

DECEMBER 2020

STOP IVORY FINAL REPORT

June 2013 - December 2020



**STOP
IVORY**



IN 2013, STOP IVORY WAS ESTABLISHED WITH ONE PURPOSE...

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2013 was the bloodiest year for elephant poaching on the African continent since 1989. It proved a tipping point, beyond which systemic extractive wildlife crime and its harm to the citizens and natural heritage of countries spanning the continent could no longer be ignored.

On 7 June 2013, Stop Ivory was established as a dedicated entity with one purpose: to stop the fundamental driver of the killing, by catalysing the permanent collapse of global ivory prices. Working with the British and African governments, it initiated the establishment of the Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI).

The EPI was launched at the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in February 2014, at which the founding member states (Botswana, Chad, Ethiopia, Gabon and Tanzania) agreed four primary objectives:

- Maintain the 1989 international moratorium on ivory trade for ten years or until elephant populations recover.
- Close domestic ivory markets.
- Place ivory stockpiles beyond commercial use.
- Implement the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP).

Determined to find solutions to support the implementation of these four objectives, Stop Ivory embarked on a set of innovative measures that sought to introduce fresh ideas with practical applications to tackle the elephant crisis.

Working through the EPI, Stop Ivory worked closely with African governments to build an international consensus aimed at restricting the exchange and purchase of ivory in domestic markets around the world. Within a few years of its launch, the EPI had succeeded in helping to get formal agreement to close domestic markets in twenty countries, including the United States and China - the latter undoubtedly being the greatest single measure towards reducing elephant poaching.

Six years on, the impact of the EPI, working alongside governments and partners, and in combination with others, has been a dramatic fall in ivory prices, the closure of ivory markets, a transformative reduction in demand for ivory, strengthened management of ivory stockpiles in Africa and stronger legal mechanisms to protect elephant populations.

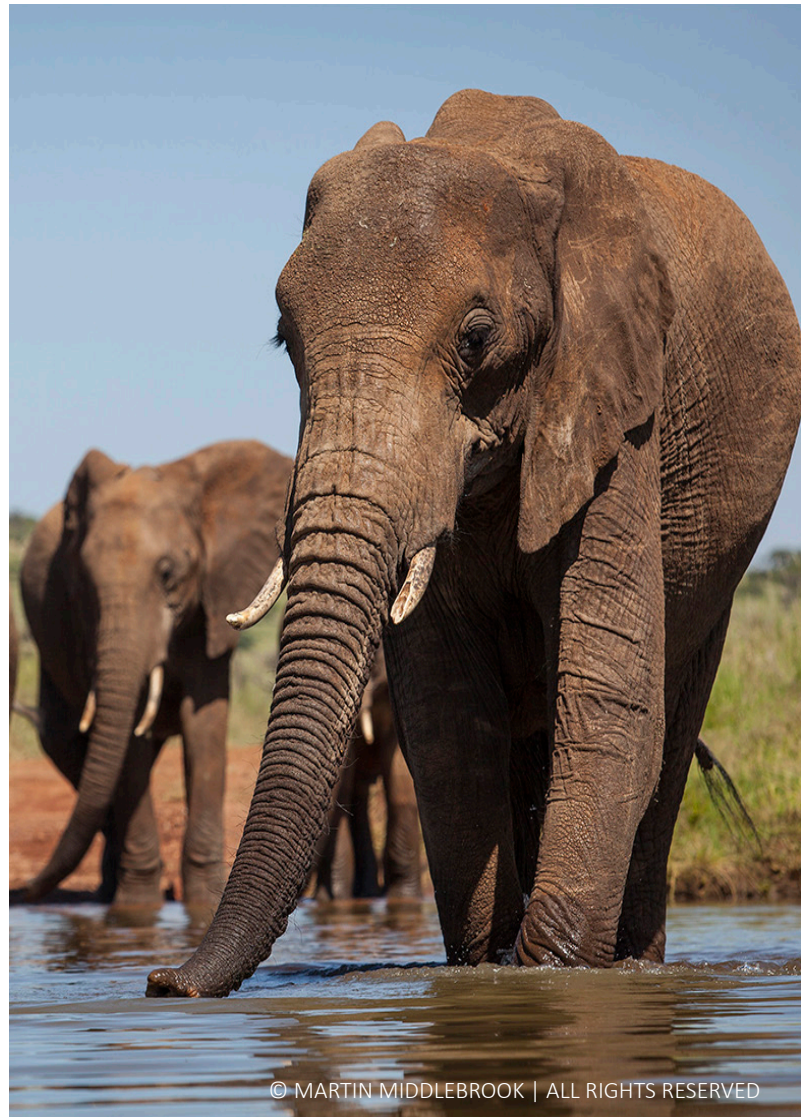
These significant changes reflect a strong political commitment to investing in elephant populations and zero-tolerance to ivory trade among a growing group of African countries. This has all contributed to stemming the killing of elephants and the trade in ivory.

