



**INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**

 Section A

Wildlife Trafficking: How Effective are State-Centric and Non-Governmental Approaches in Promoting Conservation Efforts?

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Abstract

The international illicit wildlife trafficking industry is a rapidly growing operation produced by the most recent wave of globalization. The industry is intimately linked to broader international issues including regional and global insecurity, economic and social disparities, and irreversible environmental damage. Despite an international effort to reign in the industry and to mitigate its impact, the industry continues to grow. This paper accomplishes two objectives. First, it analyzes the variables that motivate individuals, particularly in developing countries, to participate in wildlife trafficking. Next, it critiques the solutions proposed and implemented by both state and non-states actors. The paper concludes that the existing approaches to counter the illicit wildlife trafficking industry are insufficient in isolation, evident by the industry's continued growth and profitability. Lastly, the paper will outline several solutions to promote a more holistic approach to the complexity of the issue at hand.

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1. Background

The global wildlife trafficking industry has experienced an unprecedented growth since the 1990s which creates varied and complex issues for lawmakers

to attempt to address. This growth is largely attributed to the most recent wave of globalization which brought major economic, political, and technological advancements to many countries throughout the world. Those advancements contributed to important transformations in political and economic ideologies which shifted away from closed and government-

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controlled economies and towards “open economies” that prioritize the elimination or reduction of regulations and restrictions on international “trade, capital flows and movement of labour” (World Trade Organization, 2008: p.21-22). According to Naim (2005), open economies are driven by the notion: (1) that “barriers to trade or investment should be as few and as low as possible”; (2) that rules should be “transparent, coherent, and uninformedly enforced”; (3) that government intervention by way of price setting efforts and “state-owned enterprises” should be limited; and (4) that “exports and open trade” should be promoted over protectionist policies that favor local industries (p.18). Combined, these notions produced a dramatic growth in international economic activity which “brought enormous benefits for many countries and citizens” (World Trade Organization, 2008: p.13). At the same time, those notions made it easier for illicit traders to engage in their activities with minimal government interference since the latter’s ability to “act, enforce, and spend as they please” has been severely curtailed (Naim, 2005: p.20).

Although every state experiences the challenges and consequences of illicit activities in some degree or another, fiscally constrained governments are hit the hardest. Namely, fiscally constrained governments who struggle in their efforts to raise or collect taxes to cover their expenditures are forced to make budget cuts that tend to affect “law enforcement, jails, and the judiciary” (Naim, 2005: p.20). In turn, those budget cuts limit the government’s ability to monitor illicit activities, enforce its laws, prosecute violators and deter potential violators of its laws, and, in extreme cases, compensate their civil servants. Combined, these variables make the illicit wildlife trafficking industry a relatively low-risk affair that does little to deter individuals from engaging in it.

Generating an estimated \$10 to \$20 billion a year, illicit wildlife trafficking has serious environmental, sociopolitical, and economic consequences that include: (1) threatening national and regional security; (2) undermining the rule of law of government institutions; (3) increasing rates of corruption; (4) depriving local communities of sustainable economic development

opportunities; (5) causing potentially irreversible damage to wildlife species, their natural habitats and surrounding ecosystems; and (6) increasing threats to public health through the spread of disease and declining biodiversity (United States Department of State, 2017; McMurray, 2009).

