



gef

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY  
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

# Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade





## THE ISSUE

Habitat destruction and illegal wildlife trade (IWT) have devastating impacts on the populations of numerous wildlife species around the world. IWT is associated with the demand for wildlife and wildlife products from markets around the globe but primarily from Asia and South East Asia. A recent study<sup>1</sup> of 27,000 vertebrates (nearly half of the known vertebrate species), shows that 32% have decreased in population size and range. Furthermore, in a sample of over a 170-mammal species for which there was more detailed information, all have lost 30% or more of their geographic ranges and more than 40% of the species experienced severe population declines and range reduction of more than 80% between 1900 and 2015. While IWT is usually associated with large and iconic species like the African elephants and rhinos, Asian tigers and snow leopards, and jaguars of Latin America, it is also affecting a myriad of smaller species. For example, pangolins, the most trafficked animal in the world, are traded for their scales and meat, parrots and amphibians are exploited for the illegal pet trade, and reptiles for their skins. The significant decline in wildlife is now equated by many as the sixth mass extinction in the history of life on Earth, an event that will have severe negative consequences on the structure and function of most ecosystems and the environmental services that billions of people depend on.

1 Ceballos, G., Ehrlich, P.R. and Dirzo, R. 2017. Biological annihilation via the ongoing sixth mass extinction signaled by vertebrate population losses and declines. *PNAS* July 25, 2017 114 (30) E6089-E6096

## THE DRIVERS AND CONSEQUENCES

Poaching is driven by a rise in demand for wildlife products. The estimated annual value of IWT is \$7-23 billion<sup>2</sup>, making wildlife crime one of the most lucrative illegal businesses, often run by sophisticated, international, and well-organized criminal networks given its high rewards and low risks. While demand plays a key role in fueling the international trade and killing of wildlife in large numbers, at the local level poaching is also the result of poverty, corruption, inadequate enforcement, and political instability. The accelerating decline in wildlife populations will have long-term negative impacts on local communities as it deprives them of functioning ecosystem services, livelihood options and precludes opportunities to gain from nature-based tourism revenues. In many developing countries, wildlife is a driver for tourism revenues, job creation, and sustainable development. Wildlife also brings significant ecological and cultural benefits to regions around the world. IWT robs communities of their natural capital and livelihoods—\$70 billion per year is lost due to crimes affecting natural resources<sup>3</sup>—deepens poverty and inequality, and threatens national security by causing instability and fueling conflicts. IWT also negatively impacts government revenues due to lost tax revenues. Governments in source countries forego an estimated \$7–12 billion each year in potential fiscal revenues that aren't collected due to illegal logging, fishing, and, in some instances, wildlife trade.<sup>4</sup>

2 The Rise of Environmental Crime – A Growing Threat to Natural Resources Peace, Development and Security. <http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7662>

3 World Bank. 2014. *Enforcing environmental laws for strong economies and safe communities*. (English). Agriculture and environmental services discussion paper; no. 5. Washington DC; World Bank Group.

4 World Bank. 2019. *Illegal Logging, Fishing, and Wildlife Trade: The Costs and How to Combat it*. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/32806> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

At the international political level, IWT has received enormous attention in recent years. Over 18 declarations and pledges have been made in high-level political summits that included the African Elephant Summit in Botswana in 2013, the London IWT Conference in 2014, the Kasane Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade 2015, and the Hanoi Conference on IWT in 2016. The international political pressure continued as global leaders gathered at the 2018 London Conference on IWT.

At the national and regional levels, commitments, declarations, and pledges guided the development of strategies and action plans, including the U.S. National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking (2014), the European Commission's Strategic Approach to Conservation in Africa (2015), and the African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa (2015). Still, much more needs to be done.

Fortunately, countries are now taking major steps to stem the crisis, launching targeted and integrated solutions. Indeed, the **GEF-funded Global Wildlife Program (GWP)** recently released the first-ever review of international donor funding for combatting IWT in Africa and Asia, which shows that over \$1.3 billion (ca. \$190 million per year) was committed by 24 international donors between 2010 and June 2016, funding 1,105 projects in 60 different countries and various regional and global projects.<sup>5</sup>

of investments to address the problems and to look for short and long-term solutions in the source, transit, and demand countries. Activities in the source countries include: enhancing anti-poaching tracking and intelligence operations; increasing the size of conservation areas and improving their management; integrated land-use planning; strengthening enforcement; and providing opportunities for development through nature-based tourism and other agrobiodiversity, forestry, and natural resource projects that benefit local communities. In transit states, the program supports law enforcement capacity, using DNA markers, tracking known shipments of illegal wildlife products to identify the source of wildlife, and strengthening efforts against corruption at all levels. Activities in the demand countries include targeted awareness-raising among consumers across the world, increasing legal deterrents for purchase, and changing behavior of the general public.