STOP IVORY

African governments face complex continuing challenges as stewards of the remaining elephant populations. Their prospects of success depend upon successfully creating opportunities for their citizens while also maintaining large areas of habitat for wildlife. In resolving these challenges, including increasing levels of human-elephant conflict, the work of the EPI remains critical.

The consolidation of international policy to stop the ivory trade, backed up by widespread legal reform closing consumer markets has, in six short years, led to the collapse of global ivory prices and significantly reduced the killing. African governments are now able to determine the future of their own elephant populations, and organised crime has been weakened. The EPI, supported by Stop Ivory and Conservation International as co-secretariat up until 2019, has played an important role in achieving these gains.

Each year since its inception, Stop Ivory assessed whether it had achieved its purpose. In 2019, following consultation with partners, Stop Ivory determined that it had met its objectives and resolved to close. Throughout the course of 2020, Stop Ivory wound down its operations, handed over the role of EPI Secretariat to a dedicated Foundation, and will now shut down. This paper summarises the changes achieved against Stop Ivory's objectives over the last 6 years, and sets out the key areas of focus for the EPI to 2030.



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“The EPI member states are determined to halt the elephant slaughter and fight the wider threats to our biodiversity. But we are fighting the battle on behalf of all mankind. Is the rest of the world prepared to help us?”

H.E President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon

KEY FACTS

Two international resolutions passed that domestic ivory markets should close.

Five major consumer countries banned domestic ivory trade, three others committed to do so.
67% fall in average retail ivory price in China from \$2,200/kg in 2014 to \$730/kg or lower in 2017.

Significant fall in reported ivory price from 2014 to 2018 in Kenya and Tanzania.

Digital ivory stockpile management system rolled out for ivory inventory and audit in 13 countries.

Over 240 tonnes of ivory destroyed.

Rate of poaching reduced below reproduction rate on a continental level.

ELEPHANTS

The African elephant is threatened. It is hunted for its tusks and its habitat is disappearing, but it is also essential for tourism livelihoods and the survival of healthy ecosystems.

The future of this iconic species whose majestic presence dominates the natural environment as assuredly as it does human imaginations, depends upon local communities, and the decisions of African governments and the international community.

An estimated 1 million African elephants were alive in the early 1970s, with many populations considered to be stable at that time¹. But poaching in the 1970s and 1980s decimated populations in many areas. Serious and escalating poaching began again in 2005, led by organized international criminal gangs, killing them for their ivory tusks to feed new demand for status symbols in the burgeoning emerging consumer markets of Asia. The killing and trafficking were illegal, and by 2013, governments had lost control and entire populations were being wiped out.

From 2008, increases in the black market price of ivory correlated directly with escalating levels of poaching. From 1998 to 2008, poaching rates had averaged about 0.4% (illegal killing as a proportion of total carcass counts). By 2011, this had soared to over 10%. Evidence shows that criminal networks working in collusion with corrupt local officials were exploiting African natural resources, under-resourced park rangers and weak border enforcement to supply the rising demand from consumer markets.

Between 2000 and 2013, the number of large-scale ivory movements grew steadily, as did the quantity of ivory illegally traded. In 2013, the figure suggested a 20% increase over the previous peak year (2011).

