

Policy pointers

Despite national commitments to tackle IWT, there is not yet any formal requirement to monitor the actions taken. Regular, standardised reporting is needed to measure progress and identify and address key challenges.

The considerable financial resources invested in tackling IWT are unevenly distributed across the globe. The vast majority has been directed to Africa; but even here, a number of countries in need of support have received comparatively little. Resource allocation should be based on need.

While the majority of funding and action to tackle IWT remains focused on strengthening law enforcement, little progress is reported on actions to support community engagement and sustainable livelihoods, and funding for other activities, like reducing demand, is limited. This imbalance must be redressed.

Investments in IWT take a scattergun approach. Donors should better coordinate their funding and allocate it to key sites, species and issues that have been clearly identified by country-based situation analyses.

Tackling the illegal wildlife trade: promises made, progress reported

Illegal wildlife trade (IWT) is devastating populations of iconic wildlife species such as rhinos and elephants, as well as lesser known ones such as pangolins, sturgeon and rosewood. As well as being a growing threat to conservation, IWT also has significant socioeconomic impacts. It undermines good governance and facilitates corruption and criminality, whilst hindering economic development at both local and national levels, and so represents a significant human problem as well as a wildlife one. In recognition of this alarming trend, four high-level conferences on tackling IWT have been organised in Botswana, the United Kingdom and Vietnam since 2014. Countries that have participated in these state-led gatherings have made numerous commitments towards four key priorities: eradicating the market for illegal wildlife products, building effective legal frameworks, strengthening law enforcement, and supporting sustainable livelihoods and economic development. This briefing summarises an analysis¹ of progress reported against these commitments. It highlights large disparities in the way IWT funding is spent geographically and in terms of priorities. It also emphasises the need for the effectiveness of IWT investments to be better monitored and evaluated, and for investments to be aligned more clearly with defined needs identified on a country-by-country basis.

In recent years, the illegal wildlife trade (IWT) has become an increasingly sophisticated and dangerous activity which knows no borders. Not only does this illicit trade endanger plants and animals, sometimes to the point of extinction, but it also undermines sustainable development and good governance, facilitates corruption and criminality, and threatens the livelihoods of communities which depend on wildlife for their survival.

Recognising the need for concerted action, the UK government hosted a high-level intergovernmental conference to tackle IWT in October 2018. The London conference was the

fourth in a series of state-led conferences on IWT, the first also being held in London in 2014, followed by Kasane, Botswana, in 2015 and Hanoi, Vietnam, in 2016.

Each of these high-profile meetings emphasised four key 'pillars' of an effective approach to tackling IWT:

1. Eradicating the market for illegal wildlife products
2. Building effective legal frameworks
3. Strengthening law enforcement

4. Supporting sustainable livelihoods and economic development.

In the run up to the London 2018 conference, WWF and TRAFFIC commissioned the

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) to conduct a review of reported progress against these four pillars. We looked at reports compiled between the various

conferences, and we also explored funding flows to better understand where these were being targeted and for what objectives. The overall purpose of our analysis was to better understand the achievements that had been made and the challenges that remained, but it was also intended to shed light on the geographical and thematic distribution of those achievements and challenges.

Only ten countries provided progress reports after each conference

More than 40 countries attended the first international IWT conference in London in 2014, while 32 attended the Kasane conference in 2015 and 42 participated in the Hanoi conference in 2016. Latin American countries were notable by their absence from the conferences, with only three countries participating in London 2014, none in Botswana and two in Vietnam. Also notable was the absence of some important² IWT source countries such as Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria, as well as significant IWT transit countries such as Qatar, and IWT transit and destination countries such as India and Hong Kong. However, the 2018 London conference had a higher level of participation (65 countries), including previously absent Latin American countries (Bolivia and Peru) and countries significantly affected by IWT (Nigeria and Thailand).

But not all the countries that participated in the conferences have reported progress against the commitments that they made. Indeed, only 23 countries reported on progress between the London 2014 and Kasane conferences, 16 between Kasane and Hanoi, and 14 between Hanoi and London 2018. Furthermore, only ten countries reported in all three progress updates: Australia, Canada, China, Indonesia, France, Germany, Malawi, the UK, the United States and Vietnam.

Uneven progress

Considerable progress in tackling IWT has been reported by many countries and significant levels

of funding have been leveraged from donors. However, progress between the pillars and between the different commitments within each pillar has been uneven.

