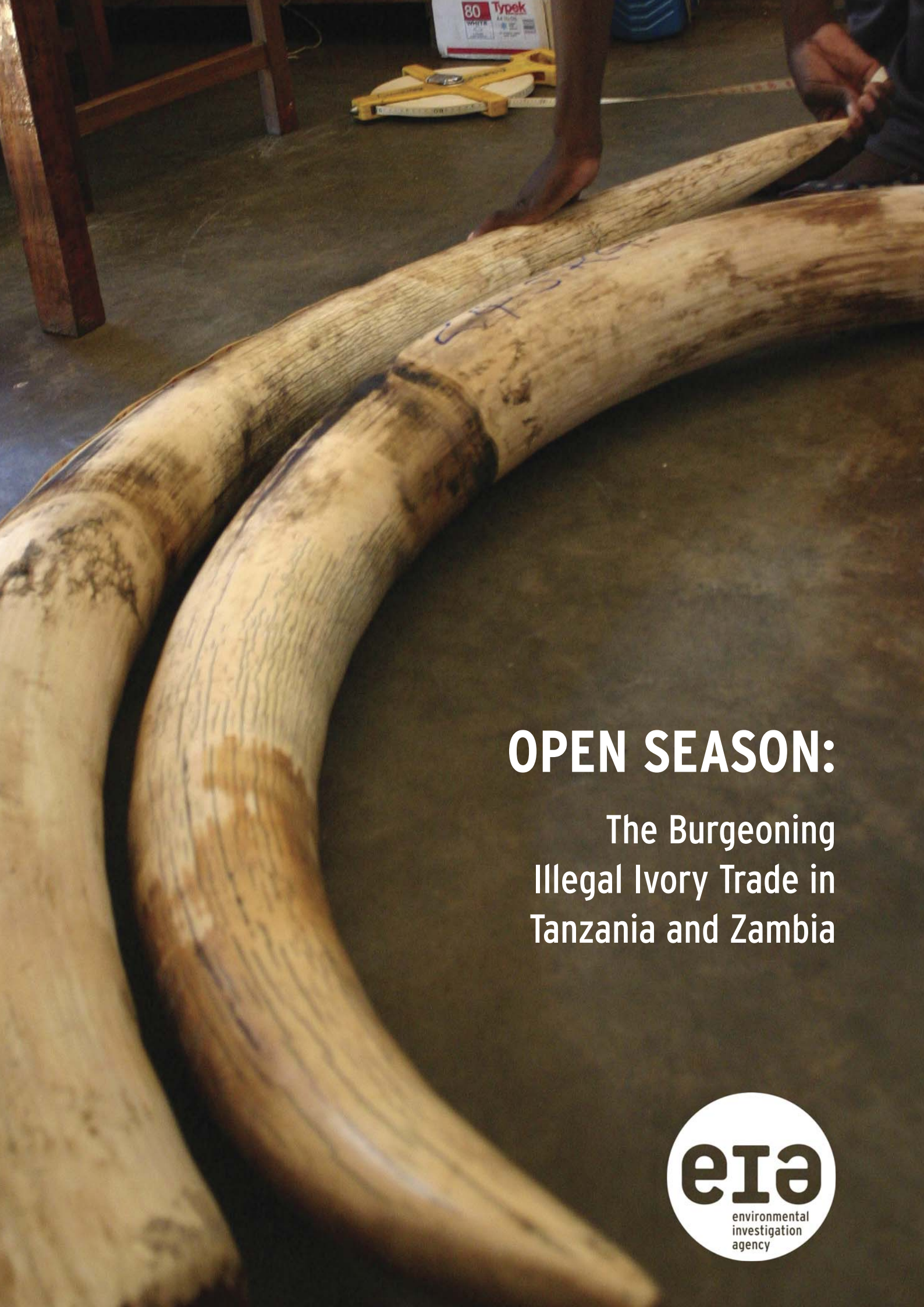

OPEN SEASON:

The Burgeoning Illegal Ivory Trade in Tanzania and Zambia

eia
environmental investigation agency

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Acting as major conduit and exporting countries for illegal ivory from other African elephant Range States, Tanzania and Zambia also have significant illegal domestic ivory markets. These cater for resident migrant workers and tourists seeking souvenirs and provide ivory in large volumes to traders and syndicates for export to destinations such as China and Vietnam.

Elephants are being poached from within both countries to supply these markets. There is ample evidence of this in the public domain, but EIA has also spoken to numerous illicit ivory traders in Tanzania and Zambia who confirm this. Furthermore, EIA has received information confidentially from a number of stakeholders who feel unable to speak of the situation publicly for fear of reprisals. Traders also stated that they source much of their illegal stock from neighbouring countries.

A significant proportion of recent ivory seizures originated in Tanzania and Zambia, and is testimony to the involvement of organised criminal syndicates. As noted in the ETIS report to CoP14 (and reiterated in the ETIS report to CoP15[i]): "...organized crime syndicates often rely upon high levels of collusion, corruption and protection between private sector operators and different government institutions... There is also evidence to suggest that local military, political or economic elites often become involved due to the perceived lucrative nature of the trade."[ii]

There are serious allegations that Zambia has reorganised its stockpile data to favourably reflect the inventory of ivory. Inventories have been transferred to new ledgers and entries changed to reduce the number of poached animals. Enforcement efforts in both Tanzania and Zambia are being seriously undermined by the alleged involvement of corrupt government officials and management failure at a senior level. Senior members of the respective wildlife authorities have been, or are directly involved in and profiting from the trade and export of ivory from the national populations. The ETIS report to CoP15[iii] also states: "There are governance issues at all levels of the ivory trade.... Unless governance issues are firmly addressed at the national level, successful implementation of the CITES Action Plan will be seriously compromised in Africa".

