



blue rhino
TASK TEAM

stop crime – protect wildlife

BLUE RHINO TASK TEAM

Who we are
and what we do

2022



The primary objective of the Blue Rhino Task Team is to investigate criminal offences related to wildlife, to lay relevant charges against suspects, and to support the prosecution of, and appropriate sentences for, perpetrators.

Wildlife in this context embraces all wild fauna and flora.

The Blue Rhino Task Team does not engage directly in anti-poaching activities; these are carried out by anti-poaching units.

This brochure provides an overview of the Blue Rhino Task Team; detailed information and data on wildlife crime is published annually in the National Report: Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement in Namibia

the BLUE RHINO vision

eradicate wildlife crime ...

... to support the permanent protection ...

... of Namibia's diverse natural heritage

stop crime - protect wildlife

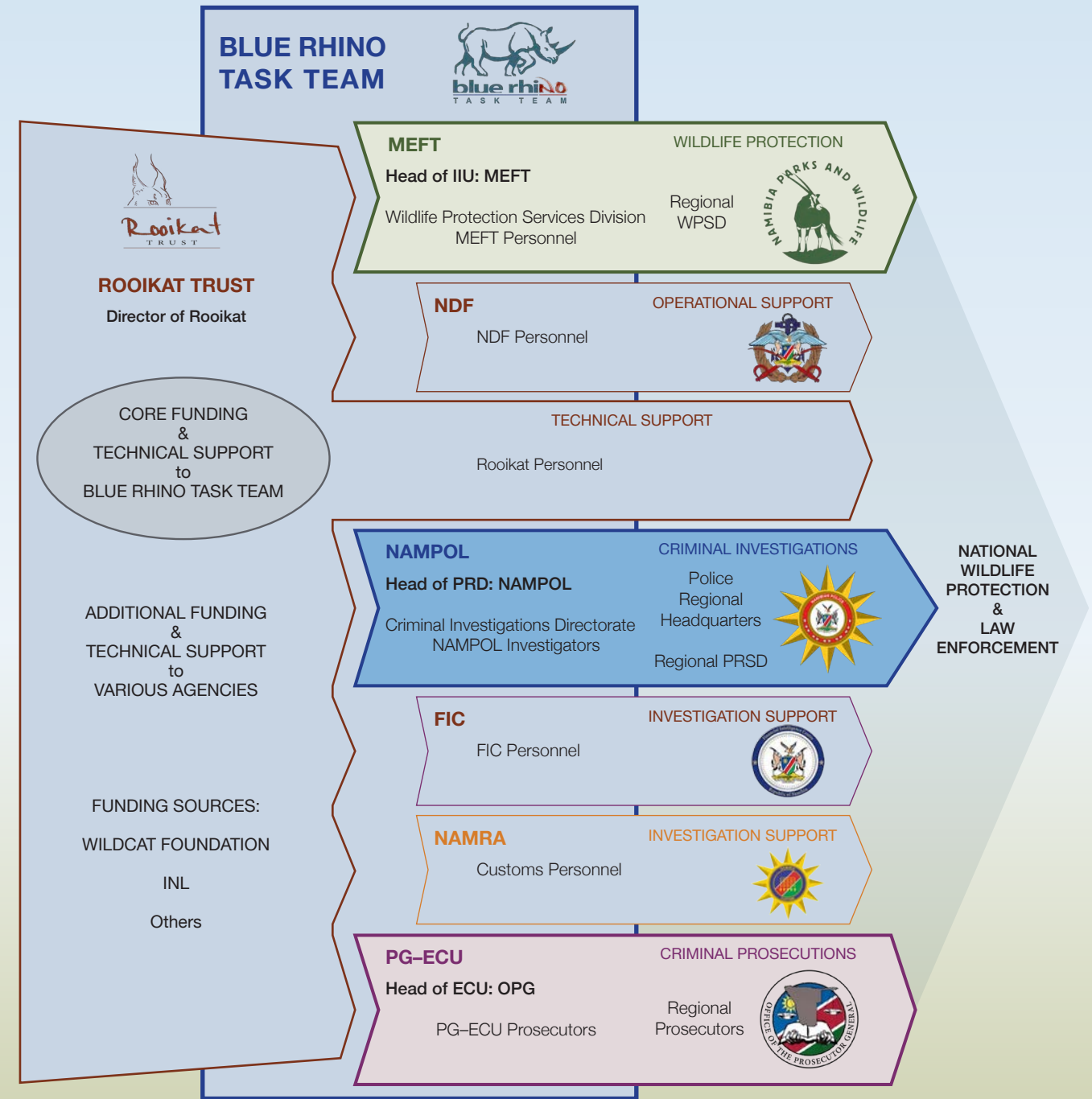
the BLUE RHINO TASK TEAM

is an interagency task force that brings together experienced personnel and resources from key government agencies mandated with countering wildlife crime. The lead agencies are the **Protected Resources Division (PRD)** of the Namibian Police Force (NAMPOL) within the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security (MHAISS, mandated with maintaining law and order by investigating criminal offences), the **Intelligence and Investigation Unit (IIU)** in the Wildlife Protection Services Division (WPSD) of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT, mandated with wildlife protection), and the **Environmental Crime Unit (ECU)** within the Office of the Prosecutor General (OPG, mandated with criminal prosecutions). The **Namibian Defence Force (NDF)**, mandated with defending the state and its resources against threats) is an important auxiliary partner.

Operation Blue Rhino was initiated on 30 July 2018 as a 3 month operation to counter a massive surge in wildlife crime in Namibia, and particularly rhino poaching. Immediate and ongoing successes motivated numerous extensions. The Blue Rhino Task Team (BRTT) receives its operational funds and wide-ranging technical support from the Rooikat Trust. Rooikat was established in early 2018 as a local NGO to enable the rapid, flexible and targeted dispersal of anti-trafficking funds from international agencies, including the Wildcat Foundation and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, USA. The direct, real-time support enables rapid responses to incidents of any nature in the fight against wildlife crime.