Because of its illusive nature and decentralized operation, pinpointing the “exact scale of the illegal trade in protected wildlife species” is difficult (McMurray, 2009: p.16). However, illicit wildlife trade networks are complex and can involve a combination of: (1) village hunters who rely on wildlife trade “as a source of subsistence cash income or kill some wildlife to protect their people and crops from attack; (2) wildlife experts; (3) criminal entities...; (4) legitimate businesses” that serve as a front; (5) corrupt government officials; and (6) consumers (Wyler and Sheikh, 2008: p.8). Moreover, there is a general consensus that “trafficking in wildlife is increasingly [becoming] a specialized area of organized crime and a significant threat to many plant and animal species” (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016: p.13). Addressing the former, McMurray (2009: p.18) indicates, “there is growing evidence that [suggests] that the same criminals engaging in the trafficking of drugs, weapons, and people are also engaging in the illegal wildlife trade” (see also Naim, 2005: p.158 and Scarcelli, 2017). Those individuals are motivated by the low-risks and high profit margins associated with the illicit wildlife trafficking industry (World Wildlife Fund, 2017). The high profit margins are a result of high consumer demand for a variety of wildlife products such as decorations, “[s]ouvenirs, exotic pets, food, traditional medicines, jewelry, and clothing” (McMurray, 2009: p.16; Naim, 2005: p.164). Addressing the latter, the World Wildlife Fund (2017), an international conservation organization that works closely with the United Nations, has asserted that the scale of the modern illicit wildlife trafficking industry is “one of the main reasons that many species are endangered”. According to Interpol statistics, it is an industry that consists of “hundreds of millions of individual plants and animals from tens of thousands of

species” and it “generates more profits than illegal arms sales” (TRAFFIC, 2008; Anderson, 1995: p.31; see also World Wildlife Fund, 2006).

With the complexity of this issue and the urgency of an effective response, policymakers at the international and national levels have implemented a collection of legislative responses to attempt to address wildlife trafficking. Concurrently, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have actively participated in the international community by providing support to both policymakers and local communities that are most affected by and critical to wildlife trafficking. This paper will examine two broad approaches for wildlife trafficking. The first approach will focus on a state-centric approach which consists of legislative action taken by the United Nations in the form of treaties and conventions as well as the Parties’ corresponding national legislation. The second approach will focus on a non-governmental approach that embodies the work of NGOs. This paper will explore question of “What are the strengths and shortcomings of each approach, and how effective are they in addressing wildlife trafficking?”

2. State-Centric Approaches

In 1975, the United Nations ratified the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES) which marked the first comprehensive international response to a growing concern that the global wildlife trade industry was endangering numerous plant and animal species. CITES, which has been ratified by 183 Member States, regulates international trade of wildlife products through an “import- and export-control licensing system” (Wyler and Sheikh, 2008: p.1) that categories species into three Appendices: Appendix I which includes species that “cannot be traded internationally for primarily commercial purposes”; Appendix II which includes species that “can be traded internationally for commercial purposes” because they are not immediately threatened by trade but are still protected by strict regulations; and Appendix III which includes species

that are protected by the domestic legislation of a given country but still needs the “cooperation of other countries to help prevent illegal exploitation” (World Wildlife Fund, 2017; Burns, 1990: p.207-211). Through these Appendices, CITES extends international protections to over 35,000 plant and animal species in effort to ensure that the international trade of those species do “not threaten their survival” (United States Government Accountability Office, 2016: p.6; CITES, 2017). CITES is particularly beneficial for those species whose populations are in decline because the abovementioned regulatory measures put into place protections against overexploitation. Namely, the licensing system involves a series of state-issued permits that are designed to promote the legal and sustainable trade of listed species and to deter “illegal, unregulated, and unreported” trade (Mundy-Taylor & Crook, 2014: p.21).

Those countries that ratified CITES are bound to its provisions and are expected to “enact the necessary legislation to give domestic effect” to it (United Nations, 2017). This process requires a state agency to administer the licensing system (“Management Authority”) and a separate agency to provide scientific guidance on the “effects of trade on the conservation status of the species in question” (“Scientific Authority”) (Brown and Swails, 2005: p.1). In United States, for instance, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Control, and the Department of Justice, among other agencies, are tasked with implementing and enforcing the provisions in CITES through the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Lacey Act and Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 (Federal Register, 2014; Wyler and Sheikh, 2008: p.27, 29). Similarly, all 28 Member States in the European Union are Parties to CITES which has been implemented through the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations (Engler and Parry-Jones, 2007: p.11). In essence, CITES created a global legal framework for member states to implement and operate under in an effort to address illegal wildlife trade. Moreover, this legal framework encourages multilateral international cooperation, and “information and intelligence sharing on wildlife trade” which, prior

to CITES, was a major impediment in conservation and management efforts (World Trade Organization and CITES, 2015; CITES, n.d.).

