

**FOR PRESS INQUIRIES:**

Blair Bender - Sunshine Sachs  
[Theivorygame@sunshinesachs.com](mailto:Theivorygame@sunshinesachs.com)  
818.268.3772

**SHORT SYNOPSIS**

From executive producer Leonardo DiCaprio, *The Ivory Game* is an epic documentary thriller that goes undercover into the dark and sinister underbelly of ivory trafficking. Award-winning director Richard Ladkani and Academy Award®-nominated director Kief Davidson filmed undercover for 16 months in China and Africa with a crack team of intelligence operatives, undercover activists, passionate frontline rangers and tough-as-nails conservationists, to infiltrate the corrupt global network of ivory trafficking. A production from Terra Mater Film Studios and Vulcan Productions, this stunningly photographed exposé follows poachers in pursuit of the 'white gold' of ivory. Ultimately, the film becomes an urgent wake-up call that proves time is running out for the African elephants, dangerously nearing closer and closer to extinction.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

What have we become if everything we value, everything we care about, we consume?

Such is the question at the heart of *The Ivory Game*, the gripping and urgent documentary thriller from filmmakers Richard Ladkani and Academy Award® nominee Kief Davidson that unveils the global crisis faced by African elephants, slaughtered by poachers for ivory tusks sold on the international black market to dealers and private collectors. At stake is nothing less than the eventual extinction of the greatest land mammal on earth, an indelible symbol of wildlife in Africa and an iconic figure of the natural world.

*The Ivory Game* is a real-life espionage thriller replete with shadowy villains, globetrotting intrigue and heart-stopping ambushes. Filmed undercover for 16 months across three continents, the filmmakers follow a daring team of intelligence agents, wildlife activists, frontline rangers, surveillance experts and high-level conservationists as they race against a ticking clock to infiltrate a dark and sinister global network of "white gold" traffickers who will stop at nothing to ply their trade.

*The Ivory Game* is an epic documentary feature designed to inspire both outrage and hope, marking a turning point in mankind's relationship with wildlife.

The Netflix Original Documentary is a production of Red Bull's Terra Mater Film Studios and Microsoft co-founder Paul G. Allen's

Vulcan Productions in association with Malaika Pictures and Appian Way, with Leonardo DiCaprio as Executive Producer.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

When we first heard about the mass killings of elephants in Africa and their possible extinction, we were shocked. Virtually no one knew this was going on. We wanted to let the world know about this tragedy in a format that would reach millions of people.

After three years of work, we hope *The Ivory Game* sparks an emotional outcry among opinion leaders, politicians and audiences around the world. The message is loud and clear: We cannot let this happen. If we allow the largest land mammal on earth to disappear on our watch, we won't simply lose an iconic species — we'll lose our humanity. To quote one of the main characters in our film, "What have we become if everything we value, everything we care about, we consume?"

*The Ivory Game* focuses on some of the most extraordinary heroes fighting on the frontlines of this senseless war. They are activists, rangers, undercover investigators and conservationists who have come together for the same honorable cause. They are some of the most inspiring people we have ever encountered and in their determination, vigilance and persistence they give us true reasons for hope.

We hope for an awakening with this film. We hope it triggers action and achieves its ultimate goal: To help save elephants.

— Richard Ladkani & Kief Davidson

## **THE STAKES OF THE IVORY GAME**

"We work in the shadows and give what we find to journalists and politicians."

Thousands of African elephants are slaughtered each year to feed the global ivory trade. Most alarming of all, traders in ivory actively pursue the extinction of elephants — the fewer the elephants, the greater demand for their tusks, the more money traders make.

Hundreds of tons of illegal ivory are shipped into Mainland China annually through transit hubs such as Vietnam, Thailand and Hong Kong. The ivory is then laundered by Chinese dealers into legal ivory through the issue of fake government certificates fueling an out-of-control black market trade.

