

# Ivory and Beyond

A Decade Of Progress



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# Acknowledgements

The NGO Stop Ivory was instrumental in the creation of the EPI and its dedicated secretariat, while Conservation International and many other organisations provided support from an early stage. Stop Ivory ended operations in 2020, after many of its responsibilities were formally assumed by the EPI Foundation. Conservation International continues to be an essential supporter of the EPI. Without the vision of Stop Ivory, and the generosity of Conservation International, we would not have been celebrating this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The EPI's work is also supported by governments and international institutions, leading philanthropic organisations, and private donors. We would like to express our profound gratitude to:

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*All photographs EPI Foundation or open source unless otherwise indicated.*

*Edited Barnaby Phillips*

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## Preface

It is an honour for me to present the 10th anniversary report of the Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI), as the incoming chairperson of its Leadership Council. In 2014 a handful of African leaders came together to form the EPI. In their founding statement, they said that ‘the illegal killing of elephants and trade in their ivory is out of control across much of Africa.’ It was a terrible situation, and one which we, as African leaders, could not tolerate. Elephants, after all, are part of our heritage. They are entwined in our rich culture and folklore, and we could not afford to lose them.

One decade later, as I look around our continent, I see a very different and more hopeful picture. This report lays out how we turned the tide of the elephant poaching crisis, and the vital role the EPI played in that process. The ever-growing list of member countries speaks for itself, while the small secretariat’s ongoing work in securing ivory stockpiles is remarkable.

Success, however, brings new challenges. Today we worry less about the criminal poaching cartels,

and more about how elephants can co-exist with our communities of farmers and pastoralists. Elephants are not always easy neighbours. They can destroy crops, and hurt or even kill people. And if the people who live close to elephants do not benefit from their conservation, they will be unlikely to support us, and our efforts hitherto will have been in vain.

The EPI brings African governments together with a platform to project their concerns and raise finance. It empowers wildlife officials across the continent, and connects them with each other and leading conservationists. And it amplifies the voices of those on the frontline of these issues. In other words, the EPI’s unique strength is that it is an African-led response to the evolving challenges of elephant conservation. This is as true in 2024 as it was in 2014.

We will continue to work for a better future for Africa’s elephants and people. Please support us on our journey.

***Sharon Ikeazor, Chair EPI Leadership Council.***

*Former Minister of State for the Environment,  
Federal Republic of Nigeria.*



## Executive Summary

**This report tells the story of the first decade of the Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI), a unique alliance of African countries committed to conserving their elephants. It is written by the EPI’s secretariat, the EPI Foundation.**

Elephants are magnificent animals. They are cherished not only across their range but throughout the whole world, and play a unique and critically important ecological role. But the years leading up to 2014 were bleak for African elephant conservation, with illegal killing and ivory poaching rampant in many regions. The leaders of Botswana, Chad, Gabon and Tanzania, and the foreign minister of Ethiopia, met in London and decided they had to stop the slaughter. They agreed that EPI countries should observe the moratorium on international commercial trade in ivory for a minimum of 10 years, which gives this report a tidy salience. They also agreed to close domestic ivory markets and put ivory stockpiles beyond economic use and, subsequently, to draw up National Elephant Action Plans (NEAPs), consistent with the 2010 African Elephant Action Plan.

The EPI’s Theory of Change is explained in Chapter 1. By implementing their commitments, EPI member states intended to disrupt the ivory supply chain, increase public awareness and strengthen enforcement measures. They would thereby cause a decline in demand for ivory, resulting in the collapse of prices and, consequently, a reduction in poaching.

The EPI has been broadly successful in achieving its objectives. In Chapter 2, we show how the moratorium on the international commercial ivory trade remains firmly in place 10 years on, despite ongoing differences of opinion between African



countries and some heated debates at meetings of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). In Chapter 3, we show that many African countries have taken measures to close their domestic ivory markets during the past decade. So have Canada, China, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

In Chapter 4, we take a detailed look at how the EPI Foundation is working with its member states, and some African non-member states, to keep ivory stockpiles secure. The EPI Foundation plays a unique role in the management and inventory of stockpiles. This is a highly sensitive area, with implications for state security and, potentially, corruption. The EPI Foundation has won the trust of governments through its diplomatic and professional approach. It has developed bespoke technology and procedures to improve the security of stockpiles, trained more than one 1,000 officials and carried out inventories in 15 countries. And where countries have chosen to destroy their stockpiles, the EPI Foundation has helped them do so.

The EPI Foundation has also helped 11 countries develop NEAPs, as outlined in Chapter 5. These holistic plans recognise the unique challenges posed by elephants, including the need for land use planning, and the importance of public support for wildlife conservation.

Indeed, it is the recognition of these diverse challenges, and growing competition over land and resources in Africa, which caused the EPI Foundation to adjust its priorities in 2020, through the adoption of a strategic Vision 2030, as explained in Chapter 6. This new Vision was developed in response to government ministers and wildlife officials in EPI member states telling the Foundation that human-elephant conflict (HEC) was emerging as a hugely significant issue in elephant conservation.

Put bluntly, the growth of HEC threatens to undermine progress the EPI has made in other areas. But HEC is also a challenge which the EPI is now confronting, with a conviction that African people above all must enjoy the benefits of elephant conservation. It is they, after all, who bear the greatest risks.

In line with Vision 2030, the EPI Foundation developed a comprehensive HEC Strategy in 2021, supported by EPI member states, with three pillars: 1) Fostering High-Level Dialogue 2) Enabling Local Solutions and 3) Amplifying African Voices. We've made rapid progress on all three fronts, by bringing African politicians and leading conservationists together in a series of dialogues, implementing our first projects on the ground, and supporting journalists who are reporting on HEC.

The EPI Foundation is a small and relatively inexpensive secretariat. Only 13% of its income has been spent on operating costs, as outlined in Chapter 7. But how can we prove that it, and EPI countries themselves, have been effective? We may have made significant advances towards the EPI's initial objectives, but has this delivered the progress on the ground that was hoped for? These are the critical questions we address in Chapter 8.

We show that, broadly speaking, seizures of ivory and the price of ivory internationally, and levels of elephant poaching in Africa itself, all appear to have declined since their peak in 2011-2013. The EPI's founding fathers can feel vindicated. Africa's elephants are in a far less precarious situation than they were in 2014.

We argue, however, that the EPI's contribution to curbing elephant poaching went beyond simply helping to drive down ivory prices. The closure of domestic ivory markets and improved security of stockpiles also sent a powerful public message, which combined with improved law enforcement, led to reduced demand for ivory, less poaching, and the development of ethical, legal, and sustainable practices. Our theory of change has proven robust.

There are no grounds for complacency. The positive trends obscure significant regional differences. The ivory trade is resilient and adaptive. As we explain in our Conclusion, Africa's demographic trajectory makes it very likely that competition between people and wildlife will become more acute in the coming years and decades. We need to find new ways of mitigating and managing HEC. Unless Africans themselves are convinced of the importance of elephant conservation, and receive the benefits, the future for these magnificent animals is bleak.

Back in 2014 the EPI's founding members called for 'urgent and sustained financial and technical support' for African elephant range states. The burden of conserving elephants, protecting them from being poached and trafficked, and dealing with HEC, falls largely on the African range states. The world needs healthy elephant populations, and the multiple benefits, services and values they provide, to successfully tackle the inter-related environmental crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Some of the significant financial resources which are now flowing to address these crises need to be directed towards elephant conservation.

The EPI has good reasons to celebrate the end of its first decade. It has grown from five to 24 countries. These span the continent, and are Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone. Most of Africa's elephants, of both savannah and forest species, are now in EPI member states. Moreover, in most of these member states, elephants are safer than they were in 2014, with several key populations stable or even increasing. The EPI has delivered against its core objectives, and adapted to take on the emerging challenge of HEC, which is now starting to get the national and global attention it deserves.

The EPI is an African success story, but there are many difficult challenges, as well as exciting opportunities, still to come.

### **John E Scanlon AO** *CEO of the EPI Foundation*



◀ *EPI Foundation Trustee Ian Craig (left) and CEO John Scanlon (middle) feeding an elephant at Reteti Elephant Sanctuary in Northern Kenya*



▶ The formation of the EPI, London, February 2014, left to right President Idris Deby of Chad, President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania, President Ian Khama of Botswana, President Ali Bongo of Gabon, Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom of Ethiopia, and Foreign Secretary William Hague of the UK.



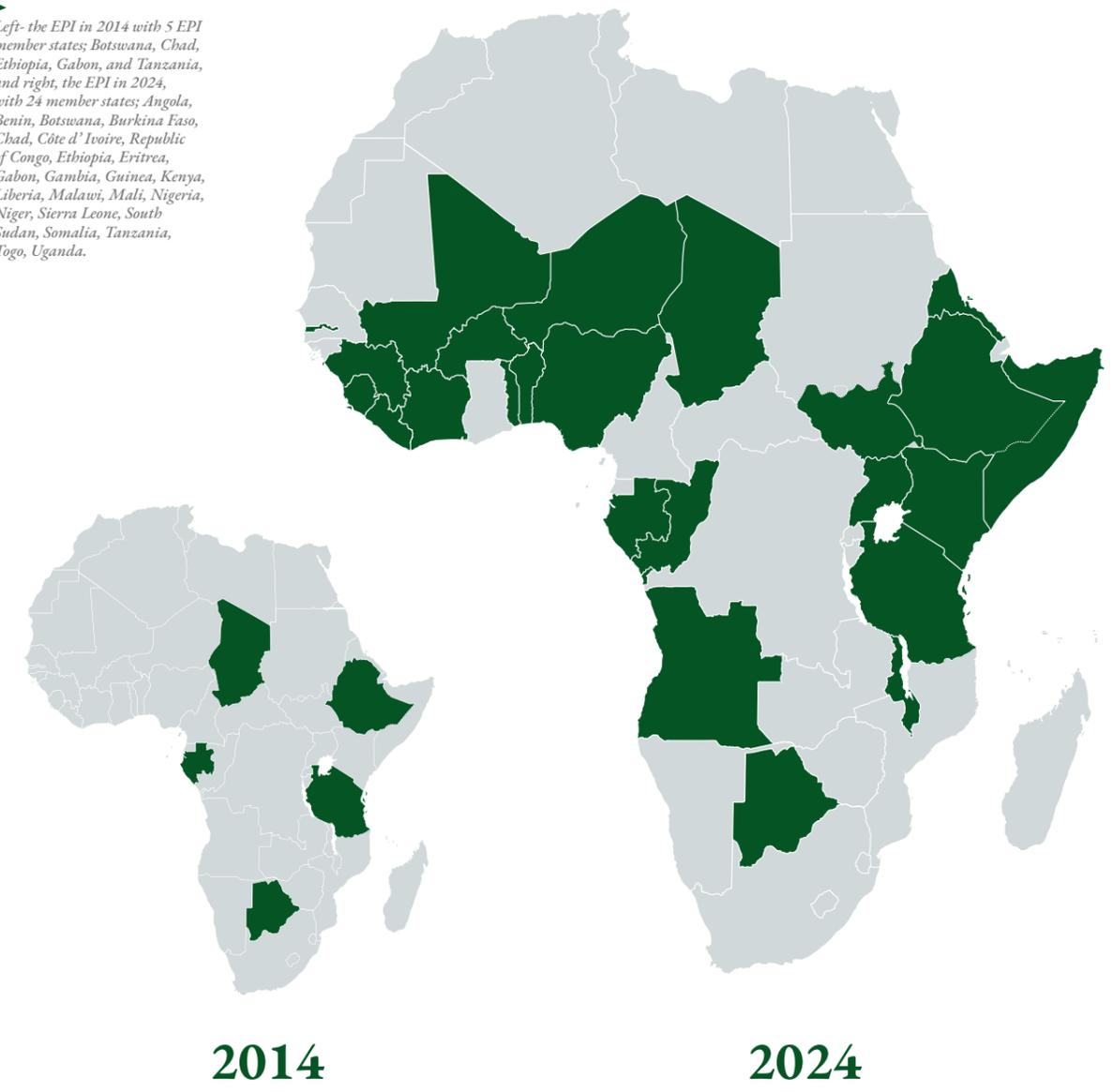
▶ Left- the EPI in 2014 with 5 EPI member states; Botswana, Chad, Ethiopia, Gabon, and Tanzania, and right, the EPI in 2024, with 24 member states; Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Somalia, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda.

## Introduction

The Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI) is an alliance of African countries, committed to conserving their elephants and improving the livelihoods of people who live alongside these animals.

In February 2014 governments from around the world gathered in London for the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference, chaired by the UK's Foreign Secretary, William Hague. It was a time of crisis in African elephant conservation, as ivory poachers wreaked havoc across the continent. The Presidents of Botswana, Chad, Gabon and Tanzania, and the foreign minister of Ethiopia, resolved to lead Africa's response to the crisis by forming the Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI). They committed to observe the moratorium on international trade in ivory, close domestic ivory markets and put ivory stockpiles beyond economic use. They subsequently pledged to draw up National Elephant Action Plans (NEAPs), consistent with the 2010 African Elephant Action Plan, which was agreed by all 37 African Elephant Range States.

The EPI's secretariat, which later became known as the EPI Foundation, was also launched in 2014, with the critical support of the NGOs Stop Ivory and Conservation International, and, with grants from the UK government and the World Bank. The EPI Foundation is an independent UK registered charity, regulated by the UK's Charity Commission.





▲ Prince William with the EPI Foundation's Dr Winnie Kiiru at the EPI event, Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference, London 2018. The Prince has been a steadfast supporter of the EPI.



▲ Prince William, EPI event, Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference, London 2018.

**"The EPI represents hope...hope that our children and future generations will have the opportunity to observe elephants in the world, coexisting with local communities, who have a vested interest in protecting them and their habitats."**

Prince William

### How the EPI Works

The EPI belongs to its member states. These collectively decide policy through an EPI Council of Ministers. Each EPI government appoints an EPI National Focal Point (NFP), typically a senior wildlife official, who liaises with the EPI Foundation on policy and projects.

The EPI Foundation has only a dozen staff and consultants, based across Africa and Europe. It has its own board, made up of leading African and international conservationists, and receives advice and guidance from an EPI Leadership Council. This is composed of eminent Africans, including a former head of state, a former head of government, former environment ministers, and a former and current First Lady.