Perpetrators at all levels of the illegal ivory trade must be prosecuted and convicted, and given appropriate sentences. There are well documented instances of institutional failure at a senior level in both Tanzania and Zambia, and to support any relaxation on trade at this time would be rewarding contempt for the law, endorsing a corrupt system and sending out a message that such actions can be committed with impunity.

INTRODUCTION

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The level of illegal ivory being seized worldwide is at an all-time high as evidenced by the number of large consignments that have been seized since January 2009. In November 2008, 108 tonnes of ivory was sold in a "one-off" sale to China and Japan from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The view was that this sale would flood the two markets thereby satisfying the demand and reducing poaching.

African elephant populations, particularly those in Central and Western Africa, continue to be vulnerable. Yet despite the alarming upward trend in seizures, sustained reports of poaching in Africa and Asia, and a failure of many elephant range states to submit the required data to the ETIS (Elephant Trade Information System) and MIKE (Monitoring of the Illegal Killing of Elephants) programmes, CITES Parties continue to sanction limited international trade in ivory.

Despite a commitment at CoP14 in 2007 that there would be no further proposals to downlist or apply for trade, Tanzania and Zambia have both submitted proposals to downlist their elephant populations from Appendix I to Appendix II. They have also requested sale of their respective legal ivory stockpiles at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES in Doha in March 2010.

Further to previous investigations in Tanzania and Zambia, The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) continues to receive a significant volume of information and claims made by contacts on the ground, that in-country elephant poaching and ivory trafficking is on the increase again.

In January and February 2010, EIA conducted undercover investigations in Tanzania and Zambia to determine the status and extent of this information. The findings of these investigations point to widespread availability of illegal ivory at both a domestic and international level in both countries. There are also allegations of complicity by the relevant authorities as well as widespread involvement of Chinese and other Asian nationals. The authorities appear unwilling, or unable, to exercise control, and EIA has reason to believe that government officials are implicated in the poaching and international trade of illegal ivory.

Reports of corruption in the wildlife sector occur in both countries. Few incidents of illegal ivory trade are followed up by prosecutions and convictions; and even when implicated in criminal or corrupt activities, officials and senior officers remain in post, often in influential positions.

Whilst many stakeholders have serious concerns about poaching and enforcement, an atmosphere of secrecy and fear prevails in relation to the transparency of wildlife management in general and the effectiveness of the enforcement authorities in particular. The recent visit of the CITES Panel of Experts to ascertain the proposals is a case in point; several stakeholders were excluded, or obstructed, from accessing the Panel and some were warned off speaking to them or from saying anything detrimental about the proposals or the situation at the sharp end.

EIA, March 2010

DOWNLISTING PROPOSALS AND REQUESTS FOR SALE

The United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia are seeking permission to downlist their elephant populations to Appendix II of CITES and to sell their respective stockpiles: 90 tonnes from Tanzania and 22 tonnes from Zambia. The requests come at a time when both countries are significantly implicated in the illicit ivory trade and reported incidents of elephant poaching are rising.

Ivory seizure data gathered under the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS)[iv] clearly shows that Tanzania is a major hotspot for illicit ivory smuggling. In 2006, ETIS reported a surge in illicit ivory trade; of the 27 tonnes seized worldwide, over 11 tonnes were shipped out from Tanzania, equivalent to more than 40 per cent of total seizures.

Figures also show another dramatic surge in illicit ivory trade in 2009 – just a year after the legal sale of 108 tonnes of ivory was supposed to satisfy demand and deflate the price for ivory. Once again, Tanzania is deeply implicated – of 24 tonnes of ivory seized during 2009 almost 12 tonnes was shipped from Tanzania. This surge is characterised by a series of large-scale seizures, indicating the growing involvement of organised crime networks. Tanzania is at the heart of this trade.

ETIS highlights Zambia as an active major source and transit country for illicit ivory smuggling, involving substantial volumes; this is consistent with the situation reported in 2007 (CoP14 Doc 53.2) and is reflected in reported seizures.

Zambia also features high on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index[v] and even in strong cases where seizures and arrests have been made, subsequent prosecutions and convictions are rare, suggesting interference. Where officials and senior officers have been implicated, it is not unusual to find that they have simply been moved within the organisation or remain in influential positions.

Downlisting proponents are required to show that elephant populations are secure and law enforcement is effective. The sheer scale of the ivory trade in Tanzania and Zambia indicate weak enforcement. In most cases, seizures of large shipments of ivory originating in Tanzania have taken place in either transit or destination countries, not within Tanzania itself. The country's elephant population is clearly not secure. Analysis of DNA taken from tusks seized in Taiwan and Hong Kong shows that the ivory came from elephant populations in southern Tanzania[vi].

One of the largest single ivory seizures since the ivory trade ban (6.2 tonnes seized in Singapore) occurred in 2002, subsequently shown by DNA analyses to have originated almost entirely from Zambia; a six tonne ivory consignment was shipped from Zambia and seized in the Philippines in late 2005, but subsequently disappeared; and another large consignment, which was confirmed to be of Zambian origin, was intercepted by Singapore authorities in 2008. The seizures made are clearly linked to organised crime.

BELOW:
Ivory store room,
South Luangwa National Park.

© EIA

In Zambia, population figures given are based on estimates with a wide variance. Failure to report the reality of poaching and illegal trade in the proposal calls into question the integrity of the information supplied. The Director General of the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) stated in 2009 that: "We are seeing poaching of elephants being a problem now. It would appear that there is a market that has been created. We are seeing a lot of ivory actually being taken to the Far East. The reason actually behind this is that countries like Japan and China have been allowed to buy ivory. People seem to make use of that kind of authorisation where now illegal activities are taking place."

