



## Corruption and wildlife trafficking

Tanya Wyatt and Anh Ngoc Cao

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## Abstract

Wildlife trafficking is a growing global concern. It takes place in all regions of the world with those nations with high biodiversity being the source and the consumers of the wildlife as well as transit areas and hubs for smuggled wildlife. It is a significant contributor to biodiversity loss and species extinction. Many if not most developing nations are rich in biodiversity and therefore must contend with wildlife trafficking. It is a critical concern for these nations' environment and economies. It has been documented that corruption is an essential component in the facilitation and perpetration of the illegal wildlife trade, but a comprehensive study into the scale, scope and structure has yet to be undertaken. This U4 Issue paper conducts a meta-study regarding corruption's role in wildlife trafficking from the available literature, interviews with experts and a case study of Vietnam in an attempt to highlight concerns for bilateral donors in regards to conservation, environment and law enforcement programmes.

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## Executive summary

Wildlife trafficking is one of the leading threats to the survival of species all over the globe. This has impact upon the livelihood of people, particularly those in developing countries who are reliant on wildlife for sustenance, income and shelter. Corruption can play a major part in facilitating this illicit market. This makes the connection between corruption and wildlife trafficking relevant to bilateral donors in three ways. First, bilateral donors have an important role to play in reducing corruption in general and therefore wildlife trafficking in particular both directly and through national governments and international organisations. Second, bilateral donors finance a number of conservation and environmental programmes where corruption is a concern and work in or are based out of countries that serve as hubs for the illicit financial flows stemming from wildlife trafficking. Finally, bilateral donors finance a number of other projects that are likely to interact with corruption and wildlife trafficking, such as law enforcement capacity building, rule of law and land administration or agricultural projects. It is through these projects where recommendations can be made for how bilateral donors can support efforts to reduce both corruption and wildlife trafficking.

Recommendations for bilateral donors:

Support states receiving aid to:

- Criminalise money laundering, corruption and bribery
- Promote transparent lobbying
- Make evidence-based alterations to legislation and penalties
- Have independent civil society organisations and mechanisms for whistle-blowing

Support criminal justice systems in aid-receiving countries to:

- Strengthen law enforcement by increasing the status of wildlife and environmental officers, building their accounting, technical and forensic expertise and providing better equipment
- Create multi-agency task forces and international cooperation that involves money laundering expertise
- Make evidence-based alterations to work patterns that can help combat corruption
- Implement accountability measures for law enforcement agencies and individual officers
- Target corrupt officials for asset forfeiture and repatriation

Monitoring and transparency:

- Support independent monitoring of crime prevention efforts for wildlife and banking
- Support transparent banking systems with built-in audit trails
- Have standards and criteria for combating corruption for states to continue to receive aid
- Avoid cash donations or have these tightly controlled

#### Demand focus and attitudes:

- Support or create initiatives to change people's attitudes towards wildlife consumption and corruption in a culturally sensitive way that does not marginalise groups of people

A coordinated effort to tackle corruption is crucial. This means addressing the state, criminal justice system and the overall transparency and oversight of state institutions and donor programmes as well as campaigns to change people's acceptance of wildlife consumption and corruption all at the same time. Donor agencies can be key players in driving these efforts through rule of law programmes as well as role models of best practice by having robust monitoring and transparency in their own projects, including of their finances and hiring processes. A missing piece that is crucial to better understanding of the dynamics of wildlife trafficking and corruption is the unpicking of the illicit financial flows and money laundering that run in parallel to these crimes. Donor agencies can help support further initiatives and research into this essential area, which is important to improve success in combating poaching and ultimately impacting on species survival and improved livelihoods.

## Abbreviations

CITES	Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
ENV	Education Nature of Vietnam
EIA	Environmental Investigation Agency
IFAW	International Fund for Animal Welfare
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization – International Police
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic and Cooperative Development
TRAFFIC	Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce
UNCAC	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNODC	United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime
UNTOC	United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

# 1. Introduction

Wildlife trafficking is one of the leading threats to the survival of species all over the globe. This has an impact upon the livelihood of people, particularly those in developing countries who are reliant on wildlife for sustenance, income and shelter. Research conducted into the nature and extent of wildlife trafficking has shown that corruption can play a major part in facilitating this illicit market (Duffy 2014; Elliott 2007; EIA 2013; Brack and Hayman 2002; IFAW 2013; UNODC 2009; WWF/Dalberg 2012; Wyatt 2013c and others). This makes this topic relevant to bilateral donors in three ways. First, bilateral donors have an important role to play in reducing corruption in general and therefore wildlife trafficking in particular both directly and through national governments and international organisations. Second, bilateral donors finance a number of conservation and environmental programmes where corruption is a concern and work in or are based out of countries that serve as hubs for the illicit financial flows stemming from wildlife trafficking. Finally, bilateral donors finance a number of other projects that are likely to interact with corruption and wildlife trafficking, such as law enforcement capacity building, rule of law and land administration or agricultural projects.

The illegal trade of live animals and plants and their products and derivatives, or wildlife trafficking, is in contravention of national laws and international conventions, particularly the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (Wyatt 2013c). Trafficking includes the range of species diversity - caviar to coral; saiga antelope horn to sea cucumbers; timber to turtles; walrus tusks to whale meat (Nurse 2014). The criminal profits are estimated to be between USD 10 and 20 billion a year, but this figure does not account for illegal timber trade and illegal fishing (Fison 2011). Illegal timber trade on its own is estimated to be worth USD 30 to USD 100 billion annually (INTERPOL and UNEP 2012). This Issue paper will focus on animals and start with a review of the literature beginning with a more detailed definition of wildlife trafficking, how it can be categorised and the ways in which it intersects with corruption. It will then analyse the literature regarding the nature and extent of the known role of corruption throughout the supply chain in facilitating and perpetrating wildlife trafficking. The analysis will include an investigation of the variety of corrupt operations that take place as well as the range of corrupt actors that are involved in smuggling wildlife (Martini 2013). This includes examination of the role of law enforcement, customs, the criminal justice system, corporations and individuals in circumventing the legal trade and environmental laws intended to protect endangered wildlife. The study explores ways in which payments and paperwork (Graycar and Felson 2010) throughout the supply chain can be compromised. Whilst wildlife trafficking mostly begins in developing nations, the illicit financial flows and the laundering of profits may take place in both developing and donor countries. The current state of knowledge regarding this aspect of wildlife trafficking and corruption will be investigated as best as possible though the available information is limited.

The literature review was supplemented by interviews with experts at INTERPOL's Environmental Security Sub Directorate and PALF Enforcement, a non-governmental organisation combating wildlife trafficking in the Republic of Congo. For further evidence of the connections between corruption and wildlife trafficking and what solutions may be created, a case study of Vietnam was also completed. The case study combined the literature available about trafficking of wildlife in Vietnam with seven semi-structured interviews of practitioners conducted in-country by one of the co-authors. Vietnam is an ideal study site as it is a developing nation with high biodiversity, which also has high levels of wildlife trafficking (Cao and Wyatt 2012), particularly import of rhinoceros horn that is contributing to the threat of extinction of rhinos (Milliken and Shaw 2012). The aim is to try to identify typologies of corruption at the various stages in order to advance prevention strategies. Furthermore, the findings and analyses will be used to develop recommendations as to what role donor countries might be able to play in reducing corruption and wildlife trafficking.

## 2. Overview of wildlife trafficking in the developing world and the role of corruption

### 2.1 Literature review on wildlife trafficking

The illegal wildlife trade or wildlife trafficking is an environmental crime that has recently gained international recognition as a serious concern for the global community. This is evident by the high profile events taking place, such as the United for Wildlife Symposium sponsored by the British royal family held in London in February of 2014, and both the European Union and the United States seeking public comment on proposed policies about wildlife trafficking. Research on the illegal trade in wildlife has been taking place for some time with academics and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) investigating the nature and extent of the problem. This was predominantly done by conservation organisations and biologists concerned with the impact of wildlife trafficking on the survival of species (see the journal *Oryx* and the research of Vincent Nijman for instance). The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN 2014) produces a Red List that categorises species based upon their conservation status – critically endangered, endangered, threatened and so forth. In making these determinations, IUCN lists threats to species survival and trade (legal) and/or trafficking (illegal) are contributing factors to many species facing reduced populations and possibly extinction. Intentional hunting and trapping of terrestrial mammals is a threat to 2,536 species at the time of this report (IUCN 2014). This does not include other vertebrates at risk.

The distinction between the legal and illegal trade and the complexities surrounding debates on if trade bans and restrictions encourage illegality and create the conditions for black markets in wildlife and wildlife products as well as the opposing view – that legal trade provides a means of laundering illegal wildlife - have drawn the attention of social scientists, particularly criminologists. They have not reached a consensus though and this debate continues. Furthermore, wildlife trafficking's connections to other crimes such as smuggling of drugs and corruption have garnered even more attention. Wildlife trafficking is a multi-stage crime that begins, in this case because of the focus on animals, with the poaching or capturing of the target animal. They must then be transported by smuggling or fraudulent means to the location where they will be sold. Depending upon the animal, and if they are alive or not, this involves multiple various people, different forms of transportation and various techniques for hiding the animal (Wyatt 2013c). Further actors will be involved if the animal needs to be processed into a particular product to be sold.

Much of the literature focuses on and is critical of the way criminal justice systems across the world fail to deal with wildlife trafficking effectively. This does not seem to be species dependent as there are examples of the failure of international law to effectively deter illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing as seen in the continued poaching of Patagonian toothfish in the Southern Oceans (Lutgen 2005) and the illegal trade of vascular plants like orchids (Flores-Palacio and Valencia-Diaz 2007). This also does not seem to be only a concern for developing nations as Lowther et al (2000) found the United Kingdom's approach to trafficking inconsistent and lacking cooperation between agencies though this has potentially improved. Several researchers have pointed out that there is a lack of seriousness given to (at least most forms of) wildlife trafficking. This is reflected in the amount of enforcement resources allocated to combat it as well as the low penalties attached to most convictions (Lowther et al 2000; Nurse 2011) though there are some exceptions, such as the death penalty for tiger poaching in China. Schneider (2008) proposes that traditional crime control techniques, such as routine active theory and market reduction approaches can be applied to wildlife trafficking to decrease it. Other research by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW 2008, 2011) has investigated the challenges of monitoring and regulating sale of endangered species and

their products online. In particular, it was uncovered that there is a significant amount of ivory for sale on the internet. This is clearly a challenge for law enforcement in regards to jurisdiction and technological knowledge required to uncover these crimes.

Other literature has focused on the nature and extent of wildlife trafficking in terms of specific regions – Alacs and George’s (2008) study on wildlife trafficking within Australia for instance; Hongfa et al’s (2007) research in China; Cao and Wyatt’s (2012) exploration of wildlife trafficking in Vietnam. Or in regards to specific animals; Tapley et al (2011) investigate the trade of reptiles in the UK for the pet industry; similarly Sollund (2013) explores reptile trade in Norway; Wyatt (2009, 2011) has researched illegal fur and falcon trades. She has also undertaken a comparative study between Australia, New Zealand and the UK, which details the range of animals targeted by traffickers. Even more comprehensive research has been done by TRAFFIC (2013), a non-governmental organisation which monitors wildlife trade, into the total number of seizures in Europe over the last decade.<sup>1</sup> Focus only on specific regions or specific species whilst useful may not expose larger patterns and methods of trafficking that could be targets for wider prevention strategies. Cook et al (2002) attempt to categorise wildlife trafficking as 1) specialist specimen collecting; 2) skins and furs, and traditional Asian medicines; 3) activities linked to drug trafficking; 4) caviar trafficking; and 5) illegal timber trade. This, too, is arguably overly focused on species, so again does not necessarily expose the larger patterns. Wyatt (2013c) categorises wildlife trafficking based upon the motivations associated with their demand. Her proposal is that across species and regions, the elements of why people want to buy wildlife and wildlife’s characteristics will result in similar perpetration methods. This might prove useful for identifying points along the trafficking chain that are prone to corruption and what form that corruption might take. This will be discussed in more detail below when attempting to construct typologies of corruption.

Several researchers have noted the involvement of organised crime in wildlife trafficking (Cook et al 2002; Davies 2014; Galster et al 1994; LeDuc 1996; Lin 2005; Lutgen 2005; Wyatt 2009, 2011, 2013c). This has implications for this discussion as it has been documented that organised crime is closely tied to corruption (Guymon 2000). Also of relevance are the studies done analysing the complexities regarding the consumption of animals as a natural resource and how this can be balanced with their conservation (Stoett 2002; Wyatt 2013c). This has particular importance in the context of developing countries, where reliance on wildlife as food and income is significant and where in some cases Western environmental or conservation management regimes, which have wildlife conservation at their core, may be met with resistance (Stoett 2002). Arguably, resistance is related to these regimes prioritising sectioning off land for conservation over economic livelihoods as well as disrupting and disregarding traditional practices of indigenous people.

## 2.2 Wildlife trafficking in the developing world

As research has shown, often nations in the developing world are the source areas that provide the wildlife that fills the demand coming mainly from China, the United States and Europe (McMurray 2008). Many of these countries are located in biodiversity hotspots, which contain numerous species targeted for wildlife trafficking. The literature highlights that developing countries struggle to combat the illegal wildlife trade for a variety of reasons. One of the main concerns is lack of resources,

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<sup>1</sup> See also TRAFFIC reports searchable by region and species: <http://www.traffic.org/search-publications/>

<sup>2</sup> The responses from INTERPOL are a collection of answers taken from the numerous staff of the Environmental Security Sub-Directorate and when referenced in this section are referred to as (INTERPOL). The answers from PALF are from the organisations coordinator Naftali Honig, when referenced in this section referred to as (PALF).