The EPI Foundation has travelled the world to promote the vision and objectives of the EPI, including at the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney in 2014, the UN General Assembly in New York, special events in Singapore and Hong Kong, the 2018 Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference in London, at which EPI heads of state and government ministers held their own side-event, and the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal in 2022.

### Support for the EPI

Stop Ivory and Conservation International have given essential support to the EPI Foundation's core activities. Project funding has come from the UK and US governments, the World Bank, private philanthropies etc. For a more complete list of our financial supporters see the Acknowledgements.

### EPI Partners

More than 40 leading international organisations have pledged their support for the EPI. These are the EPI partners. The EPI Foundation benefits from the expertise of these organisations and helps connect them with member states. Please see a full list of EPI partners in the Acknowledgements and on the EPI website.

## National Focal Point Case Studies



### Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

Côte D'Ivoire joined the EPI in 2017, since when the EPI Foundation has worked closely with Colonel Salimata Kone, who is the Director of Wildlife and Hunting Resources at the Ministry of Water and Forests.

“*The support of the EPI Foundation has been essential for Côte d'Ivoire.* Together, we have strengthened infrastructure, as well as communication and trust between law enforcement agencies. The support from the EPI Foundation has allowed us to improve security at a new central ivory storeroom, build three other ivory storerooms, prepare and validate standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the management of ivory and other seized products for all law enforcement agencies, and train officers in the use of these SOPs.”



Colonel Salimata Kone



### Kenya

Kenya joined the EPI in 2015, with Dr. Erustus Kanga as our National Focal Point. In his current role as the Director General and Chief Executive Officer of Kenya Wildlife Service, he is responsible for day-to-day management of KWS, as well as leadership and implementation of its strategic goals.

“*Working with the EPI over the past 9 years has enabled Kenya to make momentous progress in elephant conservation.* During our partnership, we have destroyed 105 tonnes of elephant ivory and 1.4 tonnes of rhino horns, successfully deterring poachers from realising economic value from selling wildlife products. Together, we have also digitised Kenya's ivory and rhino stockpiles, while pushing forward the stockpile system at CITES in a bid to improve compliance reporting. Most recently, we have partnered in the development of the National Elephant Action Plan for Kenya 2022-2032. We look forward to implementing the plans we have developed and nurturing pan-African relationships with fellow EPI member states.”



Dr. Erustus Kanga, Director General KWS.

Photo credits: Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS)



### Liberia

Liberia joined the EPI in 2015, and since then the EPI Foundation has worked closely with Blamah Goll of the Forestry Development Agency as our National Focal Point.

“*It's been almost 10 years that Liberia has been a member of the EPI, and I believe that in that time we've made great progress.* It's wonderful to be part of a pan-African alliance dedicated to elephant conservation. Colleagues at the EPI Foundation have helped the Liberian government to assess storeroom procedures for ivory storage, and in the development of a National Elephant Action Plan (NEAP). Since 2023 we've been working together to try and secure a grant to develop a “Gold Standards” toolkit to improve management of wildlife stockpiles such as ivory – this includes an assessment tool, model standard operating procedures, storeroom infrastructure guidelines, and the stockpile management system for digital inventories. These measures can reduce illegal ivory trade, corruption, money laundering, and theft. Looking forward, we hope the EPI Foundation can help us with managing human-elephant conflict, HEC, which is a growing problem in Liberia.”



Mr. Blamah Goll, Technical Manager at the Forestry Development Authority of Liberia



## Chapter 1: The EPI's Theory of Change

### The Problem

From its inception, EPI member states recognised that the threats faced by Africa's elephants are a manifestation of a much broader process of biodiversity loss. We are destroying the ecosystems which underpin human well-being and sustainable development. Since at least the early 1970s, the biodiversity and ecosystems that sustain all life have been in decline.

The main direct drivers of biodiversity loss according to the IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, IPBES, 2019) include:

1. **Changing use of sea and land** : The biggest driver of biodiversity loss is the way in which people use the land and sea.
2. **Direct exploitation of organisms** : Direct exploitation of organisms refers to how we exploit animals and plants for food and materials.
3. **Climate change** : Climate change is having a dramatic impact on our natural environment. Some species are dying out while others are having to move, due to changes in air and ocean water temperatures, weather patterns, and sea levels.

The main indirect drivers of biodiversity loss are people's disconnect with nature and the lack of value and importance of nature (IPBES, 2019).

### The underlying causes include:

- a. **Market failures**, in which the price of goods and ecosystem services do not reflect the full costs of production.
- b. **Policy failures**, in which government and private policies, plans and practices do not adequately safeguard biodiversity, and where short-term economic gain is prioritised over long-term benefits, compounded by an inequitable distribution of tenure and rights.
- c. **Governance failures**, in which rules and laws are unevenly or inadequately applied and corruption prevails, resulting in an erosion of public goods.
- d. **Capacity failures** at the individual, community, institutional and systemic levels, where the ability to identify and implement approaches to biodiversity and ecosystem conservation are limited by insufficient access to knowledge, technologies and financing needed to sustain and strengthen livelihoods.



All of these drivers and underlying causes impact Africa's elephants, but it is the illegal killing of elephants for the international ivory trade that led to a dramatic overexploitation of the species, and which still threatens their long-term survival. However, during the past decade, the loss of habitat has arguably eclipsed poaching as the most important threat to elephants. Due to a rapidly growing human population and economic growth, settlements and related infrastructure are expanding, and wildlife habitat is being converted to agricultural land or grazing pastures for livestock. Elephant migration routes are being cut, dispersal areas fragmented, and connectivity lost. As people and elephants compete for land and dwindling natural resources, human-elephant conflict (HEC) has escalated, sometimes resulting in the death or injury of people and in retaliatory killing of elephants.



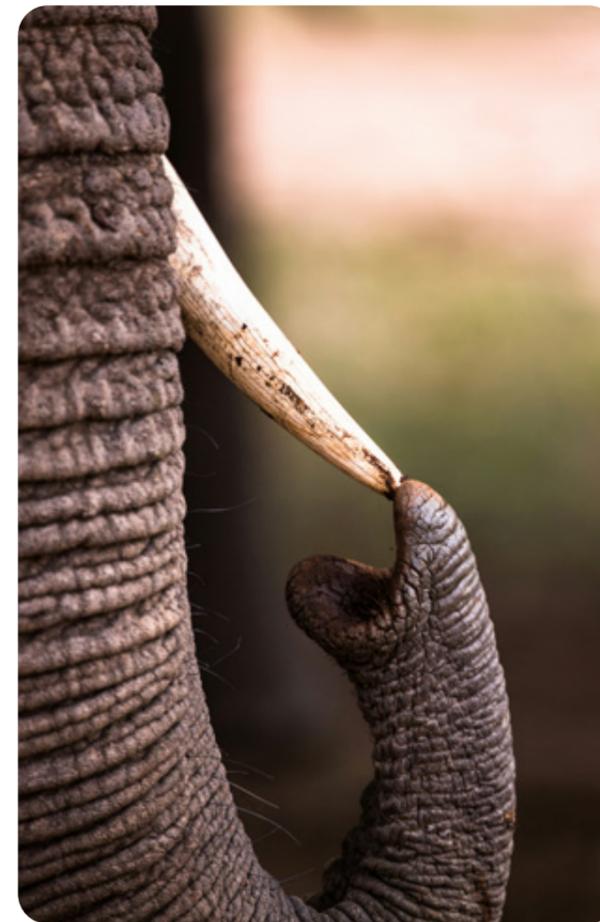
◀ KWS Ivory stockpile, Kenya, Martin Middlebrook

### *The Solution*

The London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade in 2014 recognised that the illegal trade in wildlife, and associated poaching, had reached unprecedented levels. The London Conference aimed to reverse the growth of the illegal trade, including through measures to eradicate illicit markets, by ensuring effective legal frameworks and deterrents, and by strengthening enforcement and support for sustainable livelihoods and economic development. The London Conference recognised that illegal trade could only be effectively tackled if both the demand and supply sides were addressed.

As explained in the Introduction, the EPI was founded during this conference, with four objectives:

- ◇ Maintain the 1989 international moratorium on ivory trade for at least 10 years and thereafter until elephant populations were no longer threatened
- ◇ Close domestic ivory markets
- ◇ Place ivory stockpiles beyond commercial use
- ◇ Implement the 2010 African Elephant Action Plan



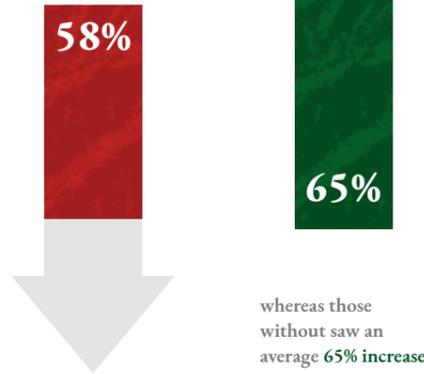
### *The EPI's Theory of Change for Ivory Trafficking*

The Theory of Change outlined here is a holistic approach to address ivory trafficking, encompassing strategies such as the maintenance of the international moratorium on commercial ivory trade, the closure of domestic ivory markets, and prevention of the economic use of ivory stockpiles. The goal is to disrupt the entire supply chain, and to strengthen enforcement measures, which, combined with raised awareness and cultural changes, will ultimately lead to a significant decline in demand, resulting in the collapse of global ivory prices and, consequently, a reduction in poaching.

**The international ban on commercial ivory trade** provides the foundation for the closure of domestic markets, and helps strengthen legal frameworks and penalty systems, while improving collaborative enforcement between countries along the entire ivory value chain. In other words, it strengthens deterrence on the supply side of the trade. Moreover, the international ban sends a strong message to the public - maintaining and increasing awareness and creating social pressure - thereby also affecting the demand side of the trade. The ban can be difficult to enforce, but evidence that it has worked to reduce the demand for ivory has been well documented, with the decline of the ivory market in Japan as one of the best examples (Thomas-Walters *et al.*, 2023).

Domestic ivory markets, regardless of their legality, provide poachers and other actors in the value chain with opportunities to buy and sell ivory without oversight. Between 1989 and 2007, elephant range states with domestic ivory markets experienced a 58% decline in elephant populations on average, whereas those without saw an average 65% increase (Lemieux & Clarke, 2009). Even the presence

Elephant range states with domestic ivory markets experienced a **58% decline** in elephant populations on average



of a single domestic ivory market within a given region tends to stimulate poaching and trafficking of ivory in nearby countries. Thus, the **closing of domestic ivory markets** is an important step in reducing the poaching of elephants and trafficking of ivory, but it must be accompanied by the strengthening of wildlife laws and penalties. Without sufficient deterrence, trade in ivory moves under the radar.

**Placing ivory stockpiles beyond economic use** is part of a broader strategy to address the root causes of elephant poaching and ivory trafficking. Sales from stockpiles perpetuate the demand for ivory and thus contribute to the decline of elephant populations. If we can keep ivory from stockpiles off the market, we also encourage the development of ethical, legal, and sustainable practices, and alternative sources of income for communities hitherto involved in the ivory trade.

The destruction of ivory stockpiles aligns with international laws and agreements, most particularly CITES, which prohibits the international commercial trade of ivory (Scanlon *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, destruction of confiscated ivory (CITES Resolution Conf. 17.8) sends a strong message that the international community condemns poaching and the trade of ivory. Although this is unlikely to discourage poachers and traffickers, it raises public awareness, thereby affecting the demand side of the trade. It informs the public about the plight

of elephants and the consequences of illegal trade, while stimulating discussions on the importance of conservation and the need to protect endangered species.<sup>1</sup>

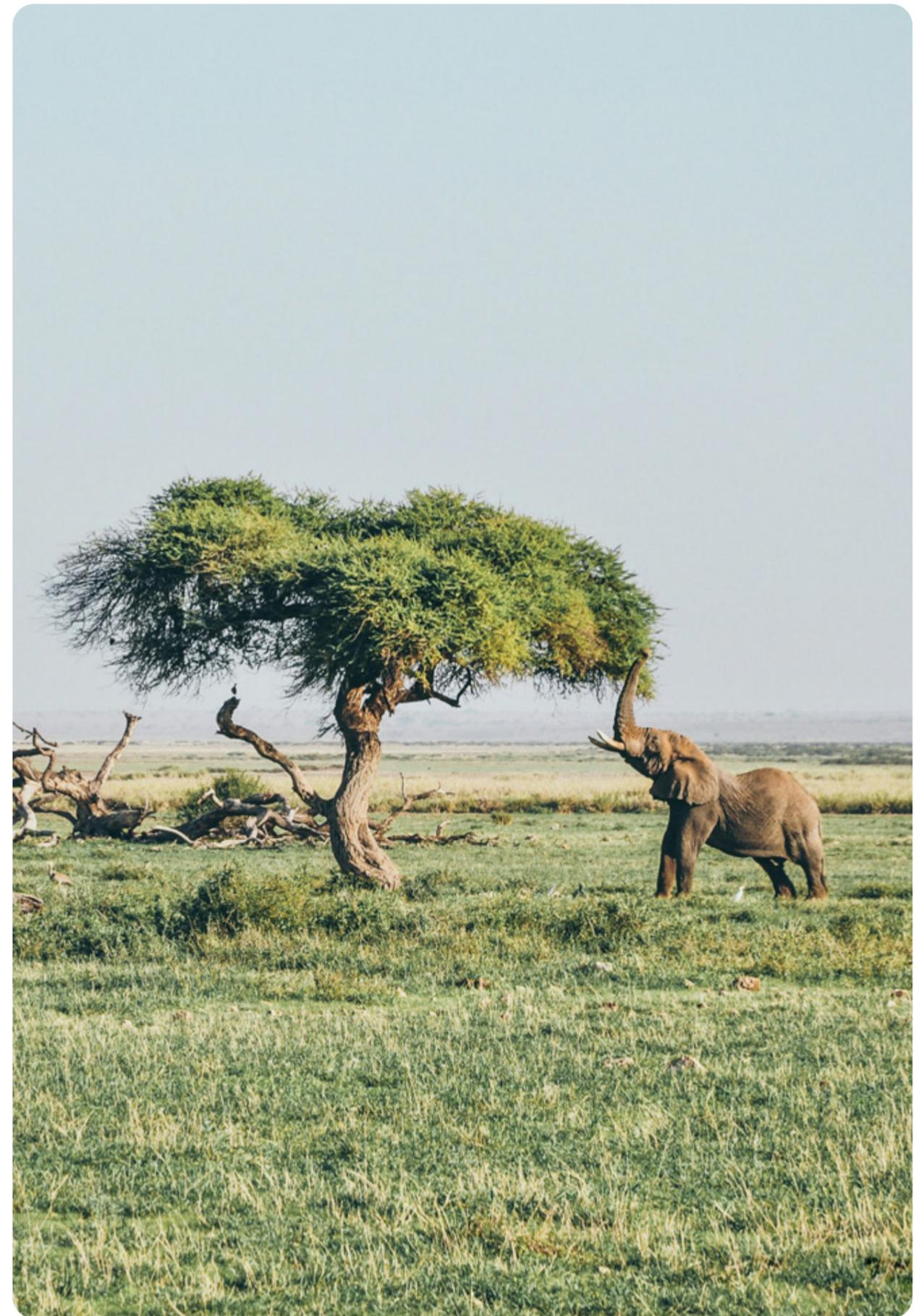
The purpose of the **National Elephant Action Plans (NEAPs)** is to help EPI member states identify and prioritise actions to protect, manage, and monitor their elephants in line with the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP). NEAPs are intended to present a cohesive and comprehensive body of work necessary to conserve a range state's elephants. This includes the reduction in poaching and illicit trade in ivory (Objective 3 of the 2023 revised AEAP) and strengthened international collaboration to improve law enforcement along the entire ivory value chain (Objective 6 of the AEAP), improved cooperation and collaboration with communities (Objective 7) and minimising human-elephant conflict (Objective 1). Thus, a NEAP is an overarching tool to reduce both the supply and demand sides of the ivory trade.

