

Best Practices #2.4: Anti-Poaching Strategies and Standard Operating Procedures





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1 Introduction to Anti-Poaching

Anti-poaching in Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) entails all activities that are focused on preventing the illegal harvesting of wildlife. While the bulk of anti-poaching work is centered on illegal killing of wild animals and live animal capture, occasionally it also deals with illegal felling of trees for charcoal making, timber, building material, and other uses. present-day poachers take advantage of modern technology (eg. mobile phones). Poachers have also managed to break into corruption scouts and rangers get motivated to facilitate poaching for both field (poaching) operations and also for dealing with court cases.

To succeed in fighting poachers in WMAs, Managers need to exercise extra care in selecting, recruiting, training, equipping, motivating, and persistently monitoring all village game scouts (VGS).

1.1 The objective of the best anti-poaching guidelines

- To guide on the applicability of the various procedures, methods, and techniques of managing WMAs and the Anti-poaching Teams
- To emphasize considerations required for ensuring effective and efficient Management of Anti-poaching Teams in WMAs.
- To guide on the appropriate selection of VGS and establishment of Anti-poaching Units in WMAs

Staff recruitment

Basic recruits should be selected from each village for language skills, educational skills, tracking skills, basic fitness, and ex-militia as an added advantage



To read more about staff recruitment, refer to Management Toolbox # _____ Human Resources Manual _____.

Contract and training

After recruitment scouts must be made clear on the rights, duties, and responsibilities by being provided with the contract which will be signed, WMAs shall also plan for Long term and short-term training both, WMA- funded and sponsored training, that will equip them with the necessary skills to meet with contemporary challenges in wildlife management

Organization of antipoaching teams and chain of command

The number of Village Game Scouts (VGS) in a WMA will depend on size, threats, and business therein. Large threatened and busy WMA will attract more VGS and therefore more individuals in each rank.



The number of scouts under the direct supervision of each rank is covered separately, under the span of control for the various ranks with respect to WMA SOP will provide a set of distinctive procedures and stages that determine how VGS would conduct a specific routine task (e.g. organize a night patrol, deal with a sound of a gunshot in the field, report on a field patrol). SOPs aim at standardizing procedures and minimize variations among VGS operations. (Refer to Best Practices for Managing WMAs And Anti-Poaching Teams)



To read more about anti-poaching teams, refer to Management Toolbox #_____ Best Practices for Managing WMAs and Anti-Poaching Teams _____.

2 Roles Performed by Anti-Poaching Personnel

2.1 Boundary protection

AA is responsible for demarcating the WMA using easily identifiable durable markings (beacons) aligned according to the approved sketch map earlier presented as a requirement during application status. The VGS shall safeguard the WMA and its demarcated boundaries

2.2 Arresting offenders

The scout shall make efforts to bring that person who has violated wildlife conservation laws before the court of law in making an arrest the VGS shall where feasible, seek the service of a Police officer or Authorized Game officer. Where VGS must make the arrest, he/she may use all means necessary to make the arrest, however, this must be done with REASONABLE force, and once the suspect is arrested, one shall not be subjected to more restraint than is necessary to prevent his escape and by necessary precautions of observing the principles of Human Rights throughout their operations

2.3 Crime scene management, evidence management, and handling of government trophies.

Ant poaching unit must Carefully manage a Crime scene and to make sure that all necessary detail is collected from the crime scene. scouts must also be able to distinguish poachers sign from those of other legal land users, also VGS will encounter cases where they will be required to deal with Government trophies Each trophy shall be well marked and have its specific identity details entered into a special register

2.4 Court cases

The Scouts' main duty is to testify before the court of law that the suspects are guilty of an offense as per the Wildlife Conservation Act. It is, therefore, necessary to arrange for competent Scouts to deal with wildlife cases starting from where the crime is committed to where the arrest was made, presenting evidence and convince the court beyond a reasonable doubt in the most professional way.

2.5 Human-wildlife conflict



VGS should be quickly able to respond to emergencies such as dangerous animal incidences. In situations where wild carnivores have killed domestic animals. It is also expected that VGS observe and monitor wildlife movements in relation to farms so that farmers are warned in advance and the Scouts join to scare wildlife even before crops are damaged, scouts will take all necessary steps to prevent further predation and the case be reported to the DGO or the nearest Wildlife Officer for further management

2.6 VGS and Field Patrols

Game Scout's aim is to dominate the WMA against Poaching and illegal activities, obtaining information on illegal activities taking place in or around the WMA, and apprehending or tracking Poachers. Before embarking into a patrol, members of the patrol team must be aware of the **objective** of the patrol, this will help to decide on the **method** to be employed either foot patrol, motor vehicle, or a combination of these the method also will determine the **composition** depending on the number of personnel available this will aid patrol effectiveness.

