



Forum: Environment Commission

Issue: Efforts in protecting the remaining wild Rhinoceros

Student officer: Reena Said

Position: Chair

Overview of the Issue

Rhinos once freely wandered various places throughout Europe, Asia and Africa. In fact at the beginning of the 20th century, 500,000 rhinos roamed Africa and Asia^[19]. However, today very few rhinos survive outside national parks and reserves. This is because of the persistent poaching and habitat loss that has been occurring over the past decades and in our present day. Currently there are only five species of rhinos that exist in our world^[19]. Out of these five, two are considered critically endangered - the Javan and Sumatran rhinos^[19].

Rhino poaching has critically increased in recent years and this is because of the constant demand for rhino horn in Asian countries, particularly Vietnam and China^[14]. Although rhino skin and nails are also of very high value in Asian traditional markets, it is their horn that is principally used as a status symbol to display someone's success and wealth; and as Traditional Chinese Medicine. According to traditional Chinese texts, rhino horn has been used in Chinese medicine for more than 2000 years for curing snake bites, hallucinations, typhoid, headaches, "devil possession" and many other conditions^[14]. Along with this, Vietnamese buyers believe rhino horn to be a cure for cancer when ground to a fine powder.

Due to these demands for Rhino horn, as years pass the population of Rhinos decrease and this is increasing the price and pressure on the declining rhino populations. Because of the value of Rhinos, poachers nowadays are being supplied by international criminal gangs with the necessary equipment to track and kill rhinos. These poachers cut off the rhino horns after tranquilizing them with guns, leaving them to bleed and die in an agonizing way. South Africa is the main country where majority of rhinos in the world are being targeted by poachers; and the extent to which the Rhinos are being harmed has now led to a call for legalising the trade of Rhino horn^[14]. This however has not been decided and is still being debated upon, due to the unprecedented damage that may occur to with dehorning rhinos. Thus, the International trade in rhino horn is banned under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora).

Rhino's are very unique creatures that impact and shape our environment and landscape. They are an umbrella species that protect all other species that share their



habitat thus, it is important to keep them safe. Currently, various organizations such as WWF, Save the Rhinos, AWF, TRAFFIC and others are working towards protecting the surviving rhinos and increasing their population. They are using various types of strategies such as increasing rhino sanctuaries, biological management, captive breeding, field protection of rhinos by recruiting wildlife scouts, increasing ranger trainings and on-the-ground patrolling, forming and strengthening law enforcement strategies, monitoring and surveying ongoing population of rhinos and various other methods. There are also campaigns being formed in order to change the minds of the rhino horn consumers and persuade them to reject its use which could ultimately lead to a long-term reduction in demand for rhino horn. Another major strategy that organizations such as the AWF are using is engaging the public to spread public awareness about the illegal rhino horn trade and the horrors of poaching in hopes that it will bring attention to the cruelty of rhino poaching and eliminate the myths about rhino horn.

Key Terms

Endangered: species that are at serious risk of extinction.^[8]

Conservation: is the practice of protecting/conserving animals and their habitats.

Translocation: “movement of individual rhinos from one area to another either to improve chances of survival, to establish new populations, to keep established populations productive, or to introduce new blood into a population.”^[6]

Poaching: “illegally hunt or catch [animals] on land that is not one's own or in contravention of official protection.”^[8]

Trafficking: deal or trade in something illegal.^[8]

Ranger: a person employed to patrol a state or national park, forest or areas.^[8]

Biological Management: “management of rhino populations (primarily through adjusting rhino stocking densities, but also managing the densities of other browsers and habitat management) to maintain rapid, healthy population growth, to minimise inbreeding and loss of genetic diversity.”^[6]

Captive Breeding: “Captive breeding is the process of breeding animals in controlled environments within well-defined settings, such as wildlife reserves, zoos and other commercial and noncommercial conservation facilities”^[16]



CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora): “is an international agreement between governments that aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.” ^[23]

TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce): “TRAFFIC, the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network, is the leading non-governmental organization working globally on the trade of wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity and sustainable development.” ^[9]

AWF (African Wildlife Fund): is an international conservation organization that ensures wildlife and wildlands thrive in modern Africa.^[2]

Kruger National Park: is the largest park in South Africa and has an open border with neighbouring Mozambique. It is heavily impacted by rhino poaching.