Last but not least is the EPI's objective to **mitigate and reduce human-elephant conflict (HEC)** in our member states, to facilitate coexistence between people and elephants, prevent death or injury to people, and reduce the retaliatory killing of elephants and poaching, as well as affecting a positive change in attitudes towards elephant conservation.

This comprehensive theory of change aims to address ivory trafficking through a multi-faceted approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of supply and demand, the importance of international cooperation and national action, and the need for sustained efforts across sectors to protect elephants and their habitats.

1

CITES Secretary-General's remarks on the destruction of confiscated elephant ivory at Colombo, Sri Lanka





## Chapter 2: Maintaining the International Ban on Ivory Trade

In 2014 EPI countries agreed that the moratorium on commercial international trade in ivory, first introduced by CITES in 1989, should be observed for a minimum of a further 10 years and ‘thereafter until African elephant populations are no longer threatened.’ So 2024 provides the perfect opportunity to assess how the EPI has performed on one of its key objectives.

▲ EPI member states and secretariat at CITES CoP18, Geneva, 2019

The one-off sales of ivory which CITES permitted in 1999 and, especially 2007, were followed by significant increases in elephant poaching in Africa. During the past decade, EPI countries have successfully resisted attempts to end the moratorium. At each of the CITES meetings of the Conference of the Parties (CoPs) during the past decade, Southern African countries have sought to loosen restrictions on the international trade of ivory. They argue that a well-regulated trade in ivory would help fund their conservation efforts. In Johannesburg in 2016 (CoP 17) proposals by Namibia and Zimbabwe were defeated, with 100 or more countries voting against each proposal, and less than 30 voting in favour. In Geneva in 2019 (CoP 18) similar proposals by Zambia and Botswana (a founding member of the EPI which changed its position on ivory trade) suffered the same fate. Again, more than 100 countries voted against each proposal to loosen restrictions, and fewer than 25 voted in favour.

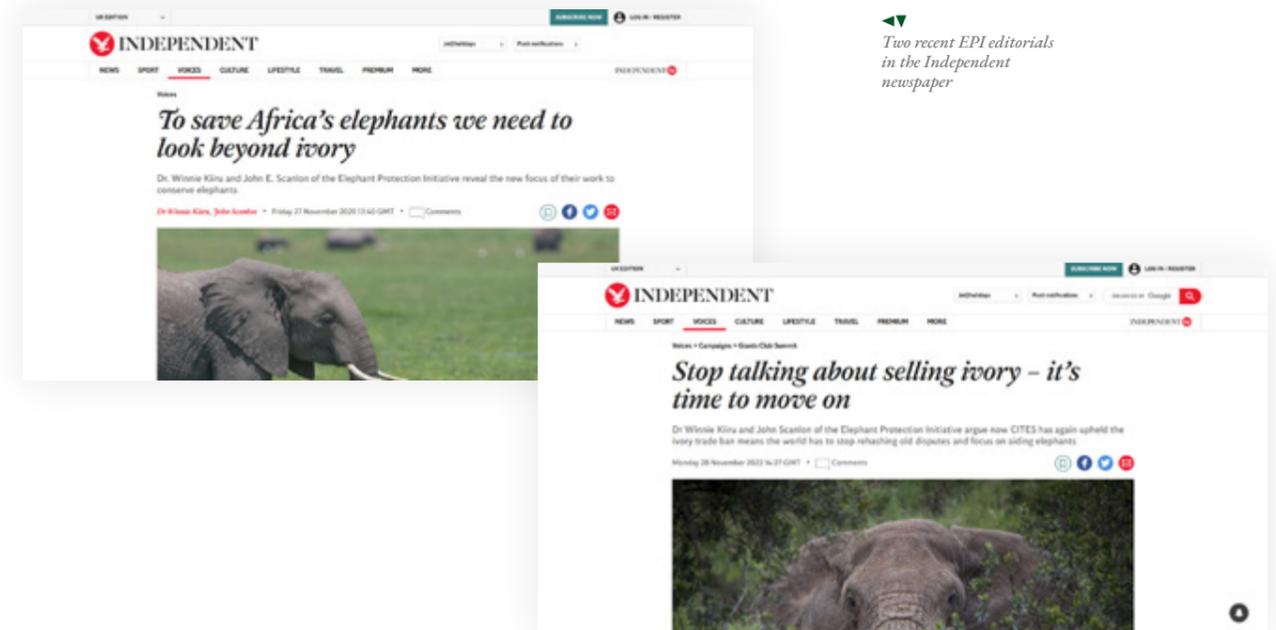
Finally, in Panama in 2022 (CoP 19), Zimbabwe prepared another proposal to allow limited ivory trade. Before this proposal was put to a vote, Zimbabwe amended it, deleting the reference to ivory, but including trade in elephant leather. This was also

rejected. However, more countries (53) voted for Zimbabwe’s proposal than against (48), with a high-level of abstention (32). (Amendments to CITES listings require a two-thirds majority of Parties present and voting).

Counter-proposals presented at these three CoPs to up-list all African elephant populations to CITES’ Appendix I, providing its highest level of protection, were likewise defeated. These proposals were put forward at different times by various countries, including Kenya, Uganda, Gabon and Burkina Faso. For example, the most recent such proposal, by Burkina Faso at CoP19, was supported by 44 countries, but rejected by 59. (It should be noted that of the four populations of elephants on CITES Appendix II, the listings include legally binding annotations that their ivory is deemed to be on Appendix I, thereby prohibiting commercial international trade.)

In summary, the maintenance of the international ban on commercial trade has been one of the EPI’s greatest successes, even if the diplomacy around it has often been divisive. Southern African countries continue to advocate for a resumption of trade in ivory, but a majority of African elephant range states believe this would lead to a dangerous increase in poaching and smuggling. Any change to the status quo seems highly unlikely in the foreseeable future, and yet the history of recent CITES meetings suggests the debate about ivory sales may remain a contentious issue.

The EPI Foundation argues that Africa needs further international financial support for elephant conservation, in recognition of the multiple benefits that flow from maintaining healthy elephant populations, including their many ecosystem services.<sup>1</sup> In recent newspaper editorials - for example ‘To save Africa’s elephants we need to look beyond ivory’ and ‘Stop talking about selling ivory – it’s time to move on’ - we’ve explained that Africa, and the international community, need to take a more holistic approach to conservation. We believe the financial resources now flowing to address the inter-related crises of climate change and biodiversity loss present African countries with an historic opportunity to unite and confront common environmental challenges.



▼ Two recent EPI editorials in the Independent newspaper

1 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212041622000845?via%3Dihub>



## Chapter 3: Closing Domestic Ivory Markets

EPI countries are committed to closing domestic ivory markets as a means to reduce elephant poaching. This is because domestic markets:

1. Increase demand for ivory, and thereby provide incentives for people to source the product, legally or illegally.
2. Encourage people to stockpile ivory in the hope of future legal sales.
3. Provide cover for the illegal trade, with criminals finding ways to launder illegal ivory into legal.
4. Make law enforcement more difficult, because of complex legal frameworks around the possession, buying and selling, of ivory.
5. Undermine the international moratorium on commercial ivory trade.

### Progress:

Since 2014 many countries around the world have taken measures to close their domestic ivory markets. EPI member states, and the EPI Foundation, have played an important role in this process, through lobbying and support.

- ◇ In 2016 the USA implemented a near-total ban on commercial trade in elephant ivory.
- ◇ In 2016 CITES adopted amendments to a Resolution that recommended all countries to close any domestic ivory markets that might be contributing to poaching or illegal trade.
- ◇ In 2016 France introduced a total ban on all ivory sales.
- ◇ In 2017 China closed its domestic ivory market.
- ◇ The UK Ivory Act 2018- which came into force in 2022- put in place a strict ban on ivory sales, with limited exemptions. In 2023 the UK government announced its intention to extend the Ivory Act to cover hippopotamus, walrus, and various whale species.
- ◇ In 2020 Taiwan enforced a ban on domestic ivory sales, maintaining exceptions for ivory products designated as antiques. New Zealand also closed its domestic ivory market in 2020.
- ◇ In 2021 Hong Kong and Singapore closed their domestic ivory markets.
- ◇ The EU updated its restrictions on ivory trade in 2021. These guidelines were not legally binding, and were up to each member state to implement. However in 2022 the EU published new measures to ban most trade in ivory. Exceptions are antiques and musical instruments containing pre-1975 pieces of ivory.
- ◇ In 2023 Canada announced a ban on ivory sales.



## In Africa:

In 2015, 25 African elephant range states adopted the Cotonou Declaration calling for the closure of domestic ivory markets. Over the past decade, EPI member states have revised and strengthened laws to protect wildlife and close domestic ivory markets, although some have loopholes which potentially allow illegal ivory to be laundered into becoming legal. These loopholes need to be tightened and closed.

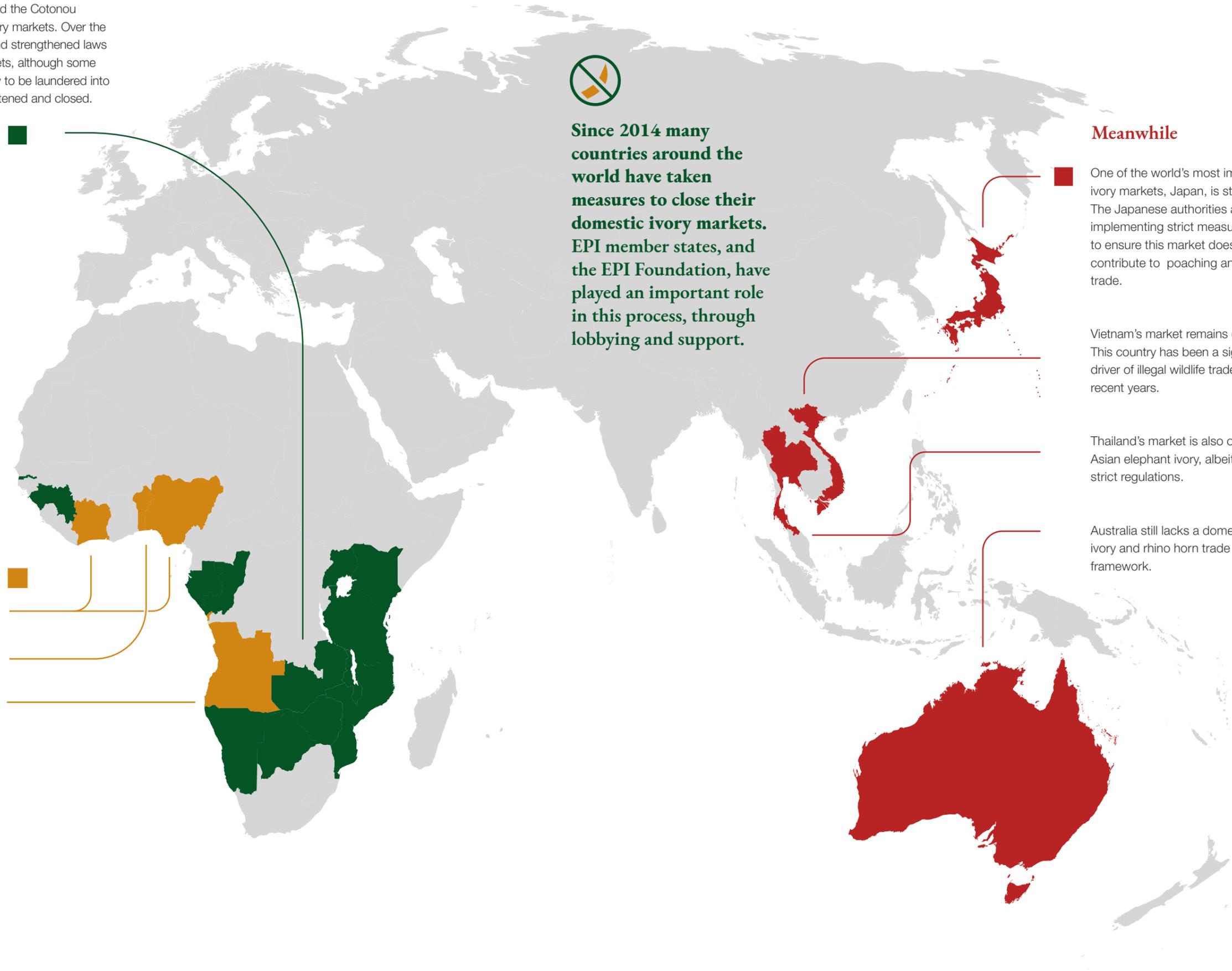
Between 2015 and 2018, a project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), implemented by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and executed by the Conservation Council of Nations (CCN), facilitated legislators in Botswana, Gabon, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe to set up parliamentary conservation caucuses to push for reforms of wildlife laws. The project aimed to increase the capacity and willingness of policymakers to assess and address poaching and illegal wildlife trade at the highest levels of government. In each of these countries legislation has been, or is due to be, passed that strengthens penalties against poaching.

