Annexure 1

Wildlife Trade in South Asia: A perspective

Samir Sinha


Introduction

South Asia comprises Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Considered one of the most dynamic regions in the world, it is home to 1.649 billion people, which include 570 million, or 44%, of the world’s poor (World Bank 2014). Countries of the region have been known since historical times as suppliers of naturally sourced products such as spices. These products remain globally coveted commodities.

South Asia’s status as a supplier of wild plant and animal products is unsurprising. With its diversity of habitats, ranging from the world’s ‘Third Pole’ - the mighty Himalayas - to coastal waters on the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea, the region is home to high biological diversity. Some of the most iconic wildlife species in the world, including tiger, Indian rhino, Asian elephant and Snow leopard are indigenous to South Asia. Following the diversity of habitats, a large variety of birds, amphibians and reptiles, medicinal plants and other floral species of economic significance are also present. Although the biodiversity is unsurprising, its persistence into modern times is remarkable. Three of South Asia’s countries are amongst the most populated on the globe (Population Reference Bureau 2013). Despite human pressure from within the region, major elements of its biodiversity are still intact.

This persistence of South Asia’s biodiversity is certainly related to indigenous attitudes. As in most regions across the globe, wild animals and plants have played an important role in culture and history in South Asia. The region
stands out, however, in the way these traditions have carried forward into modern contexts. The Rig Veda, believed to have been written in India between 4800 and 1600 BC is considered one of the oldest guides to utilization of plant products for human health. Such ongoing notions of utility have contributed to biological conservation. Plants used by traditional medical systems account for 28 percent of the region's flora (Lambert et. al 1997). This situation fairly well assures continuing basic protections for forested areas.

Although local consumptive demand for wildlife products is legally and socially bounded, Southeast Asia nevertheless faces problems of illegal wildlife trade similar to other biodiverse regions. Lying between currently well-publicized crisis areas in Africa and South East Asia, the region’s own problems of illegal trade in wildlife are easy to overlook from a distance. Nevertheless, South Asia has become an important supplier of illegal wildlife. Like Africa and South East Asia, a large part of this contraband is destined for foreign markets (Sinha 2010). This situation has historical underpinnings. Even prior to the restriction of wildlife trade by modern international treaties, international commerce in plant and animal products was robust. Archaeological evidence and written records indicate that wild commodities have been major exchange items between South and South East Asia and China for more than two millennia (Donovon 2004).

Interactions with European powers have also figured prominently in the evolution of South Asia's international wildlife trade. In the not too distant past, one of the major drivers of the Anglo-Nepalese War, also known as the Gorkha War (1814-1816), was the resistance of the rulers in Nepal to British trade with Tibet through their kingdom. Amongst the products that the British East India Company hoped to gain access to was the fabled shahtoosh wool, derived from the Tibetan Antelope and woven into exquisite shawls by artisans in the Kashmir valley (Pemble, John 2009). This is interesting historical episode illustrates how demand for a wildlife derivative can become the primary driver for territorial conquest. In recent times, the trade in Shahtoosh wool has evolved into a barter economy, with the wool entering India in exchange for other wildlife products like tiger bones. (Wright and Kumar 1997).
US citizens and others residing temporarily in Afghanistan have been documented purchasing snow leopard skins as souvenirs for friends and loved ones back home (USFWS 2010). This behavior mirrors that of Europeans serving in the subcontinent during the British Raj. Colonists in those days were often keen to take home a few tiger skins as souvenirs of their sportsmanship.

Of course luxury and souvenir outlets are not restricted solely to American or European markets. In many Asian societies, conspicuous consumption has an important cultural role in determining status of individuals or families. Consequently, economic growth in the parts of Asia where wildlife goods hold luxury status may drive poaching and smuggling out of South Asia.

In addition to China, wildlife derivatives from legally protected South Asian species also find their way to markets in Japan, South East Asia and the Middle East. To understand the broader dynamics of this transnational crime, I will focus on two comparatively well-documented species, tigers (*Panthera tigris*) and Red Sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*). Unlike many other illicitly traded animals and plants, they have been monitored by conservation organizations and given corresponding priority by law enforcement agencies. As such, they provide insights into the complex knots and linkages of the region’s illegal wildlife trade.

**Tigers**

“If there is magic in an animal, it is contained in the tiger”.

In these words, George B. Schaller, arguably the best-known large mammal ecologist today, captures succinctly what the tiger represents. As the largest of the living cats, lithe and massively muscled, they are a natural wonder, an embodiment of power and beauty (Sunquist 2010). Consequently, tigers have captured human attention. They may be both the most charismatic and the most feared of all animals (Luo et al, 2010).
The tiger is the largest obligate terrestrial carnivore in all of the mammalian assemblages in Asia. (Seidensticker et. al 1999). In historic times, the species lived across 70 degrees of latitude and 100 degrees of longitude, from the Russian Far East south through Indochina, the Indian Subcontinent, south of the Himalayas and into the Indus valley (Seidensticker et. al 1999). Today, the tiger occupies just about 7% of its historical range (Dinerstein et. al 2008).

This situation extends to South Asia. Although the tigers’ range originally covered most of the subcontinent, except for Sri Lanka and parts of Northwestern India, its current distribution is greatly restricted. Tigers have been extirpated in Pakistan. In other areas, tigers have apparently been forced into substandard habitats. The montane regions of Nepal and Bhutan as well as the mangroves of Bangladesh provide relatively poor quality habitats for tigers even though they persist in these places (Johnsingh and Manjrekar 2013).

Current wild tiger numbers across South Asia are as follows (GTF 2014) (NTCA 2015):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Tiger Population estimate</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>115-150</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>2226</td>
<td>2014*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>198 (163-235)</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above numbers represent approximately 60% of the total global population of wild tigers.

The cultural and social context of Tiger hunting in South Asia:
While habitat destruction continues to be a major cause for the decline in tiger numbers, hunting, and the way it has evolved over time has been equally important. Attitudes about the rights of priveledged classes, concerns about human safety, foreign luxury purchasing, and market opportunism in have all contributed to an ethic that clashes with internationally concomitant protection efforts.
“Shikar” or sport hunting was an ancient cultural practice and a rite of passage among certain social classes in South Asia. Kings, landlords and other nobles historically regarded it as a divine right and indulged with sometimes with profound impacts. As an illustrative, it is reported that the Maharaja of Sarguja shot one thousand seven hundred and seven tigers in his lifetime. (Sankhala 2005). Some of this indulgence was likely influenced by colonial attitudes. During the Raj, Shikar became an almost a *de rigueur* experience for Britishers serving in India. It was a way of affiliating colonial power with traditional nobility, expressing European notions about competitive superiority through high take hunts, and providing outposted civil servants with ‘authentic’ native experiences. Tigers became favored targets because of the perceived danger and the trophy value involved with taking them.

Tiger hunting by Europeans likely also entailed a sense of protective paternalism, or ‘white man’s burden’. As powerful predators, tigers occasionally caused huge losses to human life and property. Rewards were often offered for the destruction of such animals, and hunters like Edward James "Jim" Corbett (1875-1955), became legends in their lifetime and continue to be adored by local populations even today. Between 1907 and 1938, Corbett tracked and shot twelve recorded man-eating tigers and leopards responsible for killing over 1500 people (Kala 2009). The region’s first National Park and one of the strongholds of wild tigers today, Corbett National Park, established in 1936 stands a befitting testimony to Corbett.

**Tiger Trade and its drivers**

While sport hunting was a major cause of declining tiger numbers, hunting for human consumption was not historically part of the problem in South Asia. Across the region, tiger range countries do not have a documented history of large scale domestic use of tiger parts and derivatives in their pharmacological traditions. This stands in contrast to range states in South East and East Asia, where tiger parts and derivatives occupy an important place in traditional medicinal practice (Alves et al 2013). In China, the first references to the use of tiger bone in traditional medicines date back more than 1,500 years. In the
herbal compendium, Mingyi Bielu, or Records of Famous Physicians (Tao Hongjing, circa 500 A.D.), tiger bone was said to have the properties of “warding off harmful air, killing evil pathogens, stopping convulsions, and curing carbuncles and ulcerative scrofula” (But, 1995). Such commodity value implies the existence of professional hunting and longstanding commercial markets.