<sup>3</sup> Respondents were all asked: Who are the corrupt actors that make trafficking of wildlife possible? Why are

including very few law enforcement officers dedicated to policing wildlife trafficking and a limited amount of equipment for those officers. For instance, Far East Russia at one point only had two rangers to cover thousands of square miles of remote forest and taiga (Wyatt 2011). Similar circumstances have been noted in Cambodia (Wyatt 2013c) and Bolivia (Pires and Clarke 2011) and are most likely the norm. Other concerns are weak enforcement, undefined or unclear property rights (Brack and Hayman 2002), lack of political will (TRAFFIC 2008) and corruption. In fact, it has been noted that transnational environmental crimes, like wildlife trafficking, are growing particularly in developing countries where corruption is prevalent (Schmidt 2004).

Horne (2013b) notes though that developing nations like Vietnam are making strides against these concerns. Ratification of key international treaties that may combat wildlife trafficking like CITES, but also the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) or the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC), show evidence of efforts to tackle the illegal wildlife trade. CITES is potentially an area for improvement though. In developing countries, CITES policy implementation and delivery are sometimes unstructured, unstrategic and underfunded (Parr 2011). Additionally, CITES focuses on two aspects of trade through two authorities – Management and Scientific – and fails to adequately address enforcement (Parr 2011) or have ways to ensure compliance when member countries fail or refuse to implement or enforce wildlife protection measures (Reeve 2006). Further detail about wildlife trafficking in developing countries is found below when discussing the role of corruption.

### 2.3 The role of corruption in wildlife trafficking

There is a fairly substantial body of literature that links corruption to wildlife trafficking though the terminology, as demonstrated below, varies. Again, this is mostly the work of NGOs and intra-governmental organisations with some research coming from academia. A majority of the research recognises the link, but does not substantiate it with specific examples, though this does occur in some cases as detailed shortly. For instance, the UK-based non-governmental organization Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and colleagues (2013) say that illegal trade in wildlife is linked to corruption. EIA (2013) in other publications has specifically linked *political* corruption to facilitating the illegal trade. Warchol (2004) and IFAW (2013) in a similar vein, but using different terminology, identify the connections between *state* corruption and wildlife trafficking. In regards to ivory in particular, Naylor (2004) found the illegal trade is aided and abetted by corrupt officials. The corruption of government officials and the further link to money laundering is essential to the transnational smuggling and flow of illegal goods and services (Basu 2014). The exact connection and mechanism though is not elaborated on. In yet other phrasing, Elliott (2007) cites *institutional* corruption as being a key element of ivory trafficking in particular, but also to trafficking in environmental black market commodities in general. Others, too, have found that institutional corruption is integral to illegal wildlife trade (Holmes 2006; Lawson and Vines 2014; Lin 2005; Milliken and Shaw 2012) and prevalent in developing countries (Klitgaard 1988; Rosen and Smith 2010; Lawson and Vines 2014).

#### *Social and economic factors related to corruption*

It has been pointed out that corruption itself is not the driver of wildlife trafficking, but poor governance and corruption are commonly linked to this environmental crime as primary facilitators of its increase and its existence (Albanese 2011; Nowell 2012; Wellsmith 2011). Understandably, in research conducted by Dalberg in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF/Dalberg 2012) into wildlife trafficking, officials interviewed did not want to answer questions regarding corruption. The research found that ‘poaching tends to thrive in places where corruption is rife, government enforcement is weak and there are few alternative economic opportunities’ (WWF/Dalberg 2012: 14). TRAFFIC (2008) similarly has concluded that governance, corruption and the lack of rule of law are

fundamental factors in areas where wildlife is traded. In other words, ‘corruption flourishes where there are few institutional checks on power, where decision-making is obscure, where civil society is weak and where poverty is widespread’ (WWF/Dalberg 2012: 14). Klitgaard (1988) agrees that too little transparency is connected to corruption and adds too much discretion as another contributor to corrupt practices. This may well be linked to the finding that corruption plays a part in the failure to combat illegal trade in wildlife products (TRAFFIC 2008). Furthermore, it is been found that corruption can be more evident and serious when salaries of enforcement officials are low (Brack and Hayman 2002).

In regards to the latter, raising salaries through higher base level pay to stop corruption (Van Rijckeghem and Weder 2001; Pfaff et al 2014) and/or providing incentive pay for not being corrupt (Olken and Pande 2012; Sundstrom 2014) are suggestions that have varying levels of support in the literature. Whereas a higher salary may mean the corrupt actor would be less willing to engage and possibly get caught and therefore lose their job, it may just lead them to more thoroughly hide their activity. In terms of incentive pay, Sundstrom (2014) has found in South Africa that performance-related pay schemes have been caught up in the existing corrupt networks. Non-corrupt officers were isolated from those taking bribes and those line officers taking bribes were often colluding with higher ranking officers, who even with the performance-related pay, encouraged corruption as they benefited from it. Persson and colleagues (2013) have also found this to be true and suggest the need for external monitoring systems for such programmes, which will be discussed later.

As mentioned, wildlife trafficking has recently become a focus of governmental and international concern. In prominent speeches at United Nations General Assembly side events, international figures have stated that wildlife trafficking is fuelling corruption and violence (Fedotov 2013; Hague 2013; Kerry 2012). Press releases from the United States’ Office of the President have also said that the illegal wildlife trade perpetuates corruption and more specifically that in order to traffic poached wildlife, corrupt officials exploit borders and governments which are weak (White House 2014). The British royal family through United for Wildlife (2014) have also stated through the Declaration from the London Conference that poaching and trafficking encourages corruption. Many of these discussions centre on specific regions or species as is documented below.

### ***Regions and species where corruption and wildlife trafficking are linked***

Similar to the general literature about wildlife trafficking, the literature linking corruption and wildlife trafficking also can be categorised around regions and species. For instance, both Africa (Douglas-Hamilton 2012; Hongfa et al 2007; Milliken and Shaw 2012) and Asia, the Southeast in particular, (Balmford et al 2002; Lin 2005; TRAFFIC 2008) are singled out for having problems with corruption. In the case of Southeast Asia, TRAFFIC (2008) has indicated that land administration centres in particular are prone to corruption and corruption and poaching arise when people have no title to their land. Lin (2005) connects the destabilisation of some Southeast Asian nations with the corruption of customs agents. Occasionally, specific countries and sectors will be mentioned such as Russia’s transportation officials (Wyatt 2011), Kenya’s enforcement officials (Naylor 2004) and South Africa’s institutional corruption (Milliken and Shaw 2012). The latter is noted to be a means for Asian crime groups to traffic rhino horn through sophisticated networks from South Africa to Vietnam (Milliken and Shaw 2012). In terms of species, ivory trafficking is linked to corruption (Elliott 2007; Naylor 2004) as is trafficking in rhino horn (Milliken and Shaw 2012), tiger parts (EIA 2011), fur and falcons (Wyatt 2011).

Political, state or institutional corruption allows, in Africa for instance, armed non-state actors to poach (Douglas-Hamilton 2012) and the conflicts of these non-state actors may be financed by the poaching (Wyatt and Kushner 2014). In other contexts, criminal syndicates take advantage of the significant amount of collusion and corruption between the private sector and government institutions

(EIA 2010). This may be possible because the collusion and corruption undermine law enforcement (EIA 2010), which when weakened then enables criminal syndicates to poach and traffic wildlife. Corruption then facilitates the range of transactions that need to happen throughout the trafficking process (WWF/Dalberg 2012). This includes all the connections between the supply, transit and demand countries (WWF/Dalberg 2012) and has significant negative consequences.

### *The consequences*

Wildlife trafficking and other environmental crimes can result in both the loss of state revenues, which negatively impacts on social services, and also impoverishment of rural communities reliant on wildlife for their livelihoods (EUROPOL 2013). As stated at the London Conference, 'The criminal activity and corruption associated with trafficking restricts the potential for sustainable investment and development which is needed in new economic activities and enterprises' (United for Wildlife 2014). Research has also found that environmental crimes like wildlife trafficking undermine the natural resource management efforts of developing nations, which again leads to economic loss for governments (Rosen and Smith 2010). Corruption is also closely linked to money laundering and the illegal flow of finances (Gerismova 2008; Økokrim 2008). This means the profits obtained from wildlife trafficking are possibly funnelling into an illegal cash flow that could be supporting other crimes. For instance, there is recent concern profits from ivory and rhino horn trafficking are being used to fund terrorist groups (Wyatt and Kushner 2014). Of related concern is the threat of violence coming from criminal gangs and militant groups, who are perpetrating these crimes (Rosen and Smith 2010; Wyatt and Kushner 2014).

Studies have shown that one of the main concerns of corruption linked to wildlife trafficking is that corruption disrupts and challenges enforcement efforts to curb the illegal wildlife trade, so wildlife are still threatened by poaching and possibly extinction (Rosen and Smith 2010). This may happen partly through the redirecting of funding of surveillance and intelligence gathering initiatives by corrupt actors (Leakey 2001). Survival of wildlife is also at risk from corruption when funds allocated for conservation projects are improperly used (Lemieux and Clarke 2009). For example, corrupt practices within projects to protect African elephants have been implicated in the threat to elephants as well as the finding that greater levels of corruption are linked with greater elephant losses (Lemieux and Clarke 2009). Smith and Walpole (2005) also cite the importance of addressing corruption in relation to conservation initiatives. It should be noted though that unpicking the impacts of corruption is complex and difficult (Ferraro 2005) since, as with other crimes, much is undetected.

### *The forms of corruption*

That being said there is research that has uncovered some of the specific mechanisms and methods of corruption that are employed in the trafficking of wildlife. There are a range of corrupt actors identified such as the military, police, border guards, judiciary, customs officials, embassy staff, and state diplomats (Douglas and Alie 2014). Klitgaard (1988) adds tax departments, procurers and food distributors as well as any individual, public employee or otherwise, that illegally puts their own interests above those that person is pledged to serve. Much of the literature that documents the specific mechanisms of corruption cites bribery of these actors as the primary method (Guymon 2000) and some would include gifts (money, but also of illegal wildlife products) as a form of bribery (Holmes 2006; Klitgaard 1988; Passas 1998). The problem with bribery is that it undermines governments, state structures and can threaten national stability (Guymon 2000). Bribery can buy a variety of services or omissions of duties. For instance, in Latin America officials have been found to authorise the illegal trapping of wildlife after receiving bribes (Guzman et al 2007). Also, criminal organisations and exporters have enough money that they can bribe rangers, customs officers and police officers in order to obtain false documents that make it appear the poached wildlife is legal, so that it won't be inspected at the borders (Lemieux and Clarke 2009). This falsification may be through

misclassification of the smuggled wildlife to a species that is legal to trade (UNODC 2010). Other forms of falsification involve declaring lower values for the species under inspection or lesser volumes (UNODC 2010). These techniques can reduce the chance of gaining the notice of inspectors or falsely bring the wildlife into compliance with trade that is restricted by quotas. If successful, these methods all result in the illicit being made licit (Wright 2011). Bribery can also take the form of ‘grand’ corruption, which involves large sums of money rather than ‘petty’ corruption which entails small sums of money to cut through bureaucracy (Doig and Theobald 2003). For instance, developing countries have experienced contractors bribing Western companies in order for them to conduct business (Klitgaard 1988).

Other mechanisms of corruption involve government officials abusing their position by trafficking under diplomatic cover (Lemieux and Clarke 2009). For example, EIA (2013) has uncovered videotaped evidence of a Vietnamese embassy employee in South Africa facilitating the trade of rhino horn whilst in front of the Vietnamese embassy in Pretoria. Lemieux and Clarke (2009) cite diplomatic officials trafficking ivory in the course of their travels. In the private sector, it is believed that corruption of employees of trophy hunting companies (IBRD/World Bank 2005) allows for trafficking of wildlife parts from the animals hunted. Also, the employees of transportation firms in Russia are known to actively be involved in the smuggling of wildlife (Wyatt 2011).

In addition to bribes and diplomatic cover, corruption may also take the form of patronage. As Singh et al (2006) report, patronage can occur within closely-knit social networks. Others refer to this as clientelism (Passas 1998) or cronyism (Klitgaard 1988). It may happen, for instance, that the employees of enforcement agencies are engaging in illegal and corrupt practices. They have a long history of working with employees of the judiciary including the prosecutors, so the prosecutors and the prosecuted know each other resulting in favouritism in deciding which cases go to court and how those cases are handled (Singh et al 2006). Patronage also occurs between family networks where offenders and enforcers may be related as will be seen in the case study. In another example, there is strong evidence of collusion to poach between the network of ranch owners and veterinarians (Duffy 2014). Rhino horn is obviously very valuable (estimated at USD 100 per kilogram (Milan 2014)), but the worth of live rhinos has decreased. This creates an ‘economic incentive for ranch owners to ‘allow’ their rhinos to be poached, take a portion of the profits from sale of the horn and then buy another live rhino’ (Duffy 2014).

As mentioned, customs agencies around the world are actors that may be corrupted and facilitate the illegal wildlife trade. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2012) proposes useful categories of how this works. There is routine corruption, which relates to how service is received. As mentioned earlier this can pay for getting normal services or getting quicker services. In instances where the goods being moved are a legal part of the economy, the person paying the bribe would still pay taxes on the goods. Second, there is fraudulent corruption where forged and falsified documentation facilitates trade and smuggling. This enables people with the fraudulent documentation to pay less or no taxes. Finally, there is criminal activity where the customs agents would simply permit illegal goods.

### ***Money laundering and illicit financial flows***

The question then is where is the money from the illegal wildlife trade going? In the cases where there is a legal market (in Thailand for instance there is a national domestic legal market for ivory from supposedly domesticated elephants), these provide a means to launder the proceeds from illegally obtained wildlife into the legal economy. This is also true of wildlife-related industries, such as the taxidermy, fashion and pet trades, which can launder or hide protected species in the licit market as well as seemingly launder the money. The same appears to be true of open-air markets where wildlife is sold as well as wildlife restaurants. These establishments can sell a mixture of legal and illegal

species thus laundering the illicit profits into the financial flow of legitimate businesses. Additionally, as mentioned, a recent study attempts to document the use of the illegal proceeds of wildlife trafficking as funding for terrorist and insurgents groups (Wyatt and Kushner 2014), but the supporting evidence is thin and mainly from NGOs or media sources citing each other. Yet beyond such circumstances, there is nothing in the literature investigating money laundering and illicit financial flows stemming from wildlife trafficking. This is a key missing element in research to combat the illegal trade.

