

INTERPOL'S RESPONSE TO INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CRIME IN AFRICA TARGETED SUPPORT FOR THE LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNITY



Paul Stanfield
INTERPOL Director for Organized and Emerging Crime

The challenges in Africa

The negative impact of intellectual property crime is felt worldwide and Africa is no exception.

Geographically, the continent of Africa comprises many large, porous borders, the sheer extent of which makes them difficult to monitor effectively. West Africa, with numerous countries facing the Atlantic Ocean, is especially attractive to criminals as a transit hub between Europe and the Americas.

A number of free trade zones have been long established in Africa. While they boost legitimate trade and business growth, they can be exploited by criminals who take advantage of the relaxed tax and customs regulations. In July of this year, the African Union launched the operational phase of the [Africa Continental Free Trade Area \(AfCFTA\)](#) to establish a single market for goods and services across 54 countries. In addition, significant use of informal distribution systems – in which producers and sellers are unregistered – increases the difficulty of detecting the movement of illicit goods.

In Africa, as elsewhere in the world, the uptake of the Internet has opened up major new channels for distributing counterfeit goods with the added advantage of relative anonymity. According to the [International Telecommunication Union](#), the strongest growth in Internet use in recent years was reported in Africa, where the percentage of people using the Internet rose from 2.1 percent in 2005 to 24.4 percent in 2018. The trend is set to continue.

From a law enforcement perspective, we are seeing increasing evidence that proves what we have long suspected: IP crime is inextricably linked to other transnational crimes, including human trafficking and drug smuggling. These are all run by extensive and complex criminal enterprises, operating on sophisticated and flexible business models.

Despite these threats, IP crime tends not to be treated as a high priority area. This means there is a lack of understanding about the consequences, not enough specialized enforcement units devoted to preventing and investigating IP crimes, insufficient investment, and an absence of legal frameworks to adequately prosecute, sentence and deter.

Raising public awareness and shaping policy in Ghana

People are dying of ignorance. They are consuming poor quality, even dangerous, products every day with no knowledge of the risks. We need to educate the public and drive the awareness agenda. This will help us gain strategic commitment from policy-makers to give greater attention to IP crime and to strengthen current laws that are not punitive enough.

Elizabeth Viney
Prosecutor and Trainer, Ghana Police Service

INTERPOL's unique role

There is no question that illicit trade is a global phenomenon. Investigations have shown that countries in Africa are affected as the source, transit and destination of illicit goods, with routes connecting Africa with Asia, Europe, the Middle East and South America.

Clearly, this makes investigations complicated for law enforcement officials as they need to cooperate across borders and jurisdictions, and navigate different legislation, often with the added challenges of cultural and language differences.

This is where INTERPOL plays a vital role. Not only can we coordinate activities across a network of 194 member countries, but we can reach out to partners and stakeholders in the private sector, regulatory bodies and other international organizations. We offer a wide range of policing capabilities to our member countries to help prevent and investigate all types of transnational crime in all parts of the world.

Investing in Africa

Focusing on Africa, INTERPOL has two major programmes under way to strengthen technical infrastructure and improve access to INTERPOL's policing capabilities. These initiatives benefit the fight against all types of transnational crime, including IP crime.

Firstly, the [West Africa Police Information System \(WAPIS\)](#) program, funded by the European Union, is working to enable police officers in West African countries to better manage criminal data nationally and share it more effectively regionally and globally.

Secondly, [I-ONE](#) is an initiative to upgrade and modernize INTERPOL National Central Bureaus (NCBs) in 31 countries in Africa. Renewed equipment will improve access to our secure global police communications network, called I-24/7, and facilitate searches against our criminal databases.

The value of INTERPOL tools and services

Having worked at both the INTERPOL National Central Bureau for Nigeria and now at the Regional Bureau in Côte d'Ivoire, I have seen the importance of INTERPOL's policing capabilities firsthand. It's a real eye-opener to see regional cooperation in action and to see how training and operations develop a platform for trust between countries and investigators.

Fortune Madume
Regional Specialized Officer, Intellectual Property, INTERPOL Regional Bureau Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

A global training platform

Training is a fundamental component of our activities. It goes without saying that police need to be equipped with specialized skills and knowledge before they can begin to tackle IP crime.

We are proud to work with Underwriters Laboratories (UL) to provide [International IP Crime Investigators College \(IIPCIC\)](#), a dedicated e-learning platform for law enforcement officers, regulatory authorities and private sector investigators worldwide.

More than 22,000 users from more than 170 countries have enrolled on IIPCIC courses. To cater for such a global audience, the courses are available in Arabic, English, French, Mandarin, Portuguese and Spanish.

IIPCIC contains a number of industry-specific courses that are of particular concern in Africa. For example, IP infringement in the vegetable seeds sector (see [Fake Seeds in Africa](#)) and the illicit trade in medical products. On a practical level, the module "Understanding and Addressing the Illicit Trade of Medical Products" is designed to help law enforcement investigators identify substandard and falsified medical products. Containing a case study about adulterated baby teething mixture, which led to the deaths of more than 80 children in Nigeria, the module brings home the stark reality of the dangers to public health.



What is INTERPOL?