(BBC, *The World Today,* 16 October 2009)

While Tanzania's downlisting proposal claims that its elephant population is "secure" and that the origin of ivory shipped from the country remains "unconfirmed", the minister pushing for the downlisting has publicly expressed concern over the level of poaching. Natural Resources and Tourism Minister Shamsa Mwangunga said poaching incidents in national parks have assumed "alarming proportions". She stated: "Sophisticated poaching syndicates and networks with international links are swelling, posing a serious threat to our helpless wild animals."

(*Government to Support Anti-Poaching Fight,* The Guardian, 28 April 2009)

TANZANIA

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THE SELOUS – ELEPHANT POACHING HOTSPOT

The poaching threat in Tanzania is most pronounced in the Selous Game Reserve in southern Tanzania. This unique world heritage site covering 50,000 square kilometres is Africa's largest protected reserve, and contains one of the continent's largest elephant populations. During the wave of elephant poaching which hit much of Africa in the 1980s the Selous is estimated to have lost 70,000 elephants. Yet a catalogue of reports and evidence show that the Selous is still poorly protected and is wide open to poachers, who are often assisted by game scouts.

In 2007, the findings of an EIA investigation were presented to the Minister for the Environment, Wildlife and Tourism. This intelligence cited the complicity of a range of government officials in the illegal trade; specifically, one trader stated that he could procure significant amounts of ivory on demand from a senior officer from the Wildlife Division in the Selou.

Recent news reports state that at least 50 elephants a month are being poached in the Selous.[xi] The proportion of elephant mortality attributed to illegal killing, which provides an index of poaching threat, jumped from 18 per cent in 2004 to 63 per cent in 2009.[xii] Aerial observations in one sector of the park during 2008 recorded 53 recently poached elephants, compared with 18 the previous year.

Field investigations carried out by EIA show a continual flow of ivory out of the Selous. Poachers enter the reserve for periods of around two weeks and kill an average of 10 elephants each trip. The poached ivory is then hidden, buried at remote locations on the edge of the reserve until it is sold to traders, usually from Dar es Salaam. The transactions take place in villages that have become known hotspots for ivory trading. This scenario is occurring across the Selous: from Mloka in the north, through a cluster of villages such as Chumo in the centre, and down to Liwale in the south. In all of these locations local villagers describe a thriving trade in ivory, with buyers from Dar staying in local guest houses when summoned by local traders, with deals being done for around Tsh 45,000 (US$34) per kilogramme of ivory, and the ivory transported to Dar es Salaam by bus, and even on government vehicles.

Seizures occur only occasionally. In November 2009 police seized 28 tusks, weighing 62 kilogrammes, in Liwale, on the southern edge of the Selous. Three businessmen from Dar es Salaam were arrested trying to transport the tusks. Police also seized a further 20 tusks hidden at a guest house in Liwale.[xiii] During the same month police seized 33 tusks at a house on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam and arrested four suspects. The ivory, weighing over 100 kilogrammes, came from the Selous.[xiv]

© EIA

TOP:
The Selous Game Reserve, Africa's largest protected area, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

ABOVE:
Public buses are sometimes used to transport small consignments of ivory from the Selous to Dar es Salaam.

BELOW:
Poached Elephant, Selous, November 2009.

Yet the vast majority of ivory poached from the Selous is transported to Dar es Salaam unhindered, and from there it is smuggled in containers to markets in the Far East. The degree to which organised ivory syndicates target the Selous is demonstrated by DNA analysis of two major ivory seizures which took place in 2006.

In July 2006, customs officers in the port of Kaohsiung, Taiwan, intercepted two containers allegedly containing sisal fibre and shipped from the Tanzanian port of Tanga. In one container, bales of sisal were found to conceal 744 elephant tusks; in the other container, 350 tusks were discovered. Altogether, the haul of ivory weighed 5.2 tonnes.

In the same month 2.6 tonnes of illicit ivory, comprising of 390 tusks and 121 cut pieces, was seized at a house on Hong Kong Island. The scale of both of these seizures indicates the involvement of cross-border syndicates, capable of gathering large consignments of ivory for buyers in the Far East.

Ivory samples from both of these seizures were subjected to DNA testing in a bid to discover which elephant populations had been poached to provide the contraband ivory seized in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The results revealed that the tusks came from elephant populations centred on the Selous ecosystem and spilling over into the Niassa Reserve in neighbouring Mozambique.

This clearly illustrates how the Selous elephant population is being systematically poached to supply the surging trade in illicit ivory.

Dubious population data

The elephant population figures put forward by the Tanzanian government are mired in controversy. In 2006 the Tanzanian Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI), estimated the country's elephant population to be 136,753 compared with 55,000 in 1989. The 2006 figure is thought by many observers to be inflated. The African Elephant Status Report put the figure at 108,816 in 2007 and as of February 2010, the elephant population was said to be 109,000, although the results of the 2009 dry season count by TAWIRI had not been publicly released.

TAWIRI's count in 2006 found that 54 per cent of Tanzania's ivory population is located in the Selous ecosystem. Based on the population figure of 109,000 there should be 58,000 elephants in the Selous. Yet Tanzania's Director of Wildlife, Erasmus Tarimo, publicly stated that the Selous population is just 40,000. He told a newspaper: "A recent aerial count found 41 carcasses of elephants. But 41 carcasses is minimal compared to the total Selous population of around 40,000.[xv]

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MAJOR IVORY SEIZURES IN VIETNAM AND THE PHILIPPINES

In January 2009, three shipping containers full of plastic waste left the busy port of Dar es Salaam on three separate vessels, bound for destinations in the Far East. On 5th March, Vietnamese customs authorities in the port of Hai Phong inspected one of the containers. Their suspicions had been aroused by the incongruity of the declared contents and the convoluted shipping route involving three vessels via the United Arab Emirates and Port Kelang in Malaysia. Inside the container, customs officers discovered a massive haul of 6.2 tonnes of elephant tusks, hidden in cardboard boxes and concealed underneath bags of plastic waste.

