

# USAID WILDLIFE ASIA COUNTER WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING DIGEST: SOUTHEAST ASIA AND CHINA

ISSUE I, MARCH 2018

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**COVER:** Tiger captured by a camera trap in wildlife sanctuary in Thailand. Photo: Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), Thailand.

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#### **ABOUT USAID WILDLIFE ASIA**

The USAID Wildlife Asia activity works to address wildlife trafficking as a transnational crime. The project aims to reduce consumer demand for wildlife parts and products, strengthen law enforcement, enhance legal and political commitment, and support regional collaboration to reduce wildlife crime in Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia, China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. USAID Wildlife Asia focuses on four species: elephant, rhinoceros, tiger and pangolin. For more information, please visit [www.usaidwildlifeasia.org](http://www.usaidwildlifeasia.org)

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## BACKGROUND

USAID Wildlife Asia aims to document and understand the current state of wildlife trafficking in Southeast Asia and China through the compilation of secondary information on enforcement actions. USAID Wildlife Asia regularly reviews available information on the trade in elephant, rhinoceros, pangolin and tiger parts and products in target countries, and develops various analyses and recommendations based on this information. This Counter Wildlife Trafficking (CWT) Digest: Southeast Asia and China covers the period January 2017 to December 2017. It is the first in what is expected to be an on-going series, updated every six months. The recommendations provided herein target the broader CWT community and focus on increased government commitment and political will, improved law enforcement, and legal and policy reform processes.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The illegal wildlife trade has been around a long time, but the depths of the market have grown dramatically over the last 10-15 years. Surging demand and skyrocketing retail prices have opened the floodgates for a trade with an estimated current retail value of \$5 billion to \$23 billion annually. Two of the biggest components of the market value are the trades in ivory and rhino horn. Ivory and rhino horn have long been perceived as symbols of status and wealth in many societies in East and Southeast Asia. Rhino horn in particular is believed to have healing properties, but historically the prices for ivory and rhinoceros horn were based more on “practical” uses, such as piano keys, billiard balls, etc. The poaching of African elephants and rhinoceroses accelerated sharply around 2008. While rates for elephants peaked in 2011-2012 and have relatively plateaued (albeit still at alarming levels), the rates for rhinoceroses are still high. The poaching trends mirrored the equally dramatic surge in demand and the subsequent rise in prices for ivory and rhino horn observed in this period, driven by the intersection of old beliefs and new trends.

With the recent growth in the middle- and high-income classes in Asia, there are now many more individuals seeking to conspicuously display their status than there were 10-20 years ago, and the perceived luxury of these items, now commands higher prices, attracting consumers looking to display their upwardly mobile status. Skyrocketing prices have reached a point where the value is now tied more to cultural significance. With prices either holding steady or increasing these items have also gained a sort of investment value for collectors, akin to the purchase of artwork or real estate.

Consumers are motivated by a variety of reasons, from the desire to own a luxury status symbol or affirm one’s wealth to the belief that consuming certain wildlife products will provide medicinal or general health benefits (certain species and products can have multiple purposes—for example, rhino horn is consumed both for its perceived medicinal properties as well as a status symbol). On the other hand, most actors in the illicit supply chain are involved for financial gain. Like narcotics, most wildlife products show strong price inelasticity, and this strong demand emboldens suppliers. High prices also attract new participants to the supply side who are willing to accept the risks to access the growing rewards.

Like the trafficking of antiquities, the seriousness of wildlife trafficking was widely overlooked by most governments until various armed groups and organized criminal groups (OCGs), lured by the huge profits and low risk, became increasingly involved in the trade. The participation of these groups has transformed what was traditionally seen as a conservation issue into a matter of national and international security. The illegal wildlife trade now relies on a sophisticated global supply chain. The planning, collection, and smuggling of large quantities of wildlife and wildlife products demonstrate a high degree of coordination that is indicative of well-funded OCGs. Opportunistic and indiscriminate, OCGs have taken notice of the profit to be made from the illegal wildlife trade. These groups, with their established trafficking routes and sophisticated networks, have been able to coordinate large consignments of wildlife and wildlife products. While some ivory still trickles to market piece by piece in passengers’ luggage, trafficking networks have increasingly put together large shipments.

Criminal networks may finance the poaching (e.g. providing weapons or money for weapons) to fill orders, but typically they do not take part in the actual hunting. The active participation of these networks usually begins after the animal has been poached, when brokers and middlemen purchase and/or collect the goods, assemble caches, smuggle them to transit and exit points, and launder the money.

## 2. PANGOLINS

While its products are not as valuable as rhino horn and ivory, the pangolin has been identified as the most trafficked animal in the world. Its meat is considered a delicacy, its scales are used in traditional medicine, and its skins are also used in the fashion industry (Heinrich et al., 2016). The retail value for raw scales can range from \$300 to \$2,500 per kilogram, depending on the market, and the illegal trade in pangolin scales has an estimated value of almost \$50 million per year.



### 2.1 SITUATION UP TO 2016

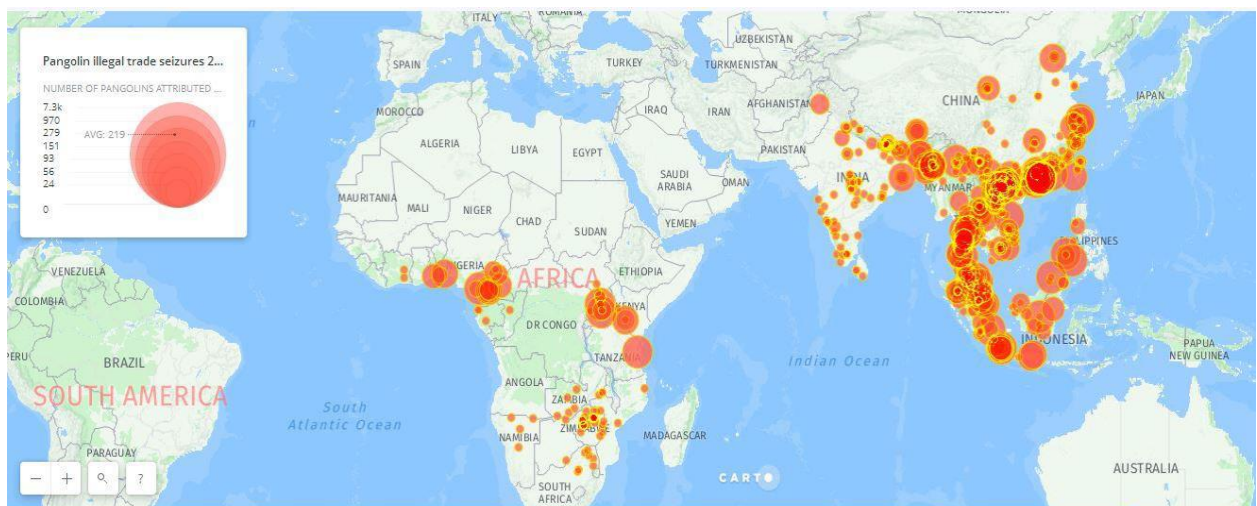
East Asian markets are the largest consumers of pangolins. The four species of pangolin in Asia have been the target of trade for decades – an estimated 160,000 pangolins were thought to be harvested annually between the 1960s and 1980s, catering for the domestic market in China alone. In addition, significant numbers were imported to China from Southeast Asian countries. The United States is also a primary importer of pangolin products. China became a major exporter of pangolins to the United States after 2000; Mexico, Japan and other Asian range countries including Laos, Thailand, Taiwan and Singapore were also prominent trading partners with the United States; it remains unclear why so many pangolins and their parts were being imported to the United States, however, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) trade data also shows that the most frequently traded commodities were leather and skins (Heinrich et al., 2016).

A zero-export quota for wild-caught Asian pangolins was imposed by CITES in 2000. Nevertheless, according to available data between 2006-2015 globally there were seizures equivalent to 112,275 illegally trafficked pangolins. These consisted of 36,344 whole pangolins; pangolin meat equivalent to 29,324 pangolins, and pangolin scales equivalent to 46,607 pangolins. At least 49,662 smuggled pangolins have been intercepted from Indonesia since 2002, while in Thailand, border officials seized 7,734 pangolins in transit between 2003 and June 2008 alone (IUCN, 2017). Extending this,

Environmental Investigation Agency analysis (EIA, 2017a), shows that 160,000 individual pangolins have been seized for 2000-2016, and concludes that the total number of pangolins traded could easily have reached one-and-a-half million during this period.

Trade in the Sunda Pangolin *Manis javanica* and the Chinese Pangolin *Manis pentadactyla* contributed to an estimated 90 percent decline in population sizes, which propelled these two species to become Critically Endangered (CITES, 2016a; IUCN, 2017). Population depletions in Asia due to high trade levels (despite the trade ban), have sparked the occurrence of African pangolin trafficking since 2001, where prior to this, trade in African pangolins was negligible (CITES, 2016b). Before 2011 there were very few seizures of African pangolins trafficked outside the continent, but this has been steadily increasing from 2 seizures in 2012, to 12 in 2015 (IUCN, 2017). Tanzania, Nigeria, Cameroon and Uganda are emerging as the key export hubs. During 2010–2015, a total of 65 pangolin seizures were reported in Zimbabwe (TRAFFIC, 2017a).

During 2015-2016, 10 seizures of pangolin scales of at least two tones (equivalent to 2,000-4,000 pangolins each time) have been reported, and a combined total of over 30 tons of pangolin scales (30,000 – 60,000 pangolins) originating from Africa were seized. The largest of these seizures, made in Hong Kong and originating from Nigeria, represented more than seven tons of pangolin scales (7,000-14,000 pangolins).