Countries and Organizations Involved

World Wildlife Fund (WWF): WWF is an international organization that protects rhino populations and establishes new populations through translocations. It also works to combat poaching by implementing innovative technology and building the capacity of rangers on the ground. It tackle illegal trade of rhino horn through advocacy and strengthening of local and international law enforcement to bring trafficking perpetrators to justice. WWF further collaborates closely with government agencies globally and other international and local NGO partners to expand support for rhino conservation. ^[19]

Save the Rhinos: a UK-based conservation charity that “works to conserve all five rhino species, by supporting rhino conservation programmes across Africa and Asia.”^[17]

International Rhino Fund (IRF): The International Rhino Fund is a charity that has been operating and funding rhino conservation programs for the last 25 years. They help ensure the survival of rhinos and focus on five major species of Rhinos - Sumatran rhinos, Javan rhinos, Greater One-Horned rhino, Black rhino and White Rhino. Their major operations are in Africa and Asia, where most of the rhino species exist.^[10]

Vietnam: Vietnam has rapidly grown into the world’s largest consumer of rhino horn. Their increasing demand for rhino horns is causing a huge poaching crisis on the African continent with “poaching levels in South Africa having risen by a staggering 5000% since 2007” ^[5]. These demands are directly linked to Vietnam’s economic

development since over the decades we have seen Vietnam's rapid growth of economy with their rising demand for wildlife.

Rhino horn are very important in Vietnam as they have seen as a symbol of power and wealth, associated with business success and high social standing. In addition, the Vietnamese have an underlying belief in health benefits associated with Rhino Horns^[22].

South Africa: South Africa is known to be the main custodian of Africa's rhinos with 18,796 white rhinos and 1,916 black rhinos which is approximately 93% and 40% of the total white and black rhino populations respectively ^[13]. In recent years poaching levels have risen significantly especially in the Kruger National Park. South Africa lost an average of 13 rhinoceroses to poaching each year from 1990 to 2007 and increasingly more since 2007^[24]. Thus, the current crisis is creating debates worldwide about the best way to tackle illegal poaching

China: China is heavily involved in the illegal trafficking and trade of rhino horn. "Between 2006-2016, around 528 kg of rhino horn was seized in China by the country's authorities – meaning that 18% of all rhino horn seizures across the globe took place in China during this period."^[4] Additionally, "as much as 30% of worldwide rhino horn seizures have involved Chinese traffickers."^[4]

Mozambique: Rhinos are now extinct in Mozambique. However, it is still a favoured base for rhino poachers to enter South Africa due its shared neighbouring border with Kruger National Park in South Africa. Along with this Mozambique is the main major exit point for rhino horn leaving the African continent en route to Asia.

Botswana: "Botswana is presently home to roughly a third of Africa's elephants and is a popular destination for tourists seeking the scenery of the ancient Kalahari Desert and the huge concentrations of wildlife in Chobe National Park. In the past Botswana has faced severe poaching problems and within the last several years has made significant investments in the protection of its wildlife, wildlife relocation to safer internal areas; translocation of wildlife from dangerous areas of South Africa by the Rhino Without Borders campaign; wildlife monitoring through governmental and non-governmental organizations; and support of its tourism industry."^[18]

Kenya: "Kenya has the third largest population of both Black and White Rhinos, totalling just over 1,000 animals"^[24]. In 1970, 20,000 black rhinos roamed Kenya however as a result of poaching currently there are only about 540 remaining.^[20] Thankfully, over the years Kenya has increased their number of sanctuaries where the surviving rhinos are protected from poachers. Populations in these sanctuaries are increasing and heavy investment have been made on-the-ground patrolling in game reserves which has immensely helped in detecting poachers in Kenya.



Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe has the world fourth largest population of Black Rhinos and is currently working towards protecting and growing the population of rhinos through translocation, anti poaching efforts and rehabilitation for rhinos. Recently there has been a significant decline in rhinoceros poaching and horn smuggling crimes in Zimbabwe due to the previous breakdown in law enforcement against rhinoceros poaching in 2008 that threatened their decades work of restoring rhinoceros populations^[24].

Related UN resolutions and Previous Approaches to Solving the Issue

July 30, 2015: A UN General Assembly resolution addressing the question of *Tackling the Illicit Trafficking in Wildlife* was adopted in order to address the continuous collapse of Elephant and Rhino population in our world. [Click here](#) to view the resolution.