The most recent, comprehensive census of African elephants estimates the population at 415,428 across 37 range states and over a range of over 3.1 million km². The African Elephant Status Report (AESR) 2016¹ has '*revealed that Africa's elephant population has seen the worst declines in 25 years, mainly due to poaching over the past ten years.*'²

But despite formidable challenges, poaching has slowed. A 2019 report revealed a decline in annual poaching mortality rates from the estimated peak of over 10% in 2011 to less than 4% in 2017.¹ Significantly, this is below the average elephant population growth rate of roughly 5% per year. The data behind the continental overview reveals significant regional variation (Figure 1).

Forest elephants have been hardest hit, partly because their ivory is highly sought after for its density and the allure of its colour.² Between 16,000 and 20,000 forest elephants (60% - 80% of the entire population) in Central Africa have been lost between 2006 and 2016.¹

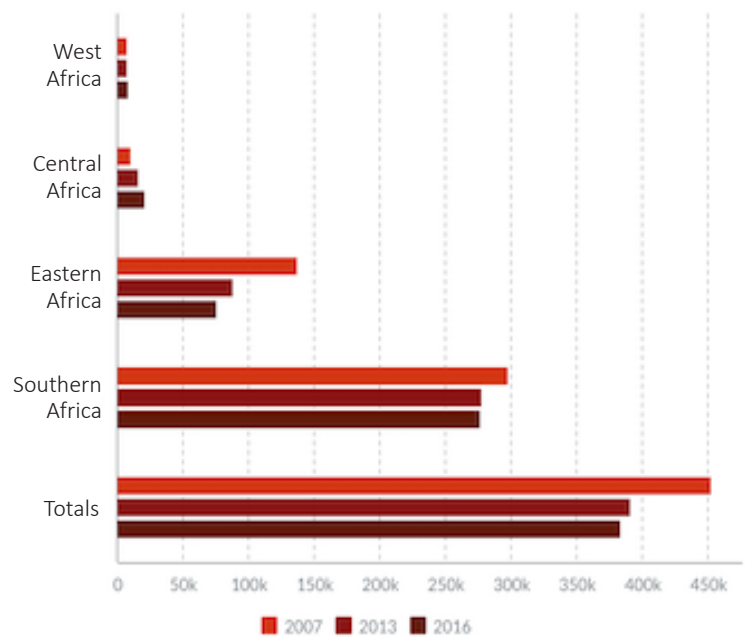


Southern Africa has relatively stable elephant numbers but there is a high degree of variation across the different southern african countries. Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique and Zambia have been deeply affected by poaching with a minimum overall number estimated at 293,447 (+/- 16,682), 75% of which constitute part of a single population in the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA-TFCA). Between 2007 and 2015, an estimated 27,000 elephants were lost.

While a large proportion of the East African elephant range remains unassessed, the region is estimated to have suffered a decline of approximately 79,000 elephants. Tanzania accounts for the highest concentration of losses, with over 60% decline between 2006 and 2015.

While some recoveries appear to be in progress since the last continental census there is still cause for concern. Long-term trends like habitat degradation and fragmentation, along with increasing human-elephant conflict, drought frequency and duration, pose further threats to the future viability of elephant populations.³

Figure 1: Regional elephant populations.



“The threat remains. We must never become complacent, but by standing together we have built the foundations of a better future.”

**Angola’s Minister of Environment
Paula Coelho, 2019**

NATIONAL ELEPHANT ACTION PLANS

The African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP) was adopted by all African elephant range states in March 2010 at the 15th Conference of the Parties to CITES. Developed through a consultative process, facilitated by IUCN and the CITES Secretariat, the vision for the AEAP agreed by the range states was ‘to ensure a secure future for African elephants and their habitats to realize their full potential as a component of land use for the benefit of the human kind’.

The goal identified was ‘to secure and restore where possible sustainable elephant populations throughout their present and potential range in Africa, recognizing their potential to provide ecological, socio, cultural and economic benefits’. Because circumstances vary from country to country, with some having seen their elephant populations dwindle to very low numbers over the past decade, and others struggling to cope with local overabundance and increased human-elephant conflict, each range state requires its own elephant action plan with priorities aligned to its particular circumstances. These National Elephant Action Plans (NEAPs) are the means for each country to attain the objectives of the AEAP.