Source: EIA, 2017a

Between 2008-2016 the equivalent of 45,000 – 65,000 pangolin individuals (23,109 individuals and 21,377 kg of scales) was recorded in 206 seizures in China. Total consumption demand in China during this period was estimated at 1,600,000 individuals (Wu & Ma, 2007; Challender *et al.* 2015; Nijman *et al.* 2016), suggesting only 3-4 percent of shipments may have been intercepted. Seizures between 2007-2011 averaged 11 seizures per year, while 2012-2016 averaged 30 seizures per year – an almost three-fold increase.

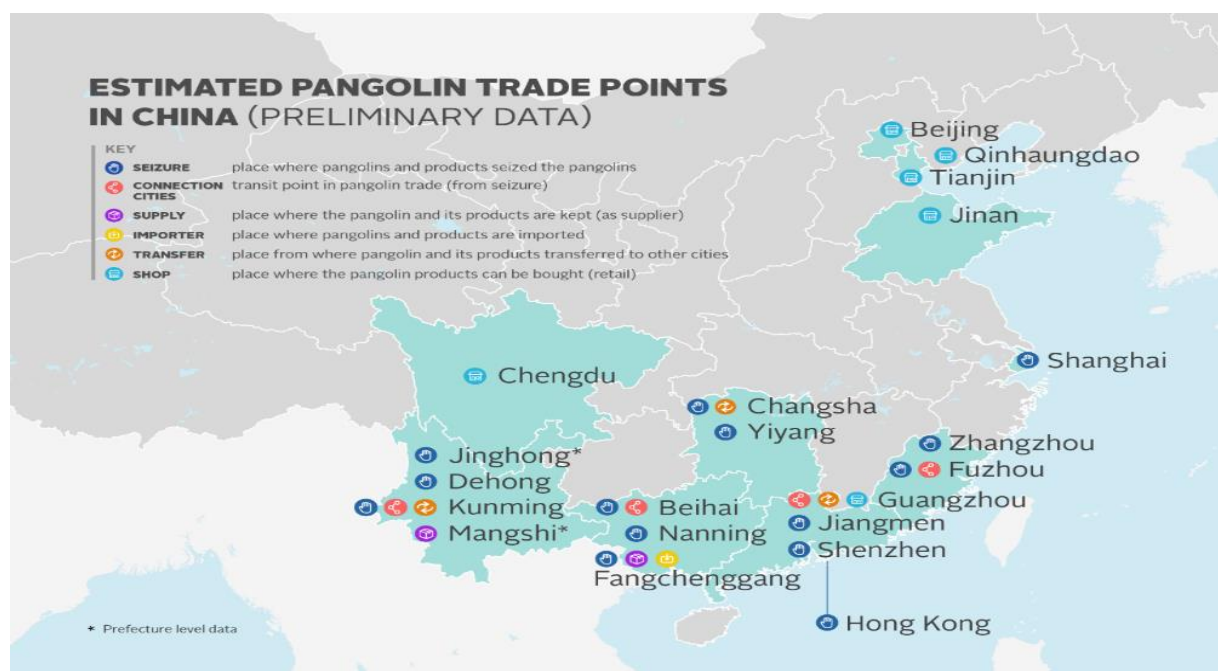
A study conducted in six major Chinese cities reported that 10 percent had bought pangolin (WildAid, 2015a). Pangolin scales are valued for their medicinal or health properties while pangolin meat is an “expensive status symbol” and an “exotic wild animal” (WildAid, 2015a).

Using social network analysis, Fangchenggang (Guangxi Province), Dehong (Yunnan Province), and Shenzhen (Guangdong Province), border cities with Vietnam, Myanmar, and Hong Kong respectively,

were identified as the largest import cities for pangolins. Fangchenggang and Dehong are the largest sources of supply to other cities within China; while Guangzhou (Guangdong Province), Kunming (Yunnan Province), and Behai (Guangxi Province) are the most important connection cities with the largest numbers of pangolins transported through them.

PROVINCE	CITY	KEY ROLE IN PANGOLIN TRADE
Guangdong	Guangzhou	Important connection node, largest numbers of pangolins passing through, and highest consumption rate in China
	Shenzen	Import to mainland China from Hong Kong SAR
Guangxi	Fangchenggang	Import overland from Vietnam and largest source of supply to other cities in China
	Behai	Important connection node, large numbers of pangolins passing through
Yunnan	Kunming	Important connection node, large numbers of pangolins passing through
	Dehong	Import overland from Myanmar and second largest source of supply to other cities in China

Of the key cities, Guangzhou tops almost all indices in the analysis. Pangolin consumption has become a status symbol as both scarcity and demand have increased, and Guangzhou has the highest reported rate of wildlife consumption in China (Zhang & Yin, 2014). Connected to the South China Sea by the Pearl River and situated within a hub of highways and railways crossing southern China, Guangzhou’s transit accessibility can complicate enforcement. Kunming is another key node for pangolins imported from Myanmar and Vietnam. Under China’s recent “one belt, one road” policy, infrastructure projects are well underway in these relatively isolated southwestern cities of Fangchenggang and Kunming, and their implications for increased wildlife trafficking should be considered.





Map prepared by USAID Wildlife Asia, 2017 based on Ling, *et al*, 2016; Dasgupta, *et al*, 2017; Cheng *et al*, 2016; and Wu *et al*, 2007.

Note that in December 2017, TRAFFIC also completed and released a comprehensive report on seizures and routes for trafficking pangolins from 2010-2015 (TRAFFIC, 2017b).

## 2.2 SITUATION UPDATE IN 2017

SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2017		
DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
January	Tanzania	67 sacks and 50 kg of Pangolin scales seized in Morogoro region.
February 3	Thailand	Seizure of 2.9 tons of pangolin scales (Moore, 2017).
May 2	Malaysia	Customs officers at the airport seized a 408kg shipment from Ghana that transited through Dubai on its way to Kuala Lumpur.
June 14	Malaysia	A second shipment weighing 304 kg from Democratic Republic of Congo that passed through Kenya and Dubai was seized just two days later in Kuala Lumpur (Timbuong, 2017).
June 1	Hong Kong	Seizure of 7 tons of suspected pangolin scales (Lo, 2017).
June 9	Malaysia	Enforcers found 288 kg of the scales packed in gunny sacks and inside 12 cardboard boxes in an air cargo warehouse at the KLIA Free Trade Zone (Timbuong, 2017).
June 14	Cameroon	Seizure of 5 tons of pangolin scales (Ngon, 2017).
June 14	Indonesia	Authorities say they arrested two suspected wildlife smugglers after a raid on a port warehouse in Sumatra uncovered more than 200 pangolins, many of them dead from stress and dehydration (UK Yahoo News, 2017).
June 15	Malaysia	Customs officers seized a further shipment of 393.5 kg pangolin scales, also arriving by air from Ghana and falsely labelled as oyster shells (TRAFFIC, 2017c).
July 29	Ivory Coast	Eight people arrested and three tons of pangolin scales seized as traffickers were preparing to deliver the pangolin scales to a Chinese client (Reuters, 2017a).
July 29	Malaysia	8,000 kg of pangolin scales seized by Customs at the Sepanggar Bay container port in Sabah. The pangolin scales were found in 266 gunny sacks in two containers owned by a private company that was meant for export. A 43-year-old local man who owned the export company was arrested and charged under the Customs Act 1967, which has maximum penalties of a fine equal to 10-20 times the value of the seized goods, three years in prison, or both (Vanar, 2017).
July 30	Malaysia	Customs authorities seized 6 sacks containing 301 kg of pangolin scales found in a cargo warehouse at KL International Airport (Clean Malaysia, 2017).
August 5	Ghana	Three individuals (the exporter and two shipping agents) were arrested after the investigation into the above seizure on June 15 in Malaysia (Bokpe, 2017).

September 1	Thailand	Customs confiscated 136 live pangolins, and 450 kg of pangolin scales worth 2.5 million baht (\$75,000) coming overland from Malaysia (Reuters, 2017b).
September 13	Uganda/Tanzania	Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) has apprehended nine suspects, who are the masterminds of illegal trade in east, west and central Africa. Eight other culprits were also nabbed with six tons of Pangolin scales. Their leader Gakou Fodie, a Mali citizen, had expired travel documents. The multi-nation operation was led by Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), together with the Lusaka Agreement Task Force with support from Interpol and Freeland (Kakembo, 2017).
October 7	Malaysia	The Peninsular National Parks and Wildlife Department rescued a total of 127 pangolins during a raid at a premise at Hosba, Kubang Pasu district. The department's general director Datuk Abdul Kadir Abdul Hashim in a statement said the team raided the house at 6.30am following a tip-off and found no valid documents for the possession of the endangered animals. He said two Malaysians and two Thai nationals were detained to facilitate investigation under Section 68 (2)(a) of the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 (Act 716) for the possession of more than 20 pangolins, known as <i>Manis Javanica</i> , which are protected wildlife under 716 Act, without special permit (Mahid, 2017).
October 24	Indonesia	More than 100 live pangolins were rescued on a fishing boat off the coast of Sumatra. The seizure indicated that some traffickers had begun to prefer smaller numbers of pangolins but more regular shipments, perhaps due to increased enforcement and interdictions (Bale, 2017a).
November 29	China	While the seizure happened in July 2017, reports first came in November 2017 of the largest seizure ever of in China, comprised of nearly 12 tons of scales, representing up to 20,000 pangolins killed. The seizure occurred in Shenzhen bordering Hong Kong. Investigations are ongoing and arrest warrants were issued at the time (Reuters, 2017c).