So intense is the demand for ivory in China that illegal markets flourish — one 15-kilogram tusk worth \$150 in Africa can fetch upwards of \$300K on the Chinese market once painted, polished or carved.

This is a serious business and a ruthless machine; while ivory traffickers control security officers and bribe government officials across the globe, activists, conservationists and whistleblowers (like WildLeaks, an organization depicted in *The Ivory Game*) work in tandem against the clock from disparate corners of the world to stop the killing in Africa and halt the shipping of tusks abroad.

One such figure in this machine is the African poacher Shétani, known as "The Devil," one of the biggest ivory traffickers in the

world, whose syndicates have killed an estimated 10,000 elephants in Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia alone.

An international consortium of disparate foot soldiers work together to take down poachers and traffickers like Shétani through drone surveillance, conservation fundraising, undercover sting operations, syndicate busting, fence building tusk burning, and the hardest task of all, legislation.

Only recently have governments and international bodies begun to rally to their cause. It is estimated that only 400,000 elephants remain in Africa.

The Great Elephant Census, the first-ever pan-African survey of savanna elephants, was launched in 2013 by philanthropist (and IVORY GAME executive producer) Paul G. Allen and Elephants Without Borders in an effort to accurately determine the number and distribution of elephants across 18 countries and 463,000 kilometers. The census confirms massive population declines and possible local extinction in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon and southwest Zambia.

Elephant populations overall declined by 30 percent (equal to 144,000 elephants) between 2007 and 2014. The current rate of decline is 8 percent per year, primarily due to poaching.

In contrast, South Africa, Botswana, Uganda, parts of Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and protected areas that span Benin, Niger and Burkina Faso were found to have stable or slightly increasing elephant populations.

In the 18 countries surveyed, 352, 271 elephants were counted. This represents 93 percent of savanna elephants in these countries.

While change *is* happening, the fight continues. An elephant is still killed every 15 minutes...

## **THE HEROES OF THE IVORY GAME**

**IAN CRAIG** (Director of Conservation, The Northern Rangeland Trust) has through his community conservancies in Kenya reduced elephant poaching by more than 50 percent since 2012. Raised in Kenya, he converted his family's 62,000-acre cattle ranch into a sanctuary for rhinos and elephants at the peak of the nation's poaching epidemic. His Lewa Wildlife Conservancy is a world-renowned model for conservation out of which the Northern Rangeland Trust was born. Today it supports 33 community conservancies across northern Kenya. In June 2016, Craig was awarded the prestigious Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II for services to conservation and security to communities in Kenya. His mission above all is for ivory to be destroyed so it can never enter the black market and fuel the killing of elephants.

**ANDREA CROSTA** (Executive Director/Co-Founder of Elephant Action League and Founder of WildLeaks) has 25 years of experience in conservation projects around the world and also consults with multi-national companies and governmental agencies on high-end security technologies, homeland security, anti-piracy operations and risk management. He is among the founding and supervisory board members of the Wildlife Justice Commission in The Hague, a co-founder of EAL and the founder and investigation manager of WildLeaks. He holds a Master's degree in Natural Sciences, a Master's degree in Business & Innovation and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. His goal is to infiltrate and

expose ivory traffickers across the globe in order to bring them to justice.

**OFIR DRORI** (Activist & Founder, Last Great Ape) was an educator and photojournalist in Cameroon when he first witnessed cases of animal tracking, which prompted him to found the NGO LAGA in the fight against wildlife trafficking. LAGA quickly replicated across Africa, which led to the formation of the EAGLE Network, a transnational anti-corruption and law enforcement agency designed to crack down on criminal syndicates and kingpins. Now operating in ten countries, EAGLE comprises more than 80 activists whose work has resulted in more than 1000 arrests.

**HONGXIANG HUANG** (Founder and CEO of China House) is an investigative journalist, activist and entrepreneur who in 2013 became the first Chinese investigator to work with various NGOs to conduct undercover investigations in the ivory and rhino horn trade in Africa and Asia. Born in Guangdong Province, he obtained degrees in journalism and development practice before founding China House, a Nairobi-based organization helping Chinese integrate into Africa.

