

Wild life Crime: A Global Problem

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Available online at: www.xournals.com

Received 19th December 2017 | Revised 19th February 2018 | Accepted 19th April 2018

Abstract:

'Wildlife' means all fauna and flora. Crime refers to acts committed contrary to national laws and regulations intended to protect natural resources and to administer their management and use. Wildlife crime, includes unlawful poaching, smuggling, transportation and distribution of the animals and their products derivatives for commercial purposes. The trafficking of wildlife threaten the existence of particular species. The global illicit trade in wildlife products cause a significant harm impact on developing countries. Traffickers exploit poverty and inequality to entice poachers, operating in territories with little government presence. The wildlife crime is much rising in Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries due to demand of raw materials for industries in Asian continent. Illegal trafficking and poaching of wildlife become one of the major problem. In the present paper, an attempt has been made to study the global problem that is wildlife crime. The issues like illegal trade, role and challenges faced by government are highlighted.

Keywords: Wildlife, Crime, Trade, Management

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Introduction

The meaning of Wildlife is the fauna and flora. 'Fauna' are animals and birds, such as tigers and falcons, but also include fish. 'Flora' are plants, such as orchids or cacti, but also include timber and non-timber forest products. On the other side crime refers to an illegal act for which someone can be punished by the government. As far as ICCWC is concerned crime refers to acts committed contrary to national laws and regulations intended to protect natural resources and to administer their management and use.

Illegal trafficking and poaching trafficking of wildlife has become a booming local and global business, which is directly related to the significant population losses or in endangered for many species. The legal and illegal trades in wildlife are highly transnational, global trading routes link source countries with end-user markets via a series of complex networks, intermediaries and entrepôts. Many of the animals like elephants, rhinos, tigers and others are critically endangered or have already gone extinct in the wild. For example, both the Western Black Rhino (Save the Rhino International 2015) and the Northern White Rhino are believed to be extinct in the wild (WWF 2015) as a direct consequence of rhino poaching for their horns. The illegal wildlife trade is driven by a number of factors including the pet trade, accessories or luxury items, bush meat, and alternative medicines. Wildlife crime remains outside 'mainstream' crime so assessing the scale of wildlife crime is very difficult. In many respects wildlife crime is a victim-less crime. There are many indicators, and considerable evidence, demonstrating the involvement of organized criminal networks in the harvesting, processing, smuggling and trade of wildlife and wildlife products through sophisticated techniques spanning across national boundaries and continents. In the combination of Fraud, counterfeiting, money-laundering, violence and corruption many other various form of crime are also found. Wild life crime also include the risk of human health through the spread of diseases because of cross-border smuggling of live animals and plants. Diseases, such as bird flu, can also be spread to food chains, leading to mass euthanasia of livestock herds. The ease with which some wildlife contraband is smuggled across borders, often in significant quantities, demonstrates very real threats to national security and the bio-security of States.

Illegal Wildlife Trade Chain

From Central and Eastern Africa and Southern Africa the illegal trade of ivory and rhino horn originated. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) report 'Elephants in the Dust' highlights that poaching is worsened by poverty and food insecurity. Poverty and inadequate bureaucracy enable criminal groups to

corrupt poorly paid enforcement authorities. But for the participation in poaching poverty is not always the reason.

TRAFFIC's 2008 report on economic and social drivers of the wildlife trade in East Asia asserts that wealth is a stronger driver of illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade in Southeast Asia than poverty, owing to the dynamics of increasing affluence and wider processes of economic growth in the region.

Wildlife crime is, therefore, no different from many other forms of illegal activities. Indeed, it shares many of the characteristics of other transnational crime types, such as illegal trade in narcotics. However, to a significant degree, wildlife crime has yet to be viewed, and accordingly responded to, as 'mainstream' crime. The global illicit trade in wildlife products cause a significant harm impact on developing countries. Traffickers exploit poverty and inequality to entice poachers, operating in territories with little government presence. The effort of developing nation to manage their natural resources are weakens by the illegal wildlife trade, which cause loss of future profit that could be available through development and tourism here it is important to recognize the correlation between insurgency groups and remote, almost stateless wildlife reserves which provide ideal cover and sustenance for rebels fleeing state authority. According to the data shown by EU-TWIX database, EU represents a major transit route for the smuggling of ivory. On the process of transiting wildlife goods from source countries along transit routes to artisans and consumers much more information is needed. Smuggled ivory from Africa to China is processed in China's registered ivory traders, and exported to Japan, South Korea, the United States and Europe.