NEAPs are intended to be cohesive and comprehensive. They should include policies to: reduce human-elephant conflict, involve local communities in wildlife conservation and management to ensure ownership of resources and increase the benefits from these, and combat the illegal trade in ivory. NEAPs also provide a framework for financial and technical support. Eight EPI member states have finalized their NEAPs, while another five member states are working on theirs.

The EPI Foundation has written guidance documents to support EPI member states in the process of designing and writing their NEAPs, in collaboration with stakeholders. Because a number of member states already had national-level elephant action plans and strategies, the NEAP process was designed to be straightforward, quick, and low-cost, using existing plans wherever possible.

IVORY MARKETS

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

In 1989 the international community agreed a moratorium on international trade in ivory through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). In 1999 and 2008, under pressure from Southern African countries, 'one off' sales were allowed, for the generation of conservation income. These sales were highly controversial, not least because of fears they would stimulate consumer demand for ivory and drive illegal killing of elephants. Ivory prices soared in the wake of the 2008 sale, in the context of growing disposable income in emerging Asian consumer markets. Ivory prices grew in tandem with other commodity prices such as gold.

Maintaining the moratorium on international trade is a key policy objective of the EPI and, together with others, its growing number of member countries have repeatedly opposed proposals for further 'one off' sales. Since 2013, resolutions have been passed with overwhelming majorities upholding the moratorium on trade on the grounds that it threatens elephant populations and recommending the closure of domestic ivory markets that are contributing to poaching or illegal trade (at IUCN (WCC-2016-Res-011) and CITES (Res. Conf. 10.10Rev. CoP18 2019).

At the CITES Cop17 in Johannesburg, and CoP18 in Geneva the international ivory trade moratorium was upheld despite proposals to lift it and allow international trade in ivory. EPI member states actively and openly argued for the maintenance of the ban.

DOMESTIC IVORY MARKETS

The closure of major domestic ivory markets since 2015 has been crucial to lowering elephant poaching rates. Empirical evidence suggests such closures have been instrumental in reducing the threat to elephants and supports placing domestic ivory stockpiles beyond commercial use as a policy priority to complement demand reduction campaigns and the closure of domestic markets.⁴

The correlation between the closure of large domestic ivory markets and the reduction in overall seizures of elephant ivory between 2013 and 2018 (both in number of cases and weight of ivory seized)⁵ cannot be ignored. This is recognised in CITES CoP18 Doc. 69.2, outlining amendments to Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP17), which included a recommendation that all parties and non-parties in whose jurisdiction there is a legal domestic market for ivory should take all necessary measures to close their domestic markets for commercial trade.⁶

- On 6 July 2016, the US implemented a near-total ban on commercial trade in African elephant ivory.
- On 31 December 2017, the Chinese government closed its domestic ivory market.
- In April 2016, the UK government announced that it would ban ivory sales.
- Hong Kong is in the process of agreeing a timeline and process for the closure of its ivory market.
- The EU is currently undergoing a consultation process on a potential ban.

CITES - International Trade Moratorium

The African elephant population was estimated to be around 1.3 million in 37 range states in the early 1970s, but by 1989, only an estimated 300,000 - 600,000 remained. Following this decline and events including the CITES trade ban on ivory, population numbers had increased in some range states and in 2007 the population was estimated to be around 470,000. Prior to 1989, the African elephant was listed on CITES Appendix II and international trade in ivory and other elephant specimens was legal but regulated.

One of the pillars of the EPI is to maintain the 1989 international ban on the ivory trade. In doing so, the EPI aimed to halt speculation about future trade, halt price escalation, and encourage all countries to end the ivory trade. The EPI provides a platform for African countries to speak as one unified voice to advocate support for the Moratorium. This has been demonstrated at major international fora; including the Conference of the Parties and Standing Committee meetings of CITES, IUCN's World Conservation Congress, the UN General Assembly, and the meetings of the African Elephant Coalition.