**GEORGINA KAMANGA** (Principal Intelligence and Investigations Officer for the Department of National Parks in Zambia) is the first female to head the "Intelligence and Investigations Unit" in Zambia, where she has helped break major ivory syndicates and disrupted traffickers throughout the country. She has 20 years experience in conservation, having obtained her diploma in Wildlife Management from Mweka College of African Wildlife in Tanzania. Born in the Luanshya province of Zambia, she is an indigenous from Mfuwe Chief Kakumbi's area and developed her passion for protecting animals and their surroundings having grown up adjacent to the South Luangwa National Park.

**CRAIG MILLAR** (Head of Security and Field Co-coordinator of the Big Life Foundation) manages the wildlife and fieldwork aspects of

Big Life's Kenyan operations. As a fourth generation Kenyan, he dreamed of becoming a game ranger at a young age, obtaining a Zoology degree at Newcastle University in the U.K., where he first began working for Big Life as a researcher. After completing his degree he worked in a variety of places across Kenya until he returned to the bush in 2014 as Big Life's Head of Security in the Chyulu Hills, which is part of the Amboseli ecosystems, home to thousands of wild elephants.

**ELISIFA NGOWI** (Head of Intelligence, National & Transnational Serious Crimes Investigation Unit in Tanzania) focuses on anti-poaching and anti-trafficking operations through his work with NTSCIU, the National Intelligence Agency (which he advises on serious crimes and counter terrorism), and the PAMS Foundation, facilitating on-the-ground support to Africa ASAP (Aerial Surveillance Against Poaching). In 1998, he became the Head of Counter Terrorism in Tanzania after the U.S. Embassy bombing in Dar es Salaam. He now heads the TASK Force, an inter-agency strike unit that hunts down traffickers and poachers across Tanzania with great success. Mr. Ngowi closely works with Georgina Kamanga in the hunt for East Africa's biggest ivory poacher Shétani, a.k.a. "The Devil."

## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

**RICHARD LADKANI** (Co-Director) is an award-winning director and cinematographer who has completed over 50 documentaries for cinema and TV in addition to a feature-length drama and a number of commercials for international clients. After completing his film studies in 1996, he gained most of his early professional experience in New York City, where he worked and lived for six years before relocating to Munich. In 2001, *Escape Over the Himalayas: Tibet's Children On Their Journey Into Exile* received top honors at international film festivals. In 2002, he received the Golden Romy Award in Vienna for outstanding camerawork on the series *Monasteries of the Danube River*. In 2005, his feature-length documentary *The Devil's Miner* won multiple international awards, including prizes from the Tribeca Film Festival, Hot Docs, the Directors Guild of America and the European Film Awards, and received theatrical releases in the U.S. and Europe. In 2009, he photographed the award-winning documentary *Jane's Journey*, about the chimpanzee researcher Jane Goodall, which was shortlisted for the Academy Awards® in 2012. Additional works include *Vatican: The Hidden World* and *Gas Monopoly*, an investigative thriller about the international gas industry, which he directed and photographed.

**KIEF DAVIDSON** (Director, Producer) is an Academy Award®-nominated director who makes films that inspire and entertain. His film *A Lego Brickumentary*, narrated by Jason Bateman and released theatrically by RADiUS/TWC, delves into the

extraordinary impact of the LEGO brick, its massive global fan base and innovative uses for it that have sprung up around the world.

He also directed *Open Heart*, which was nominated for Best Documentary Short Subject at the 85th Academy Awards®. The film took him and a small crew to the heart of Rwanda and Sudan, where they followed eight children on a perilous journey to obtain high-risk surgery at the only high-tech, free-of-charge heart surgery hospital in Africa. The film made its U.S. broadcast debut on HBO and broadcast globally.

