

A close-up photograph of a pangolin's scales, showing their characteristic overlapping pattern. The pangolin's head is visible on the right side, looking towards the right. The background is a warm, golden sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a soft glow. The overall color palette is dominated by warm tones of orange, yellow, and brown.

**WEST
AFRICA**
TWIX



**A TOOL FOR COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN
WEST AFRICA: FACILITATING INFORMATION SHARING,
COLLABORATION, AND COOPERATION**



Sooty Mangabey monkeys

WHAT IS WEST AFRICA-TWIX?

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

THE WEST AFRICA TRADE IN WILDLIFE INFORMATION EXCHANGE (TWIX) IS AN ONLINE PLATFORM THAT OFFERS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL TOOLS FOR FACILITATING INFORMATION SHARING, THE PROMOTION OF CO-OPERATION AND COLLABORATION

The tool aims to help the relevant authorities address the illegal trade in wildlife. In doing so, TWIX has been developed to facilitate the exchange of information and promote co-operation and collaboration between law enforcement and management officials responsible for combating illegal wildlife trade and implementing CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) in the ECOWAS region.

The West African region is home to unique and diverse natural resources, that support the livelihoods of millions of West Africans and contribute significantly to national economies. However, these resources are threatened by illegal exploitation, leading to rapid population decline due to growing consumer demand. The wildlife trafficking networks also engage in trafficking other contraband such as narcotics and weapons, undermining good governance, rule of law and national security in the region. The ECOWAS Member States have embarked on the use of innovative approaches and mechanisms, as outlined in the West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime (WASCWC), that leverage technology, collaboration, and information sharing to effectively combat wildlife trafficking.



2024
year the tool was
established

130+
officials connected to the
system

5
Western African countries
currently benefitting

THE TOOLS OF WEST AFRICA-TWIX

The West Africa-TWIX tool provides users with a mailing list which facilitates real-time sharing of information, expertise, and experience on wildlife trade enforcement within participating countries. Enabling users to share information on emerging trends or specific illegal activities quickly and easily can be the difference between a successful or failed investigation.

West Africa-TWIX also includes access to a dedicated website containing useful resources to support enforcement efforts as well as a database of wildlife seizures. Individual law enforcement agencies maintain ownership rights to their data and any use thereof requires approval by an agency representative.

WEST AFRICA-TWIX MEMBERSHIP

Due to the confidential nature of the information collected, West Africa-TWIX is accessible only to law enforcement and management officials responsible for implementation of CITES and National policies and laws within the ECOWAS Member States.

Agencies who are eligible to participate include, among others, Customs, CITES Management Authorities (MA), police, environmental inspection services, veterinary and phytosanitary services and the judiciary. Several international/regional organisations working on illegal wildlife trade issues are also connected.

If you meet these criteria and wish to gain access, contact: contact@westafrica-twix.org

THE OTHER TWIX PLATFORMS

West Africa-TWIX is the latest of five TWIX platforms currently in operation around the world. Each platform functions independently and covers a specific region, including, Europe (EU-TWIX), Central Africa (AFRICA-TWIX), SADC region (SADC-TWIX) and Eastern Africa (Eastern Africa-TWIX).

connecting enforcement across West Africa

wildlife seizures database with a wide array of search criteria helps target queries
monitoring helps analyse trends and flows as they develop
enforcement collaboration facilitates co-operation on wildlife crime cases

supporting WASCWC* core objectives

core objective 1

strengthen institutional responses to combat wildlife crime through training, capacity building and law enforcement

core objective 2

ensure coordinated national, regional and inter-regional cooperation to combat wildlife crime

core objective 9

promote partnerships with relevant institutions to strengthen research monitoring and information sharing

*West Africa Strategy on Combating Wildlife Crime

Logged rosewood © Paolo Cerutti / CIFOR



West African Crocodile



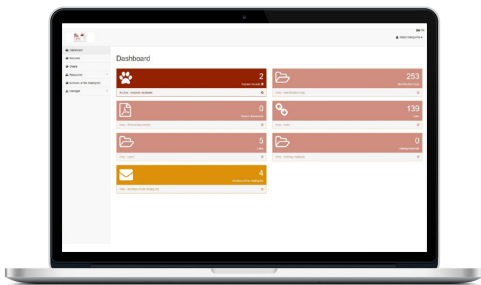
Western Chimpanzee

“ West Africa-TWIX, as a real-time communication and information exchange platform, will be able to thwart the efforts of criminals. We look forward to seeing this tool dismantle ivory and pangolin scale trafficking networks.

Bonaventure Adomo, Director of the Transnational Crime Unit (UCT), Côte d'Ivoire

The West Africa-TWIX website allows users to:

- ✓ Extract and analyse seizure information
- ✓ Create charts online and generate maps with trading routes
- ✓ Identify seized wildlife products and specimens
- ✓ Share useful documents
- ✓ Access training materials and wildlife ID guides
- ✓ Consult relevant laws and regulations
- ✓ Find links to other websites related to wildlife trade
- ✓ Access archived messages from the mailing list

