Case Study

The #WildEye Journey
The beginning

- 2012: Oxpeckers elected a winner in the African News Innovation Challenge (ANIC)
- Description of project: ‘A narrative mapping project that uses satellite imagery and geographic data analysis in stories to expose cross-border criminals and syndicates damaging the environment through logging, poaching and ecological degradation.’
- Africa’s first investigative environmental journalism unit established
2013

- Collaboration with InfoAmazonia, pioneer of environmental data and geo journalism, based in Brazil
- Launch of oxpeckers.org at the Global Investigative Journalism Conference in Rio de Janeiro
- Part of the African Network of Centers for Investigative Reporting and Code for Africa
2014

- Launch of Chinese Journalism Project – unique transnational collaborative model, supported by Wits Journalism
- First cohort of Fellows, Hongqiao Liu and Hongxiang Huang
- Over the years Asian journalists working with this Oxpeckers project have produced pioneering dossiers of work
- ‘Global wildlife trafficking syndicates employ increasingly sophisticated circumvention tools and technology to avoid detection. It makes sense to expose them by playing them at their own game’
Pioneering data journalism

- Oxpeckers model cited in *The Art and Science of Data Driven Journalism* (Tow Center, 2014): ‘Newsrooms must diversify their staff, and data journalists need to go beyond acquiring and cleaning data to understanding its provenance and source’
- **PoachTracker** – a data-driven geo-journalism tool that provides instant visualization of statistics on rhino poaching deaths and arrests across Southern Africa
- Data based on official statistics; analysed for use in related dossier of investigations
Mapping Justice

- What happens after wildlife contraband is seized and alleged offenders are arrested?
- Mapping Justice: project started with Rhino Court Cases platform
- After months of chasing SA’s Justice Ministry and submission of formal letters of access to information, Minister released a data set of court cases involving alleged rhino poachers – including information on the Dawie Groenewald syndicate (pictured) – case still not concluded
- Data-driven tool tracks & shares updates on + 350 court cases
Accessing information

- **Mapping rhino poaching court cases data**
- In the United States, one can set up a Pacer (Public Access to Court Electronic Records) account to keep track of court cases. Other countries have centralised government databases
- In Southern Africa, we resorted to search engines,
- PAIA applications, and individual court records to find the data
- We continue to work closely with government agencies and independent monitoring organisations
#WildEye

- **#WildEye** a new digital platform, building on this model to deal with all wildlife crime and justice
- Launched in 2019, in partnership with the Earth Journalism Network, originally focused on Europe
- Part of a broader project that aids and trains journalists monitoring and investigating illegal wildlife trafficking
- Series of in-depth investigations published exposing wildlife smuggling networks and how they work across the continent, and insights into how the links operate on a global scale.
- Europe cracks down on wildlife crime
#WildEye Asia

- #WildEye Asia launched in 2020, again in partnership with EJN
- ‘Until now, there was no single place to access information easily on efforts to crack down on wildlife crime in Asia. #WildEye addresses this gap by tracking & sharing data on justice in action’
- Over 18 months, just under 2,000 data points collated and shared on the #WildEye map
- Analysed to produce a series of in-depth investigations in Asia - [How journalists use data to investigate wildlife crime in Asia](oxpeckers.org/wildeyemap-asia)
Back to Africa

- Lessons learnt in other parts of the globe now being applied in Southern and East Africa
- **New Oxpeckers professional support programme** boosts wildlife crime reporting in Southern Africa with data-driven tools and journalist training
- Ambitious project – and you are the path-finders!
Lessons learnt

- Success takes time, effort, consistency
- Understanding of context and technology opportunities is key to innovation
- Foster and nurture contacts, supporters, community
Thank you!

DISCLAIMER

Views expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government or the Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism Board.