



WILDLIFE

**MAPPING THE IMPACT OF ILLICIT TRADE
ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

ABOUT THE REPORT

On 18 July 2019, the Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade (TRACIT) in collaboration with the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) organized a forum to discuss the role of illicit trade in inhibiting positive development outcomes and in particular, the implications for the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The event featured the launch of TRACIT's report, *Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the UN Sustainable Development Goals*.

The TRACIT report investigates illicit trade in 12 key sectors that participate significantly in international trade and are most vulnerable to illicit trade. For each sector, the negative impacts of illicit trade are mapped against the 17 UN SDGs. The sectors include: agri-foods, agro-chemicals and pesticides, alcohol, counterfeit and pirated goods, forestry, IUU fishing, petroleum, pharmaceuticals, precious metals and gemstones, tobacco products, trafficking in persons and illicit trade in wildlife.

This document excerpts the chapter on "SDGs and illicit trade in wildlife"

ABOUT TRACIT

The Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade (TRACIT) is an independent, private sector initiative to drive change to mitigate the economic and social damages of illicit trade by strengthening government enforcement mechanisms and mobilizing businesses across industry sectors most impacted by illicit trade.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The full report, Executive Summary and the sector specific chapter excerpts can be found at: www.tracit.org/publications_illicit-trade-and-the-unsdgs

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SDGs AND ILLICIT TRADE IN WILDLIFE



INTRODUCTION

Illicit trade and the UN SDGs

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lay out an ambitious set of 17 goals to address the world's most acute economic, social and environmental challenges. They cover everything from poverty eradication and zero hunger to clean water, decent jobs and peace. Since coming into effect in January 2016, governments, private sector and civil society have rallied around the SDGs to guide policy, implement investment strategies and allocate funding.

Among the portfolio of tools available to achieve the SDGs is the expansion of international trade.¹ This is because trade has historically proven to be an engine for development, boosting income generating capacity and contributing to unprecedented reductions in poverty levels.² Over the last few decades cross-border trade has expanded significantly, supporting rising living standards across the globe.

At the same time, the expansion in *legal* trade has been accompanied by the alarming emergence of *illicit* trade, with estimates quantifying it and associated transnational criminal activities at between 8 and 15 percent of global GDP.³

From smuggling, counterfeiting and tax evasion, to the illegal sale or possession of goods, services, humans and wildlife, illicit trade is compromising the attainment of the SDGs in significant ways, crowding out legitimate economic activity, depriving governments of revenues for investment in vital public services, dislocating millions of legitimate jobs and causing irreversible damage to ecosystems and human lives.

Mapping illicit trade against the SDGs

Despite the recognition of international trade as an important means to achieve the SDGs, insufficient attention has been given to the substantial impact that illicit trade has on holding back progress.

In order to help governments and business better understand how their efforts to achieve sustainable development must account for the negative forces of illicit trade, this study maps the 17 UN SDGs against the following sectors: agri-foods, alcohol, fisheries, forestry, petroleum, pharmaceuticals, precious metals and gemstones, pesticides, tobacco, wildlife and all forms of counterfeiting and piracy. These sectors were chosen because they participate significantly in international trade and they are particularly vulnerable to illicit trade. Trafficking in persons is also examined as a particularly abhorrent phenomenon affecting supply chains and basic human rights as well as contributing to illicit trade practices.

To the extent that an SDG—or one of the 169 targets established to track progress on the goals—is impacted by illicit trade, this study examines where and how illicit activity undermines progress to achieve it. In some cases, illicit activity is mapped against an overall goal, such as SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). In other cases, a specific target has been examined, such as SDG Target 8.7 (Eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking).

Key findings from the report

The socio-economic impacts of illicit present significant deterrence to all 17 of the SDGs—holding back progress, increasing costs and pushing achievement of the goals further away.

There are notable “macro” impacts where illicit trade cuts deeply across many of the SDGs, undermining achievement of the economic goals for poverty reduction, decent jobs and economic growth (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4 & 8), and robbing governments of taxable income that can be invested in public services (SDGs 9 & 17). When it generates revenue for organized criminal and terrorist groups, illicit trade undermines goals for peace and stability (SDG 16). Most forms of illicit trade plunder natural resources (SDGs 6, 14 & 15), abuse supply chains and ultimately expose consumers to fake and potentially harmful products (SDG 12).