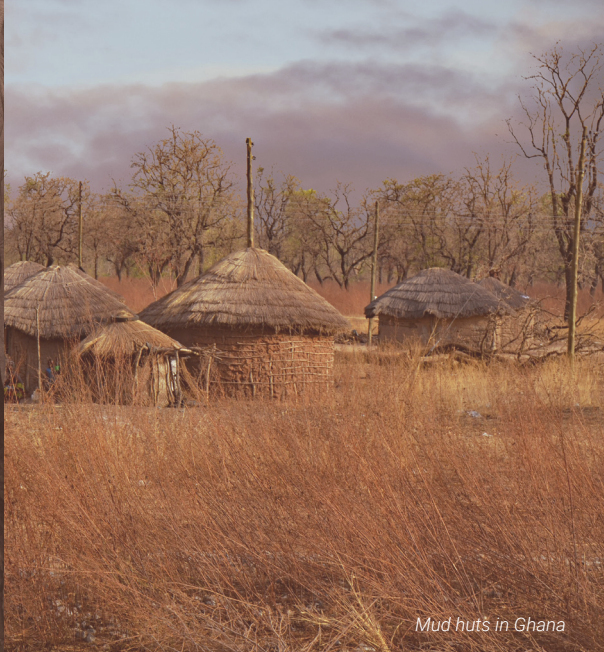


“ Information sharing between agencies is lacking. West Africa-TWIX bridges that gap.

Isa Umar Gusau, Head of Customs Intelligence Unit – Customs, Nigeria



African Elephant, threatened by poaching for its ivory tusks



Mud huts in Ghana

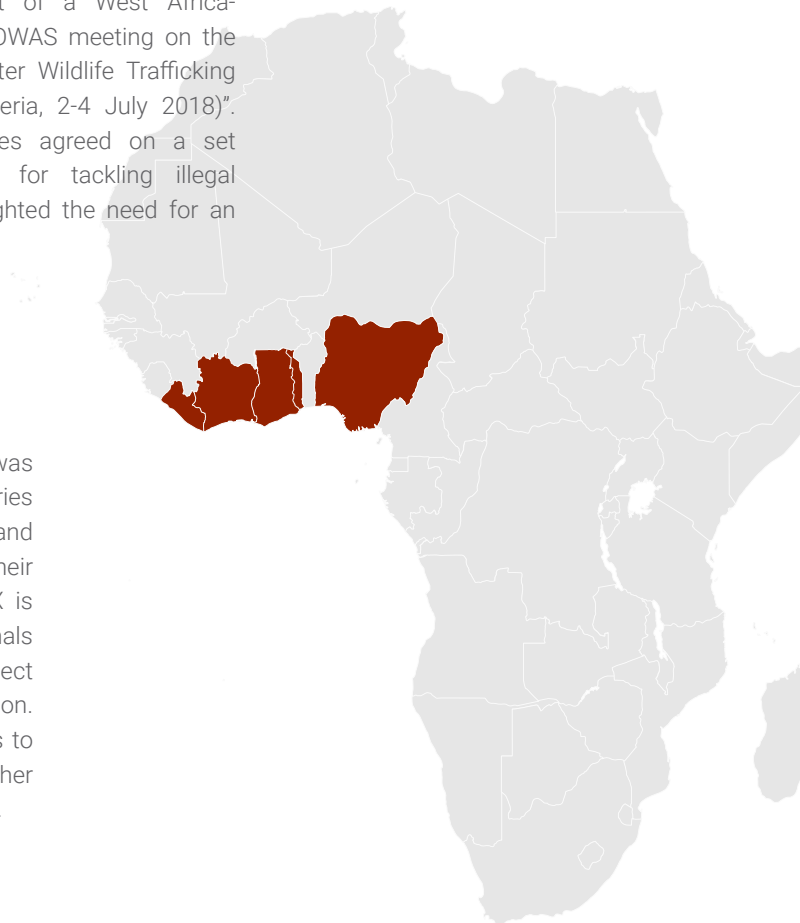
INTERNATIONAL SCOPE

SUPPORTING LAW ENFORCEMENT THROUGH COLLABORATION

The mandate for the establishment of a West Africa-TWIX system emanates from the ECOWAS meeting on the “Development of a Coordinated Counter Wildlife Trafficking Response in West Africa (Abuja, Nigeria, 2-4 July 2018)”. The fifteen ECOWAS members states agreed on a set of recommendations and priorities for tackling illegal wildlife trade in the region and highlighted the need for an information-sharing system.

OUR INITIAL REACH

The West Africa-TWIX platform was developed with five initial countries (Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo) and 90+ users nominated by their respective agencies. West Africa-TWIX is building a robust network of professionals who can quickly and efficiently connect with their counterparts across the region. The management of the tool continues to receive requests from agencies from other countries to expand the network quickly.



THE FIRST SUCCESS OF WEST AFRICA-TWIX

BRAZIL/TOGO: When a stranded vessel travelling from Brazil to West Africa made a routine call seeking assistance in high seas, the Togolese Navy brought the boat back to port and found 17 Golden Lion Tamarins and 12 Lear's Macaws (both Endangered) on board. Thanks to the efficient action of the Togolese authorities, the animals were seized, and three of the crew and one ground contact were swiftly arrested.



The Golden Lion Tamarins had been kept in small cages © EAGLE

Meanwhile, a wildlife law enforcement workshop for stakeholders across West Africa was underway, and preparations were being made to launch the West Africa-TWIX, to help law enforcement officers disrupt illegal wildlife crime.


The officer in charge of the Togo seizure was in attendance, and immediately he was able to harness the knowledge and expertise of the TWIX network. West Africa-TWIX was able to make connections between officials in Togo and Brazil that saw the wild animals repatriated.

“ West Africa-TWIX had a major role to play in this seizure by alerting colleagues to look out for species trafficked from Latin America through West African coast, and also the coordination work between different agencies that facilitated the repatriation of these species back to Brazil.

Colonel Bakaj, CITES interim focal point in Togo



Some of the Lear's Macaws that were confiscated © EAGLE



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