Conversely, South Asian cultural acknowledgement of tigers’ potency has tended to emphasize personalized trophy values. Nepalese kings occasionally gifted tiger and leopard skins to Hindu priests for religious purposes. Most hunting, however, was undertaken as a means for individuals to prove their own prowess. Tiger skins, fat, claws and whiskers were considered more than ample reward for the killing because of their supposed value for treatment of leprosy and rheumatism in Traditional (East) Asian Medicine.

A trophy focus is evident in the way South Asian markets for tiger parts have developed over time. Precolonial records of commerce in tiger parts are sparse or nonexistent. In 1930, however, tiger skins in India were reported to cost Rs 200 while a rug with mounted head cost Rs 300. These were resold to shops in big cities like Bombay (present Mumbai) and Calcutta (present Kolkata) where Europeans returning home brought them as souveniers (Sankhala 2005).

Post colonial growth only served to expand the trade. Between the 1950s and early 1960s, demand for tiger trophies had grown into a substantial international industry. During this period, it consumed an estimated 3000 tigers in India alone (Sankhala 2005 pp 12).

1 The author has dealt with cases involving Hindu priests seeking permission under CITES to import skins into India with appropriate CITED documentation. The incidents took place when Nepal still had a monarchy, and the skins were gifts given by then King of Nepal.
Legal and Policy Responses

In response to the rising domestic and international concerns about decimation of tigers and other big cats, India banned the export of tiger and all ‘spotted’ skins in 1968. Shikar outfitters and traders immediately protested, presenting very high figures of economic losses in foreign exchange that would accrue if such trade was banned. They also pleaded for relaxation, citing pre-ban commitments of over 20,000 skins (Sankhala 2005).

Traders found little sympathy, though. At the tenth General Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Delhi in November 1969, then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi famously stated, "We need foreign exchange, but not at the cost of life and liberty of some of the most beautiful inhabitants of this continent."

In 1970, India placed a total ban on tiger hunting. The Wildlife (Protection) Act was later enacted in 1972. A watershed in Indian legislation, it provides the tiger, and over 800 other species protection under its schedules.

Around the same time, Nepal enacted its National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, (1973) under which the tiger was listed as one of the protected species. The first national park of Nepal, the Chitwan National Park was also established in 1973. In a parallel effort, the Tiger Ecology Project was initiated as a joint venture of the Government of Nepal, the Smithsonian Institution and World Wildlife Fund to conduct research on the tiger (Government of Nepal, 2007).

The Royal Government of Bhutan also expressed its strong commitment to conservation by stating clearly in its 1974 Forest Policy that a minimum of 60 percent of the country would be maintained under forest cover in perpetuity. This clause is now embodied in a new Constitution that was released for nationwide debate in 2005 (Royal Government of Bhutan 2005).

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2 Spotted skins include: leopard, snow leopard, clouded leopard, marbled cat, Asiatic wildcat, Eurasian lynx, leopard cat, and fishing cat.
Bangladesh has in force the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012. Important Provisions include prohibition related to hunting of wild animals and collection or destruction of specified plants without authorization.

Changing national laws across South Asia provided a basis for better engagement across borders. With the emergence of CITES in 1973 as a global framework for regulating wildlife trade, the region’s countries began exploring its provisions as a means for protecting indigenous species like tigers.

Table: Date on which various South Asian Countries joined CITES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date of Joining CITES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>18/06/1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>20/04/1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>20/07/1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>04/05/1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>20/11/1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>30/10/1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>15/08/2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>12/12/2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1975, all subspecies of the tiger except the Siberian tiger, were accorded CITES’ highest level of protection on Appendix I. The Siberian tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*) was listed on Appendix II of the convention at that time. Later, in 1987, it joined the other subspecies on Appendix I.

**Resurgence of the trade**

Even so, the trade in tiger products was too lucrative for some to abandon. In the face of changing national and international laws, they moved their operations underground. Correspondingly, there are indications that tiger (and other illegal wildlife) trade became better organized starting in the late 1970s. The threat of interdiction by enforcement agencies added levels of secrecy and control not previously present in Shikar related commerce. This new structure may in turn, have contributed to changes in the nature of the trade. Authorities
in India began to notice in the early 90s that skins were becoming less prominent in interdicted shipments of tigers. Instead, bones and other parts were also being traded.

Presumably changes in the products being smuggled were related to changes in end consumption. As noted previously, East Asian cultures utilize tigers, particularly their bones and organs, for medicinal purposes. The shift towards these other tiger derivatives corresponds chronologically with declining demand for trophy wildlife products in the West, and to increasing market accessibility in East Asia. As smuggling to China and her neighbours became easier, and the purchasing power in these countries improved, South Asia’s illicit wildlife trade was transformed. It is interesting to note that this transformation may also have an impact on end markets in other countries. Bone purported to be from tigers also began appearing in Nigerian markets in the 1990s (Sodeinde and Soewu 1999).

Today, almost all the tiger trade in South Asian range countries is believed to be driven by external demand from China. Nepal is well documented as a key intermediary for such illegal trade. The country is home to a comparatively small tiger population (~ 200 adults) that resides largely in protected areas along its southern border. Levels of tiger trade in Nepal are believed to be huge, though. Underground markets in Kathmandu act as transit points for shipments en route to China. Most of the parts confiscated by enforcement agencies have apparently come originally from India (Dongol et al 2012). Time series studies of tiger parts seizures across India also highlight the Nepal border as a major transit point in the trade with China. (EIA 2008, Verheij et al 2010 & Stoner et al 2013).

**Tibet and the illegal trade in Tiger Parts**

Accessibility of borders, coupled with Nepal’s longstanding status as a cultural and trade intermediary between South Asia and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) has facilitated smuggling into eastern China. Interestingly, the intermediary role of TAR in tiger trade has apparently also changed as these
smuggling routes have developed. In recent years, the region has gained dubious status as an outlet in its own right for tiger parts. Here again, demand based on cultural values coupled with newfound purchasing power seems to be the main driver.

Unlike Eastern China, the TAR does not have a strong history of tiger consumption for medicinal reasons. Neither does it have a Western-style history of trophy collection and display. Rather, cat skins have long been used as fur trim on traditional Tibetan robes called *chubas*, which are worn on ceremonial occasions.

The chuba trim market was not a major end destination for tiger trade however, until China’s “Open up the West” campaign in Tibet led to an emphasis on tourism. Local governments in the TAR soon found themselves competing with each other to organise “cultural events” such as horse racing where participants decked in fine jewelry. Tiger and leopard skin lined robes added to the exotica. The robes were also seen as indicators of the wealth and development status of the region.

The demand was also likely fuelled by the spiraling price of Yarsa gambu, another wild product cloaked in mystery that is collected in large quantities from the Tibetan plateau. “Yarsa gambu” is a a Nepalization of the Tibetan, “dbyar rtswa dgun’bu” (summer grass, winter worm). Despite its common nomenclature, Yarsa gambu is neither a grass nor a worm, but a parasitic complex formed by the relationship of the fungus *Ophiocordyceps sinensis* with the larval stage of several species of moth belonging to the genus Thitarodes. (Shrestha & Bawa 2013).

The harvesting of caterpillar fungus is perhaps the largest and fastest growing source of cash on the Tibetan plateau today (EIA 2006). The collection of this expensive commodity has provided communities a sudden influx of money. Some of this newfound capital has subsequently found its way to the illegal tiger trade. With more wealth, families began competing with each other to be seen in more and more finery, creating a spiraling demand for big cat skins.
Considering that Tibet has no wild tigers, and other areas under Chinese control have very, very few, the demand could only be met from elsewhere. Traders in Tibet have on occasion stated that all the tiger skins and most of the leopard skins came from India, usually via Nepal (EIA 2006).

On 8th October 2003, at Sangsang TAR, a seizure involving 31 tiger skins, 581 leopard skins, 778 otter skins, 2 lynx skins and one fake tiger skin was made. Many of the skins were wrapped in the Delhi edition of a newspaper, indicating India as the source of this consignment (EIA 2004).

Many conservation groups approached the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, considered by many to be the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people under exile in India, to seek his support. At the thirtieth Kalachakra Initiation Ceremony, held in Amaravati, India, in January 2006, the Dalai Lama stated, “You should tell them in Tibet that because of foolish activities such as the craving for ostentatious jewelry and the making of garments out of carnivore pelts, the collective Tibetan reputation is being ruined, and the Dalai Lama is ashamed.” (Yeh 2013).

The Dalai Lama chose an important religious gathering to emphasize environmental and wildlife protection. (The Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2006). By publicly decrying the wearing of endangered skins and ostentatious display of material wealth, he positioned these activities as contra to Tibetan national identity and harming Tibetans’ reputations.