An important decision was at the CITES Conference of the Parties in Geneva in 2019, when the re-opening of the ivory trade was hotly debated. EPI member countries spoke out strongly to maintain the moratorium, and eventually the proposals proved unsuccessful.

IVORY PRICES

A primary objective of the EPI is to achieve the closure of domestic ivory markets. This is because consumer demand for ivory is the ultimate driver of the illegal killing of elephants. Such closures increase the efficacy of global bans, facilitate law enforcement and complement demand reduction campaigns.

The price of ivory in China continued to rise until 2014, but thereafter the trend has been more encouraging. Falling prices on the legal Chinese domestic market were confirmed by Save the Elephants in late 2015, which put average prices at USD 1,100/kg, down from USD 2,100/kg in early 2014.⁷ Prices for ivory on the illegal market were reported as having risen slightly in 2016 following the announcement of the ban on the ivory market in China, but reductions continued thereafter to below 2015 levels.⁸

Both ivory prices and poaching rates have significantly fallen since 2014. The data strongly suggests that poaching rates are responsive to changes in the consumer ivory price.

Ivory prices are reported to have dropped in Viet Nam (from USD 1,322/kg in 2015 to USD 750/kg by late 2016, and USD 660/kg by February 2017), which traders linked to China’s announcement that it would close its domestic markets by the end of that year.⁹

Ivory prices, like those paid for other illegal products, are differentiated along the trade chain. Poachers are often paid a flat rate that is insensitive to changes in the retail price. As markets close and demand drops, data from Kenya and Tanzania have indicated declines in the prices paid to poachers (Figure 2).

Over the same time period the Chinese economy experienced a dramatic slowdown in growth. Significant research has been undertaken to try to determine the interrelationship between China’s economic slowdown and its ivory ban on the fall in market price. The fall in price cannot primarily be attributed to a slowdown in the Chinese economy and there is evidence to show that the domestic ivory trade bans appear to have led to changing consumer attitudes and behaviours towards ivory consumption in major consumer markets¹⁰, ultimately contributing to a lower poaching rate in Africa.¹¹

Figure 2: Prices paid to poachers for ivory in Kenya and Tanzania, 2014 - 2018.

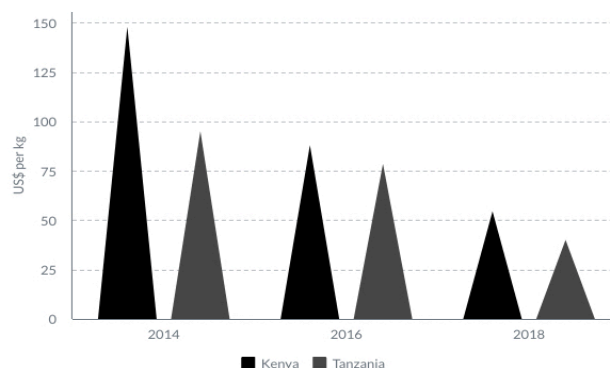


Table 1: Changes in ivory prices over recent years.

Year	Domestic raw ivory	Illegal raw ivory tusk	Wholesale illegal ivory	Retail polished	Retail carved
2010			\$750/kg (China)		
2012			\$1,560/kg (Viet Nam)		
2013	\$100/kg (Kenya)		\$5,700/kg (Viet Nam) \$1,545/kg (Viet Nam)		
2014	\$275/kg (Tanzania)		\$2,100/kg (China) \$2,150/kg (China online) \$1,262/kg (Viet Nam)	\$2,930/kg (China online)	\$7,000/kg (USA)
2015		\$2,610/kg* (China)	\$1,100/kg (China) \$1,322/kg (Viet Nam)	\$2,650/kg (<10kg) (China online) \$1,785.5/kg (>10kg) (China online)	
2016		\$2,030/kg* (China)	\$750/kg (Viet Nam) \$887/kg* (Viet Nam)		
2017		\$1,015/kg* (China)	\$660/kg (Viet Nam) \$713/kg* (Viet Nam)		
2018			\$728/kg (China) \$660/kg* (Viet Nam)		

Data taken from Sosnowski *et al.* Appendix A.¹² * Data from UNODC Wildlife Crime Report.¹³

TRAFFICKING AND SEIZURES

Data on the seizure of shipments of ivory gives a valuable insight into the scale of illegal wildlife trade. However, as with any illegal trade, empirical data on seizures alone can be misleading as it only represents a fraction of the entire trade. Moreover, seizure data is difficult to interpret. It is impacted by several factors, including enforcement effort, and can quickly go out of date. Seizure reports alone are therefore not a good indicator of the magnitude and trend of trafficking volumes.