While findings show that illicit trade poses a threat to all 17 SDGs, nowhere is the nexus as evident than in SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).



Illicit trade—in all its forms—stands in direct juxtaposition to SDG 16, by feeding violence and breeding corruption, undermining trust in institutions and the rule of law, and generating enormous illicit financial flows.

Moreover, the links between illicit trade and organized crime are well established, from human trafficking networks and tobacco smuggling, to fuel theft by drug cartels and the involvement of the mafia and organized criminal groups in the trade of counterfeit products. Perhaps most frightening are links to terrorist financing that heighten threats to national and global security.



All types of illicit trade threaten inclusive economic growth and significantly hinder achievement of SDG 8. Lost taxes rob governments of revenues intended for schools, infrastructure and other public services. Illegal and unfair competition reduces sales and dampens the ability of companies

to create lasting and dignified job opportunities. Taken together, economic leakages across the sectors susceptible to illicit trade create an annual drain on the economy of US\$2.2 trillion and present a triple threat to financing the necessary “billions to trillions” dollar gap needed to reach the SDGs.

Business is a partner for achieving the SDGs

As illicit trade weakens the viability and sustainability of industries, it simultaneously dilutes private sector contributions to achieving the SDGs. For example, illicit trade is a form of unfair competition that undermines private sector contributions to economic growth and employment. It chokes off market growth, sabotages global supply chains, squanders natural resources and endangers market security. Fake products and inferior materials in supply chains harm consumers and tarnish consumer perception of a corporation's social responsibility (CSR) performance. In some cases, it poses significant threats to the safety and security of personnel and facilities, all adding to the increasing costs of doing business. Where proliferating illicit trade creates socio-economic instability, it dampens private sector investment, holds back research and development (R&D) and discourages technology transfer.

For these reasons, the private sector has a vital interest in defending against illicit trade, helping itself across industry sectors and playing an active role in promoting the SDGs.



The Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade (TRACIT) provides a platform for business and governments to collaborate holistically to mitigate the incumbrance of illicit trade on the SDGs. Mapping the impacts of illicit trade on the UN Sustainable Development Goals is part of TRACIT's contribution to the partnership approach embodied in SDG 17 and a means by which business, the public sector and civil society—working in partnership—can more effectively achieve the SDGs.

SDGs AND ILLICIT TRADE IN WILDLIFE

Illicit trade in wildlife is a serious threat to local ecosystems and the survival of endangered and vulnerable species. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) reports that during the past 40 years there has been a 58 percent decline in vertebrate population and an 81 percent decline in populations living in freshwater systems.¹ Unsustainable and illegal trade in wildlife is cited as the second biggest threat to species after environmental damage.²

Moreover, illicit trade in wildlife is a global criminal industry and one of the most lucrative forms of illicit international trade. Similar to other forms of illicit trade, the profits from wildlife trafficking are high,³ with the value of the byproducts increasing by multiples of 25 to 50 along the commodity chain.⁴ Illicit trade in wildlife is typically transcontinental,⁵ and, as highlighted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), “[v]irtually every country in the world plays a role” as a source, transit, or destination of illicitly traded wildlife.⁶

Note: The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) defines wildlife as all fauna and flora. For the purpose of this report, however, illicit trade in wildlife will only cover fauna and exclude fish, as this is covered under the Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing chapter.

Impact of illicit trade in wildlife on achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Illicit wildlife trade is almost entirely responsible for pushing some of the world's most popular and unique species to the brink of extinction. It also robs countries of their natural heritage and damages the livelihoods of local communities who depend on tourism. Because of its criminal nature, illicit wildlife trade undermines good governance and the rule of law, fuels corruption and finances the very criminal networks that threaten peace and security. In the words of former UK Foreign Secretary William J. Hague, “[the illicit trade in wildlife] drives corruption and insecurity, and undermines efforts to cut poverty and promote sustainable development.”⁷

Since preserving wildlife is crucial for the well-being of people and the planet alike, stopping this trade is crucial to achieving a number of the SDGs. This is particularly true for SDG 15, which calls for urgent action to halt the loss of biodiversity, to protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species, and to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna.