However, CITES also is subject to four critical shortcomings that have contributed to the continued growth of the international wildlife trafficking industry since its ratification: “ongoing legal gaps, capacity and political will gaps, ... continuing structural drivers”, and the changing nature of wildlife trafficking networks (Wyler and Sheikh, 2013: p.12). With respect to the first shortcoming, CITES does not contain provisions that would otherwise establish the necessary mechanisms to “monitor illegal wildlife trade”, enforce member states’ compliance with its provisions, define the conditions of illegal wildlife trading, and “prescribe criminal penalties against violators” (Wyler and Sheikh, 2008: p.31). In particular, CITES does little beyond holding the ratifying member states to developing and modifying their national legislation to accommodate its provisions. This flexibility has created a “lack of consistency in the implementation of legal frameworks” which in turn, makes it difficult for states and international organizations to identify wildlife traffickers and their networks and to prosecute them (Wyler and Sheikh, 2013: p.12). Simultaneously, that inconsistency or lack of prioritization of certain policy issues make it easier for wildlife traffickers to operate largely uninhibited as they can set up their operations in those countries whose legal structures or enforcement mechanisms are more lax.

Second, CITES can be particularly problematic because it defers the abovementioned legal and policy responsibilities to each member state who may not have the institutional capacity or political will to implement the necessary legal framework through its law enforcement and judiciary. Specifically, those countries that are “biologically rich [but have] weak governance and poor law enforcement capacity” are especially vulnerable to organized crime syndicates, insurgency groups, and terrorist organizations whose operations, in turn, contribute to instability, violence, and corruption (Wyler and Sheikh, 2008: p.5, 18). Unless countries have institutions with sufficient “personnel, expertise,

training, funding, and equipment”, it will be difficult for them to effectively enforce the provisions of CITES and its national legislation (Wyler and Sheikh, 2013: p.12). On the flip side, some countries may not prioritize the enforcement of wildlife trafficking laws generally or the protections of certain species specifically and therefore, tend to be lenient towards the perpetrators of those laws. There is also the issue of countries not enforcing wildlife trafficking laws to begin with.

Third, “structural drivers” such as poverty, the “lack of alternative livelihoods in source countries”, the lack of public awareness of the consequences of a persistent and growing demand for wildlife products as well as the “environmental pressures that contribute to wildlife population loss” allows illegal wildlife trade to flourish despite international efforts to curb it (Wyler and Sheikh, 2013: p.13). These socioeconomic and political conditions are often neglected in formal international and national legislation which creates tension between the competing priorities of the sustainable development of natural resources and providing meaningful livelihood opportunities for local communities. Additionally, local communities may have in place social norms that are counterproductive to international legislation that attempts to preserve certain wildlife species. For example, indigenous communities may view certain species as a threat to their livelihoods and therefore, target those species as a means to defend themselves. In Africa, for instance, lions are occasionally targeted “in retribution for attacks on [local communities’] livestock” (African People & Wildlife, 2017). Other communities may place a social, cultural, or medicinal value onto wildlife products that. In countries like China, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam, rhino horn has been used as “a material for carving cups and trinkets, ground up for use as ...traditional medicine...or is displayed whole as a status symbol” (Environmental Investigation Agency, 2017; Scarcelli, 2017). International legislation does little by way of reducing these norms and beliefs that drive the demand for wildlife products.

Fourth, wildlife crime is an increasingly complex operation that includes a decentralized “worldwide

network of suppliers, distributors, middlemen and traffickers” (Wilson-Wilde, 2010: p. 221). These wildlife crime networks are often associated with other trafficking operations such as drugs, guns, humans, and counterfeit goods and are made possible through the bribery of government officials, the forgery of critical documents such as “CITES documents, export/import permits”, certificates, and shipment logs, and modern technology that ensure rapid and anonymous communication and business transactions (Wilson-Wilde, 2010: p.221; Scarcelli, 2017). These developments come at a time when national and international legislation face critical impediments by way of effective coordination, consistency, and inadequate resources and political support. Moreover, governments generally slow to respond to policy issues because of their “rigid hierarchical fashion” as well as their “dependence on standard operating procedures” (Naim, 2005: p.182). While these characteristics ensure “stability, predictability, transparency, and homogeneity in government operations” they also limit the government’s ability to respond quickly in those situations where swift action is necessary. Consequently, numerous wildlife species that are protected under CITES still experience an alarming rate of decline which calls into question the overall effectiveness of existing practices and legislation.