Since 2012/3 the overall trend of seizures of 'small worked' ivory, as well as seizures involving 100 kg or more, is significantly down. The relative number of seizures of all ivory types and weight classes has also experienced a decline (mean of 150 per annum in 2013 to 110 in 2017). The data from 2015 to 2017 reveals important details including indications of the involvement of organised criminal activity, evidenced by seizures of 500 kg which are used as the threshold indicator for ivory movements assumed to be linked to organised criminal activity.^{5,7}

Analysis used in the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) to inform CITES identified Malaysia, Mozambique and Nigeria as having the fifth highest mean number of seizures between 2015 and 2017. Corruption prevalence is the correlating factor for Mozambique and Nigeria, in addition to the presence of relatively large domestic markets, suggesting that syndicates choose these transit countries to improve efficiency. In 2018 Nigeria joined the EPI, making a public policy commitment to closing its domestic market.¹⁴

The ETIS analysis also identified a cluster of countries in East Africa – Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, in which about 60% of the trade by weight involved large-scale ivory movements, the 'hallmark of transnational organised crime'.⁵ The collective corruption score is lower in this cluster than in the first one. Promisingly, about 90% of the seizures involving ivory from these countries are made by their own authorities. Domestic markets have largely been closed down in this cluster, crowding out opportunities for laundering.

The third cluster contains Benin, the DRC, Congo, Japan and South Africa. Japan is not a range State but has a large consumer market. The DRC also has a prominent domestic market. In this group, 60% of the total number of seizures were made internally, however the DRC and Japan brought the average down considerably on this score.

IVORY INVENTORY AND STOCKPILE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Stop Ivory has designed a state-of-the-art Ivory Stockpile Management System (SMS) and provides countries with technical and financial assistance for its implementation.

The standardized ivory Inventory Protocol and Inventory Technology has been used for 13 inventories of ivory stockpiles since development. In 2016 alone, 18.37 tonnes of ivory stockpiles across eight countries were inventoried.

The inventory protocol was developed with CITES, Save the Elephants and Sam Wasser, Director of the University of Washington Center for Conservation Biology, in Ethiopia. It was developed to address a lack of standard protocols for countries to follow. It outlines the steps and process required and links to the SMS, which was first tested in Ethiopia in 2013.

The management system has developed into a sophisticated management tool allowing a digital record that includes analysis and reporting tools.

Eight countries used the SMS to submit their annual ivory stockpile report to CITES in 2019. Thirteen African countries have implemented the SMS. There have been over 800 people trained on use of the SMS to date – across inventory, administrator and user training courses.



PLACE IVORY BEYOND ECONOMIC USE

EPI member states commit to putting ivory, including national stockpiles, beyond economic use. The rationale for this commitment is that maintaining stocks of ivory is incompatible with calling for trade bans and for markets to close. Across Africa, wildlife services have been perpetuating systems of 'wildlife trophy' collection and storage that were designed under colonial administrations for extraction. Since 1989, with no legal international trade, these stockpiles have become a drain on limited resources, a security threat and an inducement to corruption. In 2014, it was estimated that a minimum of 816 tonnes of African elephant ivory was stockpiled or seized from 1989 to October 2013.

This commitment has garnered support amongst a majority of African elephant range States. Between 2011 and April 2016, 21 countries either placed or committed to place significant volumes of ivory beyond economic use.^{12, 15}

In response to the poaching crisis and to reduce the burden of maintaining and securing their stockpiles a number of countries have destroyed them, in whole or in part. These have often been high-profile events intended by governments to spread the message about the threat to elephants from poaching and the trafficking of ivory, and to underline their policy commitments.