Kief is currently in post-production on a companion piece to *Open Heart* about Dr. Paul Farmer and his organization Partners In Health, produced by Matt Damon in collaboration with the Sundance Institute, Skoll Foundation and Ford Foundation.

Kief's first feature, *The Devil's Miner* premiered at the Rotterdam Film Festival and won numerous awards at international film festivals including Tribeca, Hot Docs, Chicago and Woodstock. The film was nominated for Best Documentary by the Director's Guild of America and won the coveted FIPRESCI Prize. His subsequent feature *Kassim the Dream*, recounting the story of a former child soldier turned boxing champion of the world, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and won awards at AFI, IDFA and Silver Docs. A co-production with ARTE Germany/France, the film was released theatrically by IFC Films.

As a commercial director, Kief is represented by acclaimed production company Park Pictures where he has directed commercials for global brands such as GE, Toyota, Absolut and Facebook.

**WALTER KÖHLER** (Producer, CEO, Terra Mater Factual Studios) helped launch Terra Mater Factual Studios — subsidiary company of Red Bull — after 30 years at Austria's ORF broadcasting network, where he executive produced the *Universum* series of

films. He currently heads the strategic development of TMFS and steers the company in all creative, technological, financial and commercial matters. In 1994, he created the ORF Natural History Unit, which became one of the leading brands in factual television worldwide. As head of ORF NHU he oversaw numerous award-winning productions in the nature, science and history categories. He has won an EMMY and several Panda Awards and was involved in the BBC features *Deep Blue* and *Earth*.

**WOLFGANG KNOEPFLER** (Producer) is a documentary film producer who has worked in 50 countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. Most of the projects he has been involved with were produced for major networks including National Geographic, Discovery, BBC, WNET, PBS, ITV, ZDF, ORF, France 2 and ITV. Some of his natural history works include National Geographic's *Deep Jungle* expedition series, BBC's *Beyond Boundaries*, Discovery's *Bear Grylls — Ultimate Survivor* and the feature documentaries *Automat Kalashnikov* and *Swimmers in the Desert*. He also worked with Michael Haneke on the feature film *Funny Games* and was part of the team that produced the hit international TV drama *Commissar Rex*.

**TERRA MATER FILM STUDIOS** is the international theatrical film division of Red Bull and is headquartered in Vienna, Austria. Launched 2014, their remit covers both documentary and scripted narrative films, covering a diverse range of genres. The focus is always upon stories that are highly relevant and strongly rooted in reality. Its parent company Terra Mater Factual Studios, founded in 2011, has produced over 100 blue-chip primetime documentary specials and series, making it a leading global producer in the realms of wildlife and nature, science and history. TMFS' recent theatrical projects includes the ground-breaking wildlife drama *Brothers of the Wind*, featuring Jean Reno and the upcoming grounded sci-fi *MindGamers* (US release February 2017) with Sam Neill and Tom Payne (*The Walking Dead*).

**VULCAN PRODUCTIONS** is dedicated to the power of storytelling. The division produces content and large-scale campaigns that entertain, electrify and change the way people understand the world's toughest challenges. Vulcan Productions' films, television series and digital content spark ideas and turn action into measurable impact. Founded by Paul G. Allen and his sister Jody Allen in 1997, Vulcan Productions creates content across all platforms, extending the wide-ranging work of Vulcan Inc. in wildlife, science, climate, oceans, education, technology, current social issues, history and the arts. Award-winning projects include *Racing Extinction*, Academy Award®-nominated *Body Team 12*, *We the Economy*, *#ISurvivedEbola*, *Girl Rising*, and *The Blues*. Upcoming projects include *The Ivory Game*, *Naledi: A Baby Elephant's Tale*, *Mind of a Giant* and *Unseen Enemy*.

**MALAIKA PICTURES** is a film production company founded by Richard and Anita Ladkani in 2015 and dedicated to producing films which shine a bright light on global issues and raise awareness on topics of social and environmental significance.