His words had immediate effect.

“On February 13, 2006, the herders of Tangkor Township in Sichuan Province’s Dzögé County gathered together to publicly burn what they estimated to be one million U.S. dollars worth of pelts of endangered animals, including tiger, leopard, and otter. In an area where average per capita annual income is officially estimated at roughly 400 U.S. dollars, these pelts, which were used to decorate Tibetan robes, were in some cases investments made with a family’s life savings. This was only one of many such bonfires across culturally Tibetan areas of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in the spring
It is believed that over $75 million worth of wild animal skins were burnt in the eastern Tibet alone during this period (Associated Press 2006).

The message was also disseminated by the efforts of various environmental groups, and it resonated widely amongst Tibetans. At the government level, however, the burnings were seen as a show of loyalty to the Dalai Lama. They did not sit well with the officials of the region, and many of those who had helped organise burning events were arrested. Tibetan government employees were also forced to continue participating in festivals, and even appear on television broadcasts wearing tiger skin *chubas* (Yeh 2013).

While the environmental message of the Dalai Lama was perfectly in line with international conventions such as CITES and even China’s own domestic laws, it was seen in the immediate context as a threat to Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. Conversely, others saw the destruction of *chubas* as a destruction of Tibetan culture and argued that the skins could have been preserved rather than destroyed. These critics recalled historical references when the highest of warriors were rewarded with tiger pelts and bemoaned that the burnings were reminiscent of previous cultural vandalism.

This perspective is not shared by all. Perhaps because of forced *chuba* wearing by the Chinese authorities, burning wildlife skins has a sign of protest in the TAR. Reports from the Amdo, eastern Tibet revealed that in February 2009, during Tibetan New Year, a large number of wildlife skins were again burnt publicly in a dramatic assertion of Tibetan identity and as a form of political dissent (International Campaign for Tibet, 2009). The situation with tiger trade in the TAR underlines the complexity of transnational wildlife crime. Changing cultural values and the opportunistic nature of the crime present a shifting landscape for enforcement and crime prevention. Moreover, even actions taken in accordance with international protocols and local laws can be viewed with suspicion when they are perceived to affect local identity or sovereignty.
Recent Trends in the Tiger Trade
A recent analysis by TRAFFIC reveals some interesting facts about the pattern of seizures of tiger parts and derivatives:

Between 2000-2009, India reported a total of 294 seizures, which amounted to 58% of the total number of seizures during this period. Between 2010-2012, this fell to 29% (n=42) out of the total 145 seizures recorded. For Nepal, between 200-2009, a total of 49 seizures were made which amounted to 10% of the total number of seizures during this period. Between 2010-2012, this rose to 13% (n=19) out of the total 145 seizures recorded. Similarly, Bhutan had reported a total of 2 seizures between 2000 – 2009 and 1 seizure during 2010-12. (Stoner et al 2013).

Meanwhile, the trade in tigers continues, including in newer forms. A website buytigers.com offers live captive bred tigers from India. They advertise a chance to own “a lovely pet loyal, friendly and totally harmless, as also the most fashionable animal in earth; a five month old tiger cub.” The pet comes trained to be nice with its owner and can be shipped by sea everywhere in the world. While the listing is clearly a ruse as no centres breeding tigers for the international pet trade operate in India, the fact that such a listing continues to be displayed openly itself is an indicator of the lure of the tiger and of the brazenness and impunity with which such traders -genuine or fake - continue to peddle their illegal wares.

Red Sanders
Red Sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) is another species subject to illegal international trade. It is endemic to a relatively small part of India, where it occurs in the southern parts of Eastern Ghats in the State of Andhra Pradesh with sporadic populations in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

The biology, cultural significance, and history of Red Sanders utilization are much different to those of tigers. As such, the illegal trade in this species has taken markedly different forms.
Red Sanders is a small to moderate sized deciduous tree, appearing with a dark brown bark divided into rectangular plates by deep vertical and horizontal cracks (Troup, 2001). This species thrives under harsh environmental conditions characterised by dry hilly, often rocky ground from 150 - 900 m above sea level and requires perfect drainage. On low hills it can be found on all aspects, but as the elevation increases the species seems to prefer chiefly northern and easterly aspects. Troup (2001) estimated the extent of natural occurrence of the species as extending over an area of 9600km². Kadappa, Chittur and Nellore districts in the Rayalseema Region of Andhra Pradesh are major areas where Red Sanders occurs.

A Historical Perspective on Red Sanders Demand and Trade
Red Sanders has been in demand as a high quality timber, a source of dyes and, less prominently, for other uses such as incense. The colorant is extracted from heartwood, which is first reduced to chips or powder, then extracted. (CITES 2007). The wavy grain of the timber of this species also puts it in high demand. These attributes have imparted to Red Sanders a place not only in Indian markets, but also across the globe. Modern domestic consumption of Red Sanders is largely considered insignificant; small amounts are used by Indian Ayurvedic pharmacies (Mulliken et al 2008).

The demand for Red Sanders in its various valued forms has caused such depletion to the species that it is classified as ‘Endangered’ (IUCN Red List, 2012). It was first assessed in 1998.

Conversely, the global trade in Red Sanders is significant. It dates back at least 400 years. As early as 1602-1617 the East Indian Company sent consignments of Red Sanders wood from the Madras Coast to Europe. Trade to other parts of Asia certainly predates the European exchange.

In modern times, international trade in Red Sanders involves many tens if not hundreds of tonnes of wood, wood-chips and powder each year. Legal export of wild-sourced material is limited to value-added products, (i.e. items other than raw timber). They have been imported into Germany in the form of
powder or as an oleoresin extract (CITES 2007). In recent times, though, the main international trade in Red Sanders has been with Japan and China. In Japan, the heartwood is used to make musical instruments, ‘hankos’ (name seals), picture frames, traditional dishes and carvings. (Mulliken et al 2008). Musical instruments fashioned out of Red Sanders have been considered important traditional items, especially in weddings. While Japan appears to remain an important market for timber, this is not supported by CITES or Customs data (Mulliken et al 2008, pers. obs.).

More recently, there has been a surge in demand in Red Sanders from China, where it is believed to be used mostly for furniture making (pers. obs).

The popularity of the species in trade is also illustrated by the large number of trade names in various national and international languages attributed to it: Over forty trade names exist in different languages for Red Sanders!

Until 2003, data from Indian Customs recorded three different categories of Red Sanders - chips, powder and timber - with the chips having the greatest share of the trade. However, since 1 April 2003, the Customs HS Code 12119027 for Red Sanders chips does not seem to be in use. Beyond this date, it is not possible to distinguish international trade in such chips from timber.

It is interesting to note here that CITES trade data reveals products from time to time originating in Cambodia, Brazil, Nepal and Madagascar, none of which are range States for the species. Either the these trade records are a case of mistaken identity, or, more likely, a case of laundering illicit timber through other countries.

**Changing Routes in the illegal trade in Red Sanders**

It has been believed that the major markets for Red Sanders have been Singapore and Japan. However, in recent times, the fulcrum of this market seems to have shifted to China. This is also an indication of China’s growing
economic might as also its appetite for natural resources, irrespective of source or even price.

Traditionally, the Indian ports of Chennai and Mumbai were the main export points for Red Sanders. Gujarat has also recently emerged as an important region for smuggling by sea. However, given that Nepal offers land route connectivity between India and Nepal, it was perhaps inevitable that this route would come to be heavily exploited for illegal trade in Red Sanders. Some quantities of Red Sanders were transported by road across Nepal into China annually. However, the first seizure of illegal Red Sanders was reported in Nepal only as recently as 2006. Since then, over 400 tonnes has been seized by various enforcement agencies in Nepal. (D. Chapagain, *pers comm.*) The Government of India has worked closely with the Government of Nepal to seek return of this seized wood, some of which has already found its way back to India. The border with Myanmar is another hot spot in this trade, the border point of Moreh particularly sensitive towards this. Recently, several tonnes of Red Sanders has also been seized in Leh in Jammu & Kashmir, while on its way during winter across the frozen lakes on the Indo China border (J. Takpa *pers comm*). This only indicates the tremendous planning and investment being made by such smugglers.