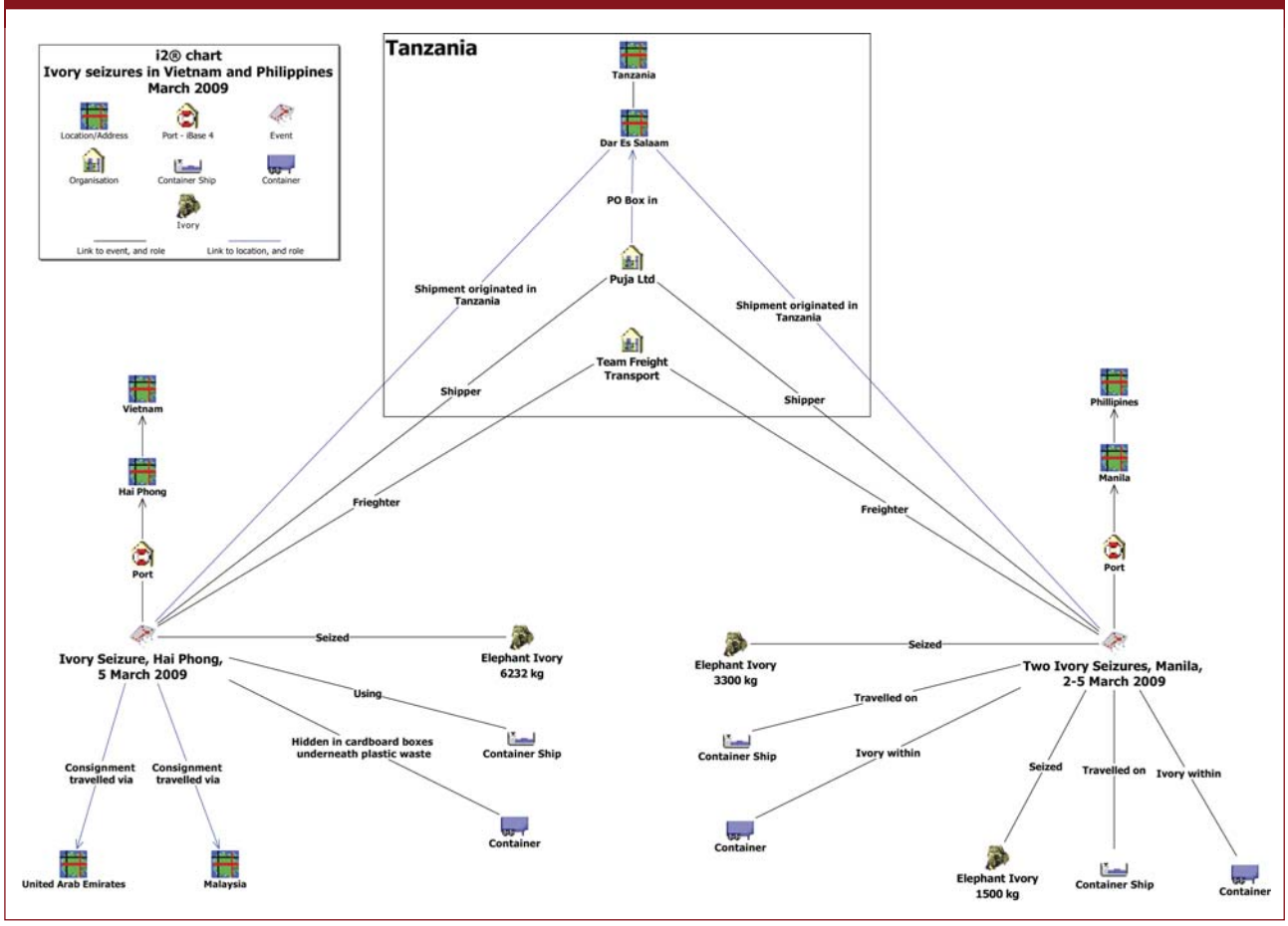
On March 2nd and 5th, the other containers arrived in the port of Manila in the Philippines. The consignee did not collect the cargo, and after six weeks the customs department inspected the containers: one revealed 3.3 tonnes of ivory tusks, the other contained 1.5 tonnes.

Such a massive haul of ivory originating in the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam indicates the involvement of organised criminal syndicates, abetted by corrupt officials in the Tanzanian customs authority. For all three containers, the shipper was stated as Puja Ltd. with a PO Office box address. Checks made by EIA and the Journalists Environmental Association of Tanzania (JET) show that Puja is a fake company. It is not registered with either the Business Registration and Licensing Agency (BRELA) or the Surface and Marine Transport Regulatory Authority (SUMATRA), a legal requirement for any company shipping freight out of Tanzania.

Suspicions of collusion by customs officers were confirmed when six officials from the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) were arrested in June for their involvement in the ivory smuggling.[viii] Sources close to the case say that the officers were bailed after a cash payment of Tsh 220 million was made ($160,000), and that the accused included an officer responsible for supervising the stuffing and sealing of the container.

In July it was announced that six individuals from four different freight companies had been charged with involvement in the ivory smuggling racket.[ix] According to the indictment, two freight companies were involved in shipping a total of 9.5 tonnes of ivory to Hai Phong and Manila, with three companies implicated in smuggling 1.5 tonnes of ivory to Manila. The one firm charged with involvement in shipping all of the three containers is Team Freight (Tanzania) Ltd. Available evidence points to the six accused being minor players in the syndicate behind the shipment of 11 tonnes of ivory, with the main culprits not yet identified by the authorities. Certainly, Team Freight is a small company; it reported income of Euros 40,000 ($190,652) in 2009, with a quarter of revenue coming from two pubs owned by Team Freight's director.