### **Conclusion**

There is substantial evidence linking corruption to wildlife trafficking. Whilst such socio-economic factors as poverty, weak law enforcement and limited rule of law contribute to corruption being prevalent in many developing countries that are sources of wildlife, Brack and Hayman (2002) point out that corruption is not confined to developing countries. Demand countries (Lawson and Vines 2014) both developed and developing are subject to corruption in the same forms as documented above. Unregulated markets where demand can be met with little oversight are easier to access because of corruption (Lemieux and Clarke 2009). Such conditions mean that poachers, particularly of ivory, can sell their products at a price that justifies the risk of poaching (Lemieux and Clarke 2009). In order to investigate further the findings in the literature, some primary data collection was undertaken through interviews with experts regarding the connections between corruption and wildlife trafficking.

## **3. Empirical findings**

Drawing from the analysis of the literature, questions regarding the links between corruption and wildlife trafficking were posed to international experts via email and to experts in Vietnam through semi-structured interviews in Hanoi. Vietnam was chosen as the case study for this report as it is a developing nation with high biodiversity that has been implicated as a source, transit and destination country for illegal wildlife and wildlife products (Milliken and Shaw 2012), which means data for each of these different aspects of trafficking can be gathered. It also has been found to have relatively high levels of corruption (Transparency International 2012). The combination of the two makes Vietnam an ideal location for a case study and for collecting data. The experts' answers provide more specific insights into the role corruption plays in wildlife trafficking as is detailed below. In particular, the aim was to uncover more information about who the corrupt actors are, why they are corrupt, the methods of corruption used and ways to combat corruption in wildlife trafficking.

### **3.1 INTERPOL and international wildlife experts<sup>2</sup>**

#### ***The corrupt actors***

The qualitative data confirms the findings of the literature in regards to the identity of the corrupt actors who engage in trafficking wildlife. These individuals come from both the private and public sector and are employed in a diverse array of jobs. In terms of the private sector, not only are individuals involved, but also companies break laws to find, capture, smuggle and sell illegal wildlife

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<sup>2</sup> The responses from INTERPOL are a collection of answers taken from the numerous staff of the Environmental Security Sub-Directorate and when referenced in this section are referred to as (INTERPOL). The answers from PALF are from the organisations coordinator Naftali Honig, when referenced in this section referred to as (PALF).

and illegal wildlife products (INTERPOL). It appears that most corruption in the private sector enables the trafficking to take place. 'For example, the counter clerk at an air freight office who accepts some money while filling in forms he knows to be fraudulent' (INTERPOL).

Law enforcement agencies are those implicated most in terms of public sector corruption. These are individuals within police forces, the judiciary and the forest ministry (PALF) as well as customs and legislators (INTERPOL). Depending upon the individual's position and power, corruption manifests in various ways. PALF Enforcement stated that corrupt actors use their position 'to peddle influence or justify the right to smuggle wildlife under conditions that are illicit under national legislation'. Others, who are directly engaged with overseeing and/or implementing wildlife law, such as police and so forth, are able to disrupt the rule of law (PALF). For instance, corrupt police officers and forest or game rangers may not stop poachers from gaining access to endangered and/or protected species (INTERPOL). Additionally, they may turn a blind eye to fraudulent permits. Similar to corrupt private sector employees, corrupt customs officials may enable the smuggling of illegal wildlife and illegal wildlife products (INTERPOL). Investigations may not be conducted or lenient sentences may be granted if prosecutors and/or judges are corrupt (INTERPOL). Of particular concern is the corruption of high-ranking government officials who may then draft weak laws and policies which allow poachers to behave with impunity. Corrupt individuals at this level may also issue fraudulent permits and licenses (INTERPOL).

For example, during the early 2000s, law enforcement efforts in Indonesia, undermined by corruption, detected a relatively low number of cases, even less were pursued for investigation, and there was an extremely low number of relative prosecutions and ultimately convictions (INTERPOL). In 2010, Indonesia's Anti-Corruption Commission undertook a 'pre-investigation of 316 cases, prosecuted 139 of those cases and successfully executed 114 prosecutions. Their investigations uncovered high-ranking officials that were involved in the corruption cases: 43 members of parliament, 10 ministers, 10 provincial governors, 20 mayors and heads of districts, 3 ambassadors and 1 judge' (Gonclaves et al 2012: 10). So corruption is seen in people with both lower and higher incomes from the range of public and private services.

### *Why are the actors corrupt?*

In support of the literature, interviewees also stated that in some instances officials are corrupt because of small salaries that they try to supplement by taking or asking for bribes (PALF). This is particularly the case in wildlife source countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America where traffickers take advantage of this situation and offer bribes (INTERPOL). For example in some areas, 'some rangers assigned to the gates of national parks have been known to keep much of the money tourists pay to enter the parks' (INTERPOL).

As INTERPOL noted though, not all corruption is linked to poverty. There are those who are corrupt simply because they are greedy and choose to make money illegally (PALF). This may come in the form of more costly bribes in order for corrupt higher-level government officials to issue permits or draft favourable policy to the traffickers (INTERPOL). In addition to greed, the qualitative data also supported the role of clientelism or patronage as an aspect of corruption. For instance, 'high-ranking government officials could have personal interests or friends/relatives involved in illegal wildlife trade activities. They may therefore be corrupt and engage in cronyism or nepotism in order to unfairly allocate permits, licenses or concessions to their own companies or friends and families' companies' (INTERPOL).

There are other motivations and drivers besides money as to why people are corrupt. PALF (personal communication August 2014) proposed that some people are corrupt due to pressures from their families or other social groups to which they belong. Furthermore, government officials can be

coerced into corrupt acts out of fear. INTERPOL noted that officials have been known to receive ‘threats and warnings from armed gangs not to interfere in illegal activities’. This of course may lead them to turn a blind eye to the activity. In other instances, ‘wildlife agencies in developing countries have poor health care coverage for their employees, without insurance for widows and children when officers are killed in the line of duty’. In order then for that ranger to ensure the welfare of his family, he may be coerced into taking a bribe through the threat of violence.

### ***Forms of corruption***

Motivations for corruption correspond to the forms and techniques that corruption seems to take. Again, respondents’ answers supported what was found in the literature. This means that bribery was thought to be the most frequent expression of corruption though there was also traffic in influence and abuse of power mentioned (personal communication with PALF Enforcement 2014; personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014) as well as extortion, embezzlement and state capture (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). The forms elaborated on in this section are bribery and ill-gotten or fraudulent paperwork as they seem to be the most prevalent.

### **Bribery**

Bribery can be prompted from both sides of the transaction. On the one hand, it may deflect pressure from corrupt actors. For example, low paid front-line officers who are offered large sums of money to allow illegal activity. On the other hand, the officer may request a bribe in order to allow the illegal activity to take place. Such is the case sometimes with customs officials or officers at transport checkpoints demanding bribes to allow the transport of illegal wildlife products (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). Furthermore, corrupt public officials are paid bribes to ignore fraudulent paperwork. This means actively overlooking expired, reused or forged permits, export papers or certificates, tax documents, and eco-certification or CITES permits (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). Where permits and licenses are not issued, criminals rely on corrupt front-line officers, forest and game rangers, to access the supply. There are known instances of game rangers being paid bribes to lead poachers to wildlife. For example, the last rhinos poached in Mozambique were pointed out to the poachers by a ranger who had been paid USD80 (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014).

If caught, poachers and traffickers can rely on bribes to the prosecution or judiciary for lighter sentences or reduced punishments. Bribes can ‘also be made to lower-level officials, such as a clerk in the evidence room, for intentionally mishandling evidence, and thus make it inadmissible in court’ (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). Harder to prove is bribery that purchases omission of duties. For instance, when an inspection officer does not count the actual number of birds in a shipment and therefore does not match that to the number allowed on the permit (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). Also difficult to prove are the cases in which patrol leaders are told to take their teams to one part of a park when the park manager knows poaching gangs are operating in the other areas. He has probably been bribed to arrange the patrols being elsewhere.

### **Fraudulent or ill-gotten paperwork**

According to INTERPOL (personal communication October 2014) there have been multiple cases of government employees stealing blank CITES documents. They take the documents from the government permit office and then sell them to unscrupulous wildlife traders. The government officials actually in charge of hunting permit allocation have been known to sell permits to the highest

bidder for personal profit. This also happens in order to gain influence or a favour. Additionally, in instances of patronage, governmental officials will unfairly allocate permits to associates and/or their family. Furthermore, 'Permits can also be obtained through extortion, when criminals threaten those in charge of allocation or threaten rangers who do not allow them access to the land or wildlife' (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). As mentioned, paperwork can be manipulated by misidentifying the species on permits or mis-declaring the volumes and values.

As stated, permits may be stolen which would then corruptly grant access to protected and endangered wildlife. In other cases, government employees rather than stealing permits simply steal wildlife confiscated by law enforcement on behalf of wildlife traffickers. It is possible this is what occurred when tons of ivory was stolen from government storage rooms in Africa (Uganda) that were dedicated to securing confiscated ivory (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014).

These methods and forms of corruption will differ depending upon the species being trafficked.

'For example, there is a difference in the corruption that occurs to allow for illegal trafficking of protected wild animal species versus timber. Permits and licenses are given out for logging and it is legal to harvest and export wood with the correct documentation. This is not the case with protected wild animal parts and products because it is not legal to poach or trade them. Illegal logging therefore requires corruption of the public officials in charge of permit and license allocation and policy-making to obtain illegal concessions and paperwork needed to log. This is less relevant for criminals that illegally poach protected animal species because the paperwork to legally carry out the activity does not exist' (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014).

Yet this also happens in trafficking of animals, where the trade is strictly regulated rather than completely banned. CITES Appendix II species can be traded with an export permit often in quantities established by quotas set by the CITES Scientific Authority of the country of origin. There have been abuses of this system. For instance, corruptly obtained permits have been found in the fashion industry for crocodile skins and in the pet industry for live tropical birds (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). Additionally, 'there have been numerous cases of 'legal' animal dealers serving as laundering mechanisms for protected wildlife, such as through falsified claims of 'captive breeding' animals that were wild caught' (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014).

Licensing and permits for hunting concessions may also be corrupt. In Africa, for instance, legally sanctioned hunting concessions are frequently next to national parks. Corrupt selling of these concessions may enable access to hunting in the national park. Corrupt licenses may also facilitate the 'legal' hunting of specific animals (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). With the actors, their motivations and the forms of corruption detailed, the experts were asked what can be done to help stop corruption and/or wildlife trafficking.

### **Solutions**

Experts cite a number of steps that could help limit corruption in wildlife trafficking. Exposing corruption and campaigning against it have some impact, but prosecuting corrupt officials for violating national laws and international conventions is an extremely important step (personal communication PALF Enforcement August 2014). A multi-faceted holistic approach that targets

several issues is required to maximise effectiveness and tackle corruption and wildlife trafficking (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). This could include strengthening law enforcement, improving good governance, accountability and transparency, and raising public awareness on corruption.

### **Strengthen law enforcement**

INTERPOL concurs with the literature that law enforcement training and capacity building is very important to stem corruption. This should include training of law enforcement officials about the best practices being used to fight corruption in wildlife trafficking. It also means implementing procedures within law enforcement agencies that minimise the opportunities for corruption to occur. For instance, INTERPOL suggests such techniques as regularly transferring rangers from one work location to another. This possibly prevents rangers from establishing closer relationships with local people as well as separating them from potential patronage networks of family and friends. Agencies can also institute unannounced times for shift changes for customs officers. This makes the location of officers unknown and potentially unpredictable, so traffickers would have more trouble enticing particular people or having the opportunity for extended contact with any one officer. Additionally, INTERPOL recommends establishing internal affairs units. They investigate the integrity of officers and possibly also their corruptibility through undercover operations to tempt officers with bribes.

Part of strengthening law enforcement, and also other civil services, is making available mechanisms for whistle-blowing about those corrupt acts that people have witnessed in a way that can be used safely and anonymously. There are some online secure platforms [such as [wildleaks.org](http://wildleaks.org)] that can facilitate wildlife crime whistleblowing, especially with links to acts of corruption (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014).

Further improvement for law enforcement would be to increase their knowledge and technical capabilities to conduct financial investigations. Exploring the monetary dimensions of wildlife trafficking 'is also an important tool for law enforcement to capture the full scope of criminal activity and stem private sector corruption' (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). Tracking the financial flows can lead to uncovering hidden pockets of money and the actors involved. This can have larger societal benefits as these offenders are probably laundering money for a variety of crimes not just wildlife trafficking. This information could enable prosecutors to seize and recover illicit assets, which has the potential to act as a deterrent for further similar criminal activity. Financial expertise does not necessarily have to be housed within wildlife or environmental law enforcement units or even within the agency. Using a multi-agency approach to tackle the crime would facilitate the inclusion of, for instance, financial law enforcement and anti-corruption units in a multi-agency taskforce (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate 2014).

### **Improving good governance, accountability and transparency**

As cited in the literature, some corruption of law enforcement and civil servants can stem from low salaries. As part of a good governance strategy then, states should consider paying forest and wildlife rangers as well as front-line officers of customs and border patrol agencies adequate salaries so they are less enticed by small bribes (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). In regards to salaries, more attention can be given to officers 'who are seen as living above their means either through their home, car or material goods' (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). This could indicate that they are corrupt and accepting bribes. Creating mechanisms of accountability in agencies for people's income such as lifestyle audits may be used to detect this (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014).

Further good governance practice could come through improved and increased oversight and monitoring of those combatting wildlife trafficking. For example, as mentioned, some officers such as forestry rangers have low salaries particularly when compared to the value of the natural resources that they are supposed to be protecting. Yet despite the incongruity of their salary and the timber and wildlife, forestry rangers typically have significant discretionary powers with little oversight. This creates circumstances where corruption prevails (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). This is also the case for wildlife rangers. For example, a typical elephant tusk is ten kilogrammes of ivory. This has a street value in most parts of Africa of USD 600 per kilogramme, which is USD 12,000 for the two tusks. ‘This is commonly more than a year’s salary for most African rangers’ (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014).