The intention of these events is to send a clear, international, message that ivory is not a commodity and should not be traded. Stop Ivory has worked with several governments and partner organisations to develop standards and protocols for largescale ivory stockpile destructions.¹⁵

Between 2011 and 2018, there were 34 destruction events by 23 different countries, amounting to more than 244 tonnes of ivory in total.¹⁶

There is no reasonable prospect that ivory stockpiles held by African governments can realise economic return. Given the high levels of illegal leakage, many countries now realise that maintaining stockpiles is an economic burden, the cost of which outweighs potential future benefits that are unlikely to materialise.

“The EPI is a shining example of what can be achieved by like-minded countries and people, all working together to achieve a common goal.”

**Angola’s Minister of Environment
Paula Coelho, COP18 2019**



CONSUMER MARKETS AND ATTITUDES

Official bans have an important part to play in changing consumer behaviour. Consumers can be influenced, and the credibility and efficacy of demand reduction campaigns are strengthened by governments' overt commitments to closing their domestic ivory markets.¹⁷

The concept of 'Ecological Civilization', written into the Chinese constitution in 2018, reflects the importance the Government is attaching to the environment. It reflected a change from the 2008 message, which coincided with the one-off sale, that ivory consumption was a cultural heritage. The claimed purchase of ivory among consumers has declined significantly since the Chinese domestic ban was implemented on 31 December 2017.

Surveys undertaken across 15 Chinese cities known to have active ivory markets revealed a significant proportion of citizens moved into the 'rejectors' category, and said they did not want to purchase ivory in the future.^{10, 18}

“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.”

**President Kenyatta of Kenya
Kenya's National Ivory Burn
30th April 2016**

A full 83% of surveyed individuals agreed that the ban would cause them to 'completely stop buying ivory',¹⁰ as opposed to only 74% who stated this prior to the implementation of the ban. Eighty-five percent of respondents agreed with the statement that 'buying ivory is shameful as it is banned.'

This change demonstrates that cultures are dynamic, and it remains a fiction that ivory consumption is a static, immutable characteristic of Asian culture, any more than it is of African or European cultures. Recent changes in the ivory market show that efforts to tackle demand through targeted demand reduction campaigns, coupled with strong regulations, such as bans, to control supply, can be effective.

Reducing demand is a vital part of combatting wildlife crime, but there is no single approach that works. Demand reduction efforts need to be evidence-based, species-specific and country or more importantly consumer specific.



EPI AS AN INSTITUTIONAL LEGACY

The EPI was established in February 2014 at the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade, by the leaders of five founding member states – Botswana, Chad, Ethiopia, Gabon and Tanzania, with the support of the UK Government and Stop Ivory. Today, it consists of 21 African member states, a growing coalition of countries committed to the four tenets of the initiative and comprising the majority of Africa's elephants.

The EPI is formerly supported by 34 partner NGOs and IGOs, including the World Bank and the Global Environmental Facility.

The EPI has gained significant momentum and traction. It has developed into an innovative African-led movement that spans the continent, involving Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries. The closure of major domestic ivory markets, securing of ivory to be placed beyond economic use, and the relative consensus achieved on many policy issues are success factors that have laid a positive foundation from which to progress in securing a future with elephants. The core commitment by African leaders and the embedding of NEAPs into national and regional development plans is crucial to understanding how elephant conservation can be translated into practical policies on the ground.

The EPI Foundation was established in 2019 to serve as the initiative's secretariat, working for the EPI member countries. The Foundation provides technical and financial support to EPI countries, as well as those that are considering joining. The Foundation works directly with government ministries and wildlife authorities in partnership with NGOs, IGOs and the private sector. The Foundation benefits from a Leadership Council of eminent African politicians and conservationists: the former President of Botswana, the First Ladies of Kenya and Sierra Leone, the Former Prime Minister of Ethiopia, and Gabon's Minister of Forests, Oceans, Environment and Climate Change.

The EPI has made important progress but this remains a critical time for nature conservation. It is important that the EPI Foundation adapts to the significant challenges facing its member states and their elephant populations.

To this end, the Foundation has established a renewed Vision for how best to support EPI countries with elephant conservation in a post COVID-19 world.

