

MS Thesis Defense

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Title: The Impact of the Global Tiger Recovery Program on Wildlife Crime

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ABSTRACT

At the end of the 19th century, there were 100,000 wild tigers (Wikramanayake et al., 2011). Today, there are 3,200-3,600 wild tigers (Seidensticker, 2010). Next to habitat destruction, wildlife crime is the second-largest direct threat to wildlife (WWF, 2015a). The Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP) aims to double the current tiger population numbers by 2022. One GTRP goal is to eliminate poaching, illegal trade, and trafficking in wild tigers and their derivatives (GTRP, 2010). The objectives of this study are to test whether strengthening law enforcement efforts through additional funding increased tiger seizures and to explore whether legislative, social, and/or leadership factors increased tiger seizures; Bangladesh and Nepal served as case study countries. A metric used to measure law enforcement efforts was tiger seizures in both countries (Stoner and Pervushina, 2013). Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Wildlife Protection (SRCWP) funding was used to assess funding for tiger protection. Population trends were assessed using tiger survey data in Nepal and tiger

abundance index data in Bangladesh. In both countries, the results indicated that there was a possible negative relationship between SRCWP funding and the number of tigers seized. In Bangladesh, there was a possible negative relationship between the tiger abundance index and the number of tigers seized. In Nepal, there was a possible positive relationship between tiger population numbers and the number of tigers seized. There was insufficient information and data to accurately assess the relationship between tiger seizures, SRCWP funding, and tiger population trends. Based on the best available information, suggestions were developed to enhance the effectiveness of SRCWP funding and project implementation. Additionally, national wildlife legislation, its integration of CITES, and social and leadership factors were examined to improve tiger protection and strengthen law enforcement in both countries.