**Legal and Policy Framework**

At the domestic level, Red Sanders is protected in India under state-level laws and regulations. It is restricted from trade by the Red Sanders and Sandalwood Transit Rules of Andhra Pradesh Forest Act, 1967. It is also categorised as a Reserved Tree under the Andhra Pradesh Preservation of Private Forest Rules 1978 and its felling from private lands is permitted only under a prescribed procedure when the tree exceeds a given height and girth class.

Red Sanders is not listed under any of the schedules of the broader national-level Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, and the act’s provisions do not apply in regulating Red Sanders trade. However, given that demand for the species in its various forms and derivatives lies largely outside India, Red Sanders has been listed on CITES Appendix II since 1994.
As a species listed under Appendix II of CITES, Red Sanders’ international trade is regulated jointly through the provision of the Foreign Trade Policy of Government of India and the country’s 1962 Customs Act. Chapter 12 of the Export Import Policy of India (Exim Policy) stipulates that Plants, plant portions, their derivatives and extracts as specified in Appendix I & Appendix II of CITES as well as those specified below at Export Licensing Note 1 and orchids from the wild may not be exported, except under special exemption granted for the purpose of research and life-saving drugs on case by case basis by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) on the recommendation of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India.

Red Sanders is listed in Export Licensing Note 1, which includes 29 species. As such, its export is generally prohibited. Similarly, Chapter 44 of this policy mentions that export of wood and wood products in the form of logs, timber stumps, roots, bark, chips, powder, flakes, dust and charcoal is prohibited. However, with a relevant license, Red Sanders can be exported in value added formulations consisting of such items as extracts, dyes and musical instruments/parts.

Given the high value attributed to this timber in international markets, there has been an effort to dispose any available timber by way of global auctions.

Seized and confiscated logs are sold by way of tender. Between 1987-2007, over 9000MT has been confiscated by Andhra Pradesh Forest Department, of which about 1400MT is held at depots across the state.

In the last few years, the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department has held several tenders to auction Red Sanders wood in log form. Given that the log form cannot be sold to overseas buyers (which is then deemed as an export) by way of the EXIM Policy, any legal purchases by international buyers would require a "relaxation of conditions stipulated" before they can be exported.
In March 2006 the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) released a Public Notice stating that only exporters having already obtained logs from the Government of Andhra Pradesh will be provided with a onetime exemption to apply for an export license to permit the transfer of Red Sanders wood in log form out of India. In June 2007 the DGFT released another Public Notice again permitting applications for export licenses for Red Sanders logs to any prospective exporter who has procured stock from the auction by the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

In December 2007, the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department again issued a global tender for sale of over 809 metric tonnes of Red Sanders logs. Sealed tenders were invited from intending purchasers of Red Sanders wood, whether for consumption in the country or for export. The bidders were asked to quote two rates for each lot separately, i.e., first rate in case of export of Red Sanders wood in Value Added Product (VAP) form (Processed form) according to ITC (HS) Classification of Export and Import Items (1st September, 2004-31st March 2009) i.e. Foreign Trade Policy published by Government of India, or for consumption within the Country and the 2nd rate for export of Red Sanders wood in Round Log form (Unprocessed form).

The tender document clearly stipulated, “Export of Red Sanders wood in round log form will be permitted only after necessary clearance is accorded by Government of India.” It also mentioned that the quoting of two rates for the same Lot as above was necessitated since the proposal for export of Red Sanders wood in Round Log form (unprocessed form), in addition to the Value Added Product form, was stated to be under active consideration of the State Government. In the event of the Government of India approving the export of Red Sanders wood in Round Log form in addition to the Value Added Product form before the delivery of Red Sanders wood to the Tenderers, the highest rate out of the two rates quoted for the Red Sanders wood in Round Log form and Value Added Products form will become applicable.
Some Recent Developments

For some time now, CITES has been concerned about the trade in Red Sanders from India. This issue was discussed in great detail during the 17th meeting of the Plants Committee. The following reflects a record of proceedings at the above meeting with respect to Red Sanders:

*Pterocarpus santalinus*: population of India

a) The Plants Committee considered this matter at PC17 in April 2008. The Committee determined that trade in *P. santalinus* was of ‘urgent concern’ in India. Consequently, in consultation with the Secretariat, it formulated recommendations to address the problems of implementing the provisions of Article IV, paragraphs 2 (a) or 3, with deadlines for their implementation. The short term recommendations to India were as follows:

Within 3 months (i.e by July 2008)

i) The Management Authority should clarify the legislative status of exports of specimens of *P. santalinus*, the level of artificial propagation, the permit process, and perceived discrepancies between reported Customs data and CITES data; and

ii) If exports of wild origin are to be continued, the Management Authority in consultation with the CITES Secretariat and the Chair of the Plants Committee, should establish a conservative quota of CITES listed specimens of this species.

b) It also made the following long-term recommendations:

Within 2 years (i.e. by April 2010)

If exports of wild origin are to continue:

i) carry out a preliminary inventory of standing stock, establish estimates of sustainable offtake and establish a scientific monitoring system of the harvested and unharvested populations;
ii) establish a revised conservative export quota based on the inventory of standing stock and the estimates of sustainable offtake; and

iii) the Management Authority report to the Secretariat the result of its actions to implement the provisions of Article IV, and how the Scientific Authority currently determines that levels of export are not detrimental to the populations concerned.

c) On 19 May 2008, the Secretariat communicated the recommendations by the Plants Committee to India. The short-term recommendations for India were urgent measures that needed to be implemented by this country in order to correct identified problems with the implementation of Article IV for *P. santalinus*.

d) No response has been received by the Secretariat in relation to the recommendations of the Plants Committee and the short-term recommendations of the Plants Committee have not therefore been complied with.

e) The Secretariat recommends that the Standing Committee recommend that all Parties **suspend trade in specimens of *P. santalinus* from India** until that country demonstrates compliance with Article IV, paragraphs 2 (a) and 3, for this species, and provides full and detailed information to the Secretariat regarding compliance with the recommendations of the Plants Committee.

Accordingly, all international trade from India in Red Sanders and its derivatives was suspended. In order to comply with the CITES requirements, the Govt of India initiated a Review of Significant Trade in Red Sanders. At its 61st meeting in August 2011, the Standing Committee of CITES agreed to withdraw its recommendations to suspend trade in *Pterocarpus santalinus* from India once the Secretariat received the completed study being conducted in compliance with the long term recommendations of the Plants Committee at its 17th meeting in April 2008.
The review of trade is an important part of the CITES process. All CITES Parties must ensure that their trade in CITES-listed species is sustainable. In order to achieve this, Parties are expected to undertake a “non detriment finding” or a sustainability assessment on whether the export of a particular species will impact negatively on the survival of that species in the wild. A non-detriment finding is essentially a science-based risk assessment. It should consider a range of information including: population status; distribution; population trends; harvest; other biological and ecological factors; and trade information (CITES 2010).

India’s study on Red Sanders is thus a significant step in ensuring that trade in the species is held at sustainable levels.

Recent Judicial and Policy Interventions

India’s Supreme Court has repeatedly been making progressive pronouncements for the cause of conservation. In a recent judgment dated 13th February 2012, the Hon. Court examined the repeated requests made by the State of Andhra Pradesh to the Central Govt. to notify Red Sanders (Pterocarpus santalinus) as a ‘specified plant’ and be included in the Schedule VI of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

The court opined that “It is settled law that the provisions of the Treaties/Conventions which are not contrary to Municipal laws, be deemed to have been incorporated in the domestic law.” It thus stated that “…following the ecocentric principle, we are inclined to give a direction to the Central Government to take appropriate steps under Section 61 of the Act to include Red Sanders in Schedule-VI of the Wildlife (Protection) Act as requested by the State of A.P. (Andhra Pradesh), within a period of six months from the date of this judgment. We are giving this direction, since, it is reported that nowhere in the world, this species is seen, except in India and we owe an obligation to world, to safeguard this endangered species, for posterity. Power is also
vested with the Central Government to delete from the Schedule if the situation improves, and a species is later found to be not endangered.”

By its letter dated 5th December 2011, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (Now renamed as the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change), Government of India has directed all states/Union Territories that any Red Sanders seized anywhere in the country should be sent to the Andhra Pradesh Handicrafts Development Corporation, Hyderabad. This shows a possible shift towards promoting value addition in Red Sanders within the country rather than focus on export of logs, which has largely been the norm so far.