Phase II of the program was launched in 2019, aiming at continuing fighting IWT in source, transit and demand countries and using wildlife as the cornerstone for sustainable development. This program will operate in 13 countries; 6 in Africa (Angola, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Namibia and South Africa), 4 in Asia (Bhutan, Cambodia, India and Indonesia) and 3 in Latin America and the Caribbean (Belize, Ecuador and Panama). The program will also include a global child project for the coordination and knowledge management that will focus on *Preventing the Extinction of Known Threatened Species, and Wildlife for Sustainable Development*. The GEF is investing \$82 million and leveraging \$483 million in co-financing. Co-financing is provided from a wide range of partners, including the governments of participating countries, GEF Agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors, foundations, the private sector, and civil society.

The GEF-funded GWP is a global partnership on Wildlife Conservation and Crime Prevention for Sustainable Development.

Phase I of the program was launched in 2015 seeking to combat IWT across 19 countries in Asia and Africa and supporting on-the-ground actions with a platform for knowledge exchange and coordination. The program carries out activities in 13 African countries (Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Republic of Congo, Tanzania, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) and in 6 Asian countries (Afghanistan, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam). In this phase, the GEF invested \$131 million and leveraged \$704 million. The program combats poaching, trafficking and demand for wildlife and wildlife products illegally traded between Africa and Asia. It is a comprehensive effort to protect threatened species and their habitats, with a suite



<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thegef.org/publications/analysis-international-funding-tackle-illegal-wildlife-trade>

## THE WAY FORWARD

Phase II of the GWP aims to reverse the decline in wildlife populations due to illegal trade and to promote wildlife conservation for sustainable development. To achieve these objectives, the program will invest financial and technical resources on three fronts:

1) Conservation of Habitats and Wildlife; 2) Promotion of a Wildlife-based Economy; and 3) Combating Wildlife Trafficking. The Conservation of Habitats and Wildlife strategy will focus on: i) enhancing the management and resilience of protected areas and any other geographically defined area for in situ conservation of biodiversity; (ii) strengthening political will, policy and governance; and (iii) diversifying and increasing the financial resources for wildlife and habitat conservation. The Promotion of a Wildlife-based Economy will focus on: (i) creating an enabling environment to support wildlife-based economies; (ii) promoting partnerships between local communities, private sector partners and/or governments, and (iii) managing human-wildlife conflict and promoting co-existence. Combating Wildlife Trafficking will focus on: (i) strengthening policies and national legal frameworks and increasing political recognition of wildlife crime as a "Serious Crime" (ii) generating, analyzing, and sharing actionable information, data and intelligence on criminal networks; (iii) increasing capacity to combat wildlife crime

(poaching and trafficking) and fight corruption across enforcement, judiciary, and prosecution; and (iv) strengthening transboundary, regional and international capacity and cooperation.

## THE AGENCIES

The World Bank is GEF's lead coordinating agency in this partnership. The implementing agencies include the Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Program (UN Environment), WWF-US and the World Bank. The Program Steering Committee is composed of the above institutions and The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Secretariat, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), TRAFFIC, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), WildAid, and WWF. Partner organizations include Agence Française de Développement, the European Union, UK Department for International Development, United for Wildlife, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Agency for International Development, the Clinton Global Initiative, the Elephant Protection Initiative, the U.S. National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking, the GEF Agencies, UN Agencies, and several national and international conservation organizations.

## ABOUT THE GEF

Countries will also be able to incorporate investments to combat IWT in one of the flagship programs of GEF-7: The Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Impact Program (IP). Through this program, the GEF will be better positioned to help countries pursue holistic and integrated approaches for greater transformational change in key economic systems, and in line with their national development priorities. The SFM IP addresses major drivers of environmental degradation and/or delivers multiple benefits across several Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and the many thematic dimensions the GEF is mandated to deliver. Wildlife components in this IP will benefit and contribute to the knowledge management platform of the GWP.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since then, the GEF has provided close to **\$20 billion** in grants and mobilized an additional **\$107 billion** in co-financing for more than **4,700 projects** in **170 countries**. Through its Small Grants Programme, the GEF has provided support to nearly 24,000 civil society and community initiatives in 128 countries.