As part of the CITES National Legislation Program, Botswana, the Republic of Congo, Gambia, Guinea and Kenya are reviewing their laws to support the implementation of CITES regulations within their respective countries.

Côte D'Ivoire and Nigeria are in the process of revising and tightening wildlife laws.

Benin is revising its forestry code, which will strengthen protection of elephants.

Angola revised its wildlife law in 2016.



**Since 2014 many countries around the world have taken measures to close their domestic ivory markets. EPI member states, and the EPI Foundation, have played an important role in this process, through lobbying and support.**

## Meanwhile

One of the world's most important ivory markets, Japan, is still open. The Japanese authorities are implementing strict measures to ensure this market does not contribute to poaching and illegal trade.

Vietnam's market remains open. This country has been a significant driver of illegal wildlife trade in recent years.

Thailand's market is also open for Asian elephant ivory, albeit with strict regulations.

Australia still lacks a domestic ivory and rhino horn trade control framework.



Angola, 2022, Tommy Trenchard

## Chapter 4: Keeping Ivory out of Economic use

EPI member states try to ensure ivory from their stockpiles does not enter the illegal wildlife trade, either by securing it or disposing of it permanently. But to achieve this, the EPI Foundation needs to first work with countries to help them know where stockpiles are, and what exactly they contain. During the past decade, the EPI Foundation has developed several tools to help countries achieve these objectives, with outstanding results.



Kiprotich Biwott, Stockpile Management System Manager, Ruth Musgrave, Director of Stockpile Management, Colonel Salimata Kone, in Côte D'Ivoire, 2022.



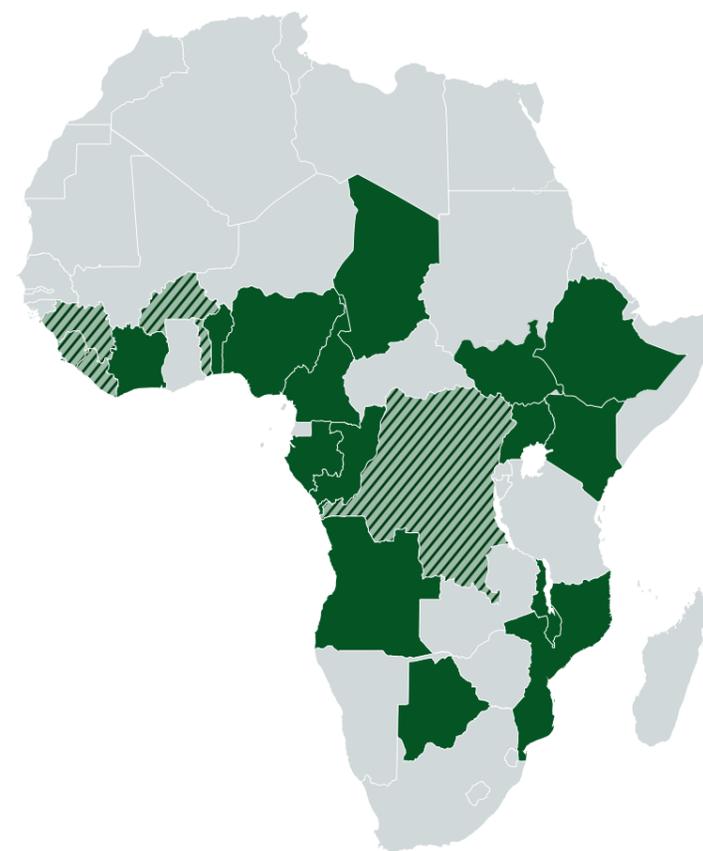
Destruction of Nigeria's ivory stockpile.

Destruction of Nigeria's ivory stockpile, Abuja January 2024, supported and funded by the EPI Foundation.

### Improving the management of ivory stockpiles through inventory and accountability

In 2014 the EPI developed the Stockpile Management System (SMS), a digital protocol and inventory App. The SMS was launched in Ethiopia and has now been used by 15 countries. A further six plan to start using it in 2024.

The SMS is typically used by national wildlife departments, but in Nigeria, for example, it is also used by the National Customs Service and a regional state government.



The SMS has now been used by

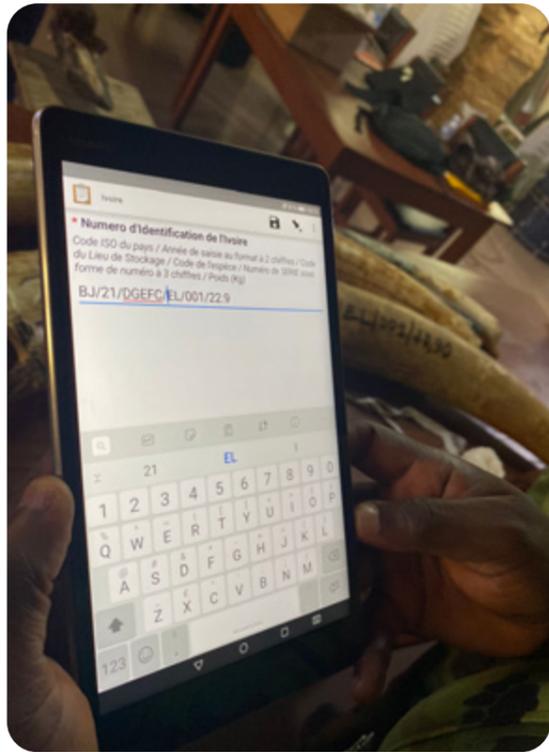
**15**  
countries

A further six plan to start using it in 2024.

African countries using the SMS

- Angola
- Benin
- Botswana
- Cameroon
- Chad
- Republic of Congo
- Côte D'Ivoire
- Ethiopia
- Gabon
- Kenya
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Nigeria
- South Sudan
- Uganda
- Burkina Faso
- Guinea
- DR Congo
- Liberia
- Sierra Leone
- Togo

Countries due to adopt the SMS in 2024 are hatched:



Recording date on the SMS, Benin, 2023

Ivory Inventory, Nigeria 2022

The EPI Foundation has carried out more than

55 SMS training courses,

involving

1149 participants.

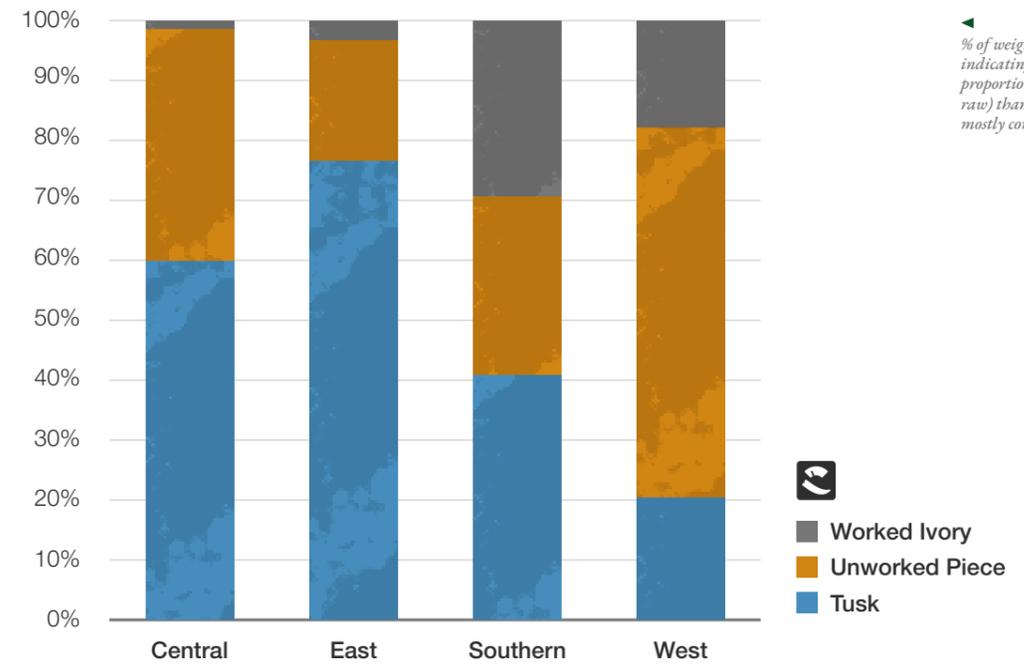
The SMS has been successful because it is simple and easy to use. It gives storeroom managers a digital inventory (not only of ivory but also other wildlife products such as pangolin scales, rhino horns and lion bones) and allows the head office to access the same data in real time, thereby improving management and reporting in compliance with CITES recommendations.

The EPI Foundation provides SMS equipment and initial training, but our ambition is that governments should become self-sufficient. Botswana and Kenya, countries with key elephant populations, are both encouraging examples of where the SMS is fully operational and where wildlife departments have not required further support after our initial training.

The EPI Foundation has carried out more than 55 SMS training courses, involving 1149 participants. Almost all these participants - 93% - were government employees, and the remainder belonged to NGOs. Eighty-five per cent were men, and 15% women. We have distributed more than 250 tablets for maintaining inventories.

Over the past decade EPI countries have inventoried at least 446,000 kgs of ivory. This is more than half of all the ivory that is stockpiled in Africa which has been reported to CITES. (446,000kg of ivory is roughly equivalent to 95,500 elephants, based on the median complete tusk weight per country and total weight of ivory inventoried.)

Of this, circa 79% consists of complete tusks, 15% is unworked pieces of tusks, and 6% is worked, or carved, ivory. More than two thirds - 69% - of the total weight of ivory that we have inventoried is registered as coming from illegal activities, 19% is the result of legal or natural deaths, and 12% is of unknown origin.



% of weight by ivory type by region – indicating that West Africa has a higher proportion of smaller pieces (worked or raw) than complete tusks. East Africa holds mostly complete tusks.



Over the past decade EPI countries have inventoried at least 446,000 kgs of ivory. This is more than half of all the ivory that is stockpiled in Africa which has been reported to CITES. (446,000kg of ivory is roughly equivalent to 95,500 elephants, based on the median complete tusk weight per country and total weight of ivory inventoried.)

Whilst conducting inventories, in countries including Angola, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, and South Sudan, we've trained wildlife departments on DNA sampling of ivory, and worked with forensic experts - including from the University of Washington and from TRACE - who can use these samples to gain insights into the origins of the ivory.

We've also supported governments - Malawi, for example - to centralise their ivory stockpiles in a single location, which allows for greater security and transparency.

The EPI Foundation is now in discussion with countries outside Africa about the possible application of the SMS for their stockpiles of wildlife products.

Kiprotich Biwott, Stockpile Management System Manager, cuts a piece of ivory for DNA Analysis, Nigeria, 2022.

## Impact of the SMS

The EPI Foundation has noticed a significant change in attitudes from government officials responsible for ivory stockpiles, following adoption of the SMS. Initially, we typically encounter uncertainty, a reluctance to communicate, and vagueness. This is often because officials do not have systems in place. They lack the time and resources to access information and specific answers.

Today we work with officials who are confident in their management, frank about their capacity and forthcoming with exact figures. They understand what stocks they have and where. More countries can meet their CITES commitments and make annual reports on their stockpiles. Benin, for example, was one of five countries able



▲ South Sudan Ivory Inventory

to report its ivory stockpile to CITES for the first time in 2022 or 2023. South Sudan, which is not a CITES member, reports each year. Our work has been recognised and complemented during CITES plenary discussions. We have presented our tools at CITES events and regularly share expertise and advice with our partners. The SMS is displayed on the CITES website.

But we can still improve. We would like more countries to adopt the SMS, and we would like to expand its use to more government departments holding wildlife products, ensuring greater transparency and accountability from the moment items arrive in official custody.

## SMS Case Study Benin



**Colonel Rémi Hefoume:** “By joining the EPI in 2020, Benin has been able to establish a secure and transparent management system for its ivory and other wildlife products stockpiles. During the last four years the EPI, with donor support, has invested thousands of dollars, enabling us to develop and adopt standardised operational procedures, obtain appropriate equipment, establish secondary storage facilities, and implement the SMS. We now have a central storeroom which meets the EPI’s ‘Gold Standards’ requirements.

The EPI’s support began at our central storeroom, and successfully expanded to our two national parks. We are currently working with all the forest inspection units in the country to secure their stockpiles.

We hope that in the coming months, with the support of the EPI Foundation, we will extend our work to the courts, the customs, and the police. We also hope to deepen cooperation with the EPI Foundation by working on human-elephant conflict and a National Elephant Action Plan.”

The commitment of the EPI Foundation team, working with my colleagues, has been crucial. Benin now has a clear system to facilitate regular reporting to CITES.



▲ Training rangers in SMS, W National Park, Benin, 2023

▲ The EPI Foundation’s Ulysse Korogone carrying out ivory inventory, National Park, Benin, 2022

▼ Colonel Rémi Hefoume, Director General of Water, Forests and Hunting in the Republic of Benin





**‘To lose our elephants would be to lose a key part of our heritage, and we quite simply will not allow it...for us, ivory is worthless unless it is on our elephants.’**

*His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, Former President of Kenya.*

## Securing Ivory Stockpiles

Ivory stockpiles are a burden to governments. Officials in charge of storerooms have enormous responsibilities. They are at risk of being attacked during thefts, of being corrupted by criminal gangs, and losing their jobs and/or being prosecuted if items are lost. The EPI Foundation found that once countries had adopted the SMS and improved their inventories, they were often keen to strengthen the overall management of their stockpiles, thereby preventing items leaking back into the illegal wildlife trade.

### Gold Standards

In 2016 we launched a ‘Gold Standards for the Management of Ivory and Other Wildlife Products,’ intended to ensure secure, transparent, and efficient storage of contraband items held in government custody. The EPI Gold Standards suite of tools includes: an Assessment tool (Excel or a bespoke App) to facilitate understanding on how storeroom management needs strengthening, Standard Operating Procedures which countries adapt to their requirements, and storeroom designs.