3. Non-Governmental Approaches

The abovementioned limitations of existing international and national legislation have, in part, stimulated the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the enforcement of those laws as well as highlighting other areas that should be addressed to better accomplish the intended objectives. Some critical areas of focus include: (1) improving “wildlife law enforcement by expanding training, information sharing, and strengthening regional cooperative networks” (Wyler and Sheikh, 2008: p.32); (2) promoting public education and awareness-raising

campaigns that aim to reduce consumer demand of wildlife products and to change certain cultural and social norms that contribute to wildlife trafficking; and (3) promoting economic incentives for local communities to pursue alternative and sustainable livelihoods (European Commission, 2016; International Institute for Environment and Development, 2015). This section will examine those areas of focus in turn.

First, an important contribution of NGOs is the information that they provide to the United Nations, Member States, and the various agencies involved in the growing effort to curb wildlife trafficking. As mentioned in the previous section, CITES is limited in its monitoring and funding capabilities since its legislative design defers most of those functions to its Parties. As a consequence, CITES is subject to critical “knowledge gaps” that impedes on its ability to conduct certain assessments and studies (Nash, 2004: p.15). These gaps are often filled by NGOs who offer useful information to the Parties by way of “assessments of species populations and biology, trade trends, the efficacy of past CITES interventions and the likely conservation impact of new actions” (Nash, 2004: p.14). Moreover, NGOs have the ability to raise funds “and dedicate these resources to a very specific goal” (Naim, 2005: p.203). For instance, the World Wildlife Fund, in partnership with Google, developed the Wildlife Crime Technology Project which utilizes new technology such as “unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, or drones), wildlife tracking tags, and SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool), a ranger patrol analysis software program” to assist park rangers in Namibia counter poachers and traffickers (World Wildlife Fund, 2017). In a similar way, an anti-poaching training guidelines manual was developed in 2016 to provide improved training and tools for park rangers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America where existing working conditions and resources proved inadequate in light of the increasing sophistication of poachers’ tactics and equipment (International Ranger Federation, 2016; World Wildlife Fund and TRAFFIC, 2016).

As Naim (2005) indicates, NGOs bring a variety of “tools and capabilities that governments usually lack”

which, in turn, assists in the effective implementation of legislation and in identifying areas for improvement (p.201-202). In particular, many of the biologically rich countries are subject to government corruption or weak governance structures which limit the national and regional institutions' ability to effectively counter the various components of a wildlife trafficking network within its territories. Put differently, NGOs serve as a critical link between the United Nations and the local communities that are affected by and crucial to CITES.

Another critical contribution of NGOs is their effort to promote public education about the negative socioeconomic and environmental consequences produced by consumer demand of wildlife products. In recent years, NGOs have worked closely with local communities to provide "environmental education" which entails "visits to protected areas by local residents ... [to] help reduce the participants' fear of wildlife,...increase their support for the conservation of species", and educate participants on the "impacts of overharvesting and the loss of threatened and endangered species" (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation, 2016: p.4). There is some evidence which indicates that "in many cases...poaching is carried out with the cognizance, or worse, active involvement of members of local communities" (Clifton and Rastogi, 2016: p.5).

An important component to reducing the involvement of local communities in the illicit wildlife trafficking network is to provide sustainable alternative livelihoods that reduce the incentives of participation. Namely, there are a variety of factors that motivate an individual's decision to participate in a wildlife trafficking network such as: (1) the ability to meet "subsistence needs"; (2) "the desire to improve financial well-being or social standing; (3) cultural practices and traditions"; and (4) "other noninstrumental motivations such as the desire to retaliate for direct losses due to wildlife", a lack of awareness of the implications of overexploiting wildlife species and resources, or a genuine fear of certain wildlife species viewed as threatening (Cooney et. al., 2016: p.368; Scarcelli, 2017). As it stands, the decision to participate in illicit wildlife trafficking appears to be

