
MONITORING THE IVORY TRADE AND IVORY STOCKS IN THE POST-CITES BAN PERIOD

Tom Milliken

TRAFFIC East and Southern Africa, PO Box 30131, Lilongwe 3, Malawi

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

Ivory trade developments in the post-CITES ban era are being assessed by TRAFFIC. The two major objectives are: 1) to identify and monitor the accumulation of ivory stocks, and 2) to develop a database of all ivory seizures, the so-called Bad Ivory Database System (BIDS).

Concerted efforts have been made by TRAFFIC to register and mark legally-held ivory stocks in compliance with CITES regulations. So far, TRAFFIC has worked in Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Malawi, and documented ivory in many other countries. Data collected so far from 16 countries show a total of 380 tonnes, but there are no data for 16 range states. Altogether, it is estimated that there are about 500 tonnes of ivory in Africa. Kenya and Zambia have burnt stocks. The largest stocks are in Burundi (86 tonnes), South Africa (69 tonnes), Tanzania (52 tonnes) and Sudan (46 tonnes). Sudan's stocks are largely held in the private sector and they have lost 15% of their weight since they were first registered in 1988, due to the arid climate. West and central African countries have poorly recorded, poorly controlled stocks. Most ivory accruing to governments in these regions seems to be sold in local markets, which is ironic given the West and central African support for the CITES trade ban.

TRAFFIC believes that the existence of growing stocks is a measure of accountability, good manage-

ment and law enforcement practices. In general, countries which are successful on this score have growing ivory stocks. Southern Africa has the best managed and fastest growing ivory stocks. Most countries still view ivory stocks as assets and protect them, though thefts have occurred in a number of countries.

Before the ban, information about the ivory trade came from official trade statistics. Now, because the trade has gone underground, these data are no longer useful so TRAFFIC has developed BIDS in an attempt to use law enforcement records to monitor the illegal trade in ivory. More than 2,700 seizures since 1989 have been documented in BIDS. Because newspaper reports are often inaccurate, TRAFFIC strives to obtain data from primary sources such as customs, police or wildlife department investigation units.

BIDS data indicate that trade volumes are down, but the critical issue to assess is that of trends. Other developments suggested by the BIDS data are an increase in Asian-run, Africa-based processing operations to produce blank name seals for export to Asia. Prior to the ban, only two such operations were identified; now they seem to exist in 12 countries. It is much more difficult to track the trade in small, worked ivory pieces leaving the continent now, rather than raw tusks as before. The decline in ivory prices may be contributing to an increase in African processing as high-wastage operations are still profitable. This trade development needs to be watch closely.