Additional improvements could be made to oversight and monitoring if independent anti-corruption investigation teams could be created, so they could unbiasedly investigate cases of corruption in the government. These units need to have specific mandates or campaigns to address corruption in the wildlife and natural resources sectors (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). In regards to donor agencies, they too should have robust oversight and monitoring. In particular, for wildlife conservation programmes the support and finance provided by the donor should be subjected to sufficient independent monitoring of corruption risks. Ideally, the support offered should have limited amounts of cash, which will help reduce the risks of corruption in the form of state capture by government officials. INTERPOL (personal communication October 2014) recommends instead that donors ‘provide resources in terms of contracted officials, equipment and capacity building for example to train low-level officials about best anti-corruption practices’. In those instances, where cash is the best choice of the type of aid to give, then the donor needs to set an ‘agreed upon standard of transparency with measurable indicators and a system of monitoring and reporting for verification’.

### **Raising public awareness**

If citizens are made aware of both corrupt acts and wildlife trafficking and then the connection between the two, they may be less likely to turn a blind eye if they are a witness to corrupt activities. It may also lead people to try to hold their governments more accountable for wildlife crimes and corruption in the government (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014).

### **Conclusion – the connections**

In spite of being widely regarded as corrupt, some of the practices discussed above remain pervasive and in some instances not punishable by criminal or civil law. Corruption enables the illicit export of natural resources. This is at ‘the expense of biodiversity and the potential prosperity of peoples who live in biodiversity hotspots’ (personal communication with PALF Enforcement August 2014). Furthermore, ‘Without a sense of order, a vicious cycle ensues where natural resource exploitation is unregulated and sustainability loses traction. Impunity reigns and further empowers other corrupt actors who take advantage’ (personal communication with PALF Enforcement August 2014). As PALF mentions, it is important to note that traffickers choose the path of least resistance, and corruption is in the interest of criminals to maintain their profits.

Corruption links to many crimes and is a major cause of failures of criminal justice. There needs to be significant punishment of wildlife crime in general and trafficking specifically as well as confiscation and seizure of all criminal proceeds to demonstrate these are serious crimes that will not be tolerated (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). For example, across Brazil, Mexico, India and the Philippines the probability of illegal logging being

penalised is less than .082 per cent (Gonclaves et al 2012). As it stands, ‘corruption propels the criminal organizations’ sense of impunity with which they operate’ (personal communication with INTERPOL Environmental Security Sub-Directorate October 2014). Now that the recommendations and data from these international experts have been detailed, the additional data collected from Vietnam are presented.

## 3.2 Case study of Vietnam

In order to further uncover the specific mechanisms of who is corrupt as well as why and how they employ corruption to traffic wildlife, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Vietnam with seven people who are experts in various NGOs and government organisations in Hanoi.<sup>3</sup> Their answers have been anonymised for their protection and they have been assigned a code of the numbers one through seven. Some brief context is given about Vietnam, the nature and extent of wildlife trafficking there and the overall and specific role of corruption before the interview data are presented.

### Brief overview of Vietnam

Vietnam is located in Southeast Asia - a dynamic economic region. With more than 92.4 million people, Vietnam is currently the world’s 14<sup>th</sup>-most-populous country (US Census Bureau 2013). Over the last two decades, Vietnam has been undertaking economic reform and as a result the Vietnamese economy has gained remarkable results. It has consistently high growth with an overall annual rise of 7 per cent since 1987, rendering it the third fastest growing developing economy in the world (World Bank 2012). Civil society has been growing as well. Not only is Vietnam the home to offices of many internationally known NGOs like WWF and the World Conservation Society, it also has grassroots initiatives like Education for Nature Vietnam (ENV).

Being home to approximately ten per cent of the world's species, Vietnam has been recognised as tenth in the world with respect to significance of endangered species with 11,458 animal, 21,017 plant, 3,000 micro-organism, 1,030 moss and 826 fungi species (Ha et al 2007; World Bank 2005). Wildlife degradation, particularly of endemic and endangered species, is currently a critical issue in Vietnam. Research by [Milliken and Shaw \(2012\)](#) is concerned that ‘most wildlife populations in Vietnam are now greatly reduced and facing a wide range of ongoing threats from destruction of habitats, rampant wildlife trade and consumption, pollution and other factors. It is estimated that 28 per cent of mammals, ten percent of birds and 21 per cent of reptiles and land amphibians are threatened or recently extinct in Vietnam ([Nguyen 2008](#)). Additionally, by some indices Vietnam has high levels of corruption (Transparency International 2012). As mentioned, the combined presence of corruption and wildlife trafficking make it an ideal case study to investigate the nexus of the problems in a developing nation.

### Wildlife trafficking in Vietnam

The development of legal international wildlife trade and the establishment of large markets in Asia, Europe and America in the late 1980s facilitated the flourishing of international wildlife trade in

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<sup>3</sup> Respondents were all asked: Who are the corrupt actors that make trafficking of wildlife possible? Why are they corrupt? What are the ways in which they make wildlife trafficking possible? (fraudulent paperwork, bribes etc) What can be done to stop corruption? Does the corrupt actor and his activities differ depending upon the species trafficked? Overall, what is the nature and extent of corruption and how does it impact wildlife trafficking? Other questions were asked as well due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews.

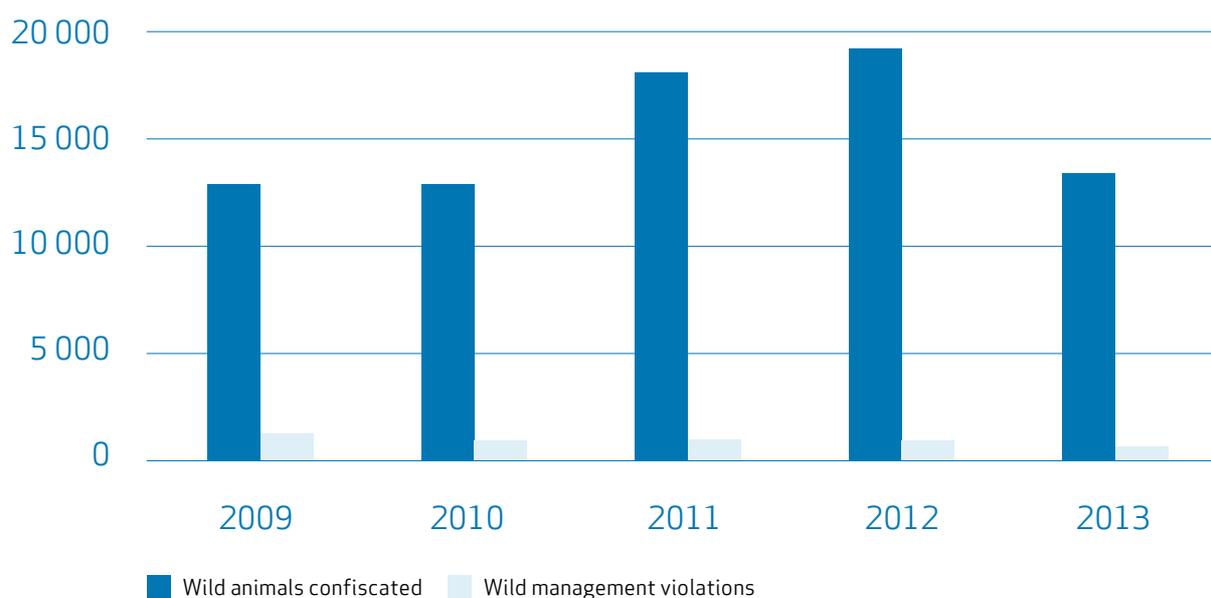
Vietnam, in which legal wildlife trade comprised the most significant part ([Dang and Dang 2010](#)). In conjunction with the traditional use of wildlife and the legal trade, the illegal wildlife trade has arguably been increasing, and it is suspected to be one of the most severe contributors to driving down the number of rare and endangered species in Vietnam. The table below published by the Forest Protection Department of Vietnam shows the number of violations of wildlife legislation in the last five years, from 2009 – 2013 in Vietnam. The main types of violations are illegal poaching, captive breeding, transporting, slaughtering and trading wild animals which are prohibited under the Forest Management and Protection Act in 2004, Decree 32/2006/ND-CP on the Management of Terrestrial Endangered, Precious and Rare Species of Wild Plants and Animals in 2006 and Decree 82/2006/ND-CP on Management of Export, Import, Re-export, Introduction from the Sea, Transit, Breeding, Rearing and Artificial Propagation of Endangered Species of Precious and Rare Wild Fauna and Flora, in 2006.

**Table 1 – Types of wildlife violations 2009 - 2013**

Types of violation	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Wildlife management violations (cases)	1,285	876	1,019	871	579	4,630
Wild animals confiscated (individuals)	12,930	12,936	18,088	19,132	13,319	76,405
Endangered wild animals confiscated	724	508	895	1,081	600	3,808

*Source: Operational Reports - Violations on the Forest Protection and Management Act by Forest Protection Department ([FPD 2014](#)).*

**Figure 1 – Number of violations and wild animals confiscated 2009 – 2013**



From the statistics, it can be seen that over the last five years, from 2009-2013, the operational agencies detected a total of 4,630 violations of wildlife management, meaning that on average over 900 violations are detected every year. During the same period, the total number of wild animals confiscated was 76,405 individuals, including 3,808 (5 per cent) rare and precious wild animals. However, these are merely official figures. The [Environment Justice Foundation \(2011\)](#) suspects that the investigated cases as well as the estimated profits represent only about five to ten per cent of the total trade in reality. [Nguyen \(2008\)](#) even believes that only around three per cent of illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam is recorded or discovered.

Wildlife trafficking has been taking place in Vietnam for a long time. Historically, Vietnam has served as a source and consumer country, supplying illegal wildlife to international markets, but it has also acted as a transit country (6). However in the last ten years, because of the increasing shortage of wildlife available domestically, Vietnam is gradually losing its reputation as a centre of supplying illicit wildlife, but becoming more known as a transit country where the volumes of smuggled wildlife from overseas to Vietnam seem to be increasing (6). Previously, Vietnam transited wildlife mainly from Southeast Asian countries. Pangolins, tigers, some species of reptiles and primates are, for example, smuggled into Vietnam from Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Indonesia via busy border crossings such as Lao Bao (Quang Tri province), Cha Lo (Quang Binh province) and Cau Treo (Ha Tinh province) (1,3; ENV 2010).

Since about 2004, the transit of wildlife from other regions through Vietnam has gained particular importance (6). Most noted are ivory and rhino horn that are trafficked from African countries, especially South Africa, mainly via air (Noi Bai Airport and Tan Son Nhat Airport) and sea (Hai Phong Port) (1, 3, 5, 6). [Milliken and Shaw \(2012: 145\)](#), for example, argue that Vietnam is ‘the world’s leading destination and consumer of rhino horn. Moreover, this highly unfortunate status is unlikely to change any time soon in spite of longstanding legal prohibitions outlawing its usage in the country. There is domestic demand for wildlife in Vietnam, but it seems to be quite small compared to the largest international market - China - where the demand for wildlife is more significant (6). Overall, although some may observe that the scale of wildlife trafficking in Vietnam seems to be declining, a survey by [Robertson \(2013\)](#) concludes that illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam ‘is vast and is driving species to extinction’.

### ***Corruption in Vietnam***

Prior to examining corruption in the illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam, it is worth briefly looking at the problem of corruption facing the country recently. It can be argued that corruption in general in Vietnam is rampant. Though there are methodological challenges to the following perception indices, they give a general overview that people are widely familiar with. For instance, in the 2011 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, Vietnam performed below average with a score of 2.9 on a 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean) scale. The country ranked 112 out of 182 assessed countries worldwide and 21 out of 35 countries in the Asia Pacific region.

The World Bank’s (2010) Worldwide Governance Indicators confirm Vietnam’s poor performance on the control of corruption, showing little or no improvement over the years. For instance, between 2004 and 2010 there was no significant change in any of the six areas of governance assessed. Corruption in Vietnam ranges from bribery, theft of state assets, kickbacks, collusion in contracting, to payments for services provided. It is worse in some fields including land and housing administration, police, health, construction, customs and tax ([Norad 2011](#)). Despite some improvement in reducing the level of administrative corruption ‘there is general agreement that fewer corruption cases only means that corruption is becoming more complex, not that corruption is

declining' ([World Bank 2013](#)). Consequently, almost two-thirds of the participants in the research by Dao Le (2011) stated that corruption is 'the most significant socio-economical problem facing Vietnam'. Meanwhile a study by the World Bank (2013) revealed at least a third of the population ranked corruption as among the most serious problems facing Vietnam. The Communist Party of Vietnam (2012) acknowledges that corruption is one of the greatest threats to the party's legitimacy and the regime's survival.

It is an encouraging sign that institutional changes have been made and a comprehensive set of laws and policies have been developed over the past ten years (Nguyen 2013; Norad 2011). There are a number of cases involving high-ranking officers, such as members of the Party Central Committee, ministers, deputy ministers, secretaries of the provincial party committee, chairmen of the provincial people's committee and department directors, where corruption has been detected and sanctioned with either disciplinary punishments or criminal prosecutions or both ([Phan and Pham 2010](#)). However, irrespective of such efforts, both international organisations and Vietnamese institutions believe that the improvement has been limited particularly due to a large gap between the political will of the government to make the necessary changes and the practical implementation required to make such changes (Nguyen 2013; Norad 2011; Phan and Pham 2010). In short, corruption in Vietnam, is clearly a worrying problem, impacting all aspects of society. The problem could drastically erode public confidence in the state, which is a vital aspect of political and human security.

### *Corruption in wildlife trafficking in Vietnam*

Although both corruption and wildlife trafficking in Vietnam appear to take place in rampant fashions, incidents of the involvement of corruption in wildlife trafficking are rarely mentioned in the media and the official statistics; furthermore, in academia and the third sector this topic is under-researched. Whilst many cases of wildlife trafficking as well as corruption are prosecuted in Vietnam, review of the literature has not uncovered any single case of corruption linked to wildlife trafficking where criminal proceedings have been initiated, let alone prosecutions or convictions. Likewise there are not many stories or comments in newspapers addressing the connection. In order then to better understand the links between corruption and wildlife trafficking, in general, but in Vietnam in particular, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted asking about the connections. The findings are presented below and supported where possible by media and secondary sources.