Two important decisions taken by the global community in the second half of 2016 have important implications for the pangolin trade in 2017.

In 2016, China passed its newly revised “Wild Animal Protection Law” which started to come into force in January 2017. The law stated for the first time that consumption of wildlife parts is illegal, and carries a fine of two to ten times the approximate value of illegal seizures and jail sentences for serious cases (Xinhuanet, 2016). However, pangolin is still listed as an approved legal ingredient in the Chinese pharmacopeia of medicine. Pangolin products and traditional medicine containing pangolin are sold in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) outlets, hospitals and other shops. The assumption is that elevating the level of pangolin protection under the law would automatically lead to its withdrawal from the pharmacopeia.

In October 2016, all eight African and Asian pangolins were listed in CITES Appendix I, and the international trade in live pangolins or any of their parts was banned. Pangolins have been relatively overlooked by policymakers, despite being the most widely trafficked animal in the world. Thus, the ban is an important step in bringing attention to the pangolin’s plight.

Pangolins are secretive and nocturnal. Some species live in trees, making them very hard to count, and the total size of the populations in Africa is unknown. But new analysis published in 2017, based on data collected by hundreds of local researchers at scores of hunting sites and bushmeat markets across central and west Africa, found that up to 2.7 million pangolins are being killed every year, with the most conservative estimate being 400,000 a year. The analysis by Cheng *et. al.* (2016), also found that almost half of the pangolins killed were juveniles, an indicator that the populations are being dangerously overexploited as animals are being caught before they can reproduce. This is particularly harmful as pangolins are slow breeding and produce only a single pup every year or two (Carrington, 2017).

## 2.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In 2017, at least 32 tons of pangolin scales and 563 live pangolins (many of which later died) were seized in Southeast Asia, representing the equivalent of 25,000-50,000 individual animals. There is a clear trend of increasing numbers of seizures, increasing size of seizures, and an increasing proportion of seizures originating from Africa from 2015 through 2017. However, it is not clear if increased seizures are resulting from more effective enforcement (which could be a plausible explanation), or simply because the scale of trafficking has increased while the proportion of shipments intercepted has remained about the same (which is also plausible).

Malaysia was implicated as a transit country in most of these seizures. USAID Wildlife Asia should focus more on the involvement of Malaysian customs authorities in its law enforcement capacity building and regional collaboration efforts. In most reports, the seized pangolins were not identified to species, and it is therefore often difficult to know the original source of the trafficked individuals. The USAID Wildlife Asia Pangolin Species Identification Guide will help in identifying the species and therefore the source area of trafficked pangolins which in turn can help more effective law enforcement. In China, it is important to advocate for increasing the level of protection provided to pangolins under the Wildlife Protection Law, so that pangolins will automatically be removed from the TCM pharmacopeia. Demand reduction efforts targeting pangolin consumers should start in Guangzhou, and then be replicated in other areas.

### 3. RHINOS

Today, there are only approximately 28,000 rhinos remaining in the wild – less than 25,000 in Africa, and around 3,000 in Asia (IUCN Red List, 2017). South Africa is home to more than 80 percent of the world’s remaining rhino population. All five rhino species have been listed in the CITES Appendix I, with the exception of White Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*) populations in South Africa and Swaziland. Of the two Critically Endangered Asian rhinos, the Javan Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) now exists only in Indonesia, (the last Javan rhino in Viet Nam was shot dead, its horn removed in 2010 inside a national park); and the Sumatran Rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) has its remaining stronghold in Indonesia, with a few individuals possibly surviving in Malaysia and unconfirmed sightings in Myanmar.



#### 3.1 SITUATION UP TO 2016

Rhino horn has always been sought for its reputed health benefits, including as a cure for cancer and as a hangover remedy (Guilford, 2013; Kennaugh, 2016). Recently, however, there has been a growing trend of conspicuous consumption in Vietnam and China whereby the affluent (or those trying to appear so) consume or give rhino horn as gifts to flaunt their status and wealth (van Heerden, 2012; Kennaugh 2016). With prices averaging \$27,000 to \$65,000 per kilo, it is one of the most expensive animal products available, and the high price has fueled aggressive poaching (Al Jazeera, 2016).

Starting in the mid 2000’s, there was a dramatic increase in poaching of rhinos in Africa for trade of horns to Asia (particularly Vietnam), with the illegal trade increasing up to 30 times its previous level

(Gao *et al.*, 2016; Milliken, 2013). Between 2006 and 2010, 95 percent of poached rhinos were from South Africa and Zimbabwe, and at least 2,500 trafficked horns ended up in Vietnam and China (IUCN Red List, 2017). Between 2011 and 2015, more than 4,500 rhinos were killed in South Africa alone, flooding the retail market with approximately \$304 million to \$2.3 billion worth of rhino horn (Stoddard, 2014). Poaching of South African rhinos surged from 83 animals in 2008, to a high of 1,215 animals in 2014 (TRAFFIC, 2017d), before reducing slightly to 1,054 animals in 2016 and down to 1,028 in 2017 (Mongabay, 2018a).

Official documentation records at least 1,164 arrests in South Africa since 2010 that are related to rhino poaching. It is unclear how many arrests led to formal charges, but the reported conviction rate for rhino crimes is less than five percent, and even as low as 2.6 percent in 2010 (MacLeod, 2014).

Most rhino horn has been transported by air using carry-on or checked luggage, with shipments leaving South Africa, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania, via Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi in the Middle East, before reaching airports in Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam and increasingly Malaysia. Horns poached in Southern Africa were found sometimes to have been shipped in cargo holds from Cape Town or Maputo. A less direct route was also identified as transiting through other African countries first, such as Nigeria, and then shipped among timber or agricultural products to China. In other cases, horns were sent by post or shipped to North America or Europe as transit points to China.

EIA has assimilated data representing a total of 475 seizures of rhino horn, with a total weight of 4,179 kg, equivalent to about 1,500 individual horns (EIA, 2017b). Based on the seizures in EIA's data set, the five countries in which the greatest amount of horn have been seized since 2006 are South Africa (1,491 kg), China (including Hong Kong, 622 kg), Vietnam (613 kg), Mozambique (427 kg), and Namibia (125 kg).

Chinese and Vietnamese nationals have been heavily involved in the global rhino trade. Overall, EIA's records document the seizure of 1,135 kg of rhino horn explicitly linked to Vietnamese nationals (27 percent of total seizures) and 1,099 kg explicitly linked to Chinese nationals (26 percent of total). Chinese nationals have been arrested in possession of rhino horn throughout Africa and Europe, with a particular proliferation of cases in Namibia in recent years. Vietnamese nationals have been arrested in various African countries, as well as in transit and destination countries such as Qatar, the Czech Republic, Thailand, Singapore, and China (EIA, 2017c).

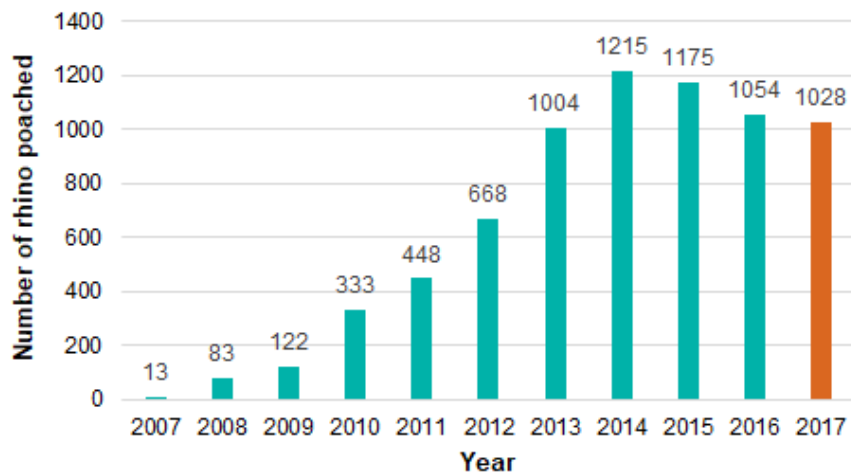
Open markets selling rhino horn products have exacerbated this problem, with markets in Laos observed to be selling pieces of rhino horn cross-sections and carvings. The markets in Laos are also known to cater for a specific Chinese clientele, where many if not all outlets are operated by Chinese nationals and transactions observed to be in Chinese Yuan (Krishnasamy *et al.*, 2016; EIA, 2017b).

### **3.2 SITUATION UPDATE IN 2017**

On July 24, 2017, South African Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa gave an update at Parliament on the government's efforts in dealing with rhino poaching. The multi-disciplinary Integrated Strategic Management Approach of Rhinoceros was adopted by Cabinet in August 2014 to combat rhino poaching. From January to the end of June 2017, 529 were poached, compared to 542 over the same period last year. Kruger National Park saw a 34 percent drop in poaching from January to August 2017. Carcasses of 243 animals were found in the reserve, compared to 354 in 2016. The Skukuza Regional Court is now fully functional with a number of successful prosecutions (Brandt, 2017).

By the end of the year South Africa’s official rhino poaching numbers for 2017 revealed that 1,028 rhinos had been killed. While that’s 26 less than the illegal offtake of 2016, the figure is still disturbingly high, and on trend to eventually lead to the extirpation of white rhinos from South Africa (Bale, 2018).

**Recorded number of rhinos poached in South Africa**



Source: Save the Rhino, 2017.