The illicit trade in wildlife impacts achievement of six of the SDGs:

- SDG 1 (no poverty);
- SDG 2 (zero hunger);
- SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth);
- SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities)
- SDG 15 (life on land); and
- SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

Livelihoods



In addition to the serious and wide-ranging environmental impacts, illicit trade in wildlife has substantial negative impacts on livelihoods and the economies of local communities which depend upon wildlife and associated industries as a component to achieve sustainable development.^{8, 9}

WWF reports that the knock-on effects of illegal wildlife trade can undermine local employment in legitimate sectors, fuel corruption, and rob governments of tax revenue that could be invested towards meeting the SDGs.¹⁰

For SDG 1 (no poverty), the illicit trade in wildlife impacts SDG Target 1.4 which calls for ensuring “equal rights to men and women, and in particular the poor and the vulnerable, to economic resources, as well as ownership and control over land and natural resources.” As stated by CITES Secretary-General John E. Scanlon, illicit trade in wildlife means that “local communities are being deprived of making their own development choices, including through the legitimate use of their wildlife resources.”¹¹

More than 90 percent of natural World Heritage sites support recreation and a growing wildlife-based tourism industry. But the economies associated with many of these sites are threatened by excessive poaching. This is linked to SDG Target 2.3 which refers to ensuring opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment, and SDG Target 8.9 to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

Sustainable ecosystems are critical for supporting tourism, which according to UNEP contributes 5 to 10 percent of national economies.¹² According to the UNWTO, wildlife watching and wildlife tourism provide approximately 60 percent of the income of most African regions.¹³

The economic case for combatting illicit trade in wildlife is clear, and can be illustrated by the life on an elephant, which is estimated to be 76 times more valuable alive than dead. Wildlife based tourism is, in other words, big business. According to the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, one elephant's ivory might yield up to US\$21,000 on the black market, but that same elephant could generate up to US\$1.6 million in tourism over its lifetime.¹⁴

Protecting biodiversity, preserving natural heritage and ending poaching and trafficking



According to UNDP, of the 8,300 animal breeds known to man, 8 percent are now extinct and 22 percent are at risk of extinction.¹⁵ In 2014, 1,215 rhinos were killed for their horns by poachers in South Africa,¹⁶ and between 2010 and 2012, an estimated 100,000 elephants—or one fifth of the African elephant population—were killed by poachers for their ivory.¹⁷ Rhino poaching in Zimbabwe and South Africa, which have the largest remaining populations, has increased dramatically from less than 50 in 2007 to over 1,000 in 2013.¹⁸ In March 2016, UNODC reported that rhino poaching in South Africa had increased by as much as 8,000 percent between 2007 and 2014.¹⁹ According to OECD, rhino horns can earn traffickers up to US\$65,000 per kilogram.²⁰ UNEP estimates the Asian street value of poached African ivory to be in the range of US\$165–188 million, and the value of rhino horn poached in 2013 is in the range of US\$64–\$192 million.²¹ Developing countries are the biggest source of animals that are poached and trafficked, and they feel the economic and biodiversity losses the most.²²

Between 2000 and 2015, the parts of at least 1,755 tigers were seized in Asia.²³ There may now be as few as 3,200 wild tigers left in the world, with illicit trade being one of the biggest threats to their survival.

While elephant, rhino and tiger poaching have received wide media attention, the unfortunate award for the most trafficked mammal in the world goes to the lesser known pangolin. UNEP estimates that more than 1 million pangolins have been poached in the last decade.²⁴ Although not as valuable as ivory or rhino horn, the average retail value for raw pangolin scales can reach US\$2,500 per kilogram, with the illegal trade in pangolin scales worth an estimated US\$46 million annually.²⁵

SDG 15 (life on land) specifically focuses on one of the key effects of the illicit trade in wildlife, namely the need to “halt biodiversity loss.” Furthermore, specific targets under SDG 15 call for:

- Urgent and significant action to protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species (SDG Target 15.5).
- Ending poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and addressing both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products (SDG Target 15.7).
- Enhancing global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species (SDG Target 15.C).