September 5, 2017: “The United Nations adopted another resolution on tackling illegal wildlife trafficking, recognising CITES as the primary legal framework for regulation. The species mentioned in the resolution include rhino, elephant, turtles, sharks, parrots and trees like rosewood, agarwood and sandalwood, all of which are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The key areas that the resolution incorporates includes enhanced national legislation, stronger law enforcement, corruption counter measures, and demand reduction efforts.”^[12] [Click here](#) to view the resolution.

Resolution Conf 9.14 : The CITES Parties, through Resolution Conf 9.14 has addressed the issue of *Conservation of and trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses*. The resolution looks at key strategies that can be implemented to protect the remaining wild Rhinoceros. [Click here](#) to view the resolution.

In addition to these resolution various local and international organization such as AWF, WWF, Save the Rhinos, TRAFFIC and many more; have been working towards the protection of Rhinos through methods such as - translocation, increasing sanctuaries and rangers on the grounds, strengthening of local and international law enforcement to bring trafficking perpetrators to justice, engaging the public on the crisis at hand, captive breeding and many others. These methods have no doubt helped protect the wild rhinos and over the years Rhino poaching/trafficking has reduced drastically. However, more innovative ideas and solutions must be put forth and implemented because of the horrifying crimes that Rhinos still facing. It is critical to protect our environment and this includes the Rhinos as they are vital in the shaping of the environment.

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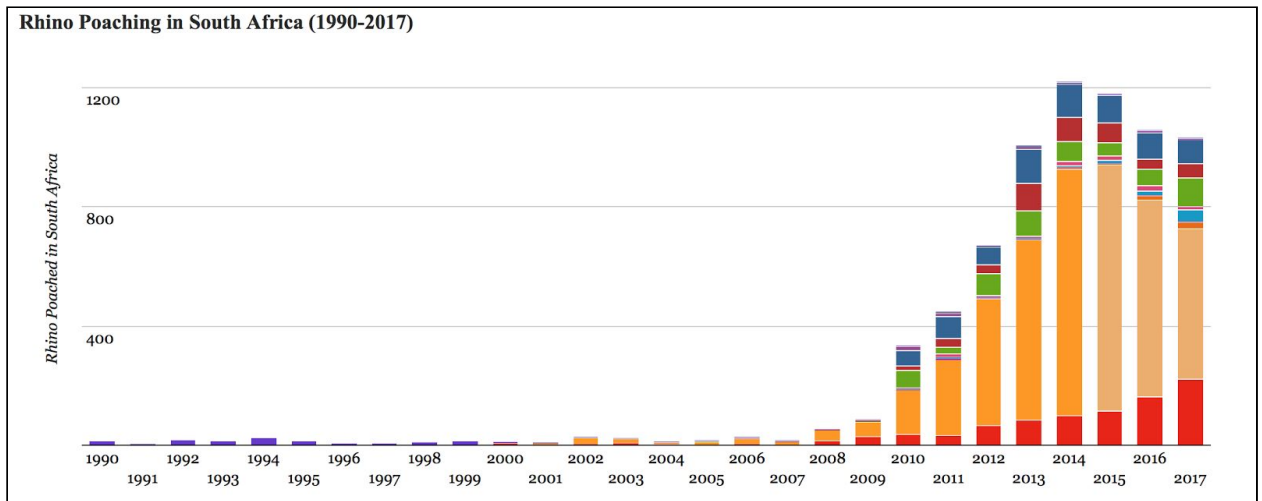


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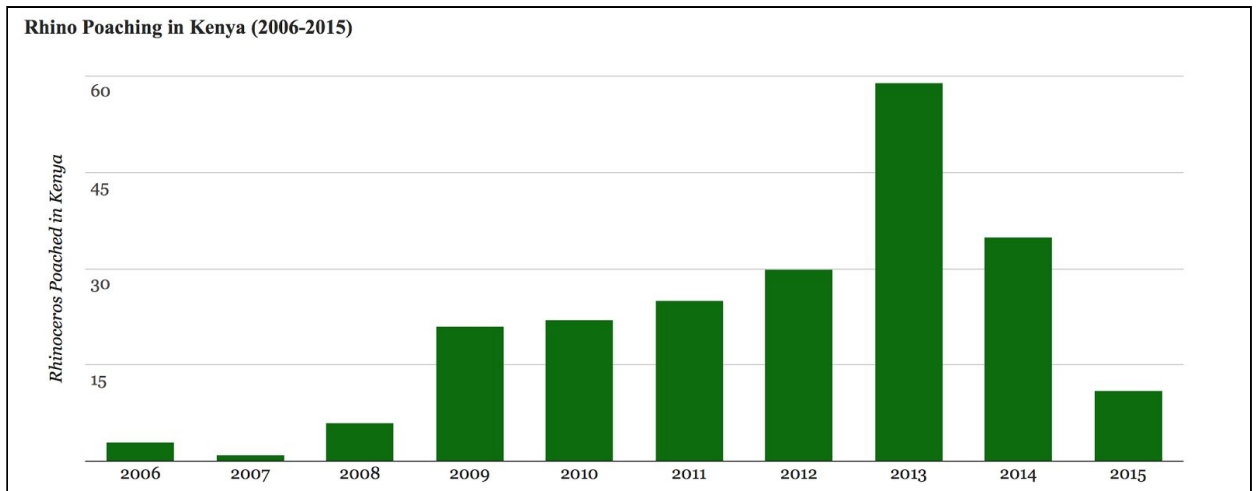
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Appendix