The BRTT has been continuously strengthened and expanded, and its mandate extended until mid-2025. The task team now also embraces personnel of the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) and Namibia Revenue Agency (NamRA). Blue Rhino builds on the foundations and ongoing efforts of the regional Protected Resources Sub-Divisions of NAMPOL, the regional units of the Wildlife Protection Services Division of the MEFT, and regional prosecutors.

Effective conservation systems that enable healthy wildlife populations form the foundation of biodiversity protection in Namibia. Anti-poaching initiatives guard against criminal impacts on vulnerable wildlife. Investigations and prosecutions thwart criminal activities to safeguard national objectives. The BRTT works within this framework to eradicate commercial poaching and trafficking of illegal wildlife products, thus supporting the protection of our country's biodiversity.



Namibia's rhinos remain a primary target for poaching gangs



intrinsic BLUE RHINO core values

- loyalty -
- trust -
- courage -
- credibility -
- pride -
- willingness -
- partnerships -
- relevance -
- integrity -
- accountability -
- diligence -
- discipline -
- perseverance -
- dedication -
- respect -
- adaptability -
- reliability -
- passion -
- hard work -

stop crime - protect wildlife

primary BLUE RHINO objectives

- > thoroughly investigate all wildlife crimes¹ related to high-value species²
- > charge all perpetrators of crimes related to high-value species
- > ensure swift prosecution and apt penalties for all perpetrators of high-value-species crimes²

- > support conservation systems through active law enforcement³ input
- > support anti-poaching activities⁴ through active law enforcement input

- > ensure responsible information dissemination related to high-value-species crimes
- > form partnerships at all levels and across boundaries

1. Wildlife in this context is a broad umbrella term for any indigenous, undomesticated fauna or flora; wildlife crimes include the intent or attempt to poach; poaching (i.e. illegally killing, capturing or collecting wildlife); possessing or trafficking controlled wildlife products; possessing illegal firearms or ammunition; illegally entering a protected area; aiding or abetting criminals; benefiting financially or otherwise from wildlife crimes; money laundering and other transgressions related to indigenous wildlife
2. High-value species embrace indigenous species at risk of significant population declines due to poaching and illicit trade, including mammals (e.g. elephant, rhinos, pangolin, predators), reptiles (e.g. crocodile, pythons, lizards); plants (e.g. ushivi, kobas, vygies)
3. Law enforcement investigates criminal activities in order to apprehend and prosecute perpetrators
4. Anti-poaching activities guard vulnerable wildlife populations through patrols, wildlife monitoring and related activities

Pangolin trafficking remains a global issue; some pangolins seized alive can be released back into the wild