On September 21, 2017, the UN General Assembly concluded its 71st session with the 193 Member States adopting a strong new resolution on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife. The new resolution includes commitments to enhance national legislation and enforcement measures, counter corruption, and use new technologies to counter crime, alongside measures to support sustainable livelihoods and undertake targeted demand reduction efforts (Laurson, 2017).

**SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2017**

DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
March and April		At least 103 rhino horns/ horn pieces were seized from seven reported seizures in Asia, with Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam seizing 85 of these horns/horn pieces. In all seven cases, the horns were transported from Africa to Asia by air (Reuters, 2017d).
March 15	Thailand	One of these above seizures was of 21 rhino horns weighing 50 kg and valued at \$5 million, seized by Customs at Suvarnabhumi Airport from the luggage of two women – Thitirat Arai and Kansinee Anutranusart, who were being assisted through customs by a police officer and a public prosecutor. Despite the entire event being captured on CCTV, the two women were apparently able to slip away, although arrest warrants were later issued for them. It is not clear if they were indeed subsequently arrested and prosecuted, and it is not clear what has happened to the police officer and public prosecutor involved in the crime (Charuvastra, 2017).
May	Hong Kong	550 grams of rhino horns worth HK\$110,000 were discovered in an air consignment declared as a “sample” arriving from Mozambique and destined for Vietnam. The horns were concealed inside a wooden container wrapped with mud and rubber bands

August 4	South Africa	For the 15th time since January 2016, the trial against alleged poaching syndicate boss Dumisani Gwala was postponed in the Ngwelezane Magistrate's Court. Gwala was arrested in a sting operation in 2015 (Savides, 2017).
August 10	Thailand	Officials at Suvarnabhumi Airport's wildlife checkpoint apprehended a Vietnamese passenger who was bound for Luang Prabang in northern Laos along with a rhino horn which had been cut into five pieces (The Nation, 2017).
August 31	Singapore	Eight pieces of illegal rhino horns were seized after they were found in the luggage of a Vietnamese man transiting through Changi Airport, Singapore. Acting on a tip-off, the 29-year-old Vietnamese man, who was flying from Dubai to Laos via Changi Airport, was stopped by authorities. The cut rhino horns were found in his luggage (Channel News Asia, 2017a).
September 8	South Africa	A Chinese national attempting to smuggle an illegal stash of five rhino horns was nabbed at Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport, just two weeks after the world's first online rhino horn auction was held in South Africa (All Africa, 2017).
September 12	South Africa	A rhino poacher who was nabbed at the Kruger National Park last year sentenced to 20 years behind bars. Thirty-year-old Mapoyisa Mahlauli was caught after a shoot-out with park rangers. He was found guilty of illegal hunting of an endangered species; illegal possession of a firearm and ammunition, and illegal immigration into South Africa (Phakgadi, 2017).
September 18	South Africa	Criminal networks smuggling rhino horn out of Africa are turning it into jewelry to evade its detection in airports. TRAFFIC revealed an "emerging trend" of making and smuggling beads, bracelets and bangles and rhino horn powder (Gill, 2017).
September 22		Global Initiative report asserted that North Koreans have been implicated in 18 of at least 29 detected rhino horn and ivory smuggling cases involving diplomats in Africa since 1986 (Pilling, 2017).
September 24	Thailand	Customs officials arrested 3 Vietnamese nationals in possession of 15 pieces of rhino horns with a combined weight of 7.4 kg. The suspects had originated from Luanda in Angola arriving in Bangkok on Ethiopian Airlines flight ET628 for Addis Ababa, and in transit to Hanoi (Bangkok Post, 2017a).
October 10	Thailand	2 Chinese nationals were arrested with 8 rhino horns weighing 6.2 kg valued at \$300,000 at Suvarnabhumi airport, and charged with offences under the Customs Act, Wildlife Act and Epidemic Diseases Act (Zambian Politics, 2017).
October 25	Laos	Lao Customs officials seized 11.5 kgs of rhino horn from two Chinese passengers. The passengers were transporting the rhino horn from South Africa, with a ticketed destination of Luang Prabang. The seizure, based on a tip from Singapore Immigration and Silk Air staff, was publicized at an October 24 media event. Another case, again involving two Chinese, were detained with 11 kgs of rhino horn destined for Luang Prabang (Straits Times, 2017).
December 14	Thailand	Police arrested three suspects, including a Department of Agriculture official, for allegedly conspiring to smuggle 14 rhino horns, weighing 12.5 kg worth about 50 million baht, from South Africa to Thailand (Bangkok Post, 2017b). The arrests included key figures in one of Southeast Asia's major illicit wildlife trade rings (Mongabay, 2018b).
December 19	Netherlands	Officials at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport have discovered five rhino horns and four other items thought to be made of rhino horn in the luggage of a Chinese transfer passenger. The man, a 30-year old Chinese national was traveling from South Africa to Shanghai. He has been arrested and remanded in custody for two weeks (Dutch News, 2017).

### 3.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Around 20 percent of all rhinos in Africa were poached between 2010 and 2016 – with 80 percent of these coming from South Africa. The vast majority of rhino horns were trafficked to Vietnam and China. Only around 10-15 percent of trafficked horns were seized in enforcement actions. Most rhino horn was transported by air using carry-on or checked luggage, with shipments leaving South

Africa, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania, via Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi in the Middle East, before reaching the airports in Thailand, Singapore, Viet Nam and Malaysia.

There have been slight declines in the numbers poached in 2015 and 2016, compared to the 2014 high. This decline in poaching numbers seemed to continue in 2017, with 26 fewer poaching incidents of rhinos occurred compared with 2016. Yet, these numbers are still alarmingly high and will continue to lead to the devastation of the species. In the first nine months of 2017, there were ten seizures totaling 131 rhino horns/pieces of horns in Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and Singapore; one seizure of 550g of rhino horn in Hong Kong, and one seizure of five rhino horns in South Africa. Recently, there are indications that criminal networks smuggling rhino horn out of Africa are more frequently turning it into beads, bracelets, bangles and rhino horn powder to evade its detection in airports.

Overall, it is striking to note how few seizures have been openly reported as resulting in convictions. All governments should be encouraged to publish the outcomes of prosecutions. USAID Wildlife Asia, as well as other projects and agencies supporting CWT efforts, need to focus on supporting more effective prosecutions with a higher success rate.



## 4. ELEPHANTS

African Elephants, or *Loxodonta africana* (except for populations from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe), and all Asian Elephants (*Elephas maximus*) are listed in Appendix I of CITES, and all international trade has been prohibited since 1989.



### 4.1 SITUATION UP TO 2016

From 2010 to 2012, poachers killed more than 100,000 African elephants (Scriber, 2014), with 2011 being the worst year in the 23 years that records have been kept since the start of the 1989 trade ban (Conway-Smith, 2011). Central Africa, Tanzania and Mozambique lost over 60 percent of their elephants in less than a decade. In Tanzania, numbers plummeted from an estimated 109,051 in 2009 to 43,330 in 2014. A government press release in 2015 concluded that it was highly likely that the decline was caused by poaching for ivory. This news confirmed concerns raised by TRAFFIC in 2013 in a report from the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS), which pointed to a profound shift in ivory smuggling routes to Tanzania's Indian Ocean ports of Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar as the principle exit points for vast quantities of ivory (TRAFFIC, 2015).

Despite some declines in poaching beginning in 2013, (when 20,000 elephants were killed and the total elephant population remaining was down to 500,000), elephants are still being killed at an alarming rate. According to the Born Free Foundation, around 24,000 elephants were killed in 2015. This represents approximately 240 tons of new ivory entering the market, with a total retail value of approximately \$240 million to \$720 million.

A staggering 273,547 kg of ivory has been seized globally from 2007 to 2014 (Milliken *et al.*, 2016) – but in fact this may represent only 10-15 percent of the amount illegally trafficked in this same period. While the number of individual seizures has fallen since 2012, the total amount of ivory seized (measured in weight) has increased (Milliken, 2014). In 2013 alone, almost 42 tons of ivory

were seized from at least 18 shipments, mirroring the size of some shipments of drugs and arms (Miller *et al.*, 2015). Also in 2013, for the first time, the number of large seizures of ivory made in Africa exceeded the seizures made in Asia. Three African countries – Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda – accounted for 80 percent of those seizures.

These large-scale seizures are indicative of the involvement of transnational organized crime in the illicit ivory trade, which involves African-based Asian syndicates responsible for moving large volumes of ivory – either through containers via sea, air cargo or hand-carried – to end-use markets in Asia (Milliken *et al.*, 2016; UNODC, 2016).

The routes of seized ivory reveal significant changes in the main points of export from the African continent over time, and demonstrates the high level of flexibility of the illegal trade over long distances. The main exit hubs were South Africa and Tanzania in 2008, with an increasing prominence of the Indian Ocean ports of Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar in Tanzania acting as major exporters in 2009-2011. Information compiled by TRAFFIC from seizure records indicates that more ivory—at least 45 tons—has flowed from Tanzania to international markets in Asia than any other African country since 2009. Forensic analyses have confirmed that seizures made in Uganda and Kenya have also involved ivory originating from Tanzania (TRAFFIC, 2015).