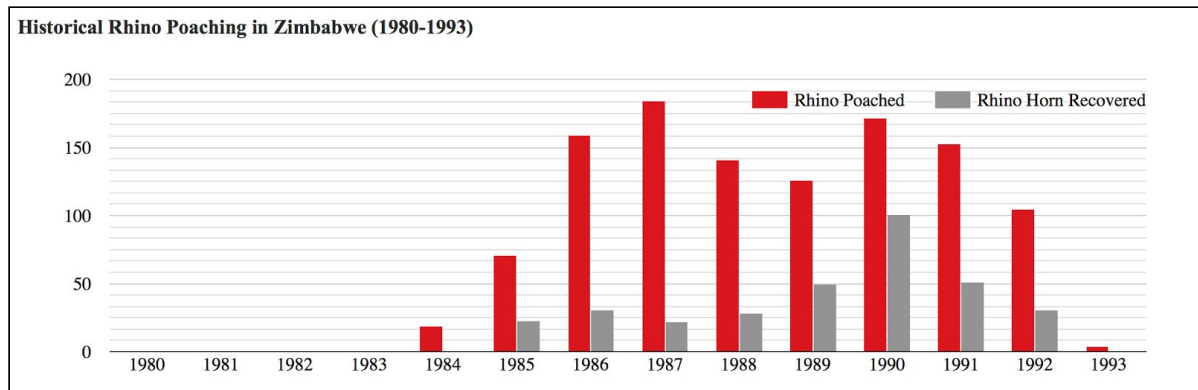
Appendix 1. Recorded numbers of Rhinos poached in South Africa from 1990 - 2017 ^[18]



Appendix 2. Recorded numbers of Rhinos poached in Kenya from 2006 - 2015 ^[18]



Appendix 3. Recorded numbers of Rhinos poached and Rhino Horns Discovered in Zimbabwe from 1980 - 1993 ^[18]



Appendix 4. Global Horn Trade flows from 2010-2015 ^[14]

Country/ Territory	Total 2010-2015			Country/ Territory	Total 2010-2015		
	No. of Seizures Made by / Implicated in	Weight (kg) of Seizures	No. of Horns or Horn Pieces		No. of Seizures Made by / Implicated in	Weight (kg) of Seizures	No. of Horns or Horn Pieces
South Africa	89 / 17	1,109.01	491	Singapore	2 / 1	65.98	32
Viet Nam	27 / 48	1,069.46	458	Malawi	0 / 1	53.30	11
China	80 / 20	859.74	413	Tanzania	1 / 0	53.30	11
Mozambique	17 / 15	797.78	307	France	1 / 7	53.22	41
Hong Kong SAR	11 / 3	184.99	83	Zimbabwe	6 / 0	47.76	18
Thailand	9 / 2	147.86	84	Namibia	2 / 1	47.41	18
Kenya	6 / 4	121.74	46	Cambodia	3 / 1	43.02	15
Czech Republic	5 / 1	119.43	43	U.K.	2 / 1	37.31	14
U.S.A.	1 / 2	107.78	40	Botswana	1 / 1	23.06	6
Malaysia	1 / 3	76.16	36	India	28 / 0	22.77	31
Nigeria	0 / 4	71.03	28	Others*	13 / 22	211.64	104
Uganda	2 / 2	69.48	46	Total	307 / 156	5,393.23	2,376

Visit the links below for more statistical facts on the issue:

<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/17/WorkingDocs/E-CoP17-68-A5.pdf>

<http://www.poachingfacts.com/poaching-statistics/rhino-poaching-statistics/>