The pillar that had the most reported action was strengthening law enforcement. Most reported actions focused around investing in capacity building for law enforcement officials, strengthening capacity for specialised investigations, establishing national cross-agency coordination and collaboration, and strengthening regional and global enforcement networks. Major achievements have included increases in the numbers and skills of rangers, the roll out of the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART)³ approach in many protected areas, as well as increased deployment of canine units and technology. (The 'SMART Approach' combines a site-based management tool with capacity building and a set of protection standards that enables protected area managers to gather data on wildlife and threats, store and analyse these data and use them to better plan and target protection efforts). At the international level, a major achievement has been the strengthening of the International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime (ICCWC)⁴ and the development and roll out of the ICCWC toolkit, which is intended to help countries undertake national assessments of wildlife crime issues and responses.

The law enforcement pillar has also received the highest allocation of donor funding. An analysis conducted in 2016 by the World Bank⁵ found that US\$1.3 billion was allocated to IWT between 2010 and 2016. Of this, 65% was allocated to activities related to law enforcement. In our analysis, we identified more than 450 additional IWT projects that had been funded since the World Bank analysis and estimate that 83% of these had some degree of focus on law enforcement.

Major gaps remain

By contrast to the law enforcement pillar, we found that very few countries had reported any progress against any of the commitments under the livelihoods pillar. Indeed, each of the progress reports produced between each conference flagged this to be an area with poor implementation of commitments made. Nevertheless, many projects do seek to address the wider community engagement and livelihoods agenda around IWT. The World Bank study estimated that 15% of the \$1.3 billion committed had supported this pillar and our analysis indicated that 33% of projects funded since the World Bank study included a livelihoods focus.

Indeed, it is the pillar focused on reducing demand for illegal wildlife products that has

Improved monitoring of progress against IWT requires more than reporting actions

received the least investment to date, attracting only 6% of the \$1.3 billion funding identified by the World Bank and featuring in only 4% of the projects we identified. Despite the apparent lack of funding, significant progress has been reported against this pillar. Most action has been taken around tightening market controls, destroying seized illegal wildlife products and raising public awareness. Major achievements reported included closing domestic ivory markets and destroying ivory stockpiles.

However, major gaps persist. These include a lack of attention to other species beyond elephants and rhinos, slow progress in tackling commitments around collaboration across the trade chain, continued government use of at-risk species and a poor understanding of the science of, and process behind, demand reduction and behaviour change.

Africa receives the lion's share of donor resources

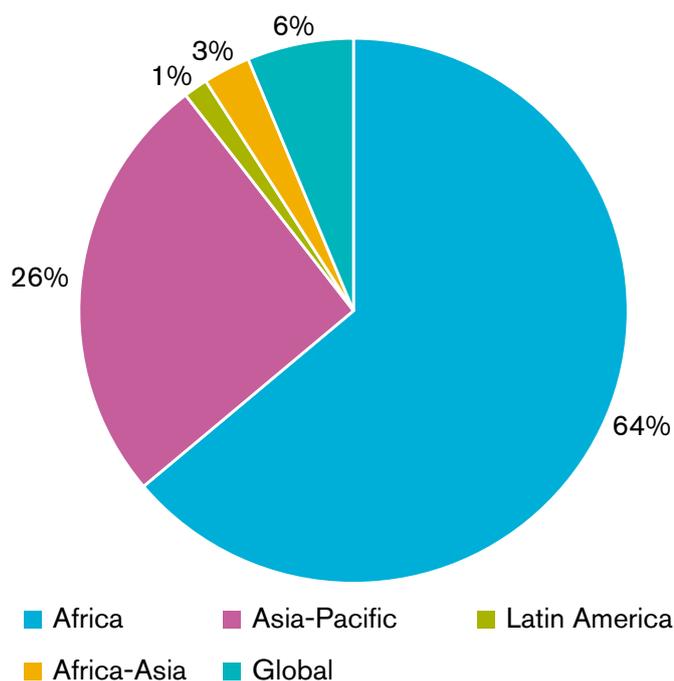
The vast majority of donor resources for tackling the illegal wildlife trade have been allocated to Africa. Of the estimated US\$1.3 billion identified in the World Bank study, 63% went towards efforts in Africa compared to 29% in Asia. Our additional analysis found that 77% of projects funded were in Africa compared to 14% in Asia and 6% in Latin America. Of the top five country recipients of funding from the World Bank study, the first four were all African (Tanzania, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Gabon) with the fifth being Bangladesh. Our analysis of funds allocated since the World Bank study identified Brazil as the top individual recipient — but this is because it received a \$13 million Global Environment Facility (GEF) grant in late 2016. Apart from Brazil, the list is dominated by African regional programmes and by Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Namibia and Tanzania. Combining the two analyses shows that overall, 64% of funding has gone to Africa (see Figure 1).

Have actions to combat the illegal wildlife trade been effective?

It is impossible to know whether the significant investments that have been made in tackling IWT have been effective because few projects monitor effectiveness and there is no standardised or widespread monitoring and reporting of IWT.