Stop crime - protect wildlife

Namibia's elephant population is healthy; many seized tusks originate from elephants killed in other countries

central BLUE RHINO operational principles

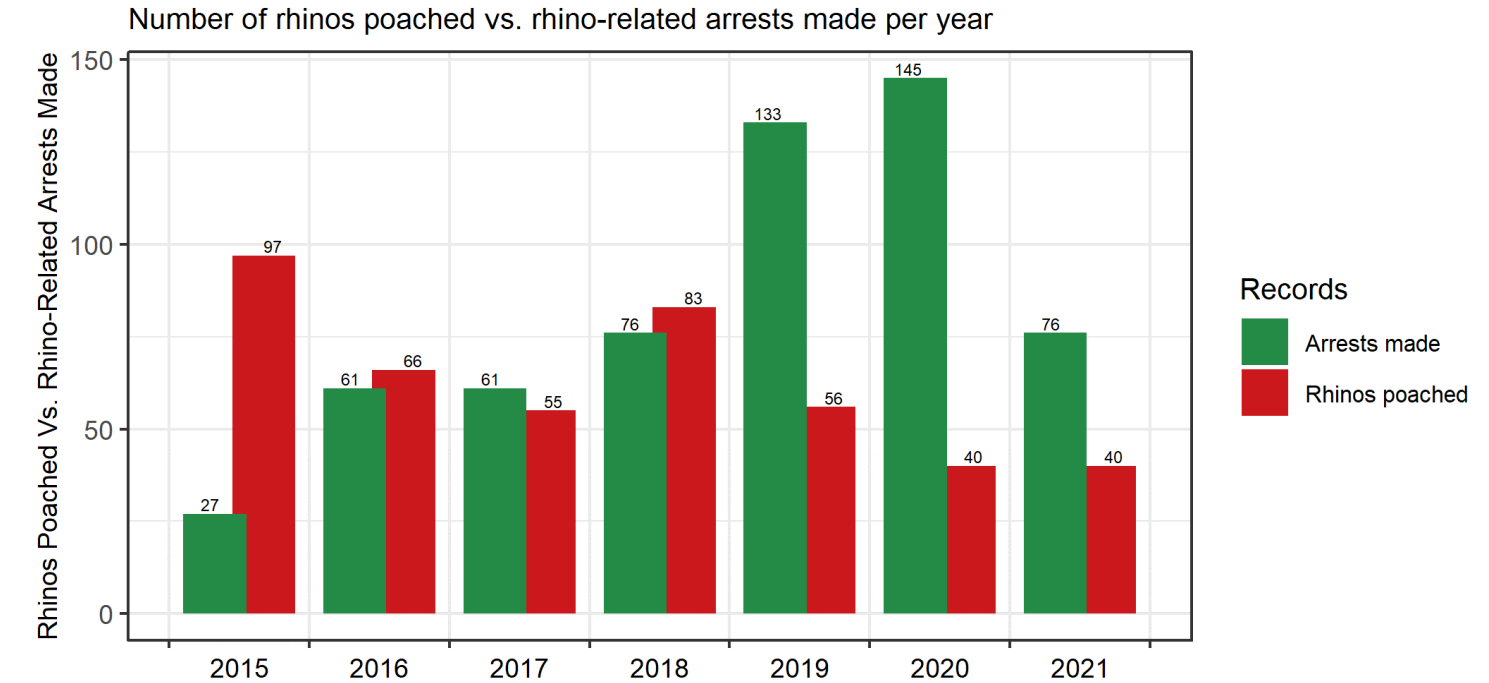
- > The Blue Rhino Task Team is a diverse squad with a multi-agency approach and a rich skills base
- > Cooperation with regional MEFT, NAMPOL and NDF units and state prosecutors forms the basis of operations
- > The task team is dynamic and is restructured as needs dictate
- > Operations are adaptive and responsive to changing needs and circumstances
- > Investigations and prosecutions are equally important aspects of successful law enforcement
- > Investigations are intelligence-led using innovative technologies and information networks
- > Prosecutions are motivated by all applicable charges based on clearly incriminating evidence
- > Decision-making is evidence based and data driven
- > Collaboration and communication, critical thinking and personal initiative are actively encouraged
- > Approaches are guided by experience and lessons learnt, shared amongst team members and partners
- > All contributions in the fight against wildlife crime are duly acknowledged
- > The task team works within clear institutional arrangements in line with the national vision
- > Convicted perpetrators and significantly reduced crime rates are the final indicators of success
- > The task team works to ensure justice