While the Tanzanian authorities moved quickly to charge the customs officers and shippers, the case is unlikely to be resolved soon. In 2006, customs officers and staff at a shipping company were charged with involvement in shipping 5.2 tonnes of ivory from the port of Tanga to Taiwan. As of mid-2009, the court case was still on-going.[x] Likewise in Vietnam, the case remains unsolved, with no significant arrests or prosecutions.



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ABOVE:
These whole tusks, which come from young elephants, illustrate the indiscriminate nature of poaching in the Selous.

EIA INVESTIGATIONS

In mid-2006, EIA investigators travelled to Tanzania to verify reports that elephant poaching was increasing and the ivory trade growing in the country. Despite the fact that trade in ivory is banned in Tanzania, EIA identified 36 individuals offering either ivory products or raw ivory during a three-week investigation. Most of the traders were based around the Mwenge handicrafts market in Dar es Salaam. Upon request, a range of products were offered to investigators, ranging from bangles to carved statues. Raw ivory tusks were also offered on several occasions, and were usually stashed on nearby roofs or at locations near the market.

The majority of ivory shown to EIA investigators was said to come from Tanzania, with traders citing the Selous Game Reserve and Serengeti area as sources. One trader claimed to have a stash of ivory from Rufiji in the Selous, adding that he had contacts with rangers who helped obtain the tusks. Other traders claimed to source ivory from northern Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Some of the traders introduced investigators to associates with freight forwarding companies familiar with shipping ivory overseas. One such shipper, based in the Changombe industrial area, adjacent to Dar es Salaam port, claimed to have shipped ivory to the Far East for a Taiwanese client. He explained how ivory is often concealed with foodstuffs such as cashew nuts, adding that customs officials who are supposed to inspect the packing of the container are simply paid off.

During the investigation, EIA also heard persistent rumours of government officials and Wildlife Division staff being involved in the trade.

In March 2007, EIA met with the then-Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, Professor J. Maghembe, and showed him undercover video footage from the 2006 investigation. Shortly afterwards, Tanzania withdrew its downlisting proposal initially submitted for the 2007 CITES meeting.

In February 2010, EIA returned to Tanzania to investigate reports of elephant poaching in the Selous and to probe the large seizures of ivory totalling over 11 tonnes in Vietnam and the Philippines during 2009, which were shipped from Dar es Salaam port. EIA worked together with the Journalists Environmental Association of Tanzania (JET) on the investigation.

In Mloka village, the gateway to the northern Selous, EIA/JET heard testimony from local villagers about the mechanics of the ivory trade. One villager claimed that poachers usually come from outside Mloka but would sometimes employ villagers to act as guides inside the Selous, paying them Tsh 20,000 ($15) per trip. Rangers

working inside the reserve collude with the poachers by either telling them when patrols will be going out, or helping them pinpoint elephant herds. The price for raw ivory at the village level was said to be Tsh 25,000 per kilogramme ($19), with the buyers often retired army, police and government officials, who also help provide firearms to the poachers. Local villagers explained that the ivory is transported to Dar es Salaam in small consignments from Mloka, sometimes by public bus but also concealed in government vehicles, which are never stopped at checkpoints. EIA/JET were told that poaching takes place throughout the year, but peaks in the rainy season when large areas of the Selous are difficult to access and tourist operations close. EIA/JET were also told of an upsurge in poaching activities in the northern Selous during 2009, with temporary camps established by meat and fish poachers, and gunshots heard by tourists. On a five-hour drive inside the reserve, EIA/JET saw the two-week old carcass of a poached elephant, and spotted only six live elephants. One local source said that 15 elephants had been poached in August 2009, near Lake Tagalaga, in the northern Selous.

In the town of Somanga, a key transit point on the road from Lindi in southern Tanzania to Dar es Salaam, local contacts explained how ivory trade was flourishing in the area, with the villages of Chumo, Chapita, Kinjumbi and Rutambi said to be hotspots. One villager said that elephant poaching was increasing in the area with a constant demand from buyers in Dar es Salaam. Local traders are said to buy ivory from poachers for Tsh 25,000 per kilogramme, which is then sold to businessmen from Dar es Salaam for Tsh 45,000 ($35). Once the local traders have secured fresh ivory, they use mobile phones to communicate with buyers. While some of the buyers will come to the village to do business, others prefer to carry out the transactions in the town of Ikwiri – a key transit point on the road to Dar es Salaam, located north of a 60 kilometre stretch of dirt road. Once again, locals spoke of the involvement of staff from the Selous reserve in elephant poaching.

While in the area, EIA/JET received intelligence of fresh ivory for sale in the remote village of Chumo. Undercover investigators posing as timber and ivory dealers travelled to the village and were introduced to a local shopkeeper who also poaches elephants in the Selous. The poacher said he had five kilogrammes of ivory for sale, with a further 100 kilogrammes available within two days. He claimed that around 500 kilogrammes of tusks are traded in Chumo every month. When the investigators asked to see the ivory, they were led to the dense bush surrounding the village, where the hidden ivory had been buried prior to sale. Under intense pressure from increasingly aggressive poachers to buy the ivory, the investigators had to flee the scene, pursued on motorbikes modified with silencers, which are also used to ferry ivory around the area.

EIA/JET investigations reveal overwhelming evidence that ivory is flowing out of the Selous, with the connivance of rangers working in the reserve, and that the main destination is Dar es Salaam. The availability of ivory in the area indicates that the concerted enforcement operation in the Selous in November 2009 appears to have been too limited in duration, and the trade continues unabated.