But in 2012, massive seizures of ivory began to take place in the west coast country of Togo, transiting through Western Europe en route to Malaysia. There was also a short-term shift in shipments destined to Singapore as a transit hub in this period, whereas the center of transit activity had been Malaysia previously, and would become so again in 2012. Data from 2013 show that Tanzania was still heavily involved in the trade, but Kenya's port of Mombasa became the leading conduit through which major flows of ivory exited Africa. The continued heavy trafficking activity in these East and Southern African countries also suggested a shift in poaching patterns (IUCN/SSC, 2013). Further evidence of the use of new ports for shipping ivory such as Togo and Côte d'Ivoire is suggested by INTERPOL Purple Notices. In one instance in January 2014, an ivory seizure in the port of Lomé, Togo, revealed nearly four tons of ivory hidden among teak logs en route to Viet Nam (INTERPOL, 2014).

While China and Thailand have consistently been large end importers of ivory (Nellemann *et al.*, 2013), Southeast Asia plays a critical role in this trade – eight countries, with the exception of Brunei and Malaysia, have domestic ivory markets. Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam allow domestic trade in some form, allowing either ivory from pre-CITES convention or domestic Asian Elephants from within their respective countries. Open markets in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Viet Nam selling high volumes of ivory products reinforce the need for improved regulations, given that such large volumes of ivory are suspected to have come from African elephant ivory, and not local Asian elephants. In addition, ivory markets in Laos and Myanmar are owned by Chinese nationals, where transactions were also conducted in Chinese Yuan (Krishnasamy *et al.*, 2016; Milliken *et al.* 2016). TRAFFIC's 30-month monitoring of the Bangkok ivory market showed that open availability reduced over time: from a high of 14,500 products in December 2013 to less than 300 products in June 2016 (Krishnasamy *et al.*, 2016).

In China, Vietnam and Thailand, the demand for ivory is largely driven by the need to affirm status or wealth. Ivory is not only bought for personal use but is perceived as an ideal gift that shows respect for the receiver. The desire for ivory is influenced by the need to link to one's cultural heritage or spiritual belief (China Market Research for IFAW, 2016; National Geographic, 2015; WildAid, 2015b).

Hong Kong remains the largest ivory market in the world. More than 90 percent of buyers in the city are tourists from the mainland, who are usually encouraged by local traders to smuggle the material or its products. Thirty-three tons of illegal ivory were seized in Hong Kong between 2000

and 2013. In 2015, it has been reported that 15 tons of ivory were shipped out of Zambia under the control of a Chinese broker who was handling the transaction remotely.

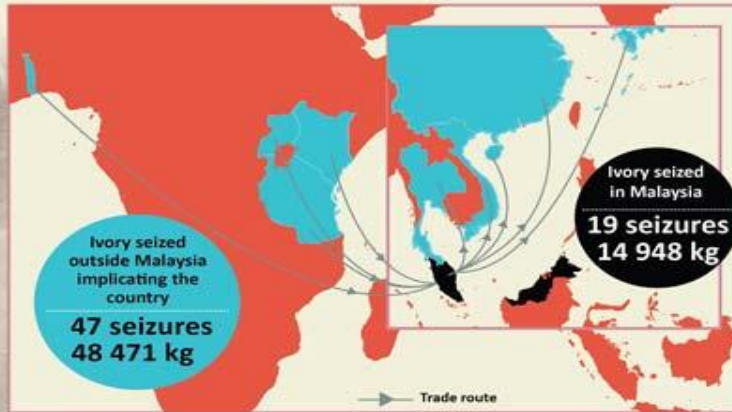
At the same time, TRAFFIC analysis points to Malaysia as the world's paramount ivory transit country, with its ports serving as a major gateway for the flow of tons of illicit ivory between Africa and Asia. Ivory seizure records from January 2003 to May 2014 linked Malaysia to 66 confiscations worldwide totaling a massive 63,419 kg. Only 19 of the seizures were made in Malaysia. The remaining 47 occurred outside the country, mostly after shipments had passed undetected through Malaysia's ports. The vast majority of the 63 tons came from just 26 large-scale seizures, indicating the involvement of transnational organized crime groups. While more than 30 percent of all seizures originated from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda—the three major exit points in Africa for the world's illegal elephant ivory trade—in total, Malaysia-linked seizures involved the import, export and re-export of ivory from at least 23 countries and territories around the world (TRAFFIC, 2016).

The TRAFFIC report, *Malaysia's invisible ivory channel: An assessment of ivory seizures involving Malaysia from January 2003-May 2014*, documents Malaysia's progression over the years to the current unenviable position as the principal transit point for ivory sourced in Africa and redirected to Asia, especially Viet Nam, Hong Kong and China. Malaysia is one the eight countries of 'primary concern' that had been identified by the CITES as being most heavily implicated in the illegal trade in ivory, requiring Malaysia effectively to implement a National Ivory Action Plan (NIAP) to address the situation.

# MALAYSIA

IVORY SEIZURES 2003-2014

Malaysia was linked to 66 ivory seizures totalling 63 419 kg between January 2003 and May 2014. This includes seizures made within and outside Malaysia, but with the country identified as a destination or transit point.



**RHINO HORN TRADE THROUGH MALAYSIA**

23 rhino horns were trafficked along with the ivory between August 2010 and December 2013. In two of these shipments, Malaysia was listed as the country of destination.

Report Source: MALAYSIA'S INVISIBLE IVORY CHANNEL: An assessment of ivory seizures involving Malaysia from Jan 2003 - May 2014

**TRAFFIC**

Source: Krishnasamy, K. (2016). Malaysia's invisible ivory channel: An assessment of ivory seizures involving Malaysia from January 2003-May 2014. TRAFFIC: Malaysia.

In countries where law enforcement has improved, illegal ivory trade has been displaced to countries with weak governance and lacking the capacity to effectively investigate wildlife related crimes. In many countries, corruption plays a critical role in enabling the ivory trade, providing opportunities for criminal syndicates to exploit the system. This was highlighted in the recent EIA report, *The Shuidong Connection: Exposing the global hub of the illegal ivory trade*, where an organized criminal group from Shuidong moved its operations to Mozambique following improved enforcement efforts in Tanzania (see box on page 22).

## EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES AT DETECTION AND PROSECUTION

Despite the challenges in detecting and prosecuting illicit ivory crimes, there are some examples of best practices worth highlighting for their thorough investigation efforts and adequate sentencing outcomes (EIA, 2017d):

### Example 1

In June 2014, 2,152 kg of ivory was seized during a raid at warehouse in Mombasa, Kenya, in what is suspected to be an ivory collation syndicate. Those arrested allegedly attempted to bribe the officers with KES 5million (\$22,000). An identified suspect, Feisal Mohammed Ali, fled to Tanzania and was subsequently put on an INTERPOL Red Notice, a valuable tool to aid international cooperation helping to locate wanted suspects. He was arrested in December 2014 and, although the case was plagued by accusations of evidence-tampering and contradicting testimonies, it was resolved in July 2016. The investigation found evidence linking Ali to the vehicle used to transport ivory and he received a sentence of 20 years imprisonment and fined Ksh 20million [\$192,400], a significant outcome involving a higher-level offender.

### Example 2

A seizure at a known ivory transit point Togo, in the Autonomous Port of Lomé, resulted in the discovery of 3,815 kg of ivory, 22.55 kg of pangolin scales and 266 teak logs in containers ready for export to Vietnam. Upon investigation, two local shipping agents, Manza Esso Walla and Mohammed Alanou, were identified as well as two Vietnamese timber traders, of whom one, Dinh Huu Khao, was identified as the owner of the shipments. When he was apprehended he was found in possession of \$165,000 in multiple currencies. A further two suspects were identified, one of whom, Dao Van Bien, was also subject to an INTERPOL Red Notice after absconding from Togo. In October 2015, Alanou and Dinh were both convicted for their involvement in the seizure via a public case and were sentenced to 22 and 24 months imprisonment, respectively. Both offenders were also fined 100 million CFA francs [\$178,800] and 15 million CFA francs [\$26,800] via a civil case, to be paid to Ministry of Environment and Forest Resources and SOS Elephants, respectively. The outcome for Dao remains an unknown.

### Example 3

Following the interception of 13 kg of ivory at a tollbooth in Lichuan County, Fuzhou City of Jiangxi, China, a one-year investigation was conducted by Jiangxi Province Police. The investigation went on to uncover an ivory processing factory in Fujian province, where more than 500 kg of ivory and ivory products were seized. Four accused were identified in the case and subsequently convicted in 2015 and 2016. The outcome in this case reflects the severity of the crimes: each offender received a custodial sentence of between three and 13 years. Three of the offenders also had assets seized, ranging from RMB 200,000- RMB 1.2 million [\$29,600-1,776,500].

For World Elephant Day 2017, the EIA updated an ivory seizure map, detailing 150 large scale ivory seizures of 500 kg or more between 2000 and July 2017 (EIA, 2017e). A detailed analysis estimates that these large-scale ivory seizures account for the death of approximately 37,438 elephants. Of the total number of seizures, Vietnam, Hong Kong and Kenya returned the highest number, with 31, 15

and 14 seizures respectively. The prosecution outcomes and pending prosecutions for Vietnam and Hong Kong are low, with just two finalized outcomes, and two prosecutions in process for each country. Kenya, by contrast, was identified to have prosecution results for four cases, with a further six reported to have commenced prosecution. This confirms positive action in 10 of its 14 large-scale ivory seizures. Through this research, it is apparent that the reporting and transparency surrounding prosecutions of individuals and companies implicated in the illegal ivory trade, especially large-scale seizures, is woefully inadequate. Overall only 22.8 percent of known large-scale seizures have resulted in satisfactory legal outcomes. Such low conviction rates provide little deterrent for those involved in the illicit trade of ivory.