## Findings

### *The corrupt actors*

The qualitative data collected from Vietnamese participants supports the data from the literature and international experts as to who the corrupt actors are who are trafficking in wildlife. An interviewee gave the following summary:

Groups involved in the corruption in wildlife trafficking may be firstly the groups of law enforcement at local levels. I think the risk of corruption may occur in any step and location of wildlife trafficking and staff in any institution can get involved. From the guards of nature reserves to the border army; from customs officers at border gates to authorities issuing permits including permits for wildlife ranching and permits for wildlife importation and exportation - all are at risk of corruption (1).

Corruption is a risk to all institutions that are vested in tackling wildlife trafficking in Vietnam. They are specified below:

**Table 2 – Vietnamese wildlife management institutions**

Institutions	Structural arrangement	Responsibility relevant to wildlife trafficking	Risk of corruption
Forest protection (Kiem Lam)	Under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.  Located at central, regional, provincial, and district levels; in national parks, and nature reserves.	Enforcement of forestry legislation, monitoring all types of forests and carrying out preliminary investigations of forest violations including wildlife trafficking.	Bribery, patronage
Forest guards	Employed by state-owned forestry enterprises.	Directly protecting the forests owned by the enterprises.	Bribery, patronage
Environmental police	Ministry of Public Security Central, provincial and district	Preventing wildlife trafficking and conducting preliminary investigations of wildlife trafficking.	Bribery, patronage
Investigative police	Ministry of Public Security Central, provincial and district levels	Conducting formal investigations of wildlife trafficking.	Bribery, patronage
Customs	Ministry of Finance Central and provincial levels	Monitoring the import and export of goods, including wildlife shipments.	Bribery, patronage, ill-gotten or fraudulent paperwork
Border guards	Ministry of Defence Central and provincial levels; also maritime brigades, and border posts.	Controlling encroachments into Vietnam and preventing illegal border crossings, including wildlife incidents.	Bribery, patronage
Market control	Ministry of Industry and Trade  Central, provincial, and district levels.	Inspecting domestic wildlife markets, including wildlife restaurants.	Bribery, patronage
CITES Management Authority	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Central level	Issuing all CITES import and export permits internally, issuing permits for wildlife farming and liaising with the CITES Secretariat and the CITES Parties externally.	Bribery, patronage, ill-gotten or fraudulent paperwork

Depending on the scale of wildlife trafficking, different institutions are targeted for corruption. Small-scale wildlife traffickers mostly need to have a relationship with local Kiem Lam (Forest Department) officers, and sometimes with the local environmental police. In this scenario, the amount of the bribes is small. In contrast, large-scale wildlife traffickers need connections with not only local Kiem Lam forces, but also other authorities at higher levels such as district and provincial levels or even with overseas authorities. For these connections, it takes longer to establish relationships with the senior leaders and of course the value of bribes or gifts has to be much greater to be commensurate with the official's position (3). It is likely that for networks of wildlife trafficking that create illicit supply

chains with different steps for collecting, transporting, processing and trading, that if corruption happens, it may happen in the entire chain, not only in any single step (5). However, it seems clear that the likelihood and scale of corruption varies depending on the species trafficked. Presumably, the more valuable the species or the size of the shipment, the more likely it is that corruption will play a role as the reward will entice further risks, such as bribes and so forth. Also, possibly the extent of corruption will be greater, such as fraudulent or forged permits as a means to procure the illegal wildlife. Furthermore, differing species also may mean the involvement of higher levels of corrupt authorities and higher values of bribes and gifts in order for the offenders to be successful.

An interviewee wondered if lax or corrupt law enforcement were the reasons that Vietnam experiences high levels of wildlife trafficking whereas neighbouring countries like Myanmar and Laos, which are equally close to China, have relatively low levels (3). Another interviewee speculated that:

In the border areas, there is no one carrying something that the border armies do not know about. People coming to the border areas, which are three kilometres from the actual border line, the forces already know exactly who they are, times and routes they go. So why can they [wildlife traffickers] still escape? (1).

A survey by [Robertson \(2013\)](#) concerning wildlife smuggling along the border river Ka Long between Vietnam and China, reveals that when carrying unlawful wildlife across the border, wildlife smugglers usually invest tens of thousands of dollars to bribe the border officials there. In contrast, another respondent thought that there are not enough border officers to stay along all parts of the border throughout the days and nights, so Vietnam could be a transit country because of lax enforcement. For instance, traffickers often use small, well-worn paths to carry wildlife across isolated areas on the border. Thus although there is cross-border wildlife smuggling and there is evidence to link it to corruption, it is difficult to confirm whether the border officers (army and guard) are corrupt or not (5) and if so the extent of the corruption.

This highlights the negative side of many institutions engaging in the control of wildlife trafficking. However, it is important to remember that not all wildlife officers are corrupt. There are many stories of wildlife officers who bravely say no to bribes and make every effort to carry out proper enforcement. The most recent incident is the case of traffic police officers in Thanh Hoa province who rejected a bribe of VND 5 million (USD 232) when they discovered an illicit transport of pangolins worth VND 2 billion (USD 93,000) ([Thu Hoa 2014](#)). These efforts should be raised and examined in further research projects, to identify how the officers can maintain their integrity under conditions that encourage corruption.

### ***Why are the actors corrupt?***

It is a strong consensus among the respondents that, in Vietnam, the salary for Kiem Lam officials is notoriously low and that this is the reason for corruption. Indeed, in the early 2000s the average official monthly salary of a Kiem Lam officer was about GBP 18 ([Nguyen 2003](#)); more recently it is around GBP 60 ([Do 2010](#)). Senior officers who have university degrees with at least 10 years of work experience may get GBP 100 a month plus a monthly allowance of GBP 7 ([Nong Nghiep Vietnam 2012](#)). An interviewee insists that 'One of the causes of corruption among the officers is because the level of salary does not meet the basic needs for living of officers who are entrusted with wildlife management and protection' (7). However, other interviewees assert that the level of salary is the norm in public sectors in Vietnam, and that wildlife officers cannot complain.

If Kiem Lam forces justify that their corruption is because of low salary, then the entire country will be involved in corruption. The salary of the President is at this level, and then the salary of Kiem Lam is at that level; that is fair. They cannot demand higher salaries (5).

Whilst salaries may indeed be the cause, or at least correlated to corruption, there is evidence of other factors playing a role in why people are corrupt. An interviewee observed that ‘sometimes a single individual doesn’t want to be corrupt, but the whole collective is already corrupt; then he cannot stand outside’ (1). This means ‘corruption is unavoidable for officers. If not corrupt, they may be moved to other working locations’ (6). This implies some level of coercion or force for some who become corrupt.

It is important to note that family relationships and larger social networks also are a factor in the corruption taking place in wildlife trafficking in Vietnam. Phan and Pham (2010) recognise that the rule of ‘human morality’ that is highly regarded by the Vietnamese has been abused for corruption. In the domain of wildlife trafficking, if a family has an officer (especially a leader of a wildlife authority), illegal wildlife traders may purposely establish connections with his family members (4). Because of this relationship, the officer or leader may give certain support to the trader that helps him to traffic wildlife. This means that in Vietnam not only officers, but also their relatives may be subjects of corruption. This applies also to friendships and workplace relationships, which may be also taken advantage of.

We are close friends or close colleagues, when my brother or I get in trouble, for example, we need to obtain permits for wildlife farming and that is the domain you are in charge of. If I call you, it is hard for you to completely ignore the plea, right? (4).

This indicates that patronage as a form of corruption is also present in Vietnam. Further corruption that is linked to more social or cultural aspects of society is Vietnam’s ‘culture of envelope’ where public servants are given small amounts of money in envelopes to complete their duties. This can be seen to be a form of ‘speed money’ (Passas 1998). As a respondent stated, ‘If you are an official, you expect it and if you are an ordinary person, you expect to give it. So you have some kind of symbiotic relationship. It is actually increasing and it is actually considered normal’ (2).

Additionally, unlike the consequences of some other crimes such as murder, robbery, theft, arson and vandalism that are highly visible and directly affect the victims, very often wildlife as the direct victim of wildlife trafficking is not visible to the public. Nor are they thought of as the property of Kiem Lam or the public (3). This very nature of wildlife trafficking like other environmental crimes strengthens the collusion of Kiem Lam and wildlife traffickers as they are virtually invisible.

#### ***What methods of corruption are used?***

Again, as seen in the data from international experts and the literature, there are a variety of forms of corruption used to facilitate the illegal wildlife trade. Those employed in Vietnam are similar yet different to trends seen internationally, and can offer insight regarding solutions.

#### **Bribery**

Overall there are many ways wildlife traffickers use bribery to corrupt officers. The most common ways include giving cash, envelopes containing cash, gifts, material or spiritual benefits and wildlife products themselves. For example because many senior staff in Vietnam enjoy products made from rare and precious wildlife such as ivory, tiger glue, and rhino horn, illicit traders use these items as gifts for bribing the staff (3, 4). An interviewee observed that giving gifts is now more blatant (4). For example, a trader wants to cook a tiger to make tiger glue. This is one of the most valuable and

common traditional medicines in Vietnam, which costs around USD 380 for 100g and is used to cope with a number of health problems such as paralysis and rheumatism (Nguyen and Nguyen 2008). He brings the live tiger to his home, inviting the leaders or their subordinates to see the tiger and confirm its authenticity. After the leaders agree, the cooking is carried out. The glue then will be collected directly by the subordinate who will bring it to the leaders (4). The gift in this instance is the glue itself.

Bribes facilitating wildlife trafficking in Vietnam may be made in fixed regular payments. This may take place monthly, every several months or annually. It may also happen on particular occasions such as Tet holiday (New Year Festival), weddings or funerals of the relatives of the corrupt officer (3, 4, 7). Bribes can go directly to individuals, but also through groups to buy favour. This can be seen in the fundraising events for collectives such as the trade unions, women groups, and youth groups that are in the wildlife agencies (4). Wildlife traffickers establish relationships with the corrupt officers in these agencies. They then attend the public fundraising events for the collective. Whilst public venues for fundraisers help to avoid speculation about the money given, often it is merely a pretext and some or most of the funding goes into the personal pockets of those corrupt officers (4). Alternatively, wildlife traffickers are sometimes asked to accompany officers in welcoming guests and visitors of the officer. The trafficker then pays the bills for the expensive dinners and other entertainment. The dinners also provide the opportunity for the traffickers to establish relationships with the guests who are sometimes other wildlife officers.

Bribery can buy a variety of services or omissions. First, corrupt officers can help the traffickers by turning a blind eye to the illicit activities. For example, a household is allowed to raise several tigers for decorative purposes. However, the tigers are actually being illegally sold commercially and replaced by other tigers. It then appears that there are continually tigers in the house for which they have permission. In reality though, the people are farming tigers. The wildlife officers know this, but turn a blind eye. If, for any reason, the illicit farming is detected, these officers have a convincing excuse not to know since it can be argued that it is difficult to identify individual tigers (4).

A second way of helping is that corrupt officers leak information to the traffickers. They can tell the traffickers in advance, for instance, about the enforcement agencies' secret planned inspections or raids (4, 7). Wildlife restaurant owners, for example, will be informed in advance about the plans to inspect their restaurants, so that the owners have time to conceal illegal wildlife and related illicit activities (4, 7). When the inspection teams arrive at the restaurants, no illicit wildlife is found. At the end of the inspection, in front of the public, the inspection minutes will clearly conclude that 'at the time of inspection, no illegal wildlife is found'. During other inspections, if any illicit wildlife is found, the officers defend themselves by saying that they cannot stay in the restaurants twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It is difficult to hold them accountable in such incidents (4). In a similar way, before smuggling traffickers telephone the corrupt officers asking them about the possibility of transporting the wildlife. Usually, the conversations use hidden signals to avoid detection. For example, the traffickers may ask 'How are you? How is the weather in your town today?' If the corrupt authorities feel that the illicit transport would be successful, they may respond 'Oh, I'm great. The weather is very nice. If you are free, come visit my family. We can have a drink together'. If the enforcement agencies are particularly active or have operations planned though, the officer may warn the trafficker saying that 'I'm a bit tired. The weather today is not very nice' (4).

Bribes can also purchase permits in Vietnam. This is particularly relevant to the ranching and farming of wildlife that occurs there. Federal Article 10 in Decree 82 clearly states that animal breeding and rearing farms must meet all six conditions set out in the legislation. Two of the conditions are that 'cages and farms must be constructed in suitability to the characteristics of the reared species and the production capacity of the farms' and 'ensure safety for humans and environmental sanitation under the State's regulations'. Some interviewees observed that the amount of wildlife being ranching in

Vietnam was not large and is born on the ranches. The process of granting the permits for these operations is undertaken relatively strictly by panels of authorities and experts, which means it is difficult for corruption to take place (5, 6). In contrast, some other interviewees in the research suspect that some farms do not entirely meet the standards. They believe there are violations in regards to the size of enclosures and barns and the condition of the semi-natural environments, but are still given permits to ranch (3, 4, 7). A survey by ENV (2010: 1) shows that ‘many tiger farmers utilize their influence and connections to avoid difficulties with the law, while selling the idea to the media and public that they are saving tigers’.

Another way of helping wildlife traffickers is that the corrupt officers take advantage of their power over frontline officers to interfere with normal operations. If a wildlife van or a timber truck is stopped, the trafficker can telephone influential leaders in Kiem Lam forces, or even in the public security agencies and the people’ committees, asking them for help. Because of their power, the person called can then telephone the leader of the frontline officers or directly call the officers to interfere with regular inspections. Often this results in the van being left alone. This explains the fact that sometimes frontline Kiem Lam officers find it difficult to conduct normal operations. An interviewee cited a statement of Kiem Lam officers: ‘We are not able to carry out our duties because the circle of traders is more powerful than us. The power is in the use of a mobile to call a province leader, and immediately the stopped truck will be released’ (1). Another interviewee shared a scenario that if the corrupt officer is a leader, at for example the district level, on the day of the illicit transport, the leader may order an unexpected meeting with all frontline officers in the whole district. This means the trafficker will contend with a reduced number of or no frontline officers as they are sitting in a meeting room. The higher the level of leadership of the corrupt officer, the stronger and more effective support the traffickers can receive (4).