With funding from the UK government through DEFRA, and the US government through INL and USFWS we have carried out:

#### Assessments:

◇ In 11 countries – Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Ethiopia, Gabon, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda - we have assessed 90 storerooms, to understand improvement and strengthening needs. In all of these countries, officials struggle with a lack of resources. We encountered the following problems:

- ◇ Lack of designated storage facilities.
- ◇ Inadequate storage facilities.
- ◇ Lack of protocols for access and record keeping in storerooms.
- ◇ Ineffective staffing, poorly defined roles, and responsibilities.
- ◇ Disorganised record keeping.

#### Improvements:

- ◇ The EPI Foundation has improved 12 central storerooms and 42 field storerooms – introducing secure structures such as shipping containers, as well as CCTV, fencing, shelving units and lockers.
- ◇ We have developed 12 Standard Operating Procedures for storeroom management in 10 countries.
- ◇ We have trained 300 people in these procedures.
- ◇ We provide follow-up mentoring- remote and in person- to storeroom managers.

#### Impact:

- ◇ Countries have more secure and transparently managed stockpiles. They reduce thefts and losses and are less at risk from corruption. They have improved evidence handling, enabling criminal prosecutions.
- ◇ We have conducted 13 audits in 10 countries, with consistently reassuring results.
- ◇ Gabon, Uganda, and Malawi are developing Wildlife Forensic Labs.
- ◇ Benin has introduced the forensic marker, SMARTWATER, in its central storeroom. This is an additional tool in stockpile security.



### Destruction of stockpiles

We support countries in taking their own sovereign decisions on how to manage their stockpiles; to store or to destroy. We commend Angola, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria for carrying out ivory destructions during the past decade. These EPI member states disposed of a combined total of more than 120,000kg of ivory, as well as other products, such as pangolin scales. By destroying these items, they reduced the risks of theft and corruption as well as the costs of storage, and prevented this ivory from ever being used in the illegal wildlife trade. Moreover, they sent a message to the world that this trade is unacceptable.

EPI member states, including Angola, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Malawi are now evaluating the best long-term options for their ivory stockpiles, including routine disposals.

The EPI Foundation is also developing draft policies and legislation on how to better manage stockpiles, including through destruction, over time.

#### African countries using Gold Standards for storeroom management

- Angola
- Benin
- Cameroon
- Côte D'Ivoire
- DRC
- Ethiopia
- Gabon
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Nigeria
- Uganda.



Kenya Ivory Burn, 2016, supported and funded by the EPI.

# Case Study: Malawi's Elephant Conservation Triumph: A Gold Standard Approach



**'It makes Malawi achieve its commitment in terms of CITES obligations, and it creates that international perception that Malawi is serious, but also transparent, in terms of management of stockpiles under its custody.'**

*Brighton Kumchedwa, Director, Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW)*

Malawi joined the EPI in 2015, and has had great success in implementing the EPI Foundation's 'Gold Standards.'

**Infrastructure Enhancement:** The EPI Foundation, with funding from the UK and US governments, undertook assessments of 25 storerooms across the country. Subsequently, seven storerooms were improved with UK government funding, while 10 benefited from US funding. Another important area of collaboration has been in **the centralisation and inventorying of ivory**, thereby helping Malawi meet its annual reporting requirements to CITES.

**Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** In collaboration with the TRACE Forensics Network, the EPI Foundation developed and implemented a uniform Standard Operating Procedure for the management of ivory and other wildlife products across all Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) storerooms.

**Capacity Building:** Recognising that effective implementation depends on well-trained personnel, DNPW officers received extensive training in the newly established SOPs.

**Success Factors:**

- ◇ **Political Will:** Malawi's political leaders have prioritised wildlife conservation, giving impetus for enacting and enforcing stringent measures.

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- ◇ **Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborations with international organisations like the EPI Foundation and support from the UK and the US have increased Malawi's capacity to tackle wildlife crime effectively.

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- ◇ **Community Engagement:** Malawi has engaged local communities in conservation efforts, fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship over natural heritage.

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- ◇ **Capacity Building:** Investments in training and mentoring programs have empowered DNPW officers with the skills and knowledge needed to enforce regulations and combat wildlife crime effectively.



◀ Malawi Ivory Inventory, 2022.

**Challenges and Future Directions:**

**Resource Constraints:** Limited financial and human resources undermine efforts to combat wildlife crime. Continued support from international partners is crucial.

Chakwera, called for a new international agreement to prevent and combat wildlife trafficking, in the form of an additional Protocol under the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime.

**Transnational Wildlife Crime:** Wildlife trafficking is a transnational phenomenon, and can only be stopped by coordinated efforts across borders. Strengthening regional cooperation and information-sharing mechanisms is essential to disrupt criminal networks. In February 2021, the President of Malawi, H.E. Dr. Lazarus McCarthy



◀ Angola: stockpile storeroom, with Gold Standards security systems in place, 2022. Tommy Trenchard.



## Chapter 5: Implementing the African Elephant Action Plan

EPI member states are committed to developing and implementing National Elephant Action Plans (NEAPs). These NEAPs provide each country with comprehensive guidance for elephant conservation, consistent at a national level with the 2010 (revised in 2023) African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP), which was adopted by all 37 African elephant range states in consultation with the CITES Secretariat and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The EPI Foundation has worked closely with EPI member states to develop NEAPs. These NEAPs cover such diverse areas as the management of human-elephant conflict, the involvement of local communities in conservation, land-use planning, and combating poaching and the illegal trade in ivory. (In 2013, the Standing Committee of CITES requested that countries identified as being of concern for their role in the illegal ivory trade – whether as source, transit, or demand countries – develop National Ivory Action Plans, or NIAPs, and actions stipulated in these have been incorporated into NEAPs.)

Over the years, the EPI Foundation has developed several criteria for NEAPs. The most recently revised guidelines (2021) stress the importance of Spatial Planning, to minimise the human-elephant interface and thereby reduce human-elephant conflict (HEC), and to maintain connectivity between wildlife habitats despite accelerating climate change. The 2021 guidelines also include strategies on how to finance NEAP



NEAP Validation Ceremony, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, 2018.



Kenya NEAP workshop, 2022, with EPI Foundation's Dr Winnie Kiiru, seated centre.

implementation, and integrate these plans with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

All NEAPs must:

- ◇ Be prepared by, or with the full participation of, the relevant country authorities.
- ◇ Align with the objectives of the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP).
- ◇ Be for at least a 10-year period.
- ◇ Contain a detailed implementation plan for the medium term, as well as a monitoring and evaluation plan including targets and indicators.
- ◇ Identify longer-term actions that are necessary to deliver the NEAP's goals.
- ◇ Be "SMART" (i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound).
- ◇ Include a clear process for monitoring implementation through the appointment of a NEAP Coordinator and a National Elephant Action Plan Coordination Committee (NEAPCC), as laid out in our 2021 manual, 'Monitoring & Evaluation Framework for NEAPs'.

Since 2015,

**11** African countries

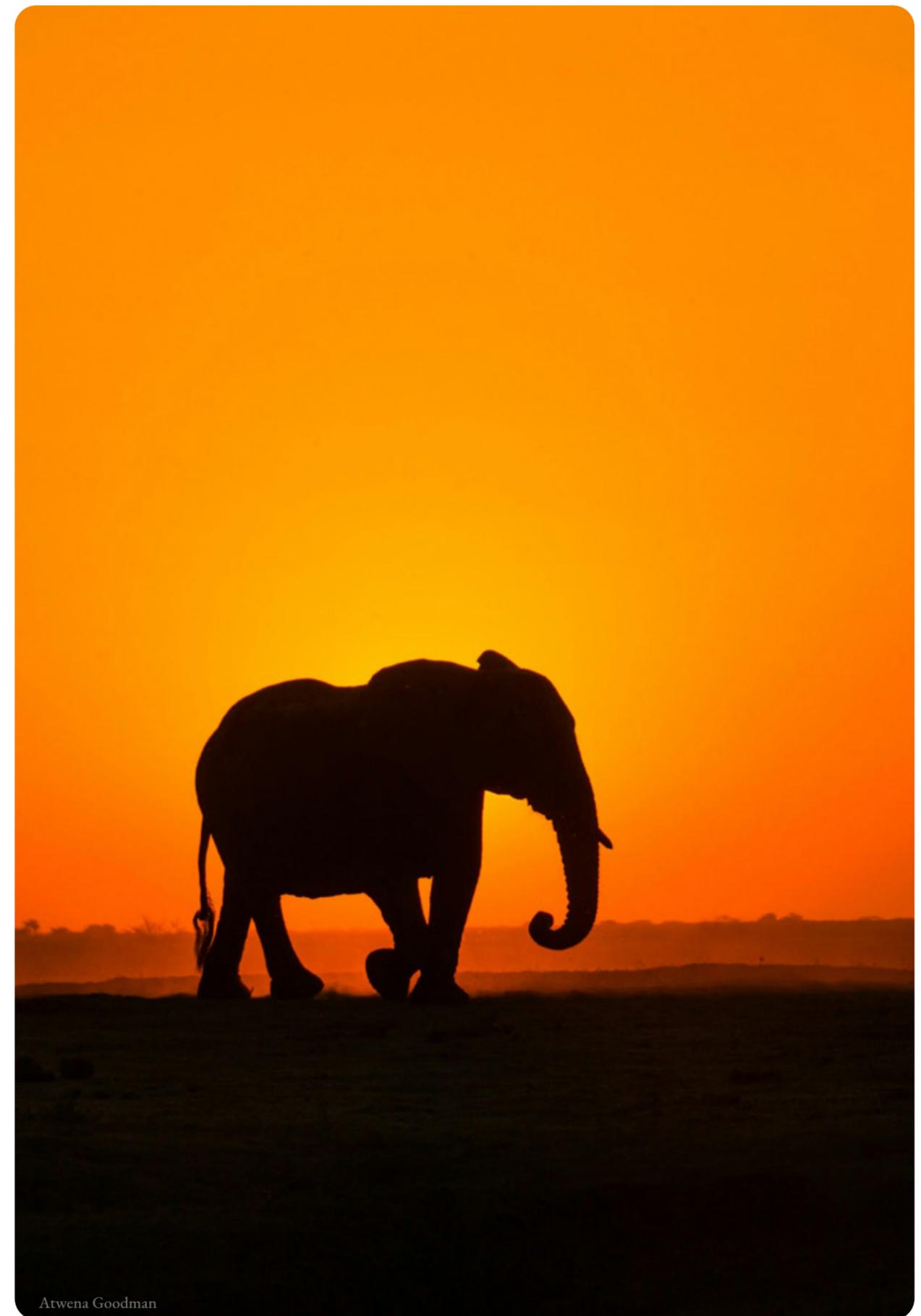
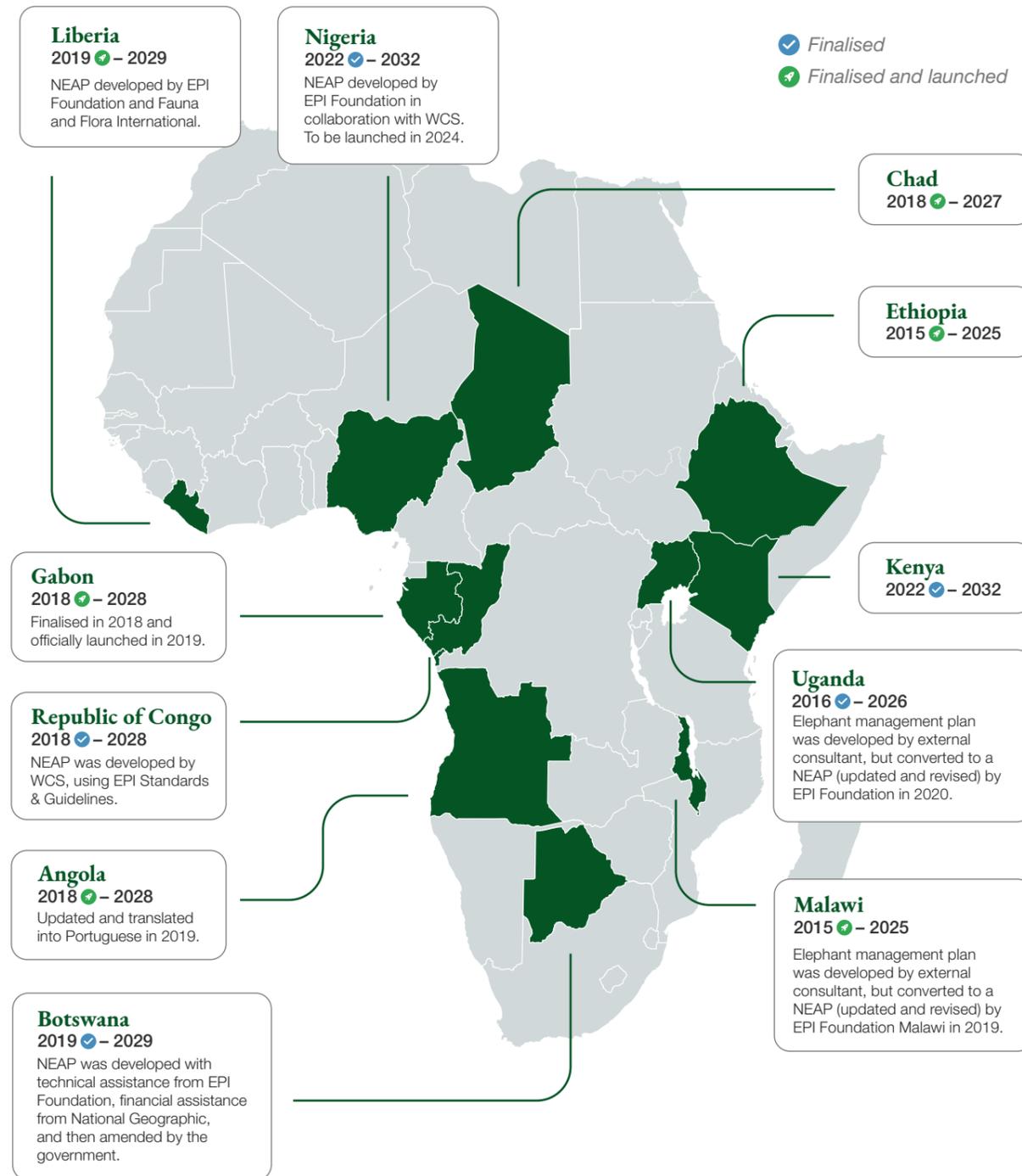
have developed and finalised NEAPs with the support of the EPI Foundation.