Role of controlling agencies worldwide

South Asian Enforcement Network (SEWAN): In 2008 under the support of south Asia co-operative environment programme SAWEN was created with the help of CAWT and TRAFFIC. Countries include in SAWEN are India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan. It provides a platform for its member countries to cooperatively work together in the fight against the burgeoning wildlife crime.

Coalition against Wildlife Trafficking: In 2005, U.S. State Department established the Coalition against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT) as a voluntary coalition of governments and organizations. The main objective of the coalition is to regulate and end the illegal trade of wildlife and wildlife products. CAWT currently includes six governments and thirteen international NGOs.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wild Enforcement Network: in 2005, ASEAN Wildlife

Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) was established by the Freeland Foundation and TRAFFIC Southeast Asia worked with the Thai government and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It is the largest regional wildlife law enforcement collaboration in the world. The main aim of ASEAN-WEN oversees is to strengthen the collective law enforcement capacity of the ten ASEAN member countries.

Illegal wildlife trade in India

Over the years illegal wildlife trade has emerged as a form of Organized International Crime that has threatened the existence of many wild species across the globe. India has a very strong and legal policy to regulate and restrict wildlife trade. More than 1800 species of wild animals, plants and their derivatives are prohibited under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. An international agreement is signed between the governments that's aim is to ensure the international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Since 1976 India is also a member of this agreement which was named as CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora).

In India, wildlife crime includes diverse products including mongoose hair; snake skins; Rhino horn; Tiger and Leopard claws, bones, skins, whiskers; Elephant tusks; deer antlers; shahtoosh shawl; turtle shells; musk pods; bear bile; medicinal plants; timber and caged birds such as parakeets, mynas, munias etc. A large part of this trade is meant for the international market and has no direct demand in India.

In India like many other countries, the problem is not of the laws but that these may be poorly communicated and just as poorly implemented and enforced. Often, positive efforts to address wildlife trade concerns are undermined by lack of political will and governance failures. Without political backing, disincentives for over-exploitation and illegal trade, such as penalties for legal infringements, are all too often weak.

Challenges in Governing the Illegal Wildlife Trade

Governing the wildlife trade is a complex challenge especially in case when the trade is illegal. The global nature of the legal and illegal trades means that inter-state and multi-agency cooperation are required to ensure that the trade does not over exploit particular species and risk driving them to extinction.

Countries produce a set challenges for those involved in trying to control or stop wild life crime. In response to these challenges, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

(CITES) was established in 1973, came into force in 1975. But the decision of CITES are poorly implemented and enforced due to lack of adequate national legislation. The enforcement system itself is problematic because it is heavily reliant on national agencies and legal frameworks to implement it on the ground. Wildlife law enforcement officers often lack parity with their counterparts in Customs and Police services and are ill-prepared to respond to the organized nature of those who seek to steal natural resources. The states like US has the Lacey Act and the Endangered Species Act, which are supposed to strictly regulate the trade in endangered species, but as discussed earlier, given that the US remains a significant importer of illegal wildlife products. Which shows that the law is poorly enforced. (TRAFFIC 2008). Traffickers make use of new technologies to trade wildlife, and the Internet has proved to be an important means of selling wildlife across the world. The illegal wildlife trade become an international issue and governing of illegal wildlife trade came with many challenges. An International Fund for Animal Welfare report sets out the results of an investigation of online trade in CITES listed species. It followed 7122 online auctions in 11 countries over a six- week period. The study revealed a very high volume of illegal trade in endangered species, worth US\$450 000 in total. The report identified enforcement as a critical problem.

Conclusion

Wildlife crime has become a topic of international attention and concern over recent years. Wildlife crime covers a wide range of activities. The illegal wildlife trade is just one aspect of wildlife crime, but is thought to be the fourth most lucrative transnational crime after the trafficking of drugs, people and arms. Governments and various agencies are trying to monitor and influence the action to curb illegal wildlife trade and bring wildlife trade within sustainable levels. The lack of impact and outcome evaluations of programs, policies and interventions has delayed the understanding of what works, and what might work in different contexts, for the design and implementation of cost-effective interventions. From last few years the international community has paid increasing attention to illegal wildlife trade in recognition of the significant socio-economic, environmental and security consequences stemming from it. Wildlife law enforcement needs to be conducted in accordance with national requirements for due process and with respect for human rights, public safety, and the rights of the accused.



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