More recently, by a office memo dated 9th July, 2014, the Government of India has laid down detailed procedure for export of Red Sanders. It states that at the 61st Meeting of the Standing Committee of CITES, the CITES Secretariat accepted the recommendations of the Government of India in this regard which primarily stated that,

a) No harvest from the wild is contemplated and hence no export quota is recommended

b) India will authorize the export of specimens of any type from 310 metric tonnes of wood per year from artificially propagated sources

c) A one time export of specimens of any type from 11806 metric tonnes of seized wood from confiscated or seized source.

Discussion
Both tigers and Red Sanders wood, though very different biological products, offer important pointers to the current state of illegal wildlife trade in South Asia. Firstly, that the major demand drivers for high value wildlife products lie outside the region and there is very little domestic consumption. Secondly, the markets have undergone a significant shift in recent times, with those closer home and in the immediate vicinity acquiring prominence. It has also led to a shift in the nature of the products and derivatives in demand. This has also to do with the fact that the wealth map of the world has been slowly but surely
redrawn, with many eastern economies now commanding sufficient money power to dictate such demand. Thus Money has not only defined consumption but has also helped bring new markets to prominence in certain cases. (eg Tiger skin *chubas* in Tibet). With markets literally next door in most cases, the shortening of supply chains has also important implications for law enforcement.

*The Quadrat of “M”s: Money, Myth, Mythology and Marketing as drivers.*

Both tigers and Red sanders represent very high value products, which find ready markets across some parts of the globe. The enormous sums of money involved in such trade are no doubt one of its strongest drivers.

The cultural context of wildlife consumption is an important consideration in any understanding of it. It is especially true in this case, where the myths associated with wildlife consumption and the mythological association with such products continues to be a strong part of local markets. Apart from the perceived health benefits, the “social benefits” of conspicuous consumption of wildlife products in determining status of individuals has to rank as an important driver for the illegal trade. Clever marketing, where consumption of such products, often irrespective of legality is tied to a cultural and social identity only adds to the challenge in dealing with it. Amongst diaspora, such consumption may also be seen as a means of staying connected to one’s roots and thus have a strong emotional draw. This is true of both tigers and Red sanders.

On another level, the law enforcement approach for tigers and Red Sanders is as different as chalk and cheese. Tigers, the poster boys of the global conservation community, evoke very strong reactions and thus have received much attention to its fate over the years. Today, all international trade in tiger parts and derivatives is illegal. Current conservation wisdom places a very high emphasis on “Demand Reduction” but getting into the minds of a consumer, who remains largely behind the scenes due to the illicit nature of the product in demand, is never easy. Managing the source population has proved to be relatively much easier. Recent conservation success in rebuilding tiger
populations across India and to some extent Nepal show that this is working for now, but given the low global numbers of wild tigers, such successes can only be sustained by a continuous, high investment on the ground. We must also remember from past experiences that such successes can be easily reversed unless intelligence led proactive efforts across enforcement agencies and countries receive global, regional and local support and attention.

The trade in Red Sanders presents a different type of complexity; of a species endemic to a small range in India, driven by a high international demand. Unlike trade in tiger parts and derivatives, trade in Red Sanders is an accepted fact and while highly regulated, is not completely illegal. While trade in CITES listed species must necessarily meet the dual criterion of legality and sustainability, the very nature of trade in this species presents an interesting challenge. There is a heavy level of illegal exploitation of this species at the local level; whatever portion of this illegal and opportunistic exploitation that is seized is further auctioned by government agencies as a “legal” product to willing buyers at a high market price. To apply the sustainability criterion to such trade is even more complex, given that artificial cultivation of the species is still in its early stages and that the bulk of the material made available for trade is from material seized from illegal, opportunistic felling with no silvicultural criterion being applicable in such case.

Ground level enforcement is again the key here but in my opinion the legal and policy framework needs to spell out a clear, long-term road map for the conservation and sustainable trade in this species of immense national, regional and international significance.

Trade in both species ticks all the right boxes in defining Transnational Organised Crime. The involvement of highly organised gangs in such illegal trade, exploitation of local communities, the sophisticated and highly adaptive smuggling techniques and routes, use of mules and couriers and the growing use of violence against enforcement personnel are some of the disturbing pointers in this direction.
The Regional Response

The South Asian response has tended to maintain a focus on within country and within region remedies. India has established a Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, which is working with various enforcement agencies at the state and national level to provide them support in training and investigation of wildlife offences. It also monitors the backward and forward linkages of illegal trade chains. While the bureau is still in its early days, it promises to make a telling difference to wildlife crime networks.

Nepal has also established a Wildlife Crime Control Bureau that is working across agencies to prevent poaching and illegal wildlife trade. The country has also established a National Tiger Conservation Committee (NTCC) under the chairmanship of Prime Minister. The Committee consists of a total 11 members including Ministers of Home, Finance, Environment, Defense and Law and Justice Ministries, with the Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation as Member Secretary. (Karki et al 2013).

On a regional level, the countries of South Asia have formed a South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) to coordinate a regional response to illegal poaching and trafficking (Parr 2011). The South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) was formally launched during the Second Meeting of the South Asia Experts Group on Illegal Wildlife Trade held from 29-30 January 2011 in Paro, Bhutan. The meeting agreed to an action-oriented work plan for joint activities; establishment of the SAWEN Secretariat, hosted by the Government of Nepal, governance and operational structure of SAWEN, and the need for strategic collaboration on communications and fund-raising. The SAWEN Secretariat was formally established on 20 April 2011 in Kathmandu, Nepal, and housed under the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Government of Nepal. The Director-General of DNPWC serves currently as Chief Enforcement Coordinator (CEC) of SAWEN. Its mission is,” to strengthen, promote and co-ordinate regional co-operation for Curbing illegal wildlife trade that threatens the wild flora and fauna of South Asia.” (SAWEN 2015).
Regional enforcement responses are centered around developing structured institutional mechanisms of collaboration and cooperation across the region. It is also important to note here that in South Asia such a process is largely driven internally. While such an approach may appear slow, in my opinion, it may certainly prove to be more robust and realistic in its achievements over time. SAWEN has slowly begun to find its feet, with joint training programmes and information sharing mechanisms in place. However, SAWEN has begun on a cautionary and realistic note, with its Chief Enforcement Coordinator candidly stating, “SAWEN is making its efforts to enhance capacity of wildlife enforcement agencies of South Asian countries and combine such capacities through better coordination for a stronger, more coordinated and more effective national and regional response to the burgeoning wildlife crime. However, our capacity and efforts remains far from enough to take on the current scale and nature of wildlife crime (SAWEN 2015).

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, while efforts to mitigate wildlife crime across South Asia are receiving attention as never before, such attention may need to be viewed with caution. Public attention can also be deceptive, giving rise to complacency and false hope, often because such attention is not always backed by appropriate proactive action. There are many aspects which need to be ironed out for long term success. Cooperation across countries and agencies has been identified as vital, yet the absence of clear-cut nature of command and mechanisms of sharing power and responsibility has the ability to jeopardize such effort.

While institutional mechanisms are emerging, there is urgent need to have a realistic assessment and mapping of needs such as of human resources, legal and policy initiatives, specific roles and responsibilities of agencies and individuals in the flow of information and resulting action as also the capacity building over a realistic time frame. Despite all the global talk, resources for fighting wildlife crime are sparse and in a region like South Asia, it is even more difficult to ramp this up on national priorities.
And finally, fighting the effects of Money, Myth Mythology and Marketing is never going to be easy. In growing economies, the logic for conserving natural resources is not always evident for those who fight a daily battle of subsistence. In India, for example the best-forested areas also overlap with some of the poorest areas. Against this backdrop, externally driven demand, which brings in quick and very high returns can be a potent threat to conservation efforts. In effect, wildlife law enforcement agencies have to keep running faster and faster even to stay in the same place.

Despite all challenges, the fact that South Asia continues to hold significant populations of many threatened and endangered wild species is a telling tribute to its people and that of their cultural and social acceptance of wildlife. The relationship has been frayed on occasion but it continues to hold and hopefully will do so for times to come.
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Annexure 2

Witnessing the WENs
Observations on the Origins of ASEAN-WEN and SAWEN

William Schaedla and Samir Sinha


Introduction

Regional Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) have gained increasing prominence over the past decade as mechanisms for addressing transnational wildlife crime. These initiatives vary in scope, functioning, and structure, but are consistent in their stated objectives. All are founded on the idea that single agency, single country approaches are insufficient in an age when illicit wildlife supply chains span the globe. WENs aspire to create mechanisms for better enforcement cooperation between nations. Most also include provisions for improved interagency cooperation within their participating countries.