Since 2015, 11 African countries have developed and finalised NEAPs with the support of the EPI Foundation. This has been done through a consultative process, involving workshops, community meetings, and reviews of existing strategies and plans.

These plans provide countries with a blueprint for the effective and efficient conservation of their elephant populations. They have helped countries source external funds for elephant conservation, but also to allocate more of their own resources towards this objective.

▼ Member states that the EPI has supported in NEAP development and finalisation: Angola, Botswana, Chad, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda.

## Member States with NEAPS supported by the EPI



Atwena Goodman



## Chapter 6: Human Elephant Conflict and the 2030 Vision

### *Vision 2030*

In 2021, in recognition of the changing conservation landscape in Africa and beyond, the EPI Foundation, in consultation with member states and the EPI Leadership Council, launched its [Vision 2030](#). This gave the EPI an updated sense of direction as we approached the end of our first decade. Our new vision recognises that elephant conservation in Africa is intricately linked to the climate and biodiversity crises. It also acknowledges the growing challenge posed by human-elephant conflict (HEC) across the African continent.

From Kenya to Chad, from Gabon to Uganda, elephants and people are in conflict over land and dwindling natural resources. African newspapers report on this conflict daily. Unfortunately, there are reasons to worry the situation will worsen. In 2000, Africa was home to some 0.82 billion people. By 2050, according to the UN, this number will have increased to about 2.5 billion. The 22 countries in the world with the highest birth rates are African, (they are all elephant range states, except Burundi and Gambia, which have already lost theirs). To thrive, elephants need to roam across large distances. But every day people are encroaching into previously undisturbed elephant habitat. Migratory routes are cut, national parks hemmed in by farmland.



▲ Farmer with field destroyed by elephant, Liberia 2023.

As this report shows, the EPI has made important progress in stopping the ivory trade and curbing elephant poaching. But now we need to look beyond the ivory trade and face a new reality: there is no future for many of Africa's elephants if we don't also find solutions to HEC. Indeed, ivory poaching and HEC often thrive in unhealthy symbiosis. If rural communities are hostile to elephants, they are less likely to help governments stop poachers or support other wildlife conservation initiatives.

### *HEC Strategy*

The EPI Foundation's HEC Strategy launched in 2021, is based on three pillars:

#### ◇ **Fostering High-Level Dialogue**

The EPI Foundation, through its ties with African leaders and connections with donors, conservation organisations and the international media will create a platform to bring human-elephant conflict to the forefront of policy discussions and development. We believe that facilitating high-level dialogue between governments, influential institutions, experts, and local communities can help bring about the changes needed to develop effective and inclusive policies which mitigate, reduce and prevent HEC and create opportunities for harmonious coexistence.

#### ◇ **Enabling Local Solutions**

Our ambition is that the EPI Foundation becomes a key partner to local, regional, and national governments to assess, evaluate and implement HEC mitigation and prevention strategies where the need is most pressing. We will facilitate the use of technology, practical and context-specific mitigation measures, political buy-in and stakeholder collaboration.

#### ◇ **Amplifying African Voices**

We need to hear the voices of those living on the margins of wildlife habitats and protected areas, as they are best placed to implement long-term solutions for coexistence. The EPI Foundation must be a platform to project African voices on HEC.

Member states the EPI Foundation supports with HEC mitigation and management



**HEC project work so far**

- Angola
- Ethiopia
- Gabon
- Malawi
- Tanzania

▶ Watchtower inauguration, 2023, Ethiopia Cbebera-Churchura NP

**Initial HEC Projects**

◇ **ECF-CCNP - Short-term mitigation of Human-Elephant Conflict in three communities on the northwest boundary of Chebera-Churchura National Park (CCNP), Ethiopia**

- ◇ **Dates:** 01 February – 31 December 2023
- ◇ **Target country:** Ethiopia
- ◇ **Aims & Objectives:** The main goal of the project was to resolve conflicts between communities and elephants on the Northwest boundary of CCNP. This objective was realised through three activities: (1) dung removal, facilitated by the provision of wheelbarrows and shovels; (2) construction of watchtowers; and (3) the distribution of high-powered torches and power banks to community members.
- ◇ **Outcomes:** All planned interventions were completed according to work plans and timelines, and the project was deemed a success by both wildlife authorities and villagers.



◇ **Darwin R29 - Building government capability and capacity to facilitate human-elephant coexistence.**

- ◇ **Dates:** 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2025
- ◇ **Target countries:** Angola, Ethiopia, Malawi
- ◇ **Aims & Objectives:** The project aims to support wildlife management authorities in three countries. Objective 1 focuses on capacitating National HEC Focal Points (NHFPs) in each of the target countries. This involves appointing the NHFP, collaborating with the NHFP to develop a country-specific support package, and providing HEC management training and on-going mentoring for the NHFP. Objective 2 centres on the establishment and operation of HEC monitoring systems by capacitated staff within the wildlife management authorities, as there is a severe lack of HEC data across the continent. Activities include setting up monitoring systems and facilitating skills development training for NHFPs. Objective 3 aims to create a functional HEC Focal Point Network (HFNP) to facilitate information exchange between elephant range states. Lastly, Objective 4 aims to implement long-term tailored solutions within each target country, offering support with HEC mitigation in local hotspots.
- ◇ **Outcomes so far:** NHFPs appointed in all three countries, MoUs and support packages in progress.
- ◇ Wildlife officials from Ethiopia and Malawi trained in Kenya (February 2024) on HEC mitigation by partners Save The Elephants, and at the inaugural SMART Conference in Namibia (March 2024).



From Kenya to Chad, from Gabon to Uganda, elephants and people are in conflict over land and dwindling natural resources. African newspapers report on this conflict daily.

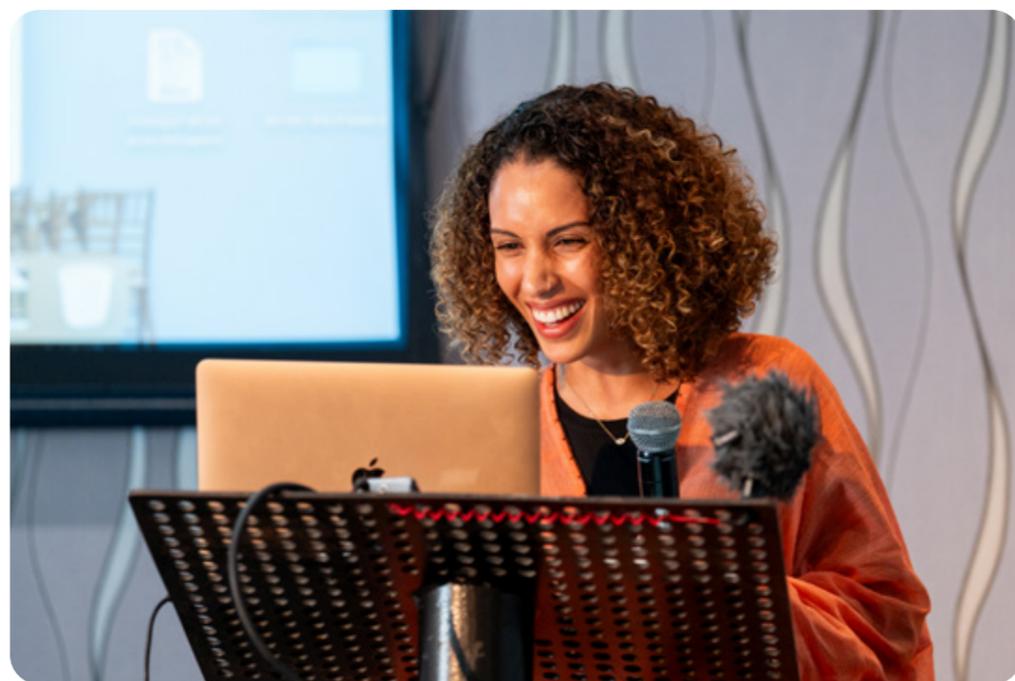
## High Level Events

Since 2021 the EPI Foundation has organised a series of high-level online events, focusing on elephant conservation challenges in Africa, and, especially, HEC. Participants have included government ministers from Angola, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Kenya, Nigeria and the UK, the First Lady of Kenya, the former president of Botswana, the former prime minister of Ethiopia, senior wildlife officials from Cameroon, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Liberia and Malawi, UN diplomats, and leading international conservationists. We've commissioned and produced a series of ground-breaking films, and each event attracted audiences of several hundred people, logging in from more than 20 African countries, and dozens of other countries around the world.

In 2023, we participated in the IUCN Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence Conference in Oxford. Through these and other events, we've put the EPI Foundation firmly in the middle of the growing conversation about human-wildlife conflict.



Government ministers, former presidents and prime ministers, First Ladies and the EPI Foundation discuss the HEC crisis at EPI event 2021.



Greta Francesca Iori, EPI Foundation Director of Program Development

## The EPI HEC Statement

In December 2022, the EPI Foundation brought together EPI member states, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the World Bank, on the sidelines of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, for a special meeting on HEC, chaired by Angola's environment minister, Ana Paula de Carvalho, to endorse a **Joint Statement on Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC)**. The statement says HEC is 'fast emerging as the greatest threat to the survival of Africa's elephants', and calls for greater support and recognition of the challenges faced by elephant range states.

2022 HEC Workshop, Cbebera-Churchura, Ethiopia



## African Media

As part of the 'Amplifying African Voices' pillar the EPI Foundation in 2023 used a grant from the Wild Philanthropy Foundation to support reporters in **Angola, Liberia, and Nigeria** to travel within their own countries and report on HEC, for newspapers, radio, television, and digital platforms.

Too often journalists in Africa, based in capital cities, don't have the resources to get out into the field and hear from rural communities living on the frontline of conservation challenges. By connecting journalists with these communities, we empower and give each a voice. And by enabling decision-makers in Africa, but also further afield, to hear and understand diverse points of view, we stand a better chance of achieving solutions that work for wildlife and rural communities.

Elephants in these three countries are little known about abroad, but even many people who live in Luanda, Monrovia or Lagos are unaware these animals still survive in the hinterlands beyond their cities. So these reports were also an important reminder that wild elephants still exist in 37 African countries, albeit in greatly reduced numbers.

The report on Nigerian TV was broadcast at peak time on that country's most popular news channel.

Our story in Liberia became front page news in the leading newspaper and prompted a debate between farmers and conservationists on HEC.



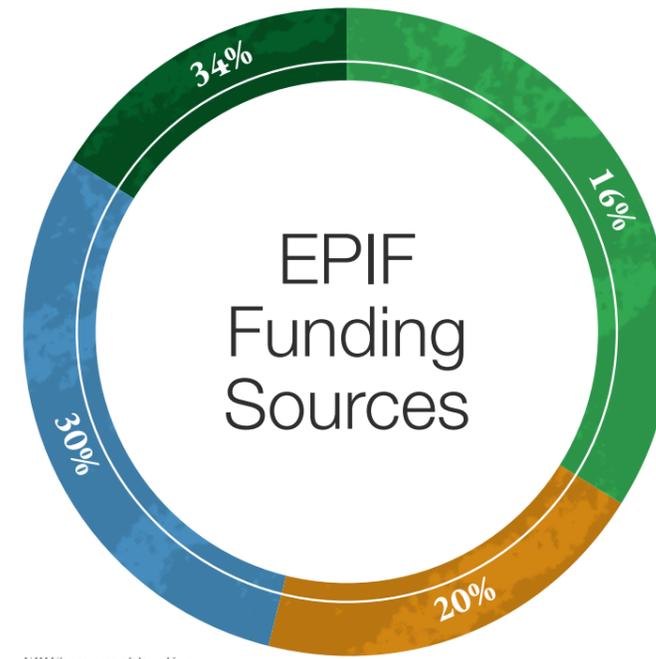
Front page news, Liberia 2023.



## Chapter 7: Finance

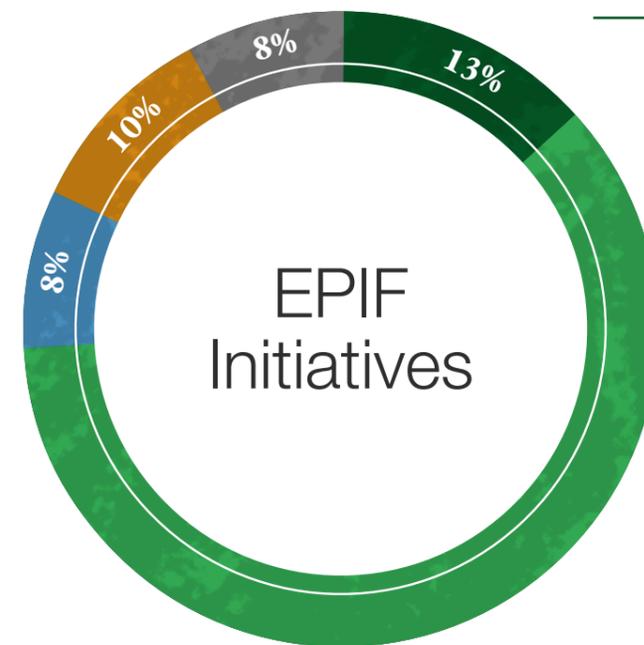
The EPI secretariat has raised and spent over **£11 million** since its launch in 2014. This money has come from **grants** (sourced from governments, as well as other major institutions and NGOs) and **private donations**. With the support of our generous supporters, we have maintained a consistent level of programme activity throughout the decade. Notably, during the challenging COVID pandemic period of 2020 and 2021, the EPI Foundation remained active and spent more than **£1.5 million** on projects.

The overwhelming majority of funds we have raised has been spent on our key objectives in Africa: keeping ivory out of the illegal wildlife trade and securing stockpiles, developing National Elephant Action Plans (NEAPs), and, in more recent years, mitigating human-elephant conflict (HEC).



EPIF's sources of funding

-  UK Government Grants
-  Philanthropy
-  US Government Grants
-  Other Grant Funding Operations



Allocation of funds over the past 10 years

Only 13% of the EPI Foundation's income has been spent on its own operating expenses.