ELEPHANT PROTECTION INITIATIVE

The founding member states – Botswana, Chad, Ethiopia, Gabon and Tanzania – established the Elephant Protection Initiative with the support of Stop Ivory.

The EPI's four primary objectives are to:

- maintain the 1989 international moratorium on ivory trade for ten years or until elephant populations recover;
- close down domestic ivory markets;
- place ivory stockpiles beyond commercial use; and
- implement the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP).

To date, 21 African countries have signed up as members of the EPI and ten member states have presented completed National African Action Plans (NEAPs).

The EPI argued vigorously against the selling of ivory stockpiles at CITES in 2019. This leadership is vital to extending stockpile management systems, the rolling out of NEAPs and assuring compliance with the EPI's founding mandate.



The EPI Foundation will continue to support member countries and partners with ivory stockpile management, achieving gold standards in the management of ivory and other wildlife products, and the development and updating of NEAPs. These are fundamental pillars of the EPI. But if we want to secure the future of Africa's elephants, we must do much more, and the Vision sets out how the Foundation will now seek to further assist EPI countries achieve the objectives of the EPI to 2030.

The Vision notes that while we will need to remain ever vigilant against the poaching of elephants and smuggling of their ivory, looking across the horizon to 2030 or to 2050, it is Africa's rapidly growing human population and economic growth, with new and expanding human settlements, related infrastructure, and conversion of land to agriculture, that loom as the largest threats to elephants. With these comes an ever-increasing risk of escalating human wildlife conflict, as people and elephants compete for land and dwindling natural resources.

These long-term challenges are only exacerbated by the immediate crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is having a devastating impact upon people, economies, and societies across the world. In Africa it has brought wildlife-based tourism to a sudden stop, thereby undermining a fundamental pillar of the business model for wildlife conservation on the continent.

It remains imperative for business, donors and governments to continue to invest in conservation, not only for its own sake, but to help avert the next pandemic, mitigate climate change and retain tourism appeal. The EPI, with its continent-wide membership, Leadership Council of eminent politicians and conservationists, world leading partners and supportive Foundation, is uniquely placed to create the platform through which EPI member states can articulate their needs and find solutions to the challenges facing their elephant populations.



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

**HRH Prince William, Duke of Cambridge
EPI International Consultative
Group Meeting, 11th October 2018**



CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

There have been remarkable changes over the last six years for elephants.

- Poaching rates have declined and elephant numbers appear to be stabilising. Large losses were recorded between 2006 and 2016, but the rate slowed significantly between 2013 and 2016.
- 13 African elephant range states have developed or are developing National Elephant Action Plans, identifying not only the key threats but actions needed to address them to secure a future for elephants.
- Ivory prices have declined in major consumer markets, a partial function of effective demand reduction efforts, complemented by near-complete bans on major domestic ivory markets in the US, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong (forthcoming) and the UK.
- Ivory seizure analysis continues to provide excellent insights into where to allocate resources to disrupt organised international criminal syndicates that thrive on the availability of domestic markets, corruption and limited law enforcement capacity.
- 21 elephant range states have committed to closing their domestic markets and placing their stockpiles beyond commercial use.

A sustainable future for elephants is not yet secure but is today more likely than it was six years ago. There are still many challenges that lie ahead, but it is evident the threat of poaching and the illegal ivory trade has significantly reduced since the EPI was established six years ago. Stop Ivory has been honoured to be a part of the many efforts to bring about such vital progress for Africa's elephants.

The stage has been set for the EPI Foundation to continue to advance the work started by Stop Ivory, while also working with Member States to offer support in addressing an array of threats to Africa's elephants that go beyond ivory, especially the existing and emerging challenges presented by human elephant conflict.

In closing its doors, Stop Ivory does so in the confidence that, under the direction of Member States and with the support of the EPI Foundation, the EPI is well placed to continue its progress and to achieve its founding goals and much more.

There is no reasonable prospect that ivory stockpiles held by African governments can realise economic return. Given the high levels of illegal leakage, many countries now realise that maintaining stockpiles is an economic burden, the cost of which outweighs potential future benefits that are unlikely to materialise.



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