a logical choice for many members of local communities because it produces a better outcome than other alternatives. In effort to address this dilemma, NGOs have worked closely with local communities to try to develop new economic opportunities that balance the competing needs of environmental preservation and economic and social development. One approach that has been taken in this avenue is to encourage communities utilize the surrounding natural resources as a center of tourism which could spur considerable investment and economic activity in the region that will provide long-term opportunities for the local population (Scarcelli, 2017). Granted, some local communities will not be able to develop this industry since certain conditions such as "political stability, tourism infrastructure, and scenic landscapes" need to be met to make tourism a viable option (Cooney et. al., 2016: p.369).

A second potential avenue is to encourage and train local people to "participate in protecting their wildlife [as] rangers, informants, or guides" (Drury, 2017). In doing so, those participants assist NGOs and national government institutions in their efforts to protect the natural resources in the surrounding area and have a direct interest in maintaining and protecting the wildlife species from traffickers and poachers. This approach has proven to be effective in Indonesia with respect to protecting and stabilizing the Sumatran tiger population in the Kerinci Seblat National Park (Drury, 2017). In addition, granting and protecting the local community's right to use and manage the natural resources around their homes provides an incentive to utilize those resources in a sustainable manner and to defend those resources against traffickers and poachers. Another area that NGOs can assist local communities to coexist with the surrounding wildlife is to develop their infrastructure by way of fences and other physical barriers that protects their "personal security, livestock [and] crops" (Cooney et. al., 2016: p.370). "Decreasing the costs of living with wildlife" can, in conjunction with the abovementioned options, increase the incentives to engage in conservation efforts and away from trafficking and poaching (Cooney et. al., 2016: p.370).

On the other side of the market chain, NGOs have attempted to reduce the demand of wildlife products particularly in destination countries by raising “public awareness of the harms done by wildlife trafficking” (United States and Barack Obama, 2014). Those harms include the “irreversible depletion of valuable [environmental] assets...potential loss of biodiversity, the introduction of invasive species”, reduced long-term economic opportunities for local communities, increased food insecurity, and lasting implications to national and regional security through increased (or perpetuated) government corruption and complicity (World Wildlife Fund, 2012: p. 15-17; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation, 2016: p.3). For instance, in 2013, former professional basketball player Yao Ming partnered with several NGOs including WildAid, Save the Elephants, and the African Wildlife Foundation to launch a public awareness campaign in China regarding elephant and rhino poaching in South Africa and Kenya. The campaign included a video documentary and public service announcements which aimed at increasing consumers’ awareness that the poaching occurring in Africa was largely motivated by China’s market for ivory which is reportedly the largest in the world (African Wildlife Foundation, 2013). This campaign complimented the findings of a 2012 Chinese consumer survey which found, among other things, that: half of all participants “did not think elephant poaching is common”; 33% believe that “elephants are poached for their tusks”; and 66% “are not aware that rhino horns comes from poached rhinos” (African Wildlife Foundation, 2013). In addition, there is evidence that suggests that recent “elephant poaching increases in Africa are closely correlated with increases in consumer purchasing power in China” (World Wildlife Fund, 2012: p.11). These findings seem to point to the importance of NGOs conducting public education and awareness campaigns to inform consumers of the consequences their purchasing patterns. If these campaigns are successful, it may contribute to reducing the demand for ivory which, in turn, would reduce the economic incentives to poach elephants and rhinos.