## THE SHUIDONG CONNECTION

EIA first encountered the Shuidong smugglers in September 2014 while investigating the catastrophic poaching of elephants in Tanzania. In Zanzibar, the main gateway for shipments of tusks flowing out of Tanzania, EIA met with a sea cucumber trader from Shuidong who revealed that a community of his compatriots in Zanzibar was behind the smuggling, with a single group sending out 20 shipments to China in just one year. They formed part of an international network of people from Shuidong supplying the booming Chinese market for sea cucumbers; with their knowledge of working in Africa and supply routes to China, their presence in strategic coastal towns and their business cover, the Shuidong traders in East and West Africa were ideally positioned to move into the illegal ivory trade.

In April 2016, EIA investigators travelled to Mozambique to ground-truth rumors that ivory traffickers were switching their focus from Tanzania as a result of improved enforcement efforts and prosecutions. In the port town of Pemba, they encountered a group of three Chinese nationals who were conspicuous because of their unique dialect – they were all from Shuidong. Posing as potential ivory traders and logistics specialists, the investigators gradually gained the trust of the syndicate partners; over the course of more than a year and through multiple meetings, they were able to piece together a detailed picture of the enormous scale and nature scale of the operations, which involves:

- Engagement of trusted Africa-based fixers to consolidate shipments of poached ivory in secure locations;
- Key Chinese syndicate players travelling to Africa to inspect tusks for quality and, subsequently, to African ports to remotely observe loading onto vessels;
- Bribing key customs and border enforcement personnel as well as freight agents;
- Concealing tusks in innocuous-looking shipments of plastic pellets;
- Using historically secure smuggling routes dotted with accomplices at every stage, known as ‘owning the road’;
- Obscuring the origin of shipping containers of ivory by sending them to be reloaded in transit countries such as South Korea;
- The ability to swiftly diversify into other illegal wildlife products such as pangolin scales, totoaba fish maw and rhino horn as demand and supplies varied;
- Continuously re-investing criminal profits into new ivory and other wildlife shipments.

Despite the Chinese Government’s laudable decision to close its domestic ivory market, leading to a fall in price for ivory tusks in the country, the smuggling group was still active as of late June 2017, extending its operations to West Africa to source lucrative tusks poached from forest elephants.

Source: Environmental Investigation Agency (2017). *The Shuidong Connection: Exposing the global hub of the illegal ivory trade*. EIA-US: Washington, DC.

## 4.2 SITUATION UPDATE IN 2017

In a major advance in December 2016, China announced a ban on all domestic trade in ivory to be fully implemented within one year. This follows a similar move by the United States in June 2016 to institute a virtually complete ban on ivory trade. However, it should be noted that the domestic ban on ivory trade announced by the Chinese government covers only trade i.e. closure of ivory processing workshops and sales for commercial purposes. It does not cover and is silent on possession and purchase by consumers (Bale, 2017b).

On June 14, 2017 Hong Kong lawmakers started to deliberate the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (Amendment) Bill. The amended bill would ultimately phase out local ivory businesses by 2021, with steps to ban for commercial purposes the trade and possession of all elephant hunting trophies and ivory carvings. It would also nullify all possession licenses. Traders are demanding compensation of HK\$2 billion over the move to ban the selling of imported ivory products by 2021 (Note that on January 31, lawmakers officially voted in favor of ending the trade by 2021, Actman, 2017).

In July 2017, in the United States, a new trade study led by TRAFFIC, with support from World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), established a baseline for the status of the U.S. elephant ivory market around the time that a series of changes to federal regulations were imposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (TRAFFIC, 2017e). Enacted on the 6th July 2016, these changes enforced a “near-total ban” on imports, exports, and domestic trade of African Elephant ivory. The study surveyed physical markets and online classified advertisements in six major U.S. cities—Boston, Los Angeles, New York, Portland, San Francisco and Washington, DC—between May and July 2016. Investigators also documented the availability, quantity, and price of elephant ivory offered by US-based sellers on six prominent online commerce platforms between June and August 2016. Overall, in the six cities, 1,589 elephant ivory items, among them figurines (780 items), jewelry (417), and household goods (261), were found offered by 227 vendors. Washington, DC topped the list with 658 items for sale from 68 vendors. Online classified advertisements for elephant ivory in the six cities mostly offered antique pianos with ivory keys (205 listings). Results show a marked decline in elephant ivory available for sale in the top-three U.S. markets of a decade ago: New York City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. In a 2006-2007 survey period, Care for the Wild International and Save the Elephants reported 16,758 ivory items in physical retail in the three cities--whereas TRAFFIC documented only 489 items in the 2016 survey period (TRAFFIC, 2017e). Stricter regulations and enforcement may be responsible for the change. In addition to the federal regulations, New York, California and many other states have enacted their own measures restricting intrastate commercial sales of elephant ivory. The second major component of the study surveyed six major online platforms—including auction sites and online marketplaces—and found a total of 2,056 elephant ivory items on offer from sellers based in 47 states, the top three being Florida (74 online vendors, 573 items), California (93 online vendors, 173 items) and New York (62 online vendors, 117 items).

In August 2017, an analysis of CITES records revealed that the UK was the world’s largest exporter of legal ivory between 2010 and 2015. The UK ivory market contributes to the international illegal

ivory trade. Thousands of pieces of ivory are still traded in the UK each year. During the colonial era, more than a million elephants were killed to feed British demand for everything from ivory ornaments and piano keys to billiard balls and cutlery. Today, the UK is the world's largest exporter of 'legal' ivory – most of which goes to Asian destinations such as China and Hong Kong. China and Hong Kong have embarked on the process of closing their commercial ivory markets. It is critical that the UK stops its commercial exports to those same markets so as not to undermine those efforts. Environment Secretary Michael Gove has recently announced a public consultation of the UK Government's proposals to ban sales of ivory of all ages.

On September 5, 2017 in Japan, AEON made an announcement that it will phase out all sales of elephant ivory by tenants in all of AEON's numerous malls across Japan by March 2020 (EIA, 2017g).

On September 28, 2017, BBC reported that Laos is the fastest growing ivory market in the world (Leithead, 2017). Save The Elephants (STE) reported that the retail ivory market in Laos has increased more rapidly than in any other country surveyed in the last three years, and shows that the number of Chinese-owned retail outlets selling ivory has increased considerably since 2013. Mainland Chinese visitors are now buying more than 80 percent of the ivory seen for sale in Laos where retail prices are considerably lower than in China. This pattern was found in their earlier studies in Hong Kong (2015), and Vietnam (2016), where over 75 percent of the buyers were mainland Chinese visitors smuggling ivory back home. The researchers found that ivory items seen for sale in Laos were either carved or machine-processed in Vietnam by Vietnamese and smuggled into Laos for sale, or were processed by Chinese traders in Laos on new computer-driven machines. Ivory also enters Laos illegally from Thailand where Thai traders have been offloading their ivory following the imposition of much stricter regulations there. In late 2013, the wholesale price of ivory sold by traders in Laos peaked at about \$2,000 per kg while by late 2016, the average price had declined to \$714 per kg. The decline in price was attributed largely to the slowdown in China's economy. In total, 81 retail outlets were found displaying 13,248 ivory items for sale in the latest surveys (Save the Elephants, 2017).

## SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS

SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2017		
DATE	LOCATION	SEIZURES
January-June	Thailand	In the first 6 months of 2017, Thailand seized 2 whole tusks and 422 pieces of tusks with a total weight of about 250 kg in two cases – this compares with 99 tusks and 22 tusk pieces weighing 1,200 kg in 2016 – as reported by Police Commissioner General Chalermkiat Sriworakhan (Kaewjinda, 2017).
March 3	Tanzania	One of Tanzania's most notorious elephant poachers, Boniface "Shetani" Maliango received a 12-year prison sentence for his role in killing and trafficking thousands of elephants across five African countries (BBC, 2017).
March 8	Thailand	In one of the two cases mentioned above, Gambian national Sainy Jagne was arrested when he went to collect 422 pieces of ivory tusks weighing 330 kg and valued at \$480,000 hidden in a shipment labelled as unprocessed gemstones (Khao Sod English, 2017a).
January-August	Hong Kong	In the first eight months of 2017, Hong Kong customs officers seized HK\$120 million in illegal endangered wildlife products – a 62 percent jump compared with the same period in 2016. Ivory remained the most commonly trafficked item, accounting for 14 percent of total cases and 63 percent of the total value. Out of 292 cases, 84 involved smuggling by passengers arriving at Hong Kong International Airport, compared with just 37 similar cases in the first eight months of 2016. The assistant commissioner of the Customs and Excise Department, said traffickers had recently turned from smuggling bulky items via sea to bringing in protected species bit by bit in air parcels



