



Poaching and the Illegal Wildlife Trade Crisis

The GEF response

The Crisis

Illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife parts is an emerging driver of biodiversity loss. The problem is particularly acute in Africa, where iconic mammals are under siege. Over the past several years, elephant and rhino populations have fallen as poachers slaughter them for their tusks and horns to be sold on the black market, mainly in Asia.

The impact of the loss of the largest terrestrial mega-vertebrates still roaming the planet goes beyond their enormous intrinsic value. First, protected areas devoid of elephants and rhinos will face increased opportunity costs brought about by reduced tourism revenue and result in greater pressure to convert them to alternative land-uses. Second, poaching is an insidious activity that weakens institutions and governance systems that are essential for effectively managed protected area systems. In addition, poaching undermines the rule of law and economic development generally. Third, elephants and rhinos are keystone species that maintain the balance of other species in the ecological community.

Commitments to Act

Sharp increases in the incidences of poaching have resulted in a call by national and international organizations to increase efforts to stop poachers that threaten not only wildlife but also humans while undermining the economic development that wildlife-based tourism brings to rural communities and national governments. Of equal importance is the need to tackle the illegal trafficking of and demand for these products in the markets of Asia and elsewhere, including local markets. Furthermore, Target 12 of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets aspires that “by 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.”

The GEF Response

In response to the international call for action and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, 2011-2020, the GEF-6 Biodiversity Strategy includes the program “Preventing the Extinction of Known Threatened Species”¹. The program will make a concerted effort to respond to the threat of extinction of these species that are critical for the ecological and economic sustainability of many protected areas in sub-Saharan Africa. This will not preclude the submission of proposals from other countries or regions where poaching and illegal trade poses an imminent danger to a threatened species.

The program will address aspects of the supply, trafficking and demand for wildlife and wildlife parts and products through national, regional, and global level projects through:

- implementing national anti-poaching and illegal wildlife trade strategies that strengthen habitat protection and protected area and site management; law enforcement (on the ground, the judiciary, and cross agency coordination mechanisms), and increase public awareness.
- increasing cooperation and building capacity within and between law enforcement agencies and relevant international organizations in range, transit and consumer states.
- enhancing and improving the use of forensic analysis to identify the source of ivory and support investigations along the entire illegal supply chain.
- mobilizing political support for environmental law enforcement to control and eliminate trafficking.
- reducing consumer demand for illegally traded wildlife by raising awareness of the scale and impacts of illegal wildlife trade on biodiversity and the environment, livelihoods, and human health, its links to organized crime, and the availability of sustainable alternatives.

Programming of GEF Resources

The GEF Secretariat is in close communication with the GEF Agencies and other institutions working on the ground to facilitate coordination and collaboration on national, regional and global projects so that GEF funds are used in the most strategic and efficient way possible.

The GEF stands ready to support countries that seek to address this increasingly significant driver of biodiversity loss which has had considerable negative impacts on protected area sustainability and human well-being in Africa and elsewhere.

1. Defined as Critically endangered (CR), Endangered (CN), and Vulnerable (VU) per the IUCN Red List

ABOUT THE GEF

The Global Environment Facility is a partnership for international cooperation where 183 countries work together with international institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector, to address global environmental issues.

Since 1991, the GEF has provided \$12.5 billion in grants and leveraged \$58 billion in co-financing for 3,690 projects in 165 developing countries. For 23 years, developed and developing countries alike have provided these funds to support activities related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, and chemicals and waste in the context of development projects and programs.

Through its Small Grants Programme (SGP) the GEF has made more than 20,000 grants to civil society and community based organizations for a total of \$1 billion.

Among the major results of these investments, the GEF has set up protected areas around the world equal roughly to the area of Brazil; reduced carbon emissions by 2.3 billion tonnes; eliminated the use of ozone depleting substances in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia; transformed the management of 33 major river basins and one-third of the world's large marine ecosystems; slowed the advance of desertification in Africa by improving agricultural practices—and all this while contributing to better the livelihood and food security of millions of people.



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