BELOW:
Poachers have easy access to firearms; this elephant was clearly killed in a hail of bullets.

© Pierre Gleizes/EIA

ZAMBIA

© EIA

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TOP:
Lone bull, Lower Zambezi.

ABOVE:
Ivory is collected and marked according to geographical location and other determining factors.

There have been a number of population figures for Zambia's elephants circulated since the mid 1990s, most of them estimated figures based on significant variance. The 2007 IUCN African Elephant Status Report (AESR) figure (which is defined as "definite") puts Zambia's population at 16,562. If one assumes a crude 4.5 per cent annual increase, the population still only sits at 18,086. This is 4,000 fewer than the lowest estimated figure from Zambia's Country Report of June 2009 (21,997 – 30,787) and almost 10,000 less than the figure quoted in the proposal. Also, the National Survey conducted in 1996 put the figure at 22,000; in their 2002 proposal, Zambia estimated its population to be between 22,000 and 25,000, and in the same year the Panel of Experts Report put the figure at between 12,000 and 25,000, all of which call into question the accuracy of the different figures presented.

Financial constraint has also been presented as a rationale to support the downlisting and sale. Yet the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) received significant donor support over the last decade,[xix] and the mismanagement of resources is well documented. Following a Norwegian government forensic audit related to its support for the South Luangwa Area Management Unit (SLAMU), the Ministry of Finance and National Planning reported ZAWA's Director General to the Anti-Corruption Commission in 2009. It is not a lack of financial resources that is blighting ZAWA's effectiveness, but a lack of efficient management of all resources.

Individuals with direct experience working for and alongside ZAWA are the first to feel the impacts of senior management failings:

- The regular requisitioning of vehicles by senior management for 'business' use at the expense of operational enforcement activities. In one management area, only one of 10 vehicles was available for operational use at the time of the investigation.
- ZAWA regularly fails to provide rations and fuel for anti-poaching operations for significant periods of time.
- Communications equipment supplied to ZAWA by the Lusaka Agreement Task Force has not been maintained and computer equipment is riddled with viruses. Staff trained to operate the equipment have been transferred elsewhere, thereby reducing ZAWA's ability to communicate intelligence.
- Until recently, ZAWA's office at Lusaka International Airport had been closed and unmanned for many months – a practice inconsistent with ZAWA's claim to have "improved strategies and effective law enforcement". The office was reopened on the 11th January 2010, a few weeks prior to the imminent visit from the CITES Panel of Experts.
- ZAWA's intelligence unit is severely compromised by its failure to retain a sufficient number of experienced investigators on staff. The results are that inexperienced individuals, some of whom have limited English language skills, are being called to give evidence in court. Their inability to articulate their evidence is resulting in individuals being acquitted and is likely to ensure that the most serious and wealthy criminals are not prosecuted, and has the potential for significant miscarriages of justice.

EIA INVESTIGATIONS

EIA has been documenting the illegal trade in elephant ivory and related poaching for over two decades and in Zambia specifically since 2001. Despite an increase in financial support from donor agencies and additional logistical support from local grass roots organisations such as the South Luangwa Conservation Society (SLCS) and Conservation Lower Zambezi (CLZ), reports of poaching have increased and enforcement capacity has plummeted. The high increase in the number of elephants recorded as 'problem' or killed as a 'management' exercise has also caused some consternation.

A variety of sources in Zambia report that the poaching of elephants has been on the increase in recent years, yet the current proposal fails to provide detail on the level of poaching. There are concerns that the true extent of the problem is being deliberately concealed, as has been the case in the past.

Despite a ban on domestic sale, ivory is easily obtainable and available in volume. Lip service is paid to the level of illegal ivory available in the domestic markets of Zambia and largely ignored as 'incidental' and of little consequence. Yet EIA investigators found that Zambia has both a thriving illegal domestic market and is also at the centre of international ivory trade: indeed, Zambia is host to some of the world's most sophisticated ivory traders and networks.

Investigators visited key border points, trading hubs and markets (including Lusaka, Chirundu, Livingstone, Katete, and Chipata) and engaged with poachers, traders and middlemen on a number of levels. Traders from, and with connections to, Zambia, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola and South Africa spoke at length about how they operated and investigators were offered worked and unworked ivory as well as other commodities, including rhino horn.

In many cases, the traders were familiar with the Mandarin words for ivory (xiangya) and rhino horn (xiniujiao). There was evidence of advance orders, and ivory purchased by government and embassy officials and immigrant workers, all of whom transport or arrange shipment of ivory back to China.

Some ivory traders have described how they supply gems and gold to rebel forces in conflict-blighted countries in exchange for ammunition, and how ivory is transported in place of medical supplies in Red Cross vehicles.

LUSAKA

"Arcades" is one of the most popular modern shopping malls in Lusaka. It has the usual mix of supermarkets, clothing stores and branches of international banks, and its restaurants cater to Zambians and international visitors. "Arcades" is also one of Lusaka's centres for engaging with suppliers and traders of illegal ivory.

Almost immediately upon visiting the mall, EIA investigators were approached by traders who stated that they could supply ivory and rhino horn. Also trading

High-tech ivory trade

The increase in the level of sophistication of wildlife criminals is not news. But EIA heard examples of this, including advice from traders on the best mobile telephone SIM card to use in order to avoid being traced by the authorities.

There have been accounts of poachers being kitted out in expensive outdoor clothing to enable them to operate despite the elements, and more than one example of poachers being found with satellite telephones (which retail at around $1,000).

BELOW:
The Sunday craft market at Arcades Shopping Mall in Lusaka is a key meeting place for Zambia-based ivory sellers and their Asian customers.