		or by using air passengers - suggesting that as court sentences for offenders have been heavy, traffickers were prompted to smuggle small quantities each time to reduce loss and avoid being caught. Online shopping and e-commerce developed rapidly. The number of parcels entering and leaving Hong Kong is enormous. Criminals therefore made good use of such means to smuggle endangered species (Leung, 2017).
May 31	Hong Kong	Customs officers picked up an incoming 27-year-old man arriving from the mainland at Hong Kong airport. In his baggage, officers found 47.4 kg of processed ivory cut into small pieces and another 14.5 kg of raw ivory concealed in four computer tower cases, worth HK\$1.1 million. The baggage tag indicated that it came from Harare, Zimbabwe, and had stopped at Addis Ababa in Ethiopia before arriving Hong Kong (Customs Today, 2017).
July 6	Hong Kong	Customs officials made the biggest ivory bust in 30 years worldwide and seized more than 7.2 tons of ivory tusks in a 40-foot refrigerated container from Malaysia (Leung and Carvalho, 2017).
August 2	Malaysia	Authorities seized trafficked ivory tusks worth nearly \$1 million in a cargo warehouse in KL International Airport (Reuters, 2017e).
August 2	Singapore	A 33-year-old man has been fined S\$10,000 for smuggling ivory products into Singapore, said the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) and Immigration and Checkpoints Authority in a joint news release (Channel News Asia, 2017b).
August 7	Namibia	Two Chinese nationals Xinxi Xue and Ruhe Zhang who were arrested on December 9, 2016 with just over 1 kg of ivory cut in pieces and concealed in coffee tins, were found guilty and fined N\$20,000 each (about \$1,500) by the court last week for their attempt to smuggle ivory to China (Amakali, 2017).
September 6	Vietnam	Authorities seized over a ton of smuggled ivory at a Vietnamese port where some 6 tons were seized last year (Khao Sod English, 2017b).
September 17	Tanzania	A Tanzanian court has sentenced nine people to at least 25 years in prison for illegal possession of ivory. The accused, including two police officers, had been “found in possession of 70 elephant tusks (Independent, 2017).
September 20	Kenya	Kenya Wildlife Services personnel arrested an Administrative Police Officer and his two accomplices while in possession of five pieces of ivory in Nairobi West. The three were arrested as they tried to sell the 25 kg of ivory estimated to be worth more than Sh1 million (Kimuyu, 2017).
September 20	Vietnam	Police in Vietnam's southern province of Bac Lieu seized 1.4 tons of African elephant ivory on Sunday which had been smuggled into the country via fishing boat from Malaysia (Trang, 2017).
September 23	Thailand	The Customs Department has seized 4 million baht of elephant ivory that was shipped to Thailand in a paper box labelled as furniture equipment. Officials decided to X-ray scan the box following a tip-off (Bangkok Post, 2017c).
October 2016	Ethiopia	Two North Korean nationals travelling on diplomatic passports were separately detained in Ethiopia en route to China. One was arrested in transit from Zimbabwe as he was about to board a flight to Shanghai. Two hundred ivory bangles were allegedly found in his possession. He was released without charge once he was identified as a diplomat (Pilling, 2017).

### 4.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Around 30 percent of all the elephants in Africa were poached between 2007 and 2014 – some countries including Tanzania and Mozambique lost 60 percent of their elephants. In the same period, only 270 tons of ivory was intercepted and seized by law enforcement – representing ivory from only about 15 percent of the poached elephants – and suggesting that over 1,600 tons with a market value of \$1.6 to 3.2 billion was successfully trafficked. Numbers of elephants poached may have declined during 2014-2016 to around 20-25,000 (or 5 percent of the total population) each year – but this is still sufficiently high to wipe out all remaining elephants within the next 20 years. In the first 9 months of 2017, over 15 tons of ivory were seized.

Hong Kong is a major importer of illegally trafficked ivory, (much of which is sold on to visitors from mainland China) and Malaysia is a major transit country. Seizures from airline passengers arriving in Hong Kong – mostly small amounts hidden in luggage- has increased 62 percent against 2016. A series of large scale seizures in Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Hong Kong suggest that very large amounts of ivory are first being sent to Malaysia, and then are transported by sea from Malaysia, via ports in Cambodia and Vietnam, to Hong Kong. On-line trafficking with delivery by post is also increasing.

More attention should be focused on supporting the closure of Hong Kong ivory markets, and on helping Malaysia to disrupting and dismantle the transnational organized crime gangs that are using the country for ivory transit. Malaysia needs to intensify its collaboration and communication with ivory source and consumer countries and authorities need to enhance their risk indicator and profiling techniques to detect high-risk shipments.

The loss of ivory to an Organized Criminal Group (OCG) through a seizure is a setback but it is only a hold-up before trade resumes. The arrest and conviction of individuals involved in the trade is the only way to bring about long-term and meaningful change to effectively combat the trade. Ultimately, the goal is to shut down the illegal ivory trade by removing the ease of the crime, preventing future opportunities for ivory traders to commit crimes, and removing any potential gain and reward from the sale of ivory.

Of concern is the scarcity of known convictions for individuals identified as “crime controllers” who coordinate and finance the trade. The arrest and conviction of those persons is fundamental to bringing about long-term and meaningful change to effectively combat elephant poaching and trafficking. The groups must be dismantled, not simply displaced to exploit another region. This needs to be a focus in all countries involved in the ivory trade.

## 5. TIGERS

*Tigers, Panthera tigris, are listed on CITES Appendix I, effectively banning all international trade since 1987. Yet with fewer than 3,900 Tigers left in the wild today, illegal hunting to supply the Asian markets for tiger parts and products remains a major threat to their survival.*



ROENGCHAI KONGMUANG/ USAID WILDLIFE ASIA

### 5.1 SITUATION UP TO 2016

In Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are the remaining tiger strongholds, accounting for over 20 percent of global Tiger populations (Krishnasamy and Stoner, 2016; Stoner *et al.*, 2016), while collectively the Southeast Asian countries play a source and consumer role as well as a transit role (CITES, 2016; Stoner *et al.*, 2016;). Markets openly selling Tiger parts, especially in Laos, Myanmar and Viet Nam compound the problem by encouraging demand and consumption, much of which also caters to Chinese markets (Shepherd and Nijman, 2015). In China, tiger parts are believed to heal a variety of bone-related ailments while tiger bone wine is perceived as enhancing sexual prowess (Gratwicke *et al.*, 2008). In 2015-16 there were two reported cases of tiger poaching in Thailand resulting in the deaths of 8 individuals (DNP, cited in UNODC, 2017).

Laos, Myanmar, Viet Nam, Thailand, as well as China are also home to captive Tiger establishments that have been long implicated in illegal trade. In addition, tiger breeding farms in South Africa are thought to perpetuate the illegal trade in Tigers. In 2015, two seizures were reported in China and Viet Nam, originating from Africa (General Administration of Chinese Customs, 2015; Robin Des Bois, 2015). In 2016, DNP raided the world famous “Tiger temple” in Kanchanaburi that had started

in 1999 with seven tigers, and was long suspected of illegally breeding tigers for trade – and confiscated 137 live tigers as well as 40 frozen dead tiger cubs and 20 preserved in formaldehyde (Guynup, 2016; Al Jazeera, 2016). Possession of tiger parts and products is not covered by the Wildlife Protection Law (WPL). The situation for tiger is further complicated by the fact that captive tiger farming is licensed in China and captive-bred tiger is used for medicinal parts. Tiger products (supposedly from legal captive tigers) are widely advertised for sale in China (EIA, 2017f).

Analysis of 801 seizure records of tiger parts (skins, bones, whole skulls, and other parts) from 2000 to 2016 in all tiger range countries shows that at least 1,755 tigers were involved, with Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam recording the highest number of seizure incidents since 2000. This assessment also showed an increasing trend of seized tigers originating from captive facilities, with at least 30 percent of seizures between 2012 and 2015 coming from captive breeding facilities, the highest of which was from Thailand, followed by Viet Nam and Laos. In China, Indonesia and Thailand, there has been a consistent increase in quarterly seizures over the 16 years. The laws in some Southeast Asian countries (as well as China) allow for the creation of captive tiger facilities, but these are poorly regulated, if at all, backed by weak laws with loopholes. Coupled with little scrutiny to regulate and control the leakage of Tigers from captive facilities, despite numerous requests from CITES to do so, the illegal trade of Tigers from these captive facilities is a major concern (Stoner *et al.*, 2016; CITES, 2015).

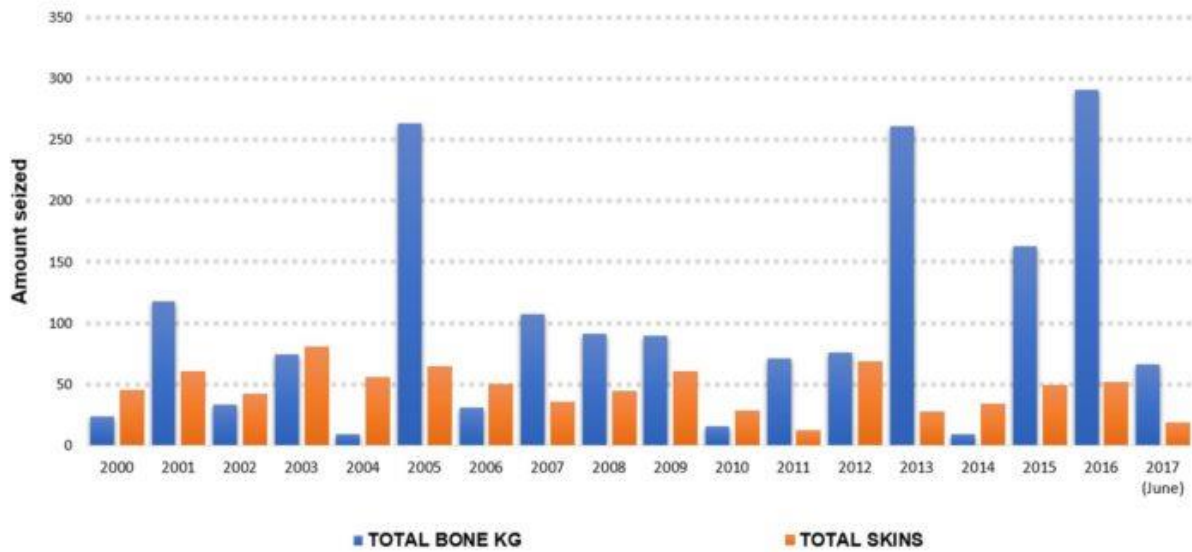
## **5.2 SITUATION UPDATE IN 2017**

Captive tigers now far outnumber the wild population. Approximately 700 tigers live on farms in Laos. Thousands more are kept throughout Southeast Asia, including in Thailand. As of March 2017, there were 49 licensed zoos in Thailand – 32 of which held a reported total of 1,287 tigers (information from DNP, cited in UNODC, 2017). An additional 5,000-6,000 are housed in 200 breeding centers in China, and an estimated 5,000 tigers are held in backyards, petting zoos and even truck stops across the United States (New York Times, 2017).