It is suspected that whole teams of Kiem Lam officers are involved in highly coordinated and therefore costly smuggling of wildlife. There is no evidence, but it is believed that corrupt officers will carry the illegal wildlife in their official vehicles through their jurisdiction and then transfer the shipment to other corrupt officers at the next boundary or that they will drive alongside the transport of the traffickers who are smuggling wildlife. Either way then if stopped by other enforcement agencies, they can claim they are escorting the trafficker to the station for inspection or other procedures. Again, the bribery involved must be significant if in fact this is taking place (4).

#### **Fraudulent and ill-gotten paperwork**

Paperwork, either fraudulent or illegally obtained, also features in corrupt practices in Vietnam. There are numerous situations where document falsification can occur. For example, forged documents that are then signed by the local authority or Kiem Lam can launder an illegally bought tiger into a legal tiger (1). Alternatively, wildlife farmers will buy a small number of animals from a legal source that supplies farms; they then re-use the legal documents from the legitimate purchase multiple times to buy illegal wildlife. Despite knowing this technique, corrupt officers overlook or even help the farmer adjust the documents and verify the legality of the information (4). Additionally, corrupt officers during inspections of farms, holding areas and transports of endangered species traders have been known to adjust the numbers and volumes of the animals so that the trader avoids criminal penalties and will only bear some lenient administrative fines (7).

### BOX 1. INFORMATION DISTORTION AS A TECHNIQUE IN WILDLIFE SMUGGLING

The technique of information distortion is believed to take place during wildlife importation and exportation. An example is the case that is 'one of the largest and most sophisticated cases of transnational animal smuggling so far in Vietnam' (Quoc Dung 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d). The case was investigated in depth by the Tien Phong Newspaper, a prestigious newspaper in Vietnam. It took place from the early 2000s until it was finally detected in 2007. According to the investigation, there were major edits in the falsified file. While the original permit allowed only temporary import of 1,450 monkeys from Malaysia to Laos for re-export into Vietnam, the falsified file allowed the import of 7,000 monkeys including 5,000 macaques from Laos directly to Vietnam. Meanwhile, the (under reported) statistics available on the website of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) indicate that between 2000 and 2007, the number of monkeys imported from Laos to Vietnam was 7,985 individuals. In contrast, the number that was provided by the Forestry Protection Department (FPD) of Vietnam was inconsistent, being 14,985 when first shared and then 16,182 the second time. Additionally, the number provided by the monkey trader was 21,835 individuals in the period of 2003 to 2005 alone, far higher than the number provided by the FPD of Vietnam. It is worth noting that for each monkey illegally smuggled to China or the US, the trader gains no less than USD 500. This means that if the difference is only several hundred monkeys, the trader can avoid the tax (28 per cent of revenue) of hundreds of millions of Vietnamese Dong. Most importantly, the investigation shows that apart from the date of issue, the copy of the permit of the Forestry Department of Laos that was provided to the journalist by the FPD of Vietnam was 'virtually entirely changed' from the original version of the permit that was provided by the Forestry Department of Laos -eight out of ten pieces of information are different. Apart from the permit, three other documents that FPD of Vietnam provided for the journalist were confirmed as false documents by the Forestry Department of Laos. The journalist questioned why there were changes, whether the document was falsified and under what motivations. It is possible that only FPD of Vietnam can answer the questions (Quoc Dung 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d).

It is frequently observed that whatever the methods of corruption are, a common feature is that the officers and traders always pay attention to preparing their defence against allegations of corruption. To do so, it is important for the officers to show that they are maintaining 'proper' operations, and any illegality is due to 'external elements'. In the technique of 'recycling' legal documents to buy illegal wildlife or substituting legal wildlife with illegal, for example, an excuse would be that it is tremendously difficult to identify individual legal and illegal wildlife (4). Likewise if officers detect a case of smuggling of endangered animals, after reaching an agreement between the officer and transporters, the final solution would be that the animals will be destroyed since the species cannot be identified. During the destruction, the endangered animals are secretly exchanged with common animals such as cats. The result of this collaboration is that the transporters can still keep their endangered wildlife shipments, while the officers are seen to be properly doing their duties, so cannot be blamed (4).

#### **Solutions**

An interviewee summarises that:

I think in essence the corruption that takes place is an outcome of the interaction of many interrelated factors. The interaction involves policies, related actors, markets, culture, and the availability of natural resources (1).

By looking into interrelated factors that contribute to the current problem of corruption in wildlife trafficking in Vietnam, the interviewees suggest a number of recommendations for dealing with the problem more effectively.

### ***More political will***

A number of studies on wildlife trafficking in Vietnam are concerned that the crime often takes a low priority among various authorities (Do 2010; Milliken and Shaw 2012; Nguyen 2008). Some interviewees in the research propose that the first and perhaps most crucial solution to effectively tackle wildlife trafficking as well as its close connection with corruption is more political will to actually control the issues. An increased will of elite politicians will lead to other measures being taken such as more severe punishments, stiffer enforcement and more effective awareness campaigns. An interviewee in the research also expresses that it is vital to increase political will in the top state structures such as the National Assembly, the Government and central bodies combating wildlife trafficking. Once the top leaders are firmly committed, the local authorities will prioritise the crime (5). In contrast, a lack of political will to stop wildlife trafficking and corruption results in lenient punishments and lax enforcement. As indicated though sometimes in Vietnam it has been found or is suspected that political authorities are involved. This means they have no motivation to tackle corruption or the illegal wildlife trade as they may be profiting from it. Non-corrupt politicians, particularly within the Communist Party, will need to drive change. Their motivations for doing so may come from public pressure to decrease corruption and protect wildlife and from their own desire to see these aims achieved.

Interviewees thought the Vietnamese legislation on wildlife trafficking and corruption overall is relatively comprehensive, but quite often sanctions for both are still lenient. [Roberton \(2013\)](#) points out that while in Vietnam smuggling endangered wildlife is a criminal offense, there are numerous repeat offenders operating in the country. If caught, these smugglers are given fines, rather than being criminally charged, and the fines are low compared to their illicit profits ([Roberton 2013](#)). Clearly, the political will is lacking, but also this would be the reason that ‘wildlife offenders ignore the rule of law. They are not afraid of laws at all. They aren’t scared of the punishments’ (1).

### ***Strengthen law enforcement***

In regards to enforcing the law and regulations for both wildlife trafficking and its connection with corruption, often it does not seem to be effective and firm. As mentioned earlier, there has not been an officer prosecuted for corruption related to wildlife trafficking. An interviewee believes:

Environmental law enforcement of any kind is very weak; it is not taken seriously. Everyone is responsible, but no one is accountable; no one ever loses their job. No one is saying the reason why you have a lot of corruption is because basically no one is fined. And maybe go to prison for some crimes. But just getting fined in their job that could be pretty embarrassing. But it just doesn’t happen. And I am afraid to say it just doesn’t happen and it is much worse in the wildlife trade... Your risk is getting out of Africa or getting through Bangkok or through Hong Kong or wherever your flight is. I suspect that if you are caught in the airport in Hanoi, I wonder if anything would happen to you (2).

It is therefore strongly recommended that the Vietnamese government ‘should make it a priority to launch a sustained campaign to prevent corruption of border officials by seeking out and applying strong and effective punishments to anyone found taking bribes’ ([Roberton 2013](#)). This should be taken seriously at both central and local levels (3).

To strengthen law enforcement, it is also vital to improve the capacity of law enforcement agencies. On the one hand, the low capability of wildlife forces is always blamed as a major contribution to the existence and increase of wildlife trafficking in Vietnam (GDF 2010; Vu 2010). Kiem Lam staff, for example, seem to have a limited ability to identify what are common and what are endangered species (GDF 2010). On the other hand, the limited ability is also exploited to justify corrupt activities. As revealed in the techniques of corruption used, the officers always look to defend themselves if their relationship with wildlife traffickers is questioned. One of the defences is the lack of supporting equipment and professional training on making technical evaluations such as the exact species being trafficked, especially hybrid ones. The lack of scientific knowledge and technical expertise not only prevents the effectiveness of functional authorities, but also creates potential ways to cover up corrupt behaviours. For example, snake farmers have to inform the functional authority about the number of offspring born at their farm. The farmer says that there are 200 new babies. In fact there may only be 100 babies actually born there and 100 taken from the wild. Law enforcement does not have the knowledge or technology to distinguish between wild and captive-bred (5). Likewise without electronic chips attached to registered tigers or other species, it is too difficult to detect when legal tigers are exchanged for illegal ones (4). More investment in supporting tools and training to enhance the understanding of wildlife and its conservation can help hold the corrupt actors to account.

Additionally, effective international cooperation would strengthen law enforcement by helping to establish mechanisms of dialogue and information exchange among countries and agencies in order to identify document falsification perpetrated by wildlife officers. This solution is increasingly urgent in the context that wildlife trafficking is no doubt a transnational crime and that most endangered wildlife species currently trafficked in Vietnam are from overseas (3). Thus frequent cooperation at different levels between Vietnamese authorities and neighbour countries such as Laos and Cambodia, but also with African countries, with INTERPOL and UNDOC, is needed (1).

### ***Good governance, accountability and transparency***

In regards to wildlife trafficking, it was largely agreed by the interviewees that it is imperative to increase transparency by determining which authorities vested in fighting wildlife trafficking are accountable for what. Indeed, at the moment the problem of wildlife trafficking is very complicated because the responsibility and accountability for controlling it is not clear (1). A study by [Do \(2010\)](#) indicates that perhaps ‘a real mechanism of critical assessment’ on the accountability among wildlife institutions is still lacking. At the state level, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is the primary department in charge of wildlife reserves, but they have no real power and no agencies exclusively participating in this (1). At the frontline, there are now numerous overlaps and ambiguities in responsibility of officers in Forest Protection, Forest Guard, Environmental Police, Investigative Police, Customs, Border Guard, and Market Control who all participate in wildlife management (3 and GDC 2010). The ambiguous responsibilities ‘will create opportunities for corruption’ (Nguyen 2008: 106) and are believed to be a major factor restricting efforts to hold corrupt officers accountable. Consequently, it is recommended to establish a mechanism that clarifies the responsibility of each individual officer in each specific locality. If wildlife trafficking takes place in his locality, he has to be held accountable (3). Furthermore, there needs to be mechanisms to monitor the operations of functional forces and evaluate workplace efficiency. To do so, first the incomes and assets of officers and agencies need to be monitored and the punishment of corrupt officers increased (1). Second, it is necessary to create databases of activities and documents, which can also be used to coordinate operations (1). The databases will help with oversight of documents from the entire trafficking chain particularly at the border gates where smugglers are aided by corrupt officers who launder illegal wildlife by supplying forged paperwork. Additionally, this may help identify cases where domestically sourced illegal wildlife is brought to the border gates to be laundered and then is carried back into Vietnam (1).

### ***Demand reduction and public awareness***

Wildlife trafficking in Vietnam is driven by high demand and big profits. For a majority of the interviewees, reducing wildlife demand is one of the significant solutions to curb wildlife trafficking as well as related corruption. This is because high demand leads to high profits, which is a key condition to motivate a trafficker to establish relationships with authorities in order to bribe them (3). An interviewee stresses that:

It's super, super profits that make the crime beyond the normal crime. There must be 'guarantees', must be 'heavy investments' to overcome the law. Clearly they must gain huge profits, so that even paying for bribes, it is still super profitable (1).

Furthermore, for a variety of Vietnamese people ranging from top politicians to ordinary people, the rich and poor, well-educated to ill-educated, consuming wildlife is a normal habit (Drury 2009). It is not stigmatised; there is a permissive attitude (2, 4).

An interviewee states:

People with the same education, similar IQ, in Vietnam they may appear to be modern and they are very modern but deep down, there is the belief that actually there must be something true... In Vietnam there is actually a deep belief particularly in medicinal properties there is something there (2).

Another interviewee adds that virtually all senior officials like having some bear bile, tiger glue or something related to rare wildlife. Many Vietnamese maintain the traditional belief that wildlife belongs to the forests and to the mountains, which is not connected to people. Additionally, all wild food is nutritious and healthy and that killing wildlife is not harmful, not serious, and not a crime. One hobby for example is to soak a whole tiger in a large crystal bottle containing some 200 litres of brandy. This brandy is not for drinking but just acts as a show of wealth (3). Such an ideology needs to be radically altered to reduce wildlife consumption, thereby reducing profits and dropping financial opportunities for corruption.

Finally, if corruption has become a normal phenomenon in Vietnam, it needs a comprehensive solution that coordinates various fields other than just wildlife trafficking. First, Vietnam needs to address its 'culture of envelope' that is an omnipresent fact in which 'for almost all Vietnamese people, returning favours and delivering envelopes are simply the way business is done' ([Sumrall 2009: 20-21](#)). These ideas suggest that tackling corruption in wildlife trafficking is highly complex and goes beyond the scope of the control of wildlife trafficking alone. It is also about dealing with various economic, legal, political, social and cultural aspects.

For a Kiem Lam officer, he may be prevented from corruption in tiger trafficking but he can be corrupt in timber trafficking or forestland management. For an environmental police officer, he may be prevented from corruption in wildlife trafficking but he can be corrupt in pollution management or environmental regeneration (1).

This means that since corruption in the whole society is still rampant and core causes of corruption have not been eliminated, it is unlikely to be able to thoroughly stop corruption in wildlife trafficking. In other words, a campaign to stigmatise wildlife consumption in Vietnam needs to be carried out. This should be done in conjunction with a campaign to stigmatise corruption.