-  Securing Ivory Stockpiles
-  Policy Development & Int. Engagement
-  NEAP Development and Implementation
-  HEC Strategy & Implementation
-  Operational & Support Costs

### Prioritising Cost-Effectiveness

From 2014 to 2024 we have supported activities on the ground in more than 30 African countries. Only 13% of the EPI Foundation's income has been spent on its own operating expenses. Our small and dedicated team works remotely, travels modestly and always strives to keep costs to the bare minimum. This ensures our funds have the maximum impact where it matters, on the conservation frontlines in African elephant range states.



## Chapter 8: Outcomes; the EPI and the Ivory Trade

From its launch in 2014, as this report has shown, the EPI worked to maintain the 1989 moratorium on commercial international ivory trade, close domestic ivory markets, and place ivory stockpiles beyond commercial use. The rationale for this strategy was to drive down demand for ivory, resulting in a fall in prices and consequent reduction in poaching.

Within a few years the EPI had played an important role in securing agreements to close domestic ivory markets in several countries, including China and the United States. China's closure of its market in 2017<sup>1</sup>, followed by a sharp drop in prices, is widely seen as a key moment in reducing demand for ivory, and hence elephant poaching. It is, however, extremely difficult to prove causal relationships between poaching and the closing of ivory markets or stockpile management. For example, a World Bank report of 2018, (Quy-Toan Do *et al*) argued there was no relation between the price of ivory and the rate of poaching, although others contest this conclusion. Nonetheless, there are compelling reasons to believe that EPI member states and the EPI Foundation have been successful in helping to curb elephant poaching, even if the method by which this was accomplished may have been more complex than by simply driving down prices.

1

China moves ahead with its closure of domestic ivory market as witnessed by the CITES Secretary General

## Ivory Prices

Ivory prices vary along the value chain, by destination country and over time. The ivory value chain can involve 6 different actors: poacher, broker, dealer, exporter, wholesaler and retailer for worked ivory. Between 2014 and 2018, a poacher in Asia would get US\$93/kg on average, a broker US\$125/kg, a dealer US\$236/kg, an exporter US\$387/kg, a wholesaler US\$1,009/kg and a retailer selling worked ivory US\$4,346/kg (UNODC, 2020). These mark-ups along the chain cover the various actors' profits and costs.

Let us take a closer look at China, an important destination for the illegal ivory trade during this last decade. In 2012, China adopted its "Ecological Civilization" programme, which aimed to incorporate conservation into all policy, and launched public awareness campaigns on the importance of the environment.

In December 2017 China closed its domestic ivory markets<sup>2</sup>, and strengthened laws and penalties pertaining to wildlife offences. Under the new laws, the maximum penalty for ivory smuggling is a life sentence. (Yingwei Chen *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, from 2013, the Chinese government helped launch a series of international law-enforcement operations, with the participation of 63 other countries and international organisations, tackling wildlife trafficking along the entire value chain. These resulted in more than 200 arrests, and the seizure of more than 300 crates of trafficked endangered species, as well as 12 tons of ivory. Since then, China has continued to strengthen its cooperation with customs and police departments in countries along the ivory supply chain, which has resulted in many seizures and the indictment of major trafficking suspects (Zhen Miao *et al.*, 2022).

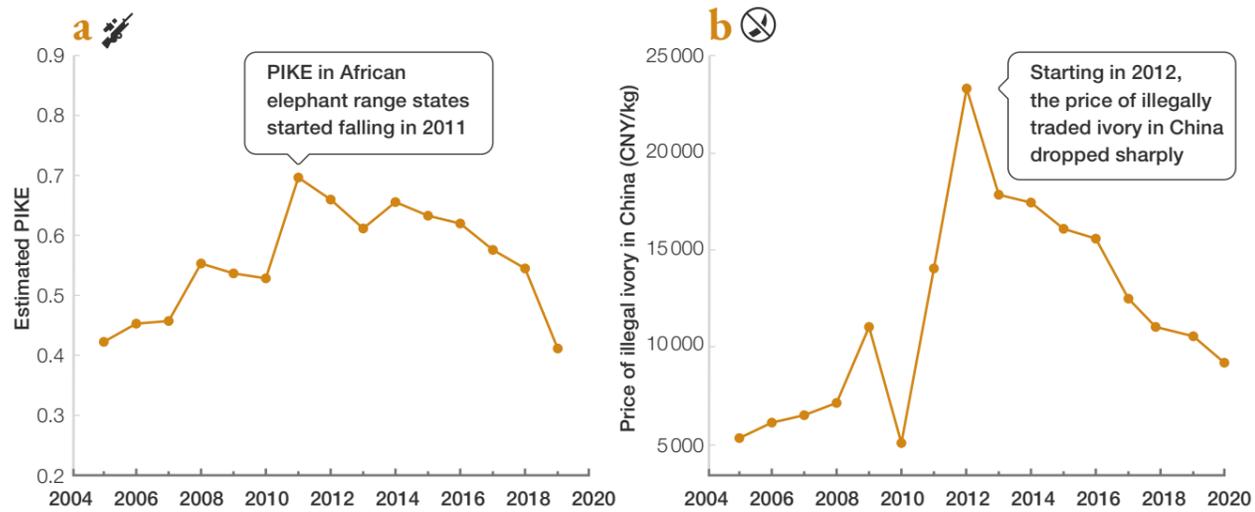
Starting in 2012, the price of illegally traded ivory in China dropped sharply (Fig. 1b) in anticipation of stricter government enforcement, and since then it has maintained a consistent downward trend (Zhen Miao *et al.*, 2022). In Japan and Vietnam, meanwhile, the price of ivory underwent a similar decline, although in Vietnam, primarily due to relatively poor law enforcement, there has been a slight recovery in price in recent years (Zhen Miao *et al.*, 2022). With the suppression of the largest market for illegal ivory, and a consecutive reduction in demand, the benefits were soon felt in Africa.

In 1997, CITES established a Monitoring Illegal Killing of Elephants programme, commonly known as MIKE. One of its key components is the Proportion of Illegally Killed Elephants, or PIKE, which is an index of poaching pressure. Encouragingly, PIKE in African elephant range states started falling in 2011, first slowly due to a time lag, and in recent years more sharply (Fig. 1a).

2 In harmony with nature - Chinadaily.com.cn, [https://cites.org/eng/CITES-secretary-general-remarks-at-first-destruction-confiscated-elephant-ivory-Hong\\_Kong-China](https://cites.org/eng/CITES-secretary-general-remarks-at-first-destruction-confiscated-elephant-ivory-Hong_Kong-China)

▼ Confiscated ivory jewellery slated for destruction. Gavin Shire / USFWS





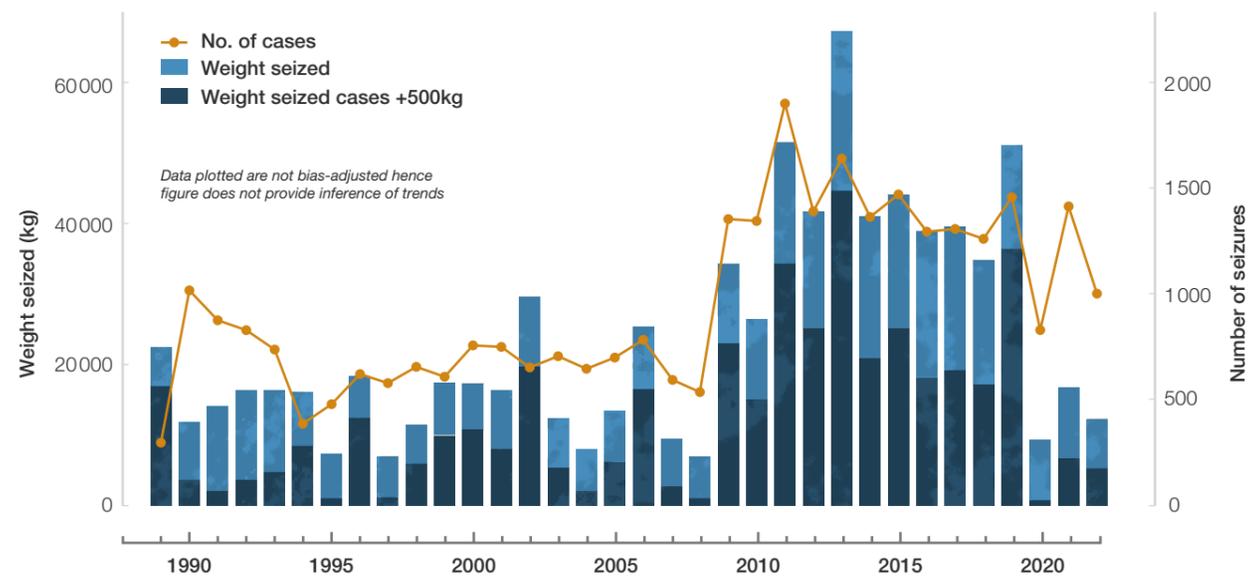
**▲ Fig. 1.** Estimated Proportion of Illegally Killed Elephants (PIKE) from 2005 to 2019 (a), and the price for raw ivory in China (b) for the same period. An estimated PIKE value of > 0.5 - i.e. more than 50% of all carcasses detected are illegally killed elephants - is considered unsustainable. (Source: Zhen Miao et al., 2022).

This positive sequence of events demonstrates the importance of co-ordinated action. The EPI, instrumental in the closure of domestic ivory markets, helped set the tone for many countries around the world to tighten laws related to trafficking of wildlife and wildlife products, introduce stricter penalty systems, and contribute to collaborative international enforcement. Together, these measures reduced demand and drove down ivory prices.

### Ivory Seizures (ETIS)

The Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) was established by the Conference of the Parties (CoP) to CITES at its 10th Meeting in Harare in 1997, to improve understanding of the illegal trade in ivory and other related products. Seizure data from ETIS provides insights into illegal trade but requires careful interpretation. It can demonstrate the presence of a problem, but also the determination and ability of the authorities to address it. It doesn't necessarily demonstrate the magnitude of trafficking, or the effectiveness and capacity of law enforcement, but it does provide valuable information on transit and destination countries, and make it possible to assess the share of ivory taken out of the trade by law enforcement, which is often lower than is widely assumed. For example, out of the 105 tonnes of illegal ivory that

**▼ Fig. 2.** Number of ivory seizure cases reported, and weight seized by year from 1989 – 2022 (Source: CITES/ETIS, 2023).



were annually exported from Africa between 2016 and 2018, only 5 tonnes were seized in Africa, 2 tonnes seized in Europe and 24 tonnes seized in Asia, resulting in 63 tonnes arriving at their destinations, mostly Asia, (UNODC, 2020).

Reported data for number of seizures and weight seized between 1989 and 2022 are summarised in Fig. 2, but should not be interpreted as a trend, nor are they necessarily suggestive of absolute quantities of ivory seized over time. That noted, numbers of seizures and weight fluctuated at relatively low levels between 1989 to 2008, increased from 2009, peaked in 2013, and then declined from 2014 to 2022, with the sharp drop in 2020 partially due to the COVID crisis, when the amount of transportation fell worldwide. Due to the time lag between poaching incidents and the export of illegal ivory, ivory seizures started to gradually decline in 2014.

### Proportion of Illegally Killed Elephants (PIKE)

PIKE, as mentioned above, is an index of poaching pressure and provides trends relating to the levels of poaching. Its results also need to be interpreted with caution, as there are potential biases related to data quality, reporting rate, carcass detection probabilities, variation in natural mortality rates and other factors. Nonetheless an estimated PIKE value of > 0.5 - i.e. more than half of all carcasses detected are illegally killed elephants - is considered an unsustainable rate of loss.

**‘numbers of seizures and weight fluctuated at relatively low levels between 1989 to 2008, increased from 2009, peaked in 2013, and then declined from 2014 to 2022’**

**▼** Poached elephant, Tsavo Kenya, 2013, Karel Prinsloo.

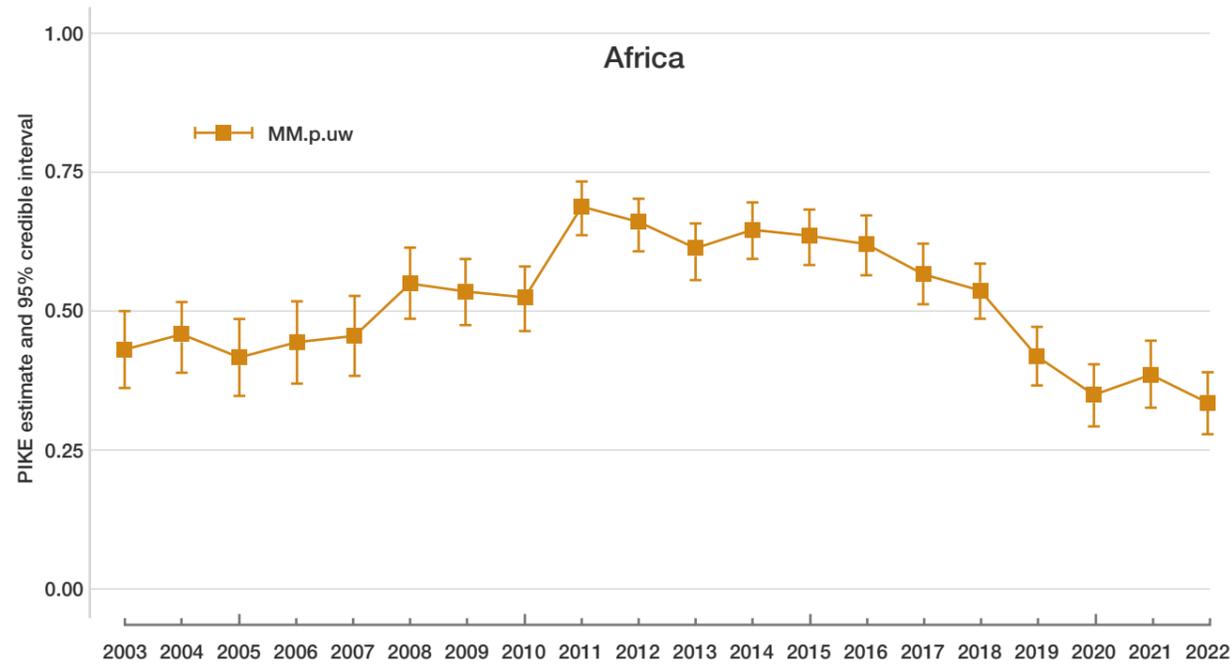


### Mean Continental PIKE

Between 2003 and 2010, the annual mean continental PIKE increased, reaching its highest point in 2011 (Fig. 3). From 2012 to 2018, the mean continental PIKE shows a gradual downward trend, with a sharp drop after 2018 (Fig. 3). Over this period, the continental PIKE estimate fell from 0.54 in 2018 to 0.33 in 2022. The PIKE estimate for 2022 represents the lowest value since 2003, with a value of 0.33. (CITES/MIKE, 2023).