Stop crime - protect wildlife

significant BLUE RHINO successes

- > Since the inception of Blue Rhino, more than 180 pre-emptive arrests have been made in dozens of cases of conspiracy to poach rhino, which has saved a large number of rhinos
- > Numerous aiders and abettors, and a number of high-level dealers and kingpins have been arrested, including international kingpins attempting to operate in Namibia
- > Since the inception of Blue Rhino, the number of arrests and seizures of illicit goods has increased significantly, while poaching losses have been reduced
- > Since the inception of Blue Rhino, many hundreds of suspects have been arrested in high-value species cases
- > Follow-up investigations into old, pre-Blue Rhino cases have led to numerous additional arrests
- > Active collaboration with counterparts in neighbouring countries has led to various successes
- > A holistic approach to investigations and prosecutions, and initiatives such as special courts for wildlife crimes, are reducing the backlog on court rolls created by the rapid escalation of wildlife crime that has challenged court capacities
- > The development of the comprehensive Integrated Database of Wildlife Crime in Namibia has revolutionised data analysis and management
- > Regular reporting and active information sharing ensure regular media coverage, increasing public support and improving the understanding of the complexity of wildlife crime

- **High-value-species crimes** are driven by high demand and high prices for illicit wildlife products at international markets, mostly in far-away countries; as long as such markets exist and Namibia has the wildlife products that are in high demand, wildlife crime will remain a challenge
- Namibia has managed to curb the number of rhinos poached while increasing arrests in cases related to rhinos
- Many of the arrests have been pre-emptive arrests, in which poaching gangs have been arrested while conspiring to poach rhinos but had not yet killed an animal; the targeted rhinos were saved but the suspects must nonetheless face justice
- Rhino poaching and trafficking remain a massive challenge, as criminals find new ways to evade detection



Stop crime - protect wildlife

The range of species targeted by poaching gangs and trafficking syndicates continues to expand

key BLUE RHINO priorities

- > Constantly adapt to shifting wildlife-crime targets, strategies and activities
- > Target organised, commercial crime and dismantle poaching gangs and criminal syndicates
- > Prevent crime through early detection of illegal activities
- > Investigate transgressions with the ultimate aim of prosecuting perpetrators and achieving appropriate sentences
- > Ensure that investigations focus not only on predicate offences but also on financial crimes, transnational organised-crime and other transgressions
- > Continuously highlight the severity of wildlife crime and its effects on wildlife populations, local livelihoods, various economic sectors, government spending and national security to ensure appropriate responses
- > Address issues, constraints and limitations pro-actively as they arise
- > Strengthen counter-trafficking initiatives in border regions to disrupt the flow of illicit wildlife products between neighbouring countries and Namibia
- > Maintain strong formal links with all neighbouring countries to facilitate ongoing collaboration and enable joint operations
- > Ensure that tools and technologies, including the Integrated Database of Wildlife Crime in Namibia, are used to best effect
- > Maintain strong collaboration with all partners to ensure a cohesive front against criminal activity

Stop crime - protect wildlife

the BLUE RHINO partnership network

The Blue Rhino Task Team is the law-enforcement focal point of a broad network of local and international partners who work together to counter wildlife crime in Namibia.

Perpetrators find themselves within a vortex of vigilance with a high probability of being caught. They face a broad suite of criminal charges with hefty fines and lengthy prison terms.