However, these efforts are not without their challenges. On the one hand, there is some evidence to suggest that public education and awareness campaigns can influence and change consumer behavior. In 2011, for instance, Yao Ming and WildAid initiated a campaign addressing Chinese consumption of shark fins which received considerable coverage through various media outlets. This campaign has been credited “with a reduction of 50-70% in consumption of shark fin in China in 2012 according to shark fin traders, media, and Hong Kong import statistics” (African Wildlife Foundation, 2013). NGOs certainly contribute to “many cases of small-scale success” but their work alone will not be enough to completely address this issue (Naim, 2005: p. 207). Namely, NGOs are subject to their own limitations that undermine their ability to create widespread change in the international community. In particular, NGOs are constrained by their finite amount of resources which is likely to be significantly less than the trafficking networks they are competing against (Naim, 2005). Moreover, NGOs are highly specialized and their mission, more often than not, will revolve around very specific objectives that confine their focus to one part of the trafficking issue. For instance, an NGO may be focused on a small geographical location or certain wildlife species. This “tunnel vision” is largely produced by the organizations’ need to raise public funding which is more attainable when it appeals to those sentiments that are strongly held by potential donors (Naim, 2005: p.207). Moreover, many of the advocates who operate these NGOs “are motivated by ideals, which differ enormously from activist to activist, group to group” (Naim, 2005: p.215). It is also the case that advocates may “have ulterior motives” such as religious, cultural, social, political, or economic interests that can conflict with the motivates of other advocates (Naim, 2005: p.217). As a consequence, NGOs are limited not only in their scope but also in their operation and their ability to coordinate with other NGOs that may share mutual interests. Certain animal species or certain geographical areas, therefore, may receive more attention and support from NGOs while others are left largely unaddressed. Similar concerns were expressed

with respect to demand reduction programs aimed at tiger poaching throughout Asia. Namely, those programs existed to some extent but were not conducted in a “systematic and comprehensive manner that would allow for the identification of drivers, factors, and key consumer groups” (Stoner, Krishnasamy, Wittmann, Delean, and Cassey, 2016: p.19). This limitation certainly hinders those NGOs’ ability to identify important consumer behaviors, patterns and beliefs which, consequently, limits their ability to carefully cater their efforts to address those components. Moreover, there is not a dedicated effort to reduce tiger poaching as compared to the scale of conservation efforts for elephant ivory or rhino horn. These inherent limitations confine NGOs to small-scale battles but that, in and of itself, will not be enough to pose a significant challenge to illicit wildlife trafficking networks.

4. Conclusion

This paper has examined two broad policy approaches that aim to address illicit wildlife trafficking: state-centric and non-governmental. The former primarily focuses on CITES, which is the first international effort through the United Nations to coordinate Member States’ conservation strategies. It is a significant contribution to the conservation of endangered and threatened wildlife species whose population decline is largely attributed to human activity and consumer behavior. Through a series of complex regulations, CITES can be an effective tool to regulate the trade of wildlife species to ensure that Member States are adopting sustainable plans for their usage of wildlife products. It can also be critical to the efforts to counter the illegal trafficking of certain wildlife species through information-sharing and multilateral cooperation. At the same time, CITES is limited in four critical ways: (1) “ongoing legal gaps, capacity and political will gaps, ... continuing structural drivers”, and the changing nature of wildlife trafficking networks (Wylter and Sheikh, 2013: p.12). In addition, the current global approach places an emphasis on the supply of wildlife products

rather than the demand in destination countries. This focus does little to reduce the demand of wildlife products and can be attributed to “driving the price up and increasing the profits made by poachers” (International Institute for Environment and Development, 2015: p.11; Scarcelli, 2017). Only recently have governments started to shift their focus from the supply side to the demand side of this phenomenon but an overhaul of policy is yet to occur. Those limitations have largely undermined CITES and Member States’ efforts to curb wildlife trafficking since many wildlife species continue to be pushed to the brink of extinction.

The limitations from a state-centric approach seem to have contributed to the proliferation of NGOs whose efforts aim to address specific components of the wildlife trafficking networks. NGOs have proven invaluable in providing a connection between international treaties and conventions like CITES, its ratifying Parties, and the local communities that are most affected by and critical to wildlife trafficking networks. NGOs have primarily focused on building the capacity of local communities and regional entities to better train and equipment law enforcement, promoting and developing alternative sustainable economic opportunities, and engaging in public awareness campaigns both on the supply side and demand side of the wildlife trafficking network. Although these efforts have demonstrated small-scale successes, NGOs are limited in their ability to enact lasting and widespread change.