**Fig. 3.** Continental PIKE estimates for Africa based on the unweighted Bayesian GLMM approach. The error bar or the confidence / credible interval (95%) shows the level of uncertainty in the annual PIKE estimates (Source: CITES/MIKE, 2023).

Annual continental PIKE Estimate



‘Between 2003 and 2010, the annual mean continental PIKE increased, reaching its highest point in 2011. From 2012 to 2018, the mean continental PIKE shows a gradual downward trend, with a sharp drop after 2018’.

### Mean Subregional PIKE

The subregional PIKE estimates across years for Central, Eastern, Southern, and West Africa show variations between regions. (Fig. 4).

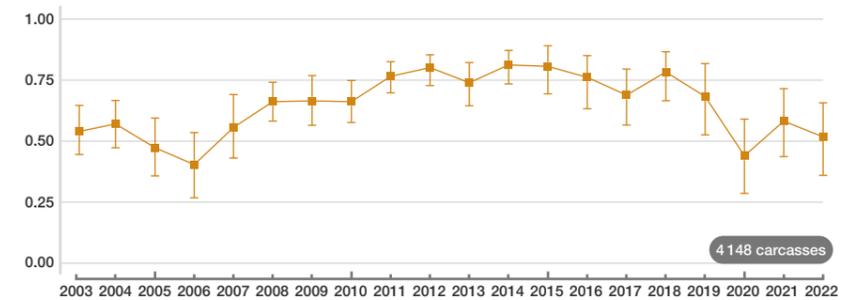
**Central Africa (4A):** PIKE estimates for Central Africa generally increased from 2003 to 2011, then fluctuated around a value of 0.75 up to 2018. From 2018 to 2022, the mean PIKE estimate followed a downward trend, but remained unsustainably high. In 2022, the average unweighted PIKE estimate for Central Africa was 0.52 (range: 0.36 - 0.66), which is significantly higher than the average 2022 continental PIKE estimate of 0.33 (range: 0.28 - 0.39), and unsustainable in the long term.

**Eastern Africa (4B):** The PIKE trend for Eastern Africa aligns with the continental PIKE trend: an upward trend from 2003 to 2011, followed by a downward trend after 2011. The unweighted PIKE estimate for Eastern Africa in 2022 is 0.27 (range: 0.21 - 0.34) and falls below the 2022 average continental PIKE estimate of 0.33.

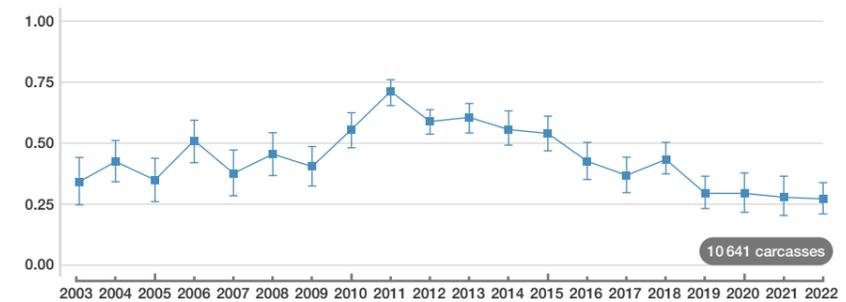
**Southern Africa (4C):** From 2018 to 2022, there is a clear downward trend in the estimated PIKE for Southern Africa. Over this period, the PIKE estimate went from 0.40 in 2018 to 0.20 in 2022. The unweighted PIKE estimate for Southern Africa in 2022 is 0.20 (range: 0.15 - 0.26) and is below the 2022 average continental PIKE estimate of 0.33.

**West Africa (4D):** The West African subregion is known for having small populations of elephants, and this, along with other factors, influences the number of carcasses found annually and undermines the value of PIKE estimates. Although the estimated mean PIKE decreased from 0.71 (range: 0.44 - 0.90) in 2021 to 0.43 (range: 0.13 - 0.76) in 2022, this was not statistically significant. The unweighted PIKE estimate for west Africa in 2022 is 0.43 (range: 0.13 - 0.76), higher than the average continental PIKE estimate of 0.33.

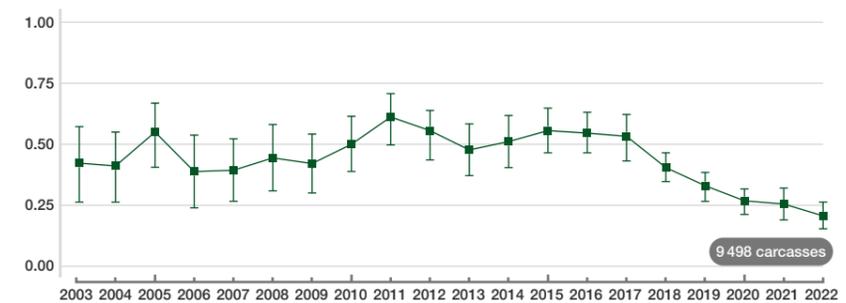
**a Central Africa**



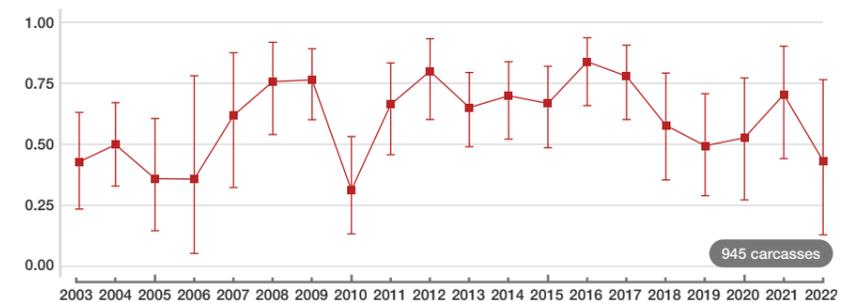
**b Eastern Africa**



**c Southern Africa**



**d West Africa**



**Fig. 4.** Subregional PIKE estimates across years based on unweighted Bayesian GLMM approach. The error bar shows the level of uncertainty in the annual PIKE estimates and represent 95% credible intervals. The total number of carcasses (2003-2022) for each subregion is shown in the bottom right corner of each graph. A – central Africa; B – eastern Africa; C – southern Africa and D – west Africa (Source: CITES/MIKE, 2023).

In conclusion, since 2011, elephant poaching has significantly declined in Eastern and Southern Africa, with elephant populations either on the increase, such as those in Kenya, Malawi and Uganda, or stabilised, such as the population of the Kavango Zambezi Trans Frontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA), and in some areas in Tanzania. No elephant survey results for elephant range states have been published recently, with the notable exceptions of Kenya, (2021) and the KAZA survey report (2023). Official numbers for most African elephant range states are still based on the 2016 African Elephant Status report, although this is due to be updated in 2024.

Even in Central Africa the poaching situation appears to have somewhat improved over the past few years. In West Africa, however, due to low sample sizes, it remains difficult to draw conclusions from the PIKE data.

Despite this progress- the reversal in poaching trends in at least three out of four subregions, a significant drop in seizure cases and weight, a significantly lower demand resulting in lower ivory prices- the battle against ivory poaching has not yet been won. In Vietnam, prices appear to be rebounding, and the country is emerging as a nascent centre of the illegal ivory trade. From 2006 to 2015, Vietnam was the intended destination of about 9% of the total weight of ivory seized worldwide, but for 2015–2019 this increased to 42% (UNODC, 2020).

Moreover, a stable elephant population in the KAZA TFCA - which includes parts of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, which share borders along the Okavango and Zambezi River basins - may appear to signify success. On closer inspection, the results are more sobering. KAZA's population of roughly 220,000 elephants has not changed since the last survey in 2015, but a natural recruitment rate of 5% per year, considering 2% natural mortality, suggests 11,000 elephants per year were lost, most likely to poaching, between 2015 and 2022. A total of 77,000 elephants equals roughly 150,000 tusks. The carcass ratio of 10.47% observed during the 2022 KAZA survey suggests that poaching is still a major problem in this region. (A carcass ratio is the number of dead elephants observed during an aerial survey as a percentage of the total number of elephants, dead and alive, counted on that survey. Carcass ratios greater than 8% are a strong indication of a declining population.)

### **Conclusion**

Over the past 10 years, EPI member states, working with the EPI Foundation, have significantly contributed to maintaining the international moratorium on commercial ivory trade, the closure of domestic ivory markets and helped keep ivory stockpiles from leaking onto the illegal market through stockpile management, safekeeping, and destruction. These measures have reduced ivory prices, but they've also sent a powerful public message, especially when combined with improved law enforcement, that has led to significantly lower demand and improved prospects for most of Africa's elephants. But we need to remain vigilant. We need to further strengthen law enforcement along the entire value chain for ivory through enhanced levels of international cooperation, but we also need to focus more attention on a new crisis that has gradually emerged over the past two decades – human-elephant conflict (HEC).

**“The EPI is instrumental in our efforts to stamp out wildlife crime because it provides us, as Africans – responsible for some of the world’s richest reserves of wildlife – a platform to engage in a joint effort to protect elephant populations.”**

*Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of Liberia.*



▲ Taken in the wild from an underground bide in Botswana.



## Conclusion

The global conservation landscape has changed since 2014. The dangers posed by climate change and the catastrophic loss of biodiversity are both more urgent and more widely understood. There is also an increased appreciation of the extent to which these crises are intertwined. This is reflected in the targets of the UN's Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which call for urgent action to reduce biodiversity loss and minimise the impact of global climate change. Africa, and therefore EPI member states, are on the frontline of feeling the impact of these crises and in taking measures to combat them.

The threats faced by Africa's elephants have also changed since 2014. This report has shown the progress made during the past decade by countries, conservationists and communities in the fight against elephant poaching and ivory smuggling, and the recovery of some key African elephant populations. EPI member states, and the EPI Foundation, are proud to have played their part in these collective successes.

In the coming years, the EPI will continue to work to maintain the 1989 moratorium on the commercial international ivory trade, and for the closure of more domestic ivory markets. The EPI Foundation will also continue its highly effective work on improving the security of ivory stockpiles, as well as in assisting countries to develop National Elephant Action Plans.

But in the next decade the EPI must also respond to the growing challenge posed by human-elephant conflict (HEC), and the need for adequate financing of elephant conservation. For many EPI member states, HEC is of domestic political significance, and is the single most important issue in elephant conservation. The competition between people and elephants for land and resources in Africa is unlikely to diminish. Already, there are many tens of millions more people living in elephant range states than when the EPI was launched. Human population growth will continue. Climate change will further exacerbate tensions.

The EPI, with its continent-wide membership, is well placed to maintain its position as the principal forum through which Africa can articulate its needs and meet its goals in elephant conservation. The EPI Foundation is blessed with an African Leadership Council and experienced and committed staff. It is a unique conduit between Africa and the rest of the world. It has developed a strategy for the decade ahead, as well as a dedicated strategy to manage HEC.

In Africa, as elsewhere, governments, and policies can change abruptly. None of the leaders who signed the EPI into creation in 2014 are still in office, although all five of their countries remain members of the EPI. As the EPI continues to expand, the EPI Foundation will have to work even harder to forge contacts and strengthen relationships with its growing list of member states, adapt to changes in their leadership, ensure it reflects their views accurately, and generate the resources to serve them effectively. To put this challenge into perspective, the EPI now has twice as many member states as there are staff in the EPI Foundation.

We are deeply grateful to all those who have supported the EPI over the first decade of its journey. We have already achieved so much. But to ensure our collective ambitions are realised, EPI member states and the EPI Foundation will need reliable and sustainable funds in the coming years. With these, we can maintain and increase ongoing projects for EPI member states, and help amplify African perspectives to a global audience.

The EPI Foundation's Vision 2030 envisages a future in which we have achieved *'the harmonious coexistence of elephants and people with herds able to travel across their range. Thereby protecting a diverse range of wild animals and plants, combating climate change and supporting local livelihoods'*.

As we enter our second decade, we ask you to join us in turning our exciting vision into a reality.



School children, Kenya.  
Martin Middlebrook

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## Appendix

### *The EPI Foundation Team*

— The EPI's secretariat is made up of passionate and experienced conservationists, who work in coordination with member state governments and NGO partners.



**John Scanlon AO,**  
*Chief Executive Officer.*



**Greta Francesca Iori,**  
*Director of Program Development.*



**Dr Hugo Jachmann,**  
*Director of National Elephant  
Action Plans.*



**Ruth Musgrave,**  
*Director of Stockpile Man-  
agement.*



**Ulysse Sinagabé Korogone,**  
*Assistant Director of Stockpile  
Management.*



**Andrew Crichton,**  
*Head of Operations.*



**Harry Thorold,**  
*Head of Finance.*



**Barnaby Phillips,**  
*Senior Communications  
Advisor.*



**José Pedro Agostinho,**  
*Project Officer - Lusophone  
Africa.*



**Kiprotich Biwott,**  
*Stockpile Management  
System Manager.*



**Clara G. Rincuni,**  
*Digital Communications  
Manager.*



**Christina Godding,**  
*Program Administrator*

## ***EPI's Leadership Council***

— The EPI and the EPI Foundation benefit from the advice and experience of a group of eminent African politicians and conservationists.



**Sharon Ikeazor,**  
*Former Minister of State,  
Federal Republic of Nigeria*



**H.E. Ian Khama,**  
*Former President,  
Republic of Botswana.*



**Fatima Maada Bio,**  
*First Lady,  
Republic of Sierra Leone.*



**Lee White CBE,**  
*Former Minister of Water,  
Forests, the Sea and the Environ-  
ment,  
Republic of Gabon.*



**Margaret Kenyatta,**  
*Former First Lady,  
Republic of Kenya.*



**H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn,**  
*Former Prime Minister,  
Federal Republic of Ethiopia.*

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