Because of their particular topical focus on conservation issues, most WENs are heavily invested with inputs from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Engagement by NGOs has been important to their creation, their functionality, and their funding. Many WENs would not exist, or would fail to function, in the absence of this civil society engagement.

Less evident is the fact that the WENs’ development has been influenced by a set of United States policy and foreign assistance objectives. Their conceptual and practical origins can be traced to U.S. involvement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN). ASEAN-WEN was funded initially by grants from the United States Department of State (DoS) and the United States Agency for International Development
ASEAN-WEN was not the first regional agreement on regional wildlife enforcement issues, but it was the first agreement to carry the WEN designation. Its structure and the format for its early implementation has since become a template for other WEN agreements in South Asia, Central America, South America and Africa.

ASEAN-WEN also relied heavily on the support of a champion country, Thailand, during its inception period. Without strong backing from parties within Thailand’s elected government and career civil service sectors, it is doubtful that this first WEN would have achieved functional status.

Similarly, the South Asian Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) grew from collaboration between NGOs, the U.S. Government, and a strong within-region country champion (India). As the second ‘WEN’, SAWEN had the benefit of ASEAN-WEN’s structural example, but it also sought to avoid some of the weaknesses inherent in heavy reliance on extra-governmental stimulus and foreign funding. From its beginnings, SAWEN has remained stubbornly independent and resistant to foreign directives.

Here we examine and contrast the early histories of ASEAN-WEN and SAWEN. Our observations are based very much on insider experiences. We were each involved directly in the events described. By sharing our experiences, we aim to provide insight into the unpublicized, but nevertheless important, circumstances underlying the WENs’ uptake. We also hope to illustrate how regional differences affected two ostensibly similar approaches to TEC.

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3 The Luaska Task Force, or Lusaka Agreement on Co-operative Enforcement Operations, predates other regional enforcement networks on wildlife trade. It was agreed in 1994, nearly a decade before ASEAN-WEN. The Agreement bears similarities to ASEAN-WEN, SAWEN, and their later counterparts. The network operates on the ground through multi-agency task forces, shares information across borders through national bureaus, and is coordinated by a regional governing council. Grant proposals submitted by WildAid and TRAFFIC for ASEAN-WEN’s early development included references to these features of the Luaska Task Force.

4 William Schaedla was employed by WildAid, WWF and TRAFFIC during the establishment of ASEAN-WEN. Samir Sinha is a wildlife law enforcement officer of the Indian Forest Service who was seconded by the Indian government to work with WWF/TRAFFIC during 2006-2011, when SAWEN was established.
ASEAN-WEN

At the time of its creation, ASEAN-WEN was the most ambitious regional approach to wildlife law enforcement ever attempted. Previous efforts had either been components of trade-related agreements, or of more general agreements on regional crime prevention.

As noted, Thailand has been a strong champion to ASEAN-WEN since the agreement’s beginnings. Yet Thailand’s commitment to anti-wildlife crime measures has historically not been consistent. The country became a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1983. In joining, it agreed to update its national wildlife legislation in support of the Treaty. This process was delayed repeatedly by special interests and legislative infighting. Consequently, the first amendments to Thai wildlife laws took nearly a decade and were promulgated only under duress. They followed concerted campaigning by a number of local and international NGOs, and a last-straw call in 1991 from the CITES Secretariat to ban all CITES related trade with Thailand. The United States was a proponent of this ban, and was among the first CITES parties to implement it (Glennon and Stewart, 1998, Schaedla, pers. obs.). Immediately after the ban came into force, Thailand’s Parliament mustered speedily and passed WARPA, the Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act B.E. 2535 (A.D. 1992).

WARPA took important steps to promote cooperation between agencies and to protect native Thai wildlife. It was, however, not effective against international wildlife crime. Problems remained, and Thailand continued to draw criticism for its ineffective protection of CITES listed species of fauna and flora. Elephant-related issues were among the most publicized examples. A myriad of conflicting national laws made it difficult for Thai authorities to interdict live elephants and elephant products being smuggled into the country. Thailand became a hub for illicit African ivory trade (Milliken, et al. 2002; Stiles 2004; Schaedla, pers. obs.).

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5 Alignment of national legislation to support CITES is part of the Treaty commitment.
6 The main campaigners for reformation of Thai wildlife law included: the Seub Nakasathian Foundation, Wildlife Fund Thailand, WWF and TRAFFIC.
Stiles, 2009; Doak 2014), and for many other types of wildlife (Roe, 2002; Srikosamatara et al., 1992; Nijman and Shepherd, 2007).

Unsurprisingly, anti-wildlife trade campaigning remained a major activity for NGOS in the early 1990’s. WWF and TRAFFIC were active lobbyists of the Thai Government during this period. They were joined in these efforts by WildAid/FREELAND, which established an initial presence out of the WWF Thailand office in 2000, then immediately set about developing local and regional programs of its own.

A substantial part of WildAid/FREELAND’s strategy involved courting grants from the United States Department of State (DoS) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Partnering with TRAFFIC, WildAid/FREELAND submitted a funding concept to USAID for an ‘Asian Wildlife Enforcement Academy’ (AWLEA), which was envisioned to address capacity and skills training needs in the region’s wildlife enforcement agencies. The proposed institution was to be associated with the U.S. sponsored International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok (Galster, pers. com. 2004).

Although the AWLEA concept was not funded in its original form, it led eventually to substantive U.S. involvement with the NGOs, and ASEAN-WEN. There were several factors that began this process. The first was a drive by the Bush Administration to restructure U.S. foreign policy in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks. This restructuring sought to make USAID subject to oversight by the DoS, and to refocus its programs in direct support of American foreign policy objectives. At the time, American foreign policy was

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7 WWF was established in 1961 as the ‘World Wildlife Fund.’ In 1986, the organization renamed itself the ‘World Wide Fund for Nature’ to better reflect the scope of its global activities. However, its U.S. and Canada offices opted against this change and retained the original name. To avoid confusion, the network is known globally as ‘WWF.’

8 WildAid underwent a number of organizational splits and changes between 2005 and 2010, eventually becoming three distinct entities: WildAid, Wildlife Alliance, and FREELAND Foundation. The offices and personnel responsible for most events described in this chapter are now part of FREELAND Foundation. They maintain a strong interest in supporting and fostering the development of ASEAN-WEN. This chapter refers to them collectively as WildAid/FREELAND.
decidedly hawkish (Jervis, 2003; Lieber and Lieber, 2002), and rule-of-law initiatives resonated well. The administration was also politically disinclined to provide funding for climate change mitigation or adaptation projects (Donaghy, et al. 2007; Piltz, R. 2007). USAID was forced to round its portfolio with alternative environmental activities, and AWLEA was an appealing option.

Against this backdrop, USAID had recently established a Regional Development Mission for Asia (USAID/RDM-Asia) in Bangkok. The move was another departure from longstanding practice. Most previous USAID programs in Southeast Asia had been bilateral, operating via primarily as single country projects or activities. USAID/RDM-Asia aimed instead to work on a multilateral model. It sought to foster regional development by strengthening entities like the ASEAN Secretariat (USAID, 2008). Somewhat incongruously however, its prescribed method for delivering regional assistance was not through direct grants to the Secretariat or to ASEAN member states. USAID/RDM-Asia was restricted mostly to funding proposals from U.S. based contracting firms and NGOs. WildAid/FREELAND held registered tax-exempt status in the U.S. and its AWLEA proposal was, again, appealing.

All that was missing was a clear indication of need from within ASEAN.

Thailand made the call during Thaksin Shinawatra’s first term as Prime Minister. His government sought to elevate Thai leadership in ASEAN, was aggressive in its approach to law enforcement, and generally supportive of Bush administration policies (United States Department of State, 2005). The government’s public relations strategy during this period (2001-2006) included creation of many high-profile initiatives to counter criticisms from political opponents, civil society organizations, and the international community. Volunteering to host CITES events was one tactic. It had become an established approach for heading-off international criticism.