© EIA

ILLEGAL IVORY TRADE IN ZAMBIA

The Case of the Singapore Seizure 2002

In June 2002, over six tonnes of ivory was seized onboard a ship arriving in Singapore. The seizure, which disrupted one of the world's most lucrative ivory syndicates, resulted from the coordinated efforts of national enforcement agencies from Zambia, Malawi and Singapore, as well as the multilateral Lusaka Agreement Task Force. Yet despite initial high levels of interagency cooperation, the recovery of substantial evidence and numerous investigations by a range of national and intergovernmental agencies, the case has foundered. Eight years on, there have been no significant prosecutions and the syndicate responsible remains free to operate with impunity.[xvi] Some of the individuals implicated in the case, including ZAWA personnel, are now back in business or back in the employment of ZAWA. One source told EIA: "The same people who did, who were involved, they are now back in the system so it cannot change.... [T]hey're back in the system. And they've been promoted."

Illegal ivory trade and Transnational Organised Crime

Investigations into the Singapore case revealed a well-established syndicate comprising Southeast Asian and African nationals, operating across at least five borders and spanning two continents. Recovered documentation showed that the syndicate had been active for at least eight years, having dispatched 19 similar-sized shipments since 1994, the majority destined for China (five for Japan). Such a formidable record of activity represents literally thousands of poached elephants and black market ivory worth many millions of dollars.

Sourced largely from elephants in Zambia, the ivory was transported to Malawi for packing before being taken by road to Mozambique. From there it was shipped to South Africa, and on to Japan via Singapore. The modus operandi employed to avoid detection included the use of personal and company pseudonyms, mis-declaration of goods, bribing customs officials, fake documentation and multiple transhipments.[xvii] DNA analysis has confirmed that most of the ivory in the Singapore seizure originated in Zambia. The majority of the shipments were destined for China.

The Minister is now asking for this ivory to be returned so that it can be sold.[xviii]

Illegal Trade in Zambia 2009

In March 2009, 72 elephant tusks and five rhino horns were seized en route to Lusaka. Four people, including two police officers were arrested in possession of six cases that had false compartments to conceal the ivory and rhino horns underneath what were described as gemstones. A convoy of three vehicles, the license details of which were provided to ZAWA by a reliable informant, was allegedly taking the consignment to Lusaka Airport. Only one of the vehicles was intercepted. A number of subsequent arrests were made including the occupant of the house at which the contraband had been stored prior to movement. Under the instruction of the Head of ZAWA's Intelligence Unit, several people were formally charged and released on bond; the Commissioner of Police and Director General of ZAWA then instructed ZAWA to hand the case over to the Zambia Police along with the exhibits, which were taken to Lusaka police Headquarters.

Several days later, fresh instructions were issued to the effect that the Director of Public prosecutions had instructed the Zambia police to withdraw the matter. Zambia claims that it has adopted a zero-tolerance approach to all incidences of poaching. Yet this case has been discontinued despite the fact that possession of the commodities represents a 'strict' liability offence with virtually no defence.

in gold and gemstones, to attract special customers, they whispered the Mandarin word for ivory - "xiangya".

EIA met with Angolan refugees who use contacts from their home country to supply ivory and, allegedly, rhino horn. They explained how they exchange gems and gold in exchange for ammunition and described how they transported ivory in Red Cross vehicles. Medical supplies in boxes are replaced with ivory; the boxes are never searched. They claimed they could supply one tonne of ivory immediately.

Another trader from the Democratic Republic of Congo, with family ties to a high-ranking officer in the Congolese army, has been operating in the ivory business with impunity since 1995. He had over 250 kilogramme of unworked ivory and claimed he could supply any amount on demand. He uses military vehicles to escort the ivory to the border, from where it is transported to Lusaka.

Kabwata Cultural Market is an arts and crafts market in central Lusaka catering to tourists. EIA investigators travelled to the market and less than five minute after arrival were offered and shown ivory. The traders said that they could supply over 90 kilogrammes of unworked tusks every month, with one stating he accesses Zambian ivory distributed by a number of fellow conspirators.

Another trader sourced ivory from Angola, Tanzania and Kenya. He uses Zambian military vehicles: the traders simply pay the soldiers and they transport it across the border. He described how he travels into the bush in Angola and Zambia to collect ivory from a number of individual poachers and smaller scale traders. This is a similar collection method described by other traders. He stated that his main customers are Chinese, including businessmen, constructors and, in 2008, an official from the Chinese Embassy who bought 100 kilogramme of ivory.

CHIRUNDU

Chirundu is located in southern Zambia and is separated from Zimbabwe by the Zambezi River. Close by is the popular Lower Zambezi National Park. EIA investigators met with two traders – one Zambian and one from Zimbabwe. They claimed to have contacts with rangers in one of the Zimbabwean national parks. In order to avoid using firearms, which were too noisy, the rangers used poisoned fruit to drug and kill elephants, and then used petrol to facilitate removal of the tusks. The ivory was then easily transported from Zimbabwe across the river by canoe.

Investigators also met with a poacher and supplier who was prepared to enter the Lower Zambezi National Park to kill four elephants, and deliver the tusks. Confirmed by independent sources to be a village scout (employed by ZAWA), he proudly sported a ZAWA "Warrior of Wildlife" T-shirt. He stated that all poachers in the Lower Zambezi Parks are Zambians.

LIVINGSTONE

Mikuni Village is a tribal village approximately 30 minutes outside Livingstone. Investigators were introduced to a poacher and carver who presented them with a large piece of unworked ivory. This individual stated that he will poach to order and procures his ivory from Sioma Ngwesi National Park. He also collects ivory from other poachers, which he sells on in Livingstone and Lusaka, at the Sunday Market at "Arcades" Shopping Mall where investigators had also been offered ivory. He has also claimed that he had taken Zambian ivory to sell in Namibia.