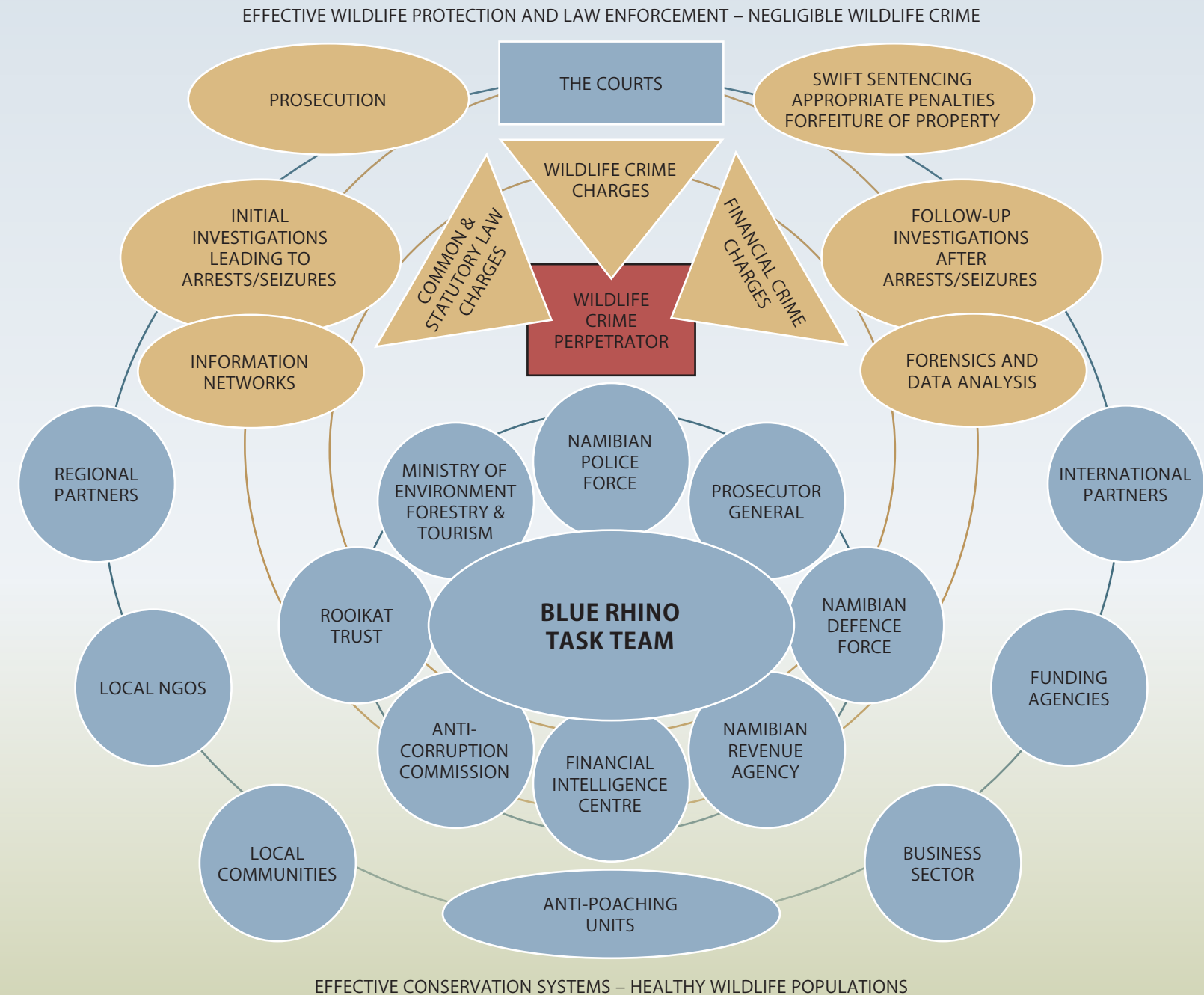
No matter who you are, wildlife crime is not worth the risk.

The Blue Rhino Task Team prioritises the investigation of high-value-species crimes and will not rest until perpetrators have been brought to justice. Complex investigations may take years, but will eventually lead to arrests and prosecutions.