Poaching also threatens the integrity of some of the world’s most iconic natural sites and therefore stands directly in the way of SDG Target 11.4 (strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage). Almost half of the world’s 200 designated UNESCO natural heritage sites are impacted by wildlife criminals.²⁶

Security and the rule of law



Wildlife trafficking erodes state authority, undermines security and the rule of law, and helps finance organized criminal and insurgent groups.^{27, 28} Ivory has been called the new conflict resource,²⁹ and as highlighted by the WWF, “ongoing armed conflicts and illicit wildlife trafficking [in Africa] seem to be interlinked, and wildlife trafficking is often used to finance terrorist activities and launder money from other illegal trafficking activities.”³⁰ In a report to the world’s highest international security body, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon wrote, “Poaching and its potential linkages to other criminal, even terrorist, activities constitute a grave menace to sustainable peace and security in Central Africa.”³¹ Because of the use of poaching to finance organized crime and terrorist activities, the UN placed sanctions on wildlife trafficking and groups who perpetrate wildlife crimes in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic in 2014.³²

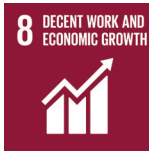
CONCLUSIONS



Deprives communities of control over land and natural resources, especially those communities dependent on tourism.



Prevents opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment represented by the tourism sector.



Negatively impacts the economies of local communities which depend on wildlife for their livelihoods.



Threatens half of the world's 200 designated UNESCO natural heritage sites home to many of the world's most endangered species.



Responsible for pushing some of the world's most popular and unique species to the brink of extinction.



Undermines governments' capacity to enforce policy, promote the rule of law, eradicate corruption and combat other forms of criminal activity that threaten peace and security.

IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The sweeping, negative impacts of illicit trade on the SDGs point to a wide range of challenges for both governments and business. Hence, it will be expedient to:

Attend to developing and least developed countries. The alarming consequences of illicit trade are especially evident in developing countries hard-pressed to monetize resources, commercialize innovation, attract investment, establish lasting job opportunities and create genuine, long-term economic growth. As such, it will be critical to support the capabilities of developing countries to better defend against illicit trade by *inter alia* taking stock of national government experiences, challenges, priorities and requests for assistance while also identifying where “in-country” efforts would be most valuable and most effective.

Account for the interconnected nature of the challenge. As noted by the UN, the SDGs are integrated and indivisible in nature with significant inter-linkages across the goals and targets. Ending poverty, for example, must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, job opportunities and environmental stewardship. By the same token, a holistic approach is needed to address the significant number of interdependencies and overlapping problems relating to multiple forms of illicit trade. The impacts of illicit trade cannot be examined effectively in isolation of other sectors, nor can they be addressed in isolation of the SDGs.

Promote shared responsibility. Improving public-private dialogue and promoting partnerships will be needed to address the global nature of illicit trade. Public and private actors can play an important role in determining a responsive, evidence-based work program for addressing illicit trade, including delineation of best practices, and, where applicable, development of regulatory standards.


Prioritize the policy response. The findings from this study demonstrate that illicit trade is a significant deterrent to achieving the SDGs. As governments go about formulating policies and implementing programs to achieve the SDGs, a first order consideration should be to reduce the deterrent forces of illicit trade and plug the fiscal leakages associated with it. This approach has the immediate effect of adding resources and revenues back into the global economy, putting more policy tools back on the table, and reducing timelines, costs and other hurdles to achieving the goals. Consequently, a more level playing field, without the economic drags of illicit trade, can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policies and programs governments are taking to stimulate growth, employment and investment to achieve the SDGs.

Foster political will and leadership. Addressing the threat of illicit trade on the SDGs will require political will of government officials at all levels to prioritize the problem, actively pursue solutions and invest in enforcement measures. This study provides a first step in raising awareness on the threat of illicit trade on achieving the SDGs. The work also serves as a roadmap to help policy makers identify areas that merit greater attention and to formulate effective strategies to address the serious threats posed by illicit trade.

NOTES

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AGRI-FOODS											
AGROCHEMICALS AND PESTICIDES											
ALCOHOL											
COUNTERFEIT AND PIRACY											
FORESTRY											
IUU FISHING											
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