Another trader stated that he had previously operated out of Kabwata Market in Lusaka and sold mainly to Chinese buyers including embassy officials, some of whom place orders with him for ivory. This trader has been told that when Chinese government officials come to Zambia to visit the President, they are allowed to buy whatever they want, taking the items home in 'diplomatic bag'. This is consistent with previous information obtained by EIA.

CHIPATA/KATETE

Having met a source in Chipata, investigators were led to Katete, near the Mozambique border. In a remote location, investigators were shown two fresh elephant tusks, each approximately one metre long, while four more were said to be at safehouses nearby. The traders stated that the tusks had been poached in Mozambique although the elephants may in fact have been poached from South Luangwa National Park.

Through independent sources, EIA was able to establish that one of the Katete traders was known to be an associate of a major ivory trafficker based in western Zambia who is connected to a wide network of ivory poachers. With nearby Chipata known to be a key trading border town, and the ability of remotely based poachers to cross borders without detection, such traders will continue to operate with little risk of detection.

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"STEPHEN"

Stephen has been in the ivory business for over 20 years, during which time he claims to have supplied many tonnes of ivory. A Congolese migrant, and understandably cautious in meetings with EIA investigators, Stephen initially used a false name, scouted meeting areas carefully before approaching the venue and was always flanked by a number of bodyguards.

Stephen was arrested once before following an undercover operation and spent a short time in custody before securing his release by paying a bribe. This account has been corroborated through independent sources.

Stephen deals in large quantities of ivory and arranges export. The majority of his customers are from China. Like many of the other ivory traders with whom investigators met, Stephen also trades in furniture, gemstones and copper.

Stephen described how, in 2004, he supplied three tonnes of raw ivory to a Chinese government delegation to Zambia. He explained that he personally loaded the ivory onto an official Chinese plane at Lusaka airport.

At the time of the first meeting with Stephen, he had three large tusks weighing around 50 kilogrammes. He kept them in a safe house on the outskirts of Lusaka. On a subsequent

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TOP:
Stephen is undoubtedly one of the most prolific ivory traders in Zambia, claiming to have been in business for 20 years, and able to supply two tonnes of ivory in one month.

ABOVE:
A trader in Kabwata Cultural Village, Lusaka, offers ivory for sale. This trader sources ivory from Livingstone, and said that ivory is often smuggled out of Zambia to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

How credible are Zambia's ivory stockpile inventories?

There have been serious allegations from several sources about the reorganisation of the stockpile to better reflect the inventory of ivory accumulated through management operations and natural elephant mortality. The inventories at all collection/storage points have been 'transferred' to brand new ledgers and there have been allegations that entries have been changed to reduce the number of 'poached' animals.

Staff involved in the 'transfer' and posting of data have been told that it is a 'State Secret' and that the action is critical to Zambia's downlisting proposal and anticipated income from any subsequent sale.

A reliable, sensitive source told EIA: "[ZAWA has] started changing everything, 'everything will be re-recorded, everything - all the piles from behind'. So they brought in new books and everything has been changed. All the records have been changed.

... [B]ig ivories, which were poached and recovered, have been labelled to be caused by natural death or controlled. Then they are leaving the little ones, those small ivories to say, 'these are the ones that were poached'.

... [T]hose little ivories .. that's the ones they will say were poached. Those big ones they will say they died naturally, but it's not only the big ones that are dying naturally, so something fishy is going on. Everyone knows it."

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meeting just five days later, his available stock had increased to 15 tusks, each exceeding 1 metre in length – the new stock having come from Zimbabwe. The 15 tusks totalled around 360 kilogrammes. He stated that he could accumulate sufficient stock to supply two tonnes of ivory within one month.

He sources ivory mainly from Zambia, but also from Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana using a network of poachers and suppliers throughout the region who know to call him when they have quantities for collection. During EIA's meetings with Stephen, he took a number of calls from poachers who had tusks available for collection. These are stored in small quantities at the houses of friends and relatives until they are collected.

Stephen suggested that the best route to smuggle ivory out of Africa is via Durban in South Africa. He explained that he could arrange for the goods to be transported there and could recommend shipping companies for onward export. If required, he could also arrange transportation logistics on to Asia as he has individuals in the shipping companies in his pay.

He stated that transporting ivory out of Zambia by air was not his recommended option, although he explained that he had previously transported cargo by road into Congo and Malawi and air freighted it from there. Although these options are cheaper than shipping from South Africa, he intimated that security was an issue and advised that direct routes offer greater protection from the risk of interception at trans-shipment points.

To indicate his ability to supply larger quantities, Stephen eventually showed investigators a small section of unworked ivory.

He also explained how his business is reliant to a large extent on a constant demand from China. Regular and guaranteed purchase and sale from such orders provides him with the capital to buy stocks from a wider chain of suppliers and poachers throughout the region. As a result, he claimed to be able to supply in excess of two tonnes of ivory every month.

LEFT:
These two tusks were offered for sale in Katete, Zambia, near to the Mozambique border.

ABOVE:
Illegal ivory trade movement into and out of Tanzania and Zambia

RECOMMENDATIONS

PARTIES TO CITES

- Oppose proposals from Tanzania and Zambia to downlist their elephant populations from Appendix I to Appendix II.
- Reject requests from Tanzania and Zambia for one off-sales of their respective ivory stockpiles.
- Oppose all further sales until the impact of previous sales has been fully analysed and assessed.

GOVERNMENTS OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA AND ZAMBIA

Take decisive and effective action against the illegal ivory trade:

- Enforce domestic legislation.
- Conduct detailed investigations into the role of individuals, government officials and syndicate leaders involved in large ivory shipments.
- Prosecute and convict perpetrators appropriately.
- Publicise case results to create a tangible deterrent to others and increase transparency.

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