

# Effects of animal trafficking on the economy



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## Introduction

Generally, animal trafficking includes the illegal stealing, smuggling, transportation and distribution of the animals and the products and derivatives obtained from them for commercial purposes for human use (Subha, 2013). Countries in Europe, the United States and Asia named as most animals' illegal smuggling activities for pets, or for their skins and furs. The issue of animal trafficking had attracted attention of a lot of major NGOs, United Nation and Interpol rank animal trafficking as third and second world's largest illicit activity respectively (Save Ecuador's Animals: animal trafficking).

As per an estimate made by the Interpol, it has been predicted that annually 10–20 billion US dollars is generated from such illegal activities. Well-organized criminal groups have turned environmental exploitation into a professional business, with high revenues encouraging the poaching of endangered and protected species in national parks (Subha, 2013). Every year, thousands of cases of poaching are reported by authorities in Africa and Asia. Based on the reliable resource, United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime, 450 elephants were killed, for their ivory, in early 2012 in Bouba Ndjida National Park in northern Cameroon. Between 1989 and 2009, estimated 2.3 tons of ivory were seized and it is worth USD \$2 million apiece at the wholesale level (UNODC, 2014).

Concern with this situation, this paper will discuss the effects of animal trafficking to the economy of that particular country internationally. Mainly there are three major points, which are a direct effect to economic, economic

effect through ecotourism development of the country and economic effect through global health.

### Discussion

Global trade in illegal wildlife is a potentially huge illegal economy, estimated to be worth billions of dollars each year. The most lucrative illegal wildlife commodities are rhino horn, elephant ivory, sturgeon caviar, and so-called “bush meat.”

Wildlife smuggling may pose at transnational security threat as well as an environmental one. Numerous sources indicate that some organized criminal syndicates, insurgent groups, and foreign military units may be involved in various aspects of international wildlife trafficking.

Some observers claim that the participation of such actors in wildlife trafficking can therefore threaten the stability of countries, foster corruption, and encourage violence to protect the trade (Wylter, 2013). Black markets existence encourages these activities to spread widely and considered to be driven by on-going consumer demand as well as gaps in natural resource management, law enforcement, and trade controls.

High prices for illegal wildlife, combined with often lax law enforcement and security measures, have motivated the involvement of transnational organized crime syndicates, who view such trafficking as an opportunity for large profits with a low risk of detection. Even where heightened security measures to protect wildlife are implemented, they had not consistently had

a deterrent effect. Instead, some wildlife trafficking operations have become more elaborate and, at times, more dangerous.

Traffickers are known to employ sophisticated hardware for poaching operations, including night vision goggles, military-grade weapons, and helicopters. Park rangers have also been killed in the line of duty by poachers. Some shipments of the wildlife contraband and the illicit profits that result from such trafficking often involve circuitous routes, support from corrupt officials, a complex web of anonymous financial mechanisms, and broad networks of complicit middlemen, processors, exporters, and retailers along the transnational supply chain. (Wyler, 2013)

The impact of illicit wildlife trafficking on the social and economic development of a country is the immediate and irreversible depletion of valuable assets. One of government representatives who asked to remain anonymous stated, “ The government does not receive any tax or revenue to support the economic activities and the country loses a lot of resources”.

Next, important impact on the social and economic development of a country is the corruption that is associated with illicit wildlife trafficking. Corruption was stated to be of grave concern to all those who participated in this study, as it has a direct impact on the wealth of a country. Corruption weakens macroeconomic and fiscal stability, deters investment and hinders growth. It reduces the effectiveness of government, deters civil engagement and distorts public expenditure decisions. It erodes the rule of law and harms the reputation of and trust in the state. In short, corruption increases wealth for a few at the expense of society.

The valuable products from such exploited animals include traditional medicine, clothing, and exotic pet foods, jewellery prepared from animals' fins, skins, shells, horns, tusks and internal organs. According to an estimate, the countries like China, US, and the European Union are the places where these smuggled products have huge market demand.

The market demand of the people is also influenced by the lifestyle, cultural heritage and regional preferences. Demand of the exotic wildlife products is in constant rise in the South-East Asian regions and North America. Also, in some parts of the African continent, the 'bush meat' from primates are considered a delicacy due to increased protein source. The meat is also exported to all over Africa, Europe and the US. (Res, 2013)

In addition, it directly benefits the goods of the criminal groups involved to delay the development of legitimate businesses such as tourism. By affecting the viability of legitimate traders and other legal businesses, this can result in loss of revenue and a cost to the state if those businesses fold, with resultant unemployment. (Dalberg, 2012) Trade is important in every country because it helps in generates for the national economy. As mentioned before, animal trafficking is an illegal trade of animal, which definitely affect the economic resources and development of the country. Since the animal trafficking mostly done by individuals or private groups without doing any legal relationship between the government, this will indirectly and directly only benefit those involved and instead the country itself.

This situation can be well measured through Deeks' study on animal trafficking. Among the measures taken by the perpetrators of this illegal trade is as the trade chain begins with local hunters or fishermen who have extensive knowledge of local forests or wetlands. These hunters sell to local markets or low-level dealers who pass products to higher-level dealers with international clients. The wildlife traffickers get across borders easily with forged or altered documents, by bribing the officers, packing illegal animals in with legal ones (making detection more difficult), or drying and grinding up coveted animal parts so they can be packed in vials and stored in suitcases (Deeks, 2006).