## **Conclusion**

The case study suggests that corruption has an important role in facilitating wildlife trafficking in Vietnam. However, it is not always necessary, particularly for offenders such as local hunters who still poach small amounts of wildlife. In contrast, for wildlife trafficking on a larger scale that targets endangered species and exists over a long time period, the need for corruption is far higher. Even with relatively large scale wildlife trafficking, traffickers may not need to pay every time they smuggle since they can use sophisticated techniques to avoid frontline officers and avoid bribes.

In Vietnam, corruption in wildlife trafficking may occur in any of the parts of the illicit chain with various institutions at risk of corruption as seen in Table 2. Also, there is a wide range of ways in which illicit wildlife traders use corrupt officers, and then obtain their assistance (Table 3). There are two common features when examining the methods of corruption. First, the level of complexity of the methods is proportional to the scale of the trade and value of the wildlife species traded. That said the larger the scale of the trade and the more valuable the wildlife is, the more sophisticated the methods are. Second, both traffickers and officers always prepare a defence to explain their relationship if it is ever questioned.

The case study suggests a number of solutions to curtail corruption in wildlife trafficking in Vietnam: enhancing political will to stop wildlife trafficking and its connection with corruption, increasing transparency in wildlife management, launching an intensive campaign to stigmatise wildlife consumption, improving international collaboration in controlling wildlife trafficking and providing better equipment and professional training for wildlife officers. However, corruption throughout society must be tackled in order to impact upon wildlife trafficking and Vietnamese society in general. Many of these suggestions are generalizable to other countries, such as increasing political will, increasing transparency related to wildlife management, improving international cooperation and improving law enforcement knowledge and capability. Whereas public awareness campaigns targeting wildlife consumption and corruption are possibly generalizable too, the cultural context of these is very specific and would need extensive research to create properly focused solutions that fit the culture. Overall, the case study provides meaningful insight into the concrete connections between corruption and wildlife trafficking that can inform further prevention strategies and studies.

**Table 3 – The corrupt actors and acts in wildlife trafficking**

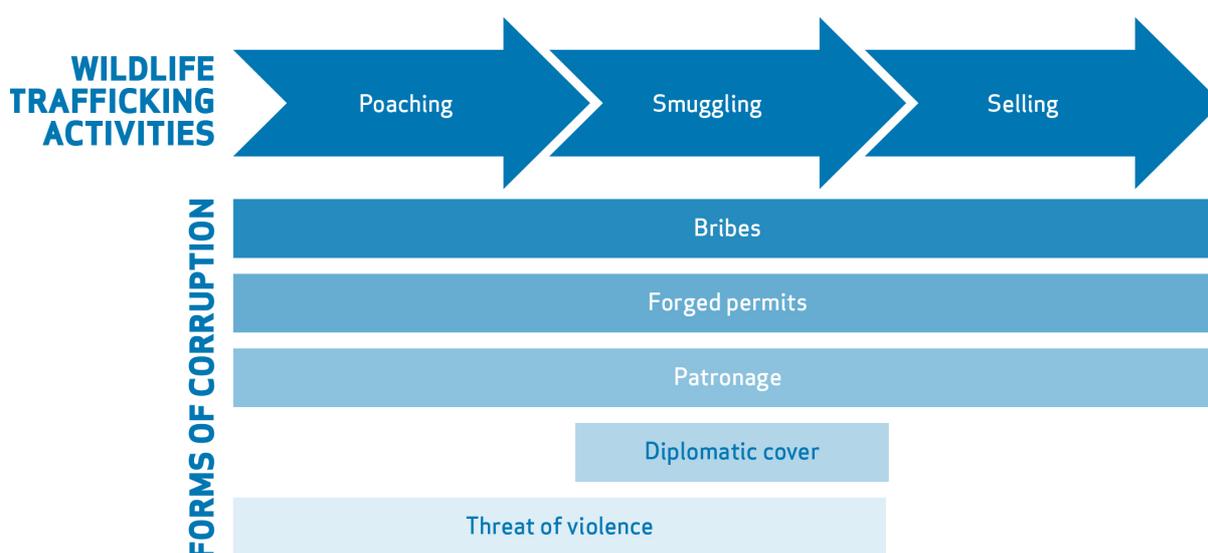
The Actors				
<b>Private Sector</b>	Transportation employees, wildlife-related businesses and industries			
<b>Public Sector</b>	Border guards, customs agents, forest officers, game rangers, judiciary, legislators, park rangers, police, politicians, prosecutors, regulators			
The Acts				
Bribes	Diplomatic Cover	Ill-gotten Permits	Patronage	Threat of Force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To allow access to wildlife</li> <li>• To draft weak legislation</li> <li>• Allow fraudulent permits</li> <li>• Gift giving to individuals and groups</li> <li>• To interfere with normal operations</li> <li>• To leak intelligence (patrols, raids)</li> <li>• For lenient sentences</li> <li>• To mishandle evidence</li> <li>• To not conduct investigations</li> <li>• To not stop poaching</li> <li>• To re-direct patrols</li> <li>• To smuggle</li> <li>• To steal confiscated wildlife</li> <li>• To turn a blind eye</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To smuggle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mis-declaration of volumes and values</li> <li>• To misidentify species</li> <li>• To mislabel captive bred for wild caught</li> <li>• To recycle legal permits</li> <li>• To sell export, import and/or hunting permits</li> <li>• To steal permits and CITES documentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To allow access to wildlife</li> <li>• To draft weak legislation</li> <li>• Fraudulent permits or unfair allocation</li> <li>• Gift giving to individuals and groups</li> <li>• To interfere with normal operations</li> <li>• To leak intelligence (patrols, raids)</li> <li>• For lenient sentences</li> <li>• To mishandle evidence</li> <li>• To not conduct investigations</li> <li>• To not stop poaching</li> <li>• To re-direct patrols</li> <li>• To smuggle</li> <li>• To steal confiscated wildlife</li> <li>• To turn a blind eye</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To allow access to wildlife</li> <li>• To extort permits</li> <li>• To turn a blind eye</li> </ul>

## 4. Towards a typology of corruption in wildlife trafficking

Corruption occurs where weak governance and enforcement are evident as well as in poorer areas or in sectors with low salaries. The latter though is controversial and whilst it may contribute to corruption, raising salaries and providing incentives have not proved to change corrupt behaviour. Additionally, there may be a cultural resilience to corruption in societies with long traditions of patronage and gift giving. There is some exploration around the bribery, falsification of documents and diplomatic cover that are used for trafficking some species, but there is no comprehensive overview attempting to categorise the patterns of corruption linked to wildlife trafficking. Based upon review of the literature and data collected, it is proposed that forms of corruption can be mapped on to the three main activities making up wildlife trafficking – poaching, smuggling and selling (Figure 3).

Corruption in the wildlife trade exists at different points along the enforcement and compliance chain starting with the poaching (though also capturing or harvesting). At this point, bribes, forged or ill-gotten permits, patronage and threats of force all may enable wildlife to begin to be trafficked. Then the transportation/smuggling, combined with either or both exporting or processing are enabled by the same forms of corruption, but may also be facilitated by diplomatic cover. This results in importing and finally selling, which can take place with the help of bribes, forged permits and/or patronage. The additional factors affecting demand proposed by Wyatt (2013c) – level of profit, scarcity or abundance, location of supply and demand, and cultural use of wildlife – offer further insight as to what form of corruption will be evident and where along the trafficking process it might happen.

**Figure 2 – Forms of corruption facilitating wildlife trafficking**



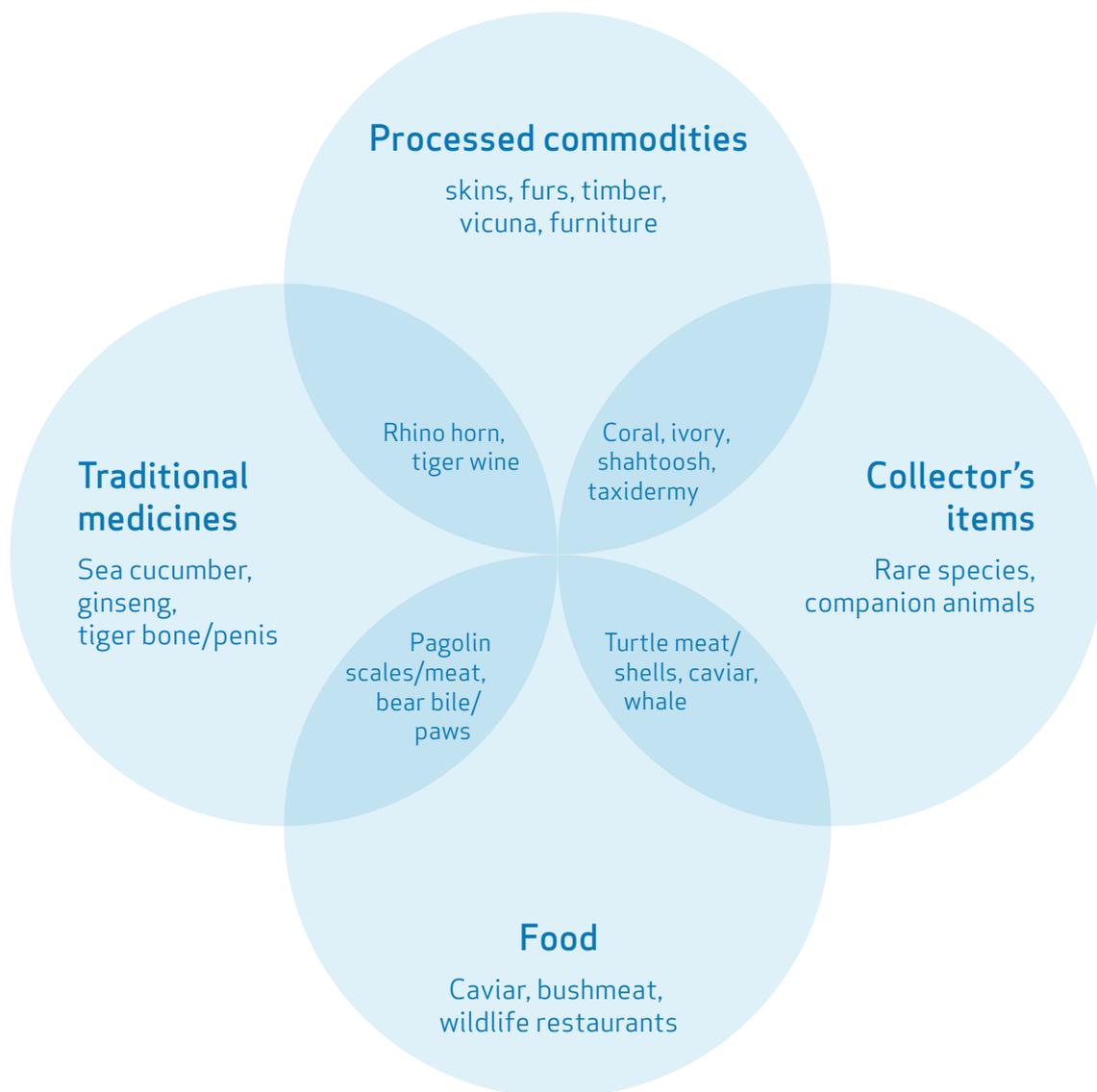
Level of profit seems to affect the type of corruption at any point along the smuggling chain. For low levels of profit, petty corruption in the form of smaller bribes or gifts may be used to, as mentioned, have law enforcement or regulators look the other way. Patronage, where family or social relationships are used as leverage to engage in corrupt activity, may also feature. All of these types of corruption could also happen in terms of possession by the poacher, smuggler, market trader or restaurant owner of illegal wildlife. Patronage, bribes or gifts may also purchase fraudulent national or CITES paperwork that launders poached wildlife through capture and smuggling. When the profit levels are much higher, bribes or gifts, but on a grand scale, facilitate trafficking. The difference is the amounts of the bribe or gifts are much higher. Patronage may feature here as well where family members or close friends are given significant tracts of land. Furthermore, when the profit levels are higher, most likely the actors involved are more powerful. The person receiving the bribe may sit in a much higher, influential position that enables them to facilitate the smuggling of, for instance, ivory or rhino horn. Additionally, the people paying the higher bribe must have access to more wealth. This may correspond to the involvement of organised crime. Trafficking of high profit wildlife may also be facilitated by diplomatic cover where corrupt officials use their positions in embassies, consulates and other diplomatic institutions to smuggle wildlife and wildlife products.

The abundance or scarcity of species being trafficked often correlates to low and high levels of profits respectively, though there are some exceptions like pangolins. This means abundance and scarcity also correlate to petty and grand corruption. Trafficking of abundant species may be facilitated by

patronage, small bribes and gifts, which allow access to poaching, and allow smuggling, market and restaurant sales. Trafficking of scarce species on the other hand most likely requires significant bribes and gifts as the wildlife is difficult to obtain, smuggle and sell. As with high levels of profits, scarce species like rhinoceros may also be trafficked under diplomatic cover. Proximity of collection and selling is also linked to levels of profit and therefore the type of corruption that is witnessed. For trafficking where the location of the poaching or harvesting is close to the location of the final sale, patronage, small bribes and gifts are all used to further the wildlife to market. If the wildlife or wildlife product must travel over long distances to reach the location of demand, the type of corruption would then most likely be grand – larger bribes and gifts – and diplomatic cover. This again could be because the higher levels of profits to be gained warrant larger payments, but also buying secrecy and remaining undetected for the long journey on a plane or ship may cost a significant amount.

Culture around wildlife is the one factor that appears to depart from a connection to the level of profit. As seen in the case study, some societies have a traditional use of wildlife that results in consumption being a resilient part of the culture. Even though some of that consumption has been criminalised and wildlife such as tigers and sharks are given protection under CITES and national legislation, consumption continues. This is also made possible through corruption. Patronage, small bribes and gifts may be used for more abundant species that may be closer to the demand location, which are easier to obtain, but still prohibited. When species are scarce though, such as rhinoceros or sea cucumbers, the bribes and gifts would be larger and diplomatic cover may also play a role.