Accordingly, existing approaches to countering illicit wildlife trafficking appear to be insufficient to effectively address the issue. Going forward, two solutions may prove fruitful in countering wildlife trafficking. First, it must be acknowledged that governments and NGOs cannot solve this problem through a fragmented and largely uncoordinated response. Both are inherently limited in their ability to tackle the issue in isolation. Accordingly, governments need to increase their coordination with each other to ensure consistency both in the development of wildlife trafficking laws as well as the enforcement of those laws.

This will require a great deal of trust between political, legal and, intelligence agencies to ensure that there are as few blind spots in the regulation and management of wildlife products as possible (Naim, 2005). Until those inconsistencies are resolved, wildlife networks can simply adjust their operations from one location or product to another that is receiving less attention. If states can develop a secure and coordinated effort that incorporates shared intelligence and best practices, they may be in a position to produce “better, more convincing results than does starting with an ambitious global treaty from which most countries in practice defect” (Naim, 2005: p.255). NGOs are crucial in this respect because they can provide information and ground-level resources that otherwise are beyond the reach of most government institutions. Even at the NGO level, however, effective coordination and information-sharing efforts should be pursued in a more congruent fashion to ensure consistency and efficiency in their operations.

Second, there needs to be a strong political will that drives a holistic effort to counter illicit wildlife trafficking networks. This goes beyond simply enacting laws; it necessarily involves the consistent and effective enforcement of those laws. As mentioned previously, government corruption and complicity has been one of several factors that have contributed to the growth of wildlife trafficking networks. In many instances, trafficking “infiltrates governments, and it can go so far as to control the government of an entire province or even take over a weak or failed state” (Naim, 2005: p. 240). Accordingly, two objectives need to be pursued in conjunction with each other. First, governments and NGOs should focus on reducing the demand for wildlife products in destination countries. Governments can contribute to this by enacting laws to prohibit the sale of certain wildlife products if, in doing so, they can promote the protection of those species. In addition, efforts should be made by both governments and NGOs to pursue demand reduction strategies such as public awareness and education campaigns to inform consumers of the negative and irreversible damage caused by wildlife trafficking and perpetuated by specific consumer patterns. If consumer demand for

those products decreases, the prices of wildlife products will likely also decrease because the financial incentives for traffickers and poachers to engage in their illicit activities is significantly reduced if not eliminated. Second, NGOs and governments should work together to build the capacity of local communities. This would include the development of: (1) infrastructure to protect the local communities’ resources such as livestock and crops; (2) locally-based and operated industries such as tourism that both creates economic opportunities for and investment in these areas; and (3) a formal system that recognizes and protects the local communities’ right to utilize and maintain natural resources and wildlife species surrounding their homes. These measures would give local communities an incentive to protect, maintain, and sustainably develop the natural resources and wildlife species surrounding them which, in turn, may increase their resilience to poachers and traffickers to attempt to disturb that system. Moreover, it may contribute to lasting social and political developments that improve the strength and legitimacy of regional and national governments. Namely, if it is the case that illicit wildlife trafficking threatens national and regional security, undermines the rule of law of government institutions, and increases rates of corruption and complicity, then it would logically follow that reducing the prevalence of illicit wildlife trafficking would reduce, perhaps negative, those implications.

These changes, however, are not possible unless there is political support and determination to enact them. Politicians may be hesitant to shift the focus of wildlife trafficking from the supply side, which in many cases lies on the other side of the globe, to the demand side which rests in their backyards. It may be a difficult policy approach to propose and defend if the voter base does not support it. Politicians, whose assumed goal is to be re-elected, will likely “weigh their interest in potential reforms and innovations by the measure of political realities in their constituency” (Naim, 2005: p.257). If it is likely that politicians pursuing these reforms will not be re-elected as a consequence of public backlash, they will be likely to avoid such reforms. Thus, a change in the political beliefs and attitudes of the

general public is also a necessary condition to ensure the development of the abovementioned policy changes. That change may come about through “education, mobilization, [and] election campaigns” (Naim, 2005: p.257). If there is enough public support to pursue new policy approaches on illicit wildlife trafficking, politicians will respond to the general will by codifying those policy approaches into law. Until then, illicit wildlife trafficking will remain to be a considerable change that produces irreversible consequences.

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