I N T E R N A T I O N A L
E L E P H A N T
F O U N D A T I O N

To Support and Operate Elephant Conservation and Education Programs

MONITORING THE ILLEGAL KILLING OF ELEPHANTS (MIKE)

MONITORING THE ILLEGAL KILLING OF ELEPHANTS (MIKE) IN THE SAMBURU-LAIKIPIA ECOSYSTEM USING A LOCAL INFORMATION NETWORK (INITIATED 2006)

Kenya

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Status

The CITES treaty established a program for monitoring the illegal killing and hunting of elephants (MIKE) worldwide to systematically gather information on the illegal killing as well as trends in the population of elephants in Africa and Asia.

The Samburu-Laikipia ecosystem is one of the four MIKE sites in Kenya and it has the second largest elephant population in the country. This population inhabits a complex unprotected home range comprised of vast communal trust, community group ranches and conservancies, small national reserves, private ranches, small-holder agricultural farms and settlement schemes. The key factor for gathering mortality data in Samburu-Laikipia is to win over the local communities so that they give information on the whereabouts of dead elephants and what killed them.

This project aims to record elephant mortality through carcass verification in the complex Laikipia-Samburu MIKE, and to develop an appropriate methodology for implementing MIKE by building a sustainable local information network through training local people to gather systematic information on elephant mortality. This project has been operational since 2002 and it has built a large elephant mortality network encompassing individual informants, private ranches, community groups and county councils among others.

In 2006, local field assistants will begin filling in elephant carcass reports under close supervision of the principal investigator. As a result of this project, the technical advisory group of the CITES-MIKE programme has endorsed ëlocal information networkí as a sound scientific methodology for monitoring the illegal killing of elephant in wildlife non-protected areas as one of the solutions to the problem of implementing Mike in a complex ecosystem.