There are some species-specific analyses of IWT trends based on poaching and seizure data. This is the case for elephants via the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Monitoring the

Figure 1. Relative geographical distribution of illegal wildlife trade funds, 2010–2018 (limited range of donors, 2016–2018)



Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) system and Elephant Trade Information system (ETIS); and rhinos via the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Rhino Specialist Group-TRAFFIC reports to CITES. But this does not happen across all species.

Another source of statistics on IWT is data which are collected by TRAFFIC, amongst others, but are not publicly available. The data are mainly taken from media reports of seizures, which are biased to certain species and geographic areas, and do not consider influence from other external factors, such as the relative willingness and capacity of different countries to make seizures. Thus, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions on IWT trends from this.

CITES introduced a non-mandatory request for illegal wildlife trade reports starting from 2017, which may help with monitoring IWT trends going forward if countries agree to provide the necessary information. But even this will provide no details in terms of commitments made towards the four pillars of the state-led conferences.

Where should future investments go?

Attention is needed to redress the current imbalance in geographical and thematic coverage of investments. IWT problems are unevenly distributed, and there is currently no apparent correlation between needs and investment. It is clear that a number of countries which have major IWT problems have rightly received major investments, but other countries

in need of support have received comparatively little. Our analysis shows that Latin America falls way behind Africa and Asia in terms of levels of investment. This is not surprising — many high-value commodities involved in IWT are sourced from Africa and Asia, including ivory, rhino horn and tiger bones. But Latin America is not without problems and there is a risk that these will be overlooked and will escalate. Even within Africa, funding is heavily concentrated in a few key countries with the danger that wildlife crimes in others will operate 'under the radar' while attention is focused on these.

The emphasis on law enforcement also needs to be balanced with attention given to the other pillars, especially reducing demand for illegal wildlife products and supporting sustainable livelihoods. The state-led conferences have emphasised four pillars for tackling IWT, recognising that action is required on all fronts and not just on law enforcement. There is more reported action against the demand reduction pillar than the level of investment would lead one to expect, but the reporting demonstrates a lack of clear strategies for reducing demand, with rare mention of specific targets or of any monitoring of effectiveness. There is also a clear gap in action against the livelihoods pillar.

One way to tackle some of these issues would be to develop a strategic and coordinated approach to investments in tackling IWT, at the international level but also at a country or regional level. Just as parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity produce National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans that highlight priority areas for investment, national/regional IWT strategies and action plans should be encouraged in all countries. In addition, international conservation nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) that apply to donors for funding should be encouraged to align their proposed projects with the needs identified in those country strategies and action plans, while retaining some flexibility

to tackle new, emerging problems. The National Ivory Action Plan process that has been developed within CITES provides a potential model that could be scaled out to all species. Similarly, the ICCWC toolkit provides a useful mechanism for conducting a national assessment that could be used to identify key needs.

Commitments need commitment

Countries have made inspiring and ambitious commitments to tackle IWT at four state-led international conferences. Although some efforts have been made to review progress made against these commitments between each conference, there is no standard format for reporting and no compulsion for countries to do so.

Tracking progress against the commitments really requires a standard reporting protocol that all countries could complete on an annual basis. The challenge in carrying out this recommendation will be to introduce a standardised reporting template that complements existing processes and is not too cumbersome for countries to complete. Such a template should also require countries to provide details on the effectiveness of action taken, impact and progress over time, as well as giving an insight into countries' strategies and priorities and how these may also change over time.

Improved monitoring of progress against IWT requires more than reporting actions. Far greater attention now needs to be paid to reporting on impact and effectiveness rather than simply reporting on activities undertaken — which may or may not have any impact on the illegal wildlife trade.

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Knowledge Products

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) promotes sustainable development, linking local priorities to global challenges. We support some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in decision making.

At WWF, we're determined to tackle the underlying causes that are driving nature's decline – notably the food system and climate change. And we're fighting to ensure future generations have a world with thriving habitats and species.

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Notes

¹ www.wwf.org.uk/IWTcommitments / ² 'Important' or 'significant' in this context is based on countries identified via the TRAFFIC seizures databases as having high numbers of seizures of African elephants, rhinos, pangolins or tigers. / ³ <https://smartconservationtools.org/> / ⁴ www.cites.org/eng/prog/iccwc.php / ⁵ Wright, E, Bhammar, HM, Gonzalez Velosa, AM, Sobrevila, C (2016) Analysis of Funding to Tackle Illegal Wildlife Trade. World Bank, Washington DC, USA. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/695451479221164739/pdf/110267-WP-Illegal-Wildlife-Trade-OUO-9.pdf>