Wild animals are used for food, decoration, and medicinal purposes, especially in China, where eating wild meat is thought to impart various benefits such as longevity, sexual prowess, and confidence. Illegal wildlife trade in Southeast Asia is an \$8—\$10 billion per year industry worldwide, wildlife trade is the second largest form of black market commerce, behind drug smuggling and before arms (Deeks, 2006).

For example, animals that are almost extinct in China is panda, which only can be found in some areas. Although the panda face the extinction, they are still hunted for their fur, which will be used for making garments, bags and accessories. Thus, upon the occurrence of trafficking animals, it will lead to the extinction of these animals as they are often exploited. In the event of the extinction of the animals, the country that would indirectly suffer losses because of the possibility of extinct animals is one of the unique attractions of the country.

Besides that if the animal is a tourist attraction because of the uniqueness of these animals, but when the animal is extinct or difficult to find it will cause a reduction in the tourist attraction from the others countries. Directly, the country's economy will be affected due to the lack of tourist's attraction items.

Diseases and infections are one of the things that would tag along in illegal trade of wildlife. There are some sayings that illegal animal trade is one of the ways for a disease to spread through the globe. Moreover, some have stated that the most dangerous emerging infectious diseases, in terms of the total fatalities and fatality rates, have come from wildlife (Daszak, 2006 cited in Sheikh, 2008).

The disease that's being transmitted will not only give impact to human, but it also gives impact on social, economic, and also threaten the native wildlife and ecosystems. The outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003 and bird flu is some of the clearest examples of the infectious disease that's been caused by animal. There are also some other example, as Heart water Disease, Avian Influenza and Monkey pox (Sheikh, 2008).

There are several cases where the disease linked to the wildlife import and export of legal wildlife. As the suspected wildlife being banned from the trade because of the disease, if there are still parts that keep on doing the trade the trade will be automatically illegal. Many of these diseases are zoonotic where it is a disease that can be passed from animals to human and these might have bio-terrorism implication (Moutou, 2010).

One example of species that involved in wildlife trade is primates, which carry a lot of zoonotic disease. Primates particularly present high health risks due to their phylogenetic proximity to humans and can inflict severe bites. A Zoonotic disease which present risks include rabies, a Monkey B virus, tuberculosis, digestive bacteria (salmonella, zig-Ella), zoonosis transmitted through bites (pasteurellosis) and various parasites (amoeba, whipworms, roundworms). One example of primates, African monkeys, can spread hemorrhagic fever (Ebola virus, Marburg fever). Hemorrhagic fever viruses cause sickness and often death in these species (Moutou, 2010). Few zoonotic diseases such as plague, tularaemia, and antivirus have been used in weapon program. This happened during the 1930s when the Japanese used fleas to cause plague in China (Sheikh, 2008).

The example of illegal wildlife trade is the bush meat trade, which refers to the harvesting of wildlife for consumption and its subsequent trafficking within or outside source countries (Elizabeth L. Bennet et al., 2006 cited in Sheikh, 2008). Even though there are many cultures that consume wildlife meat, but the bush meat term commonly refers to wildlife hunted in African forests. Bush meat trade is considered illegal when imports occur in contravention of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), national quarantine laws, and other laws that ban the trade of specific animals. The illegal bush meat satisfies the global demand, including the United States. This illegal bush meat trade concerns United States because of its potential carries disease. United States experienced the outbreak of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, which some suggest emerged in Africa through consuming primates that carry the Simian



Immunodeficiency Viruses (SIV) and monkey pox, which originated from African rodents, commonly consumed as bush meat and traded globally. Moreover, there are also other diseases which are linked to the bush meat like Ebola hemorrhagic fever and SARS (Sheikh, 2008).

The zoonotic diseases might give direct and indirect economic effects on national industries. Industries that directly affected by the zoonotic diseases would be science, food and agriculture, and health care. While on the other hand other industries that will be indirectly affected would be tourism industry. Around 2002 and 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome SARS, which is believed to emerge in China, where it is assumed to have made a zoonotic leap. Within months, the disease spread through the world from Asia to North and South America and Europe. Many countries experience deep financial crisis due to SARS. The disease has lowered the GDP of Asian countries and Canada.

The total worldwide impact of \$50 billion in losses is mostly from industries such as tourism, retail and trade. In Canada, it is estimated loss \$1.5 billion in national economic activity in 2003, representing 0.15 percent of Canada's real GDP. Real GDP in the City of Toronto itself was lowered by \$950 million, or 0.5 percent, with about \$570 million of this total concentrated in the travel and tourism sector. Malaysia also did experience financial loss due to zoonotic disease which is Nipah disease that cause loss around 350-400 million in 1999 (Inc., 2008).

### Conclusion

The continued existence of animal trafficking is widely considered to be driven by on-going consumer demand as well as gaps in natural resource management, law enforcement, and trade controls. Wildlife trafficking appears unreasonably to impact parts of the developing world that possess priceless natural resources, but do not have the capacity or political will to manage such resources obviously and effectively. Beyond its role in species extinction and endangerment, illegal wildlife trade has also been associated with the spread of disease and proliferation of invasive species.

To curb this lot of numbers of conference, campaign and gathering held by countries, NGOs and other major body such as United Nations had been held. Recently, experts from around the world had gathered in London to discuss “the global crisis” in the wildlife trade. The aim of the meeting, hosted by the Zoological Society of London, is to find new ways to protect animals and reduce demand for wildlife products.

As, animal trafficking will experience further political corruption, economic inefficiency, as well as the growth of criminal elements in society, it is essential that policymakers reevaluate the institutions and laws that are geared towards addressing the international animal trafficking.

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