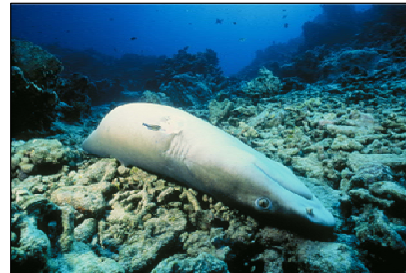


Cutting our Losses? Reducing the illegal trade in natural resources

Sponsored Workshop held during the 3rd World Conservation Congress, Bangkok, 19th November 2004

While illegal trade in natural resources is decimating biodiversity, ruining livelihoods and contributing to conflict - there are ways to tackle the problem.

The illegal trade of natural resources, such as wildlife and tropical timber, is a global problem of huge scale; driving conflict, promoting corruption and rewarding criminals. It also destroys biodiversity and undermines livelihoods. It is an issue that intersects environment and development. However, all is not lost. Solutions are possible but need political will and concerted effort.



Wild Aid, 2004

The volume of trade in wildlife products is immense. For example, 8,500 of water snakes are taken from Cambodia's Tonle Sap lake every day and 50-100 million sharks are killed for their fins every year. In terms of biodiversity impact, illegal poaching and trade has driven 3 out of 8 tiger species extinct. Meanwhile, it is estimated that approximately half of all tropical timber imported into the European Union has been logged illegally. Put simply, illegal trade is a problem both of production methods and consumption patterns. Consequently, cutting our losses from



Global Witness, 2002

illegal trade requires that solutions be found in both the consumer and producer countries.

The well-attended session explored approaches available to the international community, governments, aid donors, private sector and the civil society. In brief, the following conclusions were reached:

- Regional responses must include multi-country co-operation to tackle transboundary issues, such as border controls and strengthening of national legislations.

“REGIONAL PROBLEMS must be solved REGIONALLY and the region should be able to control its own trade,” said Dr Samedi, Director General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation, CITES management authority of Indonesia.

- Aid donors must support interventions throughout the trade chain from producer to consumer and could link aid to better controls over illegal trade.
- The private sector has greatest opportunities to reduce illegal trade. In general, the current commitment of companies to certification and supply chain management is dismal. However, responses like the Tropical Forest Trust’s focus on certification standards and sustainable procurement is beginning to show positive change.

“Interest from responsible buyers in the EU is a powerful incentive to participate in sustainable timber procurement – and for one company in Indonesia has meant a four-fold increase in furniture exports since they demonstrably improved their sourcing,” noted Hugh Blackett, Director of Projects (SE Asia), Tropical Forest Trust.

- Civil society faces perhaps the greatest challenge. It has to ensure other actors meet their commitments as well as generating new ideas for combating illegal trade.

Further information:

Workshop organised by International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), IUCN – the World Conservation Union, and TRAFFIC

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