Wyatt (2013c) proposes wildlife trafficking can be grouped into categories of demand – processed commodities, collector's items, food and traditional medicines (Figure 3). A majority of processed commodities are abundant, lower priced wildlife, where there is a fairly close proximity in terms of where the animal was poached and where it was processed. It could be predicted then that there will be petty corruption in the form of smaller bribes and gifts at the poaching and smuggling stages. For those higher priced processed commodities, the amount of the bribes and gifts increases as well, as is the case with timber, which was not discussed in detail here. Fraudulent paperwork can feature prominently in processed commodities as it enables laundering of the illegal to the legal and then the wildlife can be manufactured or altered to be sold. In contrast, collector's items are nearly all high profit items, which tend to be scarce and are smuggled over long distances. This then correlates to grand types of corruption including significant bribes and gifts as well as diplomatic cover. Fraudulent paperwork may facilitate the collection and smuggling stage, but to a lesser degree as this wildlife is highly protected, so no paperwork may be available. Trafficking of wildlife for food is similar to the structure of processed commodities. The wildlife tends to be abundant, lower priced and consumed close to the location where it was captured or harvested. This type of trafficking is enabled through patronage, small bribes and gifts. Fraudulent paperwork may be a way to obtain or smuggle the wildlife. To a lesser degree it may also permit the sale of wildlife in markets or restaurants by mislabelling the species or misreporting the volume of wildlife. Food is one of the categories of demand where cultural tradition plays a role in the sustained consumption of the wildlife regardless of its conservation status (some food items though may more closely resemble luxury items). The other category of demand where this is the case is traditional medicines. This category features wildlife that is both abundant and scarce as well as low and high priced and also near and far in proximity from the supply location to the demand site. This means a range of types of corruption are employed from small bribes and gifts to patronage, from fraudulent paperwork to diplomatic cover. The price and complexity of smuggling the item to its final destination will inform which type of corruption is used, but the unifying characteristic is the consumers' commitment to the continued use of the wildlife in spite of the threat that this may pose to the species' survival.

**Figure 3 – Categories of demand** *Source: Wyatt 2013c*

## 5. The role of donor countries and agencies: Some solutions

What then can donor agencies do to help break the connection between wildlife trafficking and corruption? In general, corruption takes place where there are 'criminogenic asymmetries', which 'are structural disjunctions, mismatches and inequalities in the sphere of politics, culture, the economy and the law' (Passas 1998). These asymmetries create opportunities for illicit profit, for the production or strengthening of the demand for illegal goods and services, for the incentive to commit criminal acts, and for the reduction of controllability (Passas 1998). Passas (1994) particularly argues against protectionist programmes as they create unequal economic exchanges (further asymmetries), which enhance inequalities or reinforce dependency in the

developing world. So aid programmes to tackle poverty and other inequalities are potentially indirectly having an impact on corruption. There are specific actions though that could be taken in relation to the states and criminal justice systems where donor agencies work, to the assessing, monitoring and transparency of programmes and the governance structures in which donor agencies operate, to the demand in donor and aid countries and to the attitudes towards wildlife and corruption in donor and aid countries.

## 5.1 States receiving aid

Key to reducing wildlife trafficking are initiatives to tackle corruption especially in state agencies (Duffy and Humphreys 2014). EIA (2012) argues part of this must be for states to institute laws to make bribing foreign officials illegal. United for Wildlife (2014) agrees that corruption and bribery need to be criminalized and this can be done by adopting or amending legislation related to corruption, money laundering and wildlife trafficking. A step to work towards this would be for states to have active engagement and implementation of legislation that complies with the United Nations Convention against Corruption (Horne 2013a; United for Wildlife 2014). In order to make the necessary additions or alterations to existing legislation, states must have a system of transparent lobbying (Passas 1998), so that conflicts of interest in regards to wildlife trade, including interests of family members and/or friends do not interfere with passing and implementing changes that would decrease wildlife trafficking and corruption. For donor agencies, this means supporting rule of law initiatives that aid countries in altering legislation to be more in line with international conventions as well as initiatives to promote transparent lobbying. In projects with wildlife and environmental management agencies, donors need to attempt to monitor conflicts of interest of those employed there.

Whilst states can send the message that wildlife trafficking and corruption are serious crimes by increasing the penalties, and as mentioned, this may be part of the solution, Passas (1998) warns that the danger with stricter penalties is that this increases the probability of getting caught. With greater risk of punishment, there is the possibility that corruption would increase as a tool (Passas 1998) to successfully traffic wildlife. Pires and Clarke (2011) agree that, at least in Bolivia where poaching of parrots is widespread, making poaching and wildlife crime a priority would create the possibility of corruption of the law enforcement officers tasked with policing it. That is not to say stricter penalties are not part of the solution, but to caution that implementation of these measures must be undertaken with cultural, social and economic knowledge and sensitivity. Donor agencies can support further research as to the best way forward for states in enforcing existing laws more, and/or criminalising or enhancing the penalties on wildlife trafficking.

States can help to combat corruption, and in turn wildlife trafficking, by maintaining the independence of civil society and NGOs (Green and Ward 2004). This provides an essential external monitor of the state and therefore of official and political corruption. Both CITES Management and Scientific authorities should be vetted for their independence, so that the organisation at the heart of wildlife trade is not contributing to the corruption that facilitates wildlife trafficking. All law enforcement, civil servants and the public should have access to a safe and secure means of whistleblowing, so that they can report wildlife trafficking, corruption and other crimes without fear of reprisal. Donor agencies can assist in the above suggestions through their rule of law programmes and projects that promote and support civil society. They can also establish criteria where aid can be suspended due to corruption or lack of reaction when corruption takes place.

## 5.2 Criminal justice systems in aid-receiving countries

Many of the solutions to combat wildlife trafficking and corruption centre on strengthening law enforcement, which could include improving the status of such positions, and building their technical expertise. First, wildlife and environmental officers need to have more training regarding species identification, crime scene evidence collection and expertise and uncovering fraudulent paperwork. This will help to also discover corrupt practices that facilitate smuggling. The typologies proposed here may also help law enforcement pinpoint the types of corruption that are utilised at the poaching, smuggling, and selling stages. This, too, may assist them in their investigations. They could also be supported by better equipment. Both of these may be achieved with the help of donor countries through training initiatives and purchasing of such equipment as part of projects. Second, financial officers with expertise uncovering money laundering and tracking the financial flows of illicit goods need to be trained and made a part of the teams that are battling wildlife trafficking. This can be through the creation of specialised units or by creating multi-agency task forces within countries. Again, as part of wider rule of law initiatives or law enforcement capacity building, attention could be focused on creating and/or improving the knowledge base and expertise of law enforcement with regards to accounting and financial crimes.

In terms of the way that law enforcement operates, the literature and data collected offer several suggestions. For wildlife and environmental officers, it has been suggested that they should not work in their home regions to avoid patronage; they should have irregular shifts, so that traffickers cannot target specific people for bribing. Whereas in some contexts this may be a part of the solution, others have pointed out there is a danger that frequent movement gives them the incentive and opportunity to extort bribes from various local people they come in to contact with. Donor agencies should support investigations into which type of the forms of corruption developed here exist in the aid-receiving countries in which they work, so that more concrete recommendations in this regard can be developed.

A key solution is to reduce the amount of discretion that officers have so that their actions are monitored more closely and they are held more accountable for their choices (Klitgaard 1988). Part of this may be to more strictly institute logbooks and/or personal cameras to record officers' interactions with the public. There also needs to be better coordination and cooperation between agencies that are tasked with various wildlife management duties. For instance in Mexico, Guzman et al (2007) recommend that to tackle the illegal parrot trade, law enforcement needs to work with wildlife authorities who are in charge of issuing trapping authorisations and implementing conservation programmes. This would help with instances of forged paperwork and corrupt tactics using mislabelled species and misreported volumes of wildlife. Naylor (2004) advises more use of traditional law enforcement tactics such as the use of informants. He suggests wiping the slate clean for corrupt game wardens in order to recruit them as informants. These suggestions may also be part of the initiatives aimed at improving the knowledge and expertise of law enforcement in developing nations.

For financial law enforcement, in collaboration with wildlife officers, they should be targeting corrupt public officials (White House 2014). This Issue paper has helped to identify the range of corrupt actors, which can inform investigations in regards to who might be suspected of corruption. When these officials are identified who collaborate with wildlife traffickers, their assets should be targeted for forfeiture and repatriation to the states that are affected (White House 2014). The White House (2014) has stated the US will work with international partners to target the assets of wildlife traffickers and corrupt officials. Donor agencies can assist in strengthening law enforcement and building their technical expertise again through their rule of law

programmes. This should be to share best practices in regards to discretion and building technical and scientific capacity in regards to knowledge of wildlife and financial flows.

### 5.3 Monitoring and transparency

Monitoring of crime prevention efforts is a crucial element to detecting corruption in wildlife trafficking. Donor agencies should support states in efforts to have this conducted independently. Further, monitoring should take place through international or intra-governmental peer review (Ayling 2013) of processes, systems and legislation. It is key to have non-state actors involved in anti-corruption efforts. Monitoring should include the auditing of reports and registrations related to wildlife management (Ayling 2013). For instance, wildlife farms in Vietnam should have a registration system and it should be monitored by an independent assessor. Import and export permits as well as trapping and hunting permits should all be subjected to this monitoring. Donor agencies can demand these practices in their own projects as well as supporting training and implementation of monitoring in wider society. This is particularly important for the banking and tax sectors, which need proper monitoring and oversight to uncover and track the illicit financial flows (Passas 1998) and money laundering (United for Wildlife 2014) stemming from corruption and wildlife trafficking.

Transparency needs to be an integral part of state institutions including banking and law enforcement. This could in part be supported by use of systems where there is an in-built audit trail that logs actions and thus increases transparency in the investigation. For rhino horn trafficking, Ayling (2013) argues that transparency is also warranted in choosing managers of reserves and around the actions of owners and employees of tours and safaris (Ayling 2013). This is good practice for any country where wildlife trafficking is a problem. Having openness about the relationships of transportation employees and anyone involved in wildlife management may help to prevent corruption. As Klitgaard (1988) says, collecting and analysing better information can act as a partial cure of corruption. Donor agencies should thoroughly vet all of their vendors and contacts to ensure they are working with banks and individuals who are not corrupt. If they discover that they are indeed working with corrupt actors, immediate steps should be taken to replace them with uncorrupted institutions or people.

It would be best practice for donor agencies to utilise civil society when implementing their conservation programmes in particular, but other programmes as well (Stoett 2002). Again, the independence of civil organisations may challenge corruption and other criminal behaviour. Others suggest that aid needs to be tied to the absence of corruption (Senior 2006). Whilst this may be difficult, especially in societies like Vietnam, donor agencies should consider the partners' and countries' willingness to tackle corruption and wildlife trafficking. As mentioned, donor agencies should limit the amount of cash given in their projects and instead rely on assistance through personnel, equipment and knowledge exchange. When cash is unavoidable, there needs to be strict monitoring and transparency regarding the spending of the money. Donor agencies should require transparency in declaring conflicts of interest and/or family and social relationships in organisations or sectors related to their projects. This may help fight patronage.

### 5.4 Demand-focus and attitudes

'Failing measures to seriously and permanently reduce demand, all that supply-side controls do is drive the targeted business further underground, raise profit rates and increase corruption' (Naylor 2004). As mentioned, criminogenic asymmetries are linked to the existence of corruption. Passas (1998) agrees with Naylor that when states outlaw certain goods without reducing demand, this creates a demand-supply asymmetry that results in corruption and black markets.

Essential then to tackling both wildlife trafficking and corruption are efforts to change people's attitudes towards consumption of wildlife and acceptance of corrupt practices. This is particularly evident in the recent campaign in Vietnam by Humane Society International and other organisations. A poll indicates demand for rhinoceros horn is possibly down by more than a third in the country to a use rate of 2.6 per cent of the population (Milman 2014). Equally important is that currently only 25 per cent of Vietnamese now believe that rhino horn has medicinal value (Milman 2014). Efforts to disrupt wildlife trafficking have also used campaigns to expose corruption (Duffy 2014). Current media coverage about poaching does not expose the key role of corruption on which poaching and trafficking rely to operate (Duffy 2014). Arguably though, campaigns also need to specifically target the acceptability and negative consequences that corruption has on people, particularly the poor. Donor agencies can aid in changing attitudes by supporting campaigns against wildlife trafficking and corruption as well as supporting the independence of civil society, NGOs and the media.

## 5.5 Conclusion

A coordinated rather than piecemeal effort to tackle corruption is essential (Passas 1998). This means addressing the state, criminal justice system and the overall transparency and oversight of state institutions and donor programmes as well as campaigns to change people's acceptance of wildlife consumption and corruption all at the same time. Donor agencies can be key players in driving these efforts through rule of law programmes as well as role models of best practice by having robust monitoring and transparency in their own projects, including of their finances and hiring processes. A missing piece that is crucial to better understanding of the dynamics of wildlife trafficking and corruption is the unpicking of the illicit financial flows and money laundering that run in parallel to these crimes. Donor agencies can help support further initiatives and research into this essential area, which is important to improve success in combating poaching and ultimately impacting on species survival and improved livelihoods.

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#### INDEXING TERMS

Wildlife trafficking  
Wildlife Violations  
Anti-Corruption  
Money laundering  
Bribery  
Governance  
Accountability  
Transparency  
Vietnam

FOTO  
Esther Simpson on flickr.com

Wildlife trafficking is a growing global concern. It takes place in all regions of the world with those nations with high biodiversity being the source and the consumers of the wildlife as well as transit areas and hubs for smuggled wildlife. It is a significant contributor to biodiversity loss and species extinction. Many if not most developing nations are rich in biodiversity and therefore must contend with wildlife trafficking. It is a critical concern for these nations' environment and economies. It has been documented that corruption is an essential component in the facilitation and perpetration of the illegal wildlife trade, but a comprehensive study into the scale, scope and structure has yet to be undertaken. This U4 Issue paper conducts a meta-study regarding corruption's role in wildlife trafficking from the available literature, interviews with experts and a case study of Vietnam in an attempt to highlight concerns for bilateral donors in regards to conservation, environment and law enforcement programmes.