Research and analysis of seizures over time reveals a cyclical trade pattern; a critical reminder to decision-makers to continue to invest not only in intelligence-led law enforcement to disrupt persistent networks and offenders, but to invest much more in demand reduction campaigns. Well-established trafficking routes that are decades old are still being used to move wild tiger parts across borders between India-Nepal-China, India-Myanmar-China-Laos and Laos-Vietnam-China (EIA, 2018).

Tiger farms were found to still be flourishing in Laos in December 2017, even though the country vowed it would shut them down in 2016. An estimated 700 tigers were kept in dreadful conditions in cages, only to be slaughtered so that their bones, meat, claws and skins could be sold (International Business Times, 2017).

**Yearly breakdown: tiger skins and tiger bone (kg) seized, January 2000-June 2017**  
 Source: Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)



### 5.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Tiger trafficking currently receives much less global attention than trafficking of ivory, rhino horn and pangolins. Nevertheless, between 2000 and 2016, seizures were made of parts/products of at least 1,755 trafficked tigers (or a little over 100 per year). Assuming that as with other major trafficked species, interceptions account for 5-15 percent of the total trade, this would imply that anywhere between 650 – 2,000 tigers may have been traded each year. In recent years, 30 percent of seized tiger parts/products originate from captive breeding, and this proportion may be increasing. If the number of tigers in trade assumed above is accurate, the proportion from captive breeding must in reality be significantly higher than 30 percent – alternatively, it may be that a much higher proportion of trafficked tigers are intercepted than is the case for other species. So far, the overall information available is not sufficient to understand the picture clearly enough.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Wildlife poaching and illegal trade has undergone a transformative change in the age of globalization, fueled by global demand and supplied by criminal networks. Somewhere between 10-15 percent of illegally trafficked ivory and rhino horn is intercepted, while only 4-10 percent of trafficked pangolins and pangolin products are intercepted (the percentage for tigers and tiger products is not as clear). By comparison, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime estimates that globally 40 percent of cocaine and heroin are interdicted somewhere between production and consumption – **implying wildlife trafficking seizures need to increase by anywhere between 300 – 900 percent to match the current level of drug seizures.**

While only 4-15 percent of trafficked wildlife is intercepted, only 10 percent of these interceptions result in prosecutions, and fewer than 10 percent of those prosecutions result in significant fines and/or prison time of more than 6 months. **Overall then, only 0.04 percent to 0.15 percent of transnational trafficking results in meaningful punishment.** More recently, we have seen an increase in successful prosecutions in Africa, with significant sentences being handed down (e.g. the September 2017 sentencing of nine people to 25 years in prison in Tanzania, for possession of 70 tusks), although the prosecution of significant actors still remains difficult (e.g. the 15<sup>th</sup> postponement of the trial of a rhino poaching syndicate boss in South Africa). We have yet to see a similar increase in harsh sentences in Southeast Asia.

In many cases of illegal wildlife seizures, such incidents are often used as a high-profile photo opportunity for the media. If the cameras are brought in as soon as a seizure is made it is a fair bet there will not be a meaningful investigation as the very act of publishing the seizure serves to tip off the syndicate members. This has been noted by many, including, e.g. EIA: “It is a familiar routine when major seizures of contraband wildlife occur,” said Julian Newman, EIA Campaigns Director. “The local authorities, usually customs, lay out the seized products such as elephant tusks, rhino horns, pangolin scales or rosewood and hold a press conference announcing their success. Then the products are put into storage and all too often the case is forgotten, with nobody prosecuted. “While seizures can put a dent into the profits of the wildlife smuggling syndicates, without proper follow-up investigations leading to prosecutions it is just an additional business expense for the criminals.” In fact, major seizure cases contain a host of clues leading to the culprits in the source and destination countries. Only when enforcement actions go beyond just making the seizure will the criminal syndicates involved in wildlife trafficking be dismantled. What is really needed are multi-agency investigations into the seizures, which should commence as soon as the contraband is intercepted. These should include parallel financial investigations and, where possible, controlled deliveries to identify the final recipients (EIA, 2017c).

While the United States Drug Enforcement Administration and similar organizations across the globe concentrate heavily on seizing drug products, they invest far fewer resources on tracking and blocking drug money. Consequently, less than one percent of drug money is ever recovered. If drug traffickers are losing 40 percent of their product but keeping 99 percent of the revenues, it is difficult to see how the problem will ever be solved. This is borne out by the observation that while the international community has been aggressively combatting drug trafficking for more than 40 years, supplies of drugs are undiminished and real prices have not risen significantly.

By comparison, wildlife traffickers are in an even better situation than drug traffickers. They are only losing 4-15 percent of their product, and they are probably keeping even more than 99 percent of the proceeds. The structure of the illicit supply chain has the intermediaries and retailers in market countries receiving the greatest compensation; little profit remains in the source countries.

Organized transnational wildlife crime will continue to grow until the paradigm of high profits and low risks is challenged; not only must the risk of getting caught – and then of being successfully prosecuted and meaningfully sentenced increase; but profits must also be slashed. Following the

profit trail is therefore also key to identifying and disrupting trafficking networks, particularly the senior individuals responsible for financing and orchestrating the network's operations. Moving forwards, USAID Wildlife Asia will continue to identify priority actions to support efforts to reduce the profitability of wildlife trafficking.

Through a regional review of the legal framework to combat wildlife trafficking, it was revealed that while ASEAN countries have the legal frameworks to combat wildlife trafficking. The definitions, categories of protected wildlife species (in particular non-native CITES species), and wildlife trafficking-related offences (trade, possession, import, export, etc.) with the corresponding level of penalties within the region vary rather substantially.

Such legislative irregularities in the region may be used by trafficking networks to identify trafficking entry points in an integrating ASEAN (ASEAN Economic Community) and create safe havens for such illegal activities.

Due to the uneven species protection-level or status of most -trafficking species (e.g. Pangolin, or non-ASEAN native species), or other emerging trafficked species, there is a need to harmonize and synchronize definitions, protected species list, wildlife offences and penalties within ASEAN, through national legislation.

As ASEAN recognizes wildlife trafficking as a serious, transnational organized crime, it is incumbent upon the ASEAN Member States to upgrade national legislation to elevate wildlife trafficking on par with other serious crimes, including enabling cross-border collaboration and adopting sustainable financial mechanisms to enforce laws, either through the wildlife legislations or other ancillary laws (Biodiversity Financing - BIOFIN, etc.).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The review of situation updates for wildlife trafficking in pangolins, rhino horn, ivory and tigers in 2017 lead to the following recommendations:

- Support multi-agency/multi-national groups of enforcement officials to address transnational organized crime through the Special Investigations Group (SIG) and Counter Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC) trainings supported by on-the-job (OJT) training and mentoring support.
- Consider how more capacity development support can be provided to overall enforcement against especially pangolin trafficking and ivory trafficking in Malaysia.
- Provide more capacity development support to border enforcement officers on land crossing borders between Malaysia and Thailand; as well as between Vietnam and China, for improved detection, interception and arrest of pangolin traffickers.
- Consider how to provide more support to customs authorities in cargo ports in Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Hong Kong, especially regarding detection of ivory trafficking.
- Ensure customs officers at airports are aware of new trends in smuggling of rhino horn (as jewelry and rhino horn powder), and know what to look out for.
- Support efforts in China to encourage a higher level of legal protection for pangolins under the new Wildlife Protection Law (which would lead to their subsequent removal from the traditional medicine pharmacopeia), as well as supporting improved awareness of the new Wildlife Protection Law in major target consumer cities.

- Support more intensive efforts to address on-line trafficking e.g. through continuing to work with the “Yiew Dong” (Forest Hawk) task force in Thailand, to test an approach that could be replicated in other countries.
- Support demand reduction efforts for pangolin, rhino horn, ivory and tiger parts and products that target consumers and address the drivers to consumption based on research evidence.
- Work with media to focus on more investigative journalism, asking hard questions and following up on cases, rather than just publicizing press releases issued by government agencies when seizures are made.
- Build Africa-Asia linkages for information sharing and collaboration on international best practices and lessons learned across the law enforcement spectrum.
- Institutionalize prosecution through appointment or deputation of prosecutors assigned to CWT cases.
- Enhance inter-agency cooperation through formal mechanisms (e.g. National WENs) with Prosecutors and Financial Action Units (AMLOs) are integral part of the system.
- Activate parliamentary oversight to monitor implementation of legislation (including subsidiary legislation) and appropriations to CWT agencies.
- Engage judicial bodies in developing innovative policies, enhancing internal capacity in handling wildlife cases, by introducing innovative rules of procedures, sentencing guidelines or adoption of CWT-specific curriculum embedded within judicial institutes.
- Providing support to prosecutors to increase the proportion of cases that are successfully prosecuted – initially through the development of Rapid Reference Guides (RRG), and subsequently through mentoring of specific cases.



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