Hence, when Thailand offered to host CITES’ 13th Conference of the Parties (CoP 13), the NGOs were prepared. Quiet, long-term lobbying by TRAFFIC in national CITES offices and at the ASEAN Secretariat fostered collective public
messaging from the region’s governments. They issued a joint ministerial statement declaring the need for improved collaboration and wildlife law enforcement at CITES’ 13th Conference of the Parties (CoP 13) (ASEAN Secretariat, 2004). This statement allowed opportunities for WildAid/FREELAND and TRAFFIC to work with the Thai government and influence CoP proceedings. The NGOs were even able to suggest wording for Prime Minister Shinawatra’s opening remarks, as he called for establishment of a “Southeast Asian Regional Wildlife Enforcement Network to Combat Nature Crimes” (CITES Secretariat, 2004).

The Prime Minister’s speech, coupled with the ASEAN ministerial statement, provided sufficient basis for U.S. engagement. WildAid/FREELAND and TRAFFIC subsequently became ‘implementing partners’ to a USAID cooperative agreement. AWLEA was rejected as an acronym for the grant because it no longer entailed creation of a simple training facility. The ASEAN-WEN Support Program was born and a precedent was set for NGO involvement in regional wildlife enforcement. Almost every aspect of ASEAN-WEN’s early development was either orchestrated or promoted heavily by WildAid/FREELAND and TRAFFIC.

The rest, as the ASEAN-WEN website indicates, is history.

ASEAN-WEN launched officially on 1 December 2005. All 10 Southeast Asian Nations (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) joined. Their commitment to the network entails development of national task forces comprised of CITES, police, and customs officers. Cross-border linkages between the task forces intended to promote regional information exchange on wildlife crime.

The network maintains an ASEAN-WEN Program Coordination Unit (PCU), located in Bangkok, Thailand. The PCU is an office of the ASEAN Secretariat. It is hosted by the Thai government and serves to facilitate regional

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9 The fact that the AWLEA’s default pronunciation, ‘aw-lee-ah,’ sounded much like the Thai words for ‘wanting a lick’ probably also had something to do with the name change.
communication, encourage information-sharing, coordinate training, and run workshops. A Law Enforcement Extension Office (LEEO) within the PCU leads partnership building with INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization (WCO), ASEANAPOL and other enforcement agencies.

**SAWEN**

In April 2004, a South Asia Wildlife Trade Diagnostic workshop organized by the TRAFFIC in close cooperation with the CITES Secretariat was attended by 70 representatives from all countries of South Asia. While the workshop suggested that the key approach for regional cooperation was Coordination, Co-operation and Communication between countries, it stopped short of suggesting any institutional framework for the same.

The actual origins of SAWEN can be traced to the 10th Meeting of the Governing Council of the South Asia Cooperative Environmental Programme, SACEP, held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 25th January 2007. At this meeting, based on a suggestion from India, the Governing Council decided "...SACEP should incorporate Work Programme for combating illegal trading in wildlife and its products. This will help strengthening enforcement of CITES in the region and in controlling illegal domestic and international trading Fauna and flora which is seriously impending biodiversity conservation efforts by all countries." (SACEP, 2007).

SACEP is an inter-governmental organisation established in 1982 by the South Asian governments to promote and support protection, management and enhancement of the environment in the region (SACEP 2015). It is based in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Prior to its 2007 statement on wildlife crime, SACEP activities tended to focus on regional coordination and support for treaties, but not necessarily on enforcement. Activities had included: hosting the Basel Convention Regional Centre for South Asia, setting up of a regional biodiversity clearing house mechanism, preparing oil spill contingency plans, marine and coastal invasive species plan and climate change adaptation issues.
SACEP attention to illegal wildlife trade broke new ground. Following the 2007 directive from its Governing Council, the SACEP Secretariat went looking for suitable partners against wildlife crime. Early support for the initiative came at the 14th meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES (CoP14). This event took place in The Hague, Netherlands, from 03-15 June 2007. CoP14 resolutions strongly supported the development and strengthening of regional networks. CITES Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP14) on Compliance and Enforcement highlighted the need for improved cooperation and coordination among CITES authorities and wildlife-law enforcement agencies at regional levels.

TRAFFIC played an important role in these discussions. The organization had strong local ties in South Asia, though a WWF hosted presence in India. At the time, it was also headed by an official seconded from the Government of India. These linkages allowed TRAFFIC to work closely with the Indian Government, which was the original champion of SAWEN at SACEP.

During CoP14 meetings, deliberations between the Secretary General of SACEP and a TRAFFIC team led a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on collaboration. This document, signed in July 2007 stated that, “SACEP has agreed to collaborate with TRAFFIC International in establishing a regional network for combating illegal trade in wild flora and fauna and ensuring that the trade is maintained at sustainable levels in South Asia.” Article I of the MoU agreed the parties would work jointly to develop and implement a South Asia Regional Strategy for combating illegal trade in wild flora and fauna. The strategy includes creation of a ‘South Asian wildlife enforcement network’.

A subsequent Workshop on Wildlife Trade in South Asia was hosted jointly by SACEP, TRAFFIC and WWF at Kathmandu, Nepal from 31 January -1 February 2008. The meeting aimed to establish a South Asia Wildlife Trade Initiative (SAWTI), under SACEP, with technical and other assistance from TRAFFIC. It was a crucial first step towards realizing SAWEN.

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10 Samir Sinha, coauthor of this chapter, managed the TRAFFIC India office from 2006-2011. During this period, he remained a serving member of the Indian Forest Service.

SAWEN was reaffirmed repeatedly in later regional meetings. The Global Tiger Workshop held at Kathmandu in October 2009 saw additional endorsement of regional cooperation against wildlife crime in South Asia (Global Tiger Initiative, 2009). This was reiterated at the First Asia Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation in January 2010 at Hua Hin, Thailand (Global Tiger Initiative, 2010).

The actual allocation of resources to develop and support SAWEN came via the authority of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). SAARC is South Asia’s premier platform for regional economic and geopolitical cooperation. It includes eight countries11, and was established formally in December 1985 with headquarters in Kathmandu, Nepal. SAECP operations fall under the SAARC umbrella, and SAWEN operations were included as a focal component in the SACEP scope of work in October 2009, following a proposal by India. SAARC member states adopted the SAARC Convention on Cooperation on Environment in April 2010 at Paro, Bhutan. The scope of cooperation under this convention included, “Wildlife conservation and combating illegal trade in wildlife and bio- resources” (TRAFFIC, 2011).

NGOs and foreign donors were involved in many of the above activities. WWF was a key instigator of World Bank funding to the Kathmandu Global Tiger Workshop, and FREELAND Foundation (the successor to WildAid/FREELAND) utilised USAID funding to support First Asia Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation (Schaedla, pers. obs). More directly, a grant

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11 The current membership of SAARC includes: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
to TRAFFIC from the DoS facilitated the first SAWEN meetings (Sinha, pers obs). It must be noted, however, that this support was very small as compared to the sums invested in ASEAN-WEN. Moreover, the DoS had little role in any decision making process in the development of SAWEN. This was due largely to the fact that individual countries in South Asia are very conscious of sovereignty issues. India, in particular, has been very sensitive to external funding driving regional agendas (Adeney and Wyatt, 2010; Chaturvedi, 2012). Throughout SAWEN’s adoption period, there was vehement insistence on the primacy of regional decision-making (Sinha, pers. obs).

SAWEN launched formally during the Second Meeting of the South Asia Experts Group on Illegal Wildlife Trade, held from 29-30 January 2011 in Paro, Bhutan. With backing through SAECP and SARRC resolved, participants at the Expert’s Group meeting proceeded to agree on an action-oriented work plan for joint activities; establishment of the SAWEN Secretariat hosted by the Government of Nepal; governance and operational structures for SAWEN; and a framework for strategic collaboration on communications and fundraising.

In his message dated 24th January 2011, on the launch of SAWEN, India’s Minister of Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh stated, “The establishment of SAWEN is crucial, timely and much needed step forward to institutionalize the collaborative efforts of members nations in controlling wildlife crime in the region. India had taken the lead inflagging the need to control wildlife crime at various forums leading to the establishment of SAWEN” (WWF India, 2011).

SAWEN presently operates out of the permanent Secretariat established in Nepal. A Chairman, appointed on a rotational basis every year among the eight South Asia member countries, leads it. The day-to-day operations of the General House of SAWEN are managed by an Executive Committee, which consists of one representative from each of the member countries. The Director General of Nepal’s Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) also serves as the Ex-Officio Chief Enforcement Officer to the network.
Where Then, With the WENs?