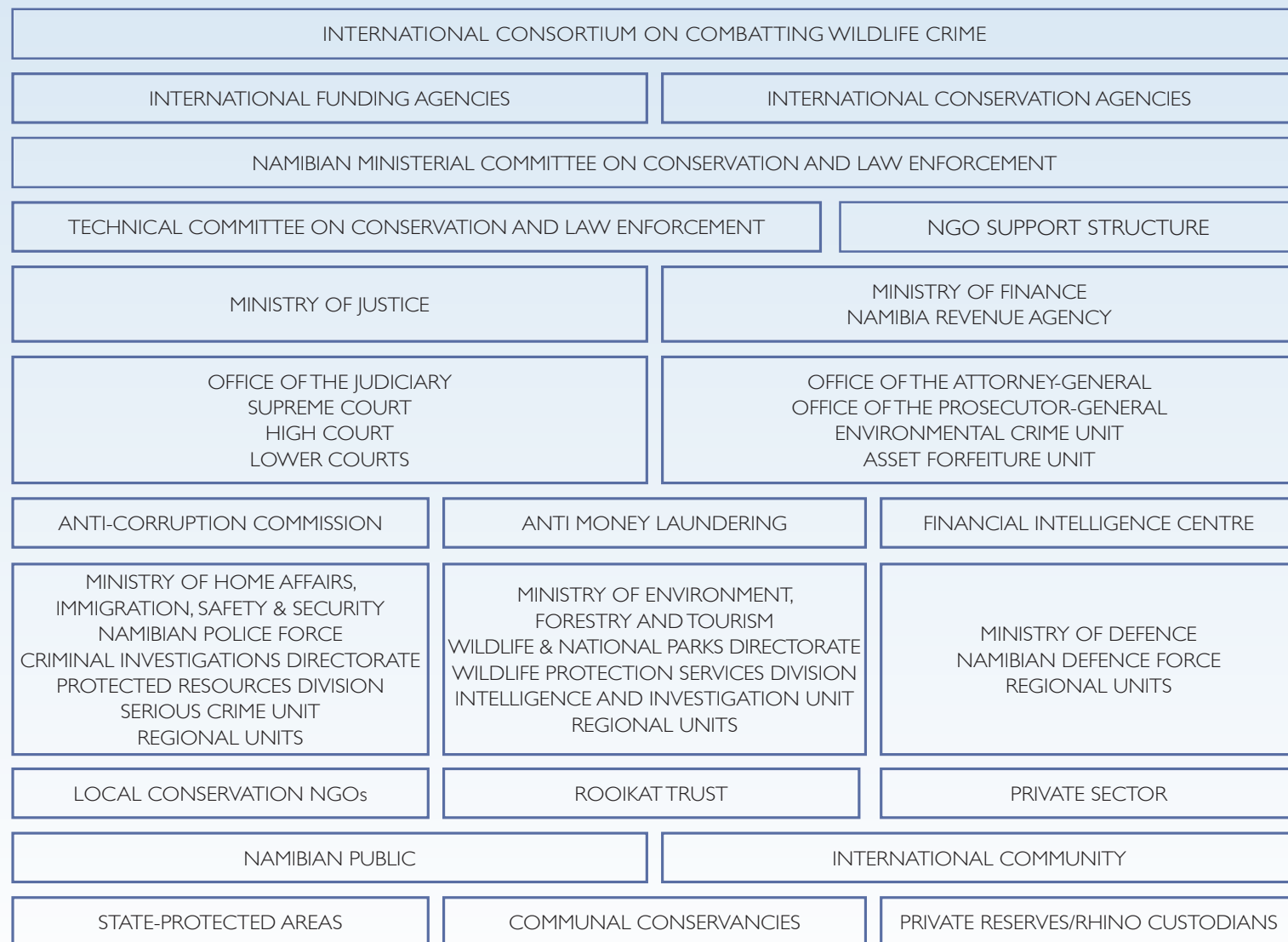
The Blue Rhino Task Team collaborates with partner agencies as needs arise. These vary from case to case. Information is actively shared with all partners, and where appropriate, with the media and the public.

Everyone can contribute to fighting wildlife crime and protecting our natural heritage.

Stop crime - protect wildlife



the BLUE RHINO global operational framework



key BLUE RHINO partner organisations

GOVERNMENT

Anti-Corruption Commission
 Financial Intelligence Centre
 Ministry of Agriculture, Water & Land Reform
 Ministry of Defence
 Namibian Defence Force
 Ministry of Environment, Forestry & Tourism
 Directorate of Wildlife & National Parks
 Wildlife Protection Services Division
 Intelligence & Investigation Unit
 Game Products Trust Fund
 Ministry of Finance
 Namibia Revenue Agency
 Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety & Security
 Namibian Police Force
 Directorate of Criminal Investigations
 Protected Resources Division
 Serious Crime Unit
 Ministry of Justice
 Office of the Attorney-General
 Office of the Prosecutor General
 Environmental Crime Unit
 Money-Laundering Unit
 Asset Forfeiture Unit

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

Integrated Rural Development & Nature Conservation
 Intelligence Support Against Poaching
 Legal Assistance Centre
 Namibia Animal Rehabilitation, Research & Education Centre
 Namibia Nature Foundation
 Rooikat Trust
 Save the Rhino Trust
 WWF In Namibia

NGO UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS

Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations
 Namibian Chamber of Environment

INTERNATIONAL FUNDING AGENCIES

Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, USA
 Global Environment Facility
 Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
 United States Agency for International Development
 Wildcat Foundation
 WWF

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Communal conservancies
 Communal farmers
 Freehold conservancies
 Freehold farmers
 Black-rhino custodians
 White-rhino owners

PRIVATE INDUSTRY

General business community
 Mining industry
 Tourism and conservation-hunting industries

Support from Namibian companies and individuals is overwhelmingly positive and extremely wide-ranging. While it is impossible to mention all contributions here, each contribution is gratefully acknowledged.

Stop crime - protect wildlife



blue rhino

stop crime – protect nature

Report wildlife crime at these numbers:

sms: 55 555

call: 061 22 83 83

[all messages and calls are strictly confidential]



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA