



South Africa

CREATING PARTNERSHIPS
THAT REDUCE THE IMPACTS
OF THE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE
TRADE ON PEOPLE,
ELEPHANTS AND RHINOS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Literature Review on the Wildlife Crime Prevention Approaches and its potential to address high-value poaching

- The relationship between poverty and crime
- Contested illegality
- Conflict resolution (and aligning values)
- Lessons from behavioural economics
- Conclusion

Relationship between poverty and crime

Poverty and crime often occur simultaneously. However, analyses show that crime is not driven by poverty alone, but rather by inequality. Countries with high overall levels of poverty do not necessarily have higher levels of crime. It is places with high levels of income inequality that typically have the highest levels of crime. Another driver of crime is a breakdown in social norms and values which results in, and is worsened by, factors such as unemployment, incomplete education, a break down in family structures, limited opportunities and exclusion from the formal economy.

Many of these factors are present to the west of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA) in South Africa: there is social and economic inequality, a lack of economic opportunities, poor education and many families are affected by migrant labour into urban centres. The legacy of Apartheid compounds inequality as it resulted in limited opportunities and weak public services, particularly in rural areas.

On the eastern side of the GLTFCA in Mozambique, there is poor governance at the local government level and poaching bosses have captured some of the governance and power structures. In both

countries there is poor service delivery, which stifles economic development and limits opportunities. People in the region often turn to poaching as a way to access resources and livelihood opportunities, which are significantly fewer in Mozambique than South Africa.

Underlying the aforementioned social issues is corruption, which is a problem in both Mozambique and South Africa. While South Africa has problems with corruption, the state is better functioning and more developed than in Mozambique.

Contested Illegality

'Contested illegality' refers to a situation in which a behaviour may have been defined as illegal by authorities, but is not viewed as 'bad' or 'wrong' by the population, or a section of the population. This is true of the communities living in or near conservation areas, and their views of conservation and poaching. This is a particularly difficult concept for conservationists to accept because their careers are built around a set of ideals and core beliefs that focus on preserving and protecting wildlife. The historic and current inequality in South Africa resulted in the priorities, needs and values of park-adjacent communities differing from those of the people and organisations governing and managing the GLTFCA. Conservation values may not be supported by those living around the GLTFCA. Many people living in and around the GLTFCA view the park as there only to protect wildlife. They perceive the GLTFCA as a place that they have been excluded from and as a symbol of a system that disempowers them and that they do not benefit from. People in these communities bear the majority of the costs and derive the least of the benefits of living with wildlife.

These perceptions result in a lack of support for conservation and turning a blind eye to, or possibly even supporting, wildlife crime.

Conflict Resolution (and Aligning Values)

Conflict resolution through dialogue and mediation can bring parties together where interests are divergent or there is a history of animosity. These processes are necessary for addressing issues such as contested illegality and competing social values regarding conservation.

Conflict resolution tends to be more successful when built from the bottom-up. Bottom-up processes involve a larger number of community members and reduce the ability of power brokers and leaders to control the agenda. Bottom-up processes allow those most affected by the issue to shape the conversation and to engage more meaningfully in the process. Interventions should be complex and multi-faceted so that all sectors of society can express themselves, feel respected and be part of the process.

Lessons from Behavioural Economics

Awareness raising and conservation education are common strategies used by conservation organisations to engage with people living in and around conservation areas. A growing body of research in behavioural economics indicates that providing knowledge does not typically lead to the desired behaviour change. In particular, nudge theory states that humans do not always make rational decisions based on cost-benefit analyses, and when we attempt cost-benefit analyses, these are often inaccurate.

Behavioural economics has been used effectively to change behaviour in fields such as public health and financial planning. For example, awareness-raising campaigns on the negative consequences of smoking or unhealthy eating have had little impact, successful campaigns using small, strategic incentives have led to changes in these behaviours.

A key insight from behavioural economics is that people modify their behaviour when incentives or sanctions are swift, fair and certain. Criminal justice systems, particularly in South Africa and Mozambique, are neither swift, fair, nor certain. Thus, we cannot rely on these criminal justice systems to drive behaviour change.

Conclusion

Lessons from criminology, crime prevention and behavioural economics suggest that law enforcement responses alone will be insufficient to reduce high-value wildlife crime in and around the GLTFCA. The significant anti-poaching and law enforcement efforts to date have succeeded in reducing poaching but have not stopped it. While these responses are needed in the short-term, they are insufficient as a stand-alone response. In the long-term, community crime prevention, socio-economic improvement, conflict resolution and behaviour change interventions, informed by evidence-based approaches that address the social, economic and societal drivers of wildlife, are needed.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) South Africa commissioned Conservation Synergies to undertake a literature review investigating the application of criminology and crime prevention theory to high-value poaching in the Mozambican and South African parts of the (GLTFCA). This executive summary highlights the key points of that review.

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