3 Patrol Duties and Methods

3.1 Drills, exercises, and inspections

WMAs drill aids in integrating the rangers into a well-disciplined and unified team of Game Scouts, Scouts are anticipated to maintain sound physical fitness on daily basis. Warming up should be done every morning before departure for field patrols. Such light exercise shall include but not limited to stretching, running, joint mobility, and parading. The most senior scout at such gathering shall inspect the scouts to make sure they are well dressed and equipped for the day's tasks.

3.2 Briefing and debriefing

Before any field activity is conducted, heads of such groups of field patrol shall gather all necessary information regarding the task lying ahead. Juniors shall be briefed on intelligence report, the purpose of the exercise, locations of interest, areas to be visited, and be required to observe all necessary measures to make the mission a success. On returning to camp or the headquarters, patrols will be debriefed. This will consist of a report on duties performed, specific objectives achieved, and any other information or intelligence that may have been collected. Also, lessons learned and challenges that were encountered.

3.3 Patrolling methods

Foot Patrols

Typically, foot patrols are composed of small groups of scouts walking in the field in search of poachers or poaching signs, look for wildlife herds and monitor their whereabouts, Scouts on foot patrols must be in contact with others through cell phone or radio, they also need to carry with them a GPS, and a pair of field glasses (binoculars).

Motor vehicle patrols



Vehicles should be used with great care. While they may prove to be fast means of transport, they can betray scouts in the field. Vehicles' color should blend with the environment, and sound should be muffled to a minimum. Vehicles are more useful in moving scouts between locations where they would proceed on foot and get picked elsewhere. The vehicle is therefore appropriate in facilitating mobile patrols.

Night operations

Scouts need to be out whenever changes may allow for poachers to sneak in. Dark nights provide the required cover for the keen poachers. Rangers may also take advantage of night cover to carry out successful operations of surveillance, disruption, or arrests.

Ambush

An ambush for VGS is an anti-poaching tactic in which scouts take advantage of concealment and the element of surprise to attack unsuspecting poachers from concealed positions. Scouts need to know well the field of operation so they may strategically locate their ambush. Likewise, Scouts may devise an effective component of the intended surprise.

De-snaring

The snare is one of the deadly trapping methods used by poachers in the WMAs. Snares are simple, cheap, lightweight, easy to make, easy to set up, easy to conceal, widely used, and not so easy to escape. Unluckily, snares do not require the presence of the poacher at the time of catching the animal. So, Scouts need to search for fresh snares and disassemble them before they trap animals in the field.

Observation Points

Field locations that allow concealed Scouts to observe remote areas of interest while in contact with other scouts in his/her team which allows detection of remote illegal activities. OPs should be strategically located in the general surveillance area which will decrease the chance of poachers and illegal activities.

Tracker Dogs

Scouts should be made to understand how best they could make use of this strategy. VGS should seek assistance where such service is available in close proximity (not necessary within the WMA). Standard operating procedures for using tracker dogs should be adhered to.

Intelligence

In WMAs, informants are community-based and help to reduce costs involved in disrupting poaching in the area. In most cases, poachers would avoid the areas where communities venture during the day. Confidential informants are crucial to anti-poaching investigations; informants can provide specific information that is simply not available from other sources. Care must be taken in managing informants, if not properly managed they can render anti-poaching investigation useless, destroy anti-poaching credibility, and even endanger game scouts' lives.



4 Field equipment and communication control

4.1 Arms and ammunition

Scouts issued with arms and ammunition for use while on duty and shall be expected to adhere to the rules and regulations governing the use of arms and ammunition including strict use in the lawful execution of duty, care, maintenance, and cleaning of any arms and ammunition, and duty to immediately report the loss of a firearm and /or ammunition but also Use of Ammunition shall be reported to the AOM by filling the prescribed ammunition use form, Scouts shall also not transfer arms and among themselves.

4.2 Communication tools

Use of personal transport and Cellphones for communication while on duty must therefore be restricted. The use of communication radios must also be controlled by The WMA radio operator who will be responsible for keeping the office mobile phone being used for anti-poaching communications.

4.3 Movements control

Scouts must seek permission from immediate superior before leaving the place of work this includes moving for holidays or off days but also avoiding unnecessary visits from people outside the WMA which may result in Leakages of information on Scout movements and contribute to poaching or other illegal activities, and visitation must be reported and recorded in a special ledger book.

4.4 Wildlife and poaching data management

Scouts are expected to remain vigilant and report on various aspects of ecological and security significance, this includes collecting data on dead animals either it's a natural death or caused by poachers, critically injured person or dead person, and finally, activities must be reported and kept in record for future reference

5 How Local Communities Can Participate in Anti-Poaching

Communities living in villages participate in the protection and utilization of wildlife resources on village land by revealing any threat that is likely to endanger the existence of wildlife on the village land. Poaching and habitat destruction through bush fire and illegal harvesting of forest products must be reported and stopped by villagers even before VGS get involved.