INTERPOL's role is to enable police in our 194 member countries to work together to fight transnational crime and make the world a safer place. We maintain global databases containing police information on criminals and crime, and we provide operational and forensic support, analysis services and training.

INTERPOL's General Secretariat is based in Lyon, France, supported by the Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore seven regional bureaus and Special Representative offices at the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations. Each member country runs an INTERPOL National Central Bureau, staffed by national law enforcement officials, which connects them and their frontline officers to our global network.



Participants at the Illicit Goods and Global Health Mentoring Programme - held under the umbrella of the International Intellectual Property Crime Investigators College (IIPCIC).

Mentoring Programme

As part of our activities to extend the reach of the IIPCIC platform, we have established a Mentoring Programme for countries in Africa in order to bring officers together in person in a train-the-trainer framework. Participants then take their newfound knowledge and skills back to their national administrations where they not only cascade this practical information to colleagues, but can also use the information to help influence strategic thinking and allocation of resources.

We were delighted to welcome 24 Mentoring Programme participants to the INTERPOL headquarters in Lyon in May this year. Acting as IIPCIC Points of Contact, they represented law enforcement agencies in Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the INTERPOL Regional Bureaus in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Zimbabwe.

The three-day event followed a blended training structure and included lectures and workshops delivered by subject matter experts from the public and private sectors. It also provided an excellent opportunity for networking and relationship building, which can make a significant difference to the success of cross-border cooperation.

IIPCIC as a component of national police curriculums

The mentoring programme also promotes the concept of embedding the IIPCIC training into national police college curriculums. This is one of the most effective ways to highlight IP crime and equip countries with the skills to respond to it.

We applaud the Police Chiefs Cooperation Organizations for Southern Africa and East Africa (SARPCCO and EAPCCO) for adopting this approach in their respective regions. These decisions, made at government level and agreed by police chiefs, will further develop the way in which law enforcement officers and other stakeholders prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute IP crime.

Recognizing the importance of training in Tanzania
Training is an important first counter-measure against IP crime which is why we have built the IIPCIC course into our college training curriculum. We have trained police, officials from the Fair Competition Commission, customs and drugs agencies, and lawyers. Our operational results have increased following investment, training and collaboration between the different stakeholders involved in the fight against counterfeit products in the country.

Jacob Elias MUWAJA
 Trainer, Tanzania Police Force

Using analysis to shape our activities

Data is central to everything we do. But data alone is not enough: it needs to be turned into actionable intelligence. We need to fully understand the threats, patterns, trafficking routes and modus operandi so that police in our member countries can target the criminal networks involved and go after their criminal finances. Making money is the key incentive for the criminals involved. We must remove this incentive by increasing the risk of prosecution and seizing their assets. Money is also essential to run their criminal enterprises, so we need to take action to reduce its availability. By targeting the assets and money generated by organized criminal networks we can put a stop to their activities.

Supporting this concept is Project-ENACT, which is the first project to cover the entire African continent to analyse the scale of organized crime and its impact on security, governance and development. The analysis will assist decision-makers in taking steps to strengthen law enforcement cooperation at regional and continental levels. Funded by the EU, ENACT is implemented by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and INTERPOL, in association with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

Operations in Africa

On-the-ground operations are essential to help our member countries remove illicit products from circulation and to dismantle the networks behind illicit trade.

To ensure that operations are fully effective, any law enforcement officers taking part in an INTERPOL operational meeting must first complete the IIPCIC online training modules. This ensures that officers gain specialist learning about transnational organized IP crime as well as a better understanding of their own role and that of other stakeholders. The result is they are better equipped to work together effectively.

Two regional operations in 2018 focused specifically on Africa.

Operation Afya tackled counterfeit goods and medical products in Southern Africa, while Operation Heera II focused on disrupting the trafficking of pharmaceutical products in West Africa. Between them, the operations confiscated a wide range of goods – for example, food, vehicle parts, tobacco products, clothing and agrochemicals – and uncovered trafficking routes in the regions as well as closing down illicit manufacturing facilities and pharmacies.

The operational benefits of IIPCIC training in Zambia
The IIPCIC course was relevant to my day-to-day duties and it clearly outlined the steps to be taken before, during and after an investigation. I learned some new elements that complement our existing routine procedures. The course really highlighted a number of valuable points such as how to work with other law enforcement agencies to understand their respective responsibilities and avoid conflict.

Kapampa Chanda
 Investigator, IP Crime Unit, Zambia Police Service

Towards a stronger Africa

We have achieved a lot through our Illicit Goods and Global Health Programme, but we must do more.

The recent International IP Crime Conference, held in South Africa, was a productive meeting that highlighted the need for law enforcement and other stakeholders to collaborate and innovate.

In this spirit, INTERPOL will implement a revised operating model to counter IP crime, based on enhanced and focused data collection, analysis and operational support. The combined strength of our tools and services, delivered through a more targeted approach, will empower our member countries to dismantle criminal networks and seize their financial assets. Ultimately, this will enable countries – in Africa and beyond – to protect public health, encourage business growth, boost national economies, and strengthen their overall security.



2019
 International IP
 Crime Conference
 October 22-24, 2019
 Cape Town, South Africa