U.S. advocacy and funding for the establishment of WENs may have begun with the Bush administration, but it has shown no signs of abating during Barack Obama’s presidency. In 2010, then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, called publicly for the establishment of SAWEN. Her speech came as the DoS was providing funding for the meetings described earlier in this chapter. In the same speech, she also called for establishment of a Central America WEN (Clinton, 2010). This latter network has since been established as the Red de Observancia y Aplicación de la Normativa Silvestre para Centroamérica y República Dominicana (ROAVIS). Funding for its earliest meetings came via U.S. Government support to TRAFFIC. Likewise, a South America WEN initiative has also seen DoS money granted to TRAFFIC. In Africa, FREELAND Foundation has received similar grants for its promotion and technical assistance to a burgeoning Horn of Africa WEN (HA-WEN).

This paradigm for establishing anti-wildlife crime networks carries a number of potential benefits. The actors involved with the WENs’ creation and support have been very consistent. This may give different networks a better chance at coordinating across geographies. It may also allow for better sharing of lessons learned by their participating agencies, avoid repeat mistakes, and facilitate more rapid establishment of new agreements.

From the standpoint of the granting agencies involved, funneling money through U.S. registered NGOs is a winning proposition. Civil society presence in the chain of foreign assistance delivery can send a strong about the importance of transparency. NGOs are perceived to be less corrupt than government offices in aid receiving countries, even if that perception is not always true (Economist, 2000). Perhaps counterintuitively, NGOs tend also to be more easily influenced by U.S. donor money than foreign governments. To obtain funding, they are customarily willing to subject themselves to rigorous fiscal and programmatic oversight, which may result in profound changes to their planned work-streams, and unanticipated engagements with new partners. This flexibility keeps NGOs accountable to donor priorities. Arguably,
it also makes them similar operationally to contractors. Yet compared to profit
driven contracting firms, NGO overheads tend to be attractively low (Abiew and
Keating; 1999, Christie, 2013; Doh, et al., 2003). They are bargain partners
whose engagement sends all the right signals. Such reckoning was part of the
discussions between USAID, WildAid/FREELAND, and TRAFFIC around the
implementation of USAID’s first ASEAN-WEN Support grant (Schaedla, pers.
obs).

Yet from a delivery perspective, NGOs may not be the best vehicles for all
WEN related activities. They play important roles advocating for laws, but
coordinating, training, and implementing actual law enforcement is not
generally within their purview12. Even when they are able to provide skilled
personnel for these tasks, their legal authority to execute them is frequently
lacking. Liability issues are a related concern. If NGO instigated enforcement
actions result in injury or loss of property criminal and civil lawsuits may ensue
(Nurse, 2013, White 2012). USAID raised concerns about these possibilities
prior to disbursement of the first WildAid/FREELAND/TRAFFIC ASEAN-WEN
grant. The NGOs addressed them in two ways. The first was through officer
secondments of U.S. Fish and Wildlife agents to WEN related activities
(USFWS, 2010). The second was by relying heavily on local police and
customs agents as instructors for the training components of the program.
While not a perfect solution, this model may also have helped downplay
perceptions of foreign influence over the new WEN.

When ASEAN-WEN was established, U.S. support alleviated objections from
some ASEAN representatives about the financial feasibility of a new regional
initiative. On a less positive note, very strong perceptions of American
influence over the network played badly with other representatives. These
negative views persisted even after grant funding was no longer a major
sustenance mechanism for the network. WildAid/FREELAND and TRAFFIC
each took steps to downplay the foreign funding factor. WildAid/FREELAND

12 There are exceptions to this rule. Perhaps the best example is The Last Great Ape organization (LAGA)
in Cameroon. It is an NGO that operates under an enforcement mandate from Cameroonian Ministry of
Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF).
was, perhaps, less convincing because of its face-forward role as the primary implementing partner to the USAID grant. The culture of the organization at the time was marked by adventure-themed media programming and heavily oriented toward generating publicity for ASEAN-WEN. TRAFFIC, in contrast, was focused more on brokering agreements to ensure the stability of the network (Schaedla, pers. obs.).

SAWEN was influenced by, and modeled after, ASEAN-WEN. Representatives from ASEAN-WEN attended its formative meetings to share their experiences and thoughts. They engaged in heavily in discussions at the regional wildlife workshop in Katmandu, Nepal. As noted above, this workshop was facilitated by TRAFFIC and WWF engagement with SAECP. It was supported financially by the DoS, and U.S. government money brought the ASEAN participants to participate. In spite – or perhaps because – of these contributions, SAWEN rapidly distanced itself from foreign funding. Even before the network was agreed, its parties focused on creation of regional funding mechanisms to ensure its functionality.

This deliberate approach was partially a matter of necessity. Adoption of resolutions within SACEP and SAARC requires active and unanimous affirmation by their participating parties (Asian Legal Information Institute, 2015, International Environmental Agreements (IEA) Database Project, 2015, Sáez, 2011). Conversely, at the time ASEAN-WEN was established in 2005, ASEAN was a much more loosely structured agreement (ASEAN Secretariat, 1967). It allowed for the functional acceptance of resolutions via ad referendum procedures. Tabled resolutions could come into force if member countries opted simply not to object (Woon, 2015, Schaedla, pers. obs.). A formal charter for ASEAN with structured rules of procedure did not come into force until two years later, in 2007 (Centre for International Law, 2007).

It was a given from the onset that SAWEN would require more discussion and bureaucratic preparation than ASEAN-WEN. Certain enabling conditions, like membership in SAARC and CITES had to be fulfilled by parties prior to their entry into the agreement (Sinha, pers. obs.). The downside to this sine qua non
environment has been a comparatively slow, low-profile start to the network.

ASEAN-WEN, on the other hand, gained public recognition very quickly on the back of high profile media activities. These were driven largely by WildAid/FREELAND and relied heavily on interactions with Thai government agencies, including: the Royal Forest Department (RFD) and the Natural Resources and Environment Crime Division of the Royal Thai Police (NRECD). During this period, the Government of Thailand committed to hosting and staffing the ASEAN-WEN Program Coordination Unit, but the network as a whole faced challenges moving past U.S. government financial support. Although member countries agreed to provide necessary financial and human resources at the network’s first meeting in 2006, the mechanisms for embedding those allocations in national budgets are, in some cases, still not clear (Schaedla, pers. obs.).

In fairness, both ASEAN-WEN and SAWEN have been enormous undertakings. It should also be remembered that SAWEN was never entirely insulated from NGO and donor related prerogatives. It was, however, established in a very different funding environment than ASEAN-WEN. According to recent self-reporting by the U.S. government, Pakistan and India fell second and twentieth, respectively, on the list of countries benefitting from USAID funding (USAID, 2013). Yet both nations have uneven relationships with international civil society. They place regular restrictions and on NGO activities. India has lately drawn criticism from the U.S. government for revoking the licenses of more than 8,000 foreign funded NGOs, including Greenpeace (al Jazeera, 2015; Lakshmi, 2015). Concurrently, Pakistan banned activities by NGOs working ‘against the interests of the state’ (Shams, 2015). Nepal has a less contentious history with international civil society groups and its position as host to the SAWEN Secretariat is at least partially a function of the interplay between foreign funding and this NGO friendliness. Aid delivery is relatively straightforward in Nepal. Most bilateral donor agencies have offices in Katmandu. WWF, which was instrumental in supporting many of the

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13 The Discovery Channel’s ‘Crime Scene Wild’ television series was among these. It featured WildAid’s Bangkok lead, Steve Galster, working with authorities around the world to thwart wildlife crime.
meetings prior to SAWEN's establishment, is very different in Nepal than in India or Pakistan. In both of these latter countries, it operates as a locally registered organization. In Nepal, its office is a subsidiary of WWF U.S.

Other Influences
As noted earlier in this chapter, several WEN related meetings have been linked closely with Global Tiger Initiative (GTI) events. The GTI is global alliance led by the World’s 13 remaining tiger range countries (TRCs), seven of which (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam) are ASEAN-WEN members, and five of which (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan) are SAWEN members. The GTI was launched in 2008 by the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Smithsonian Institution, Save the Tiger Fund, and the International Tiger Coalition (a body that includes representation from more than 40 NGOs).

WWF, in particular, backed GTI formation as part of a push to secure high-level government commitments to tiger conservation. The organization helped drive a series of meetings in the run-up to a GTI Tiger Summit in St. Petersburg, Russia (November 2010). These meetings included: the Workshop on Wildlife Trade in South Asia in Kathmandu, Nepal (January and February 2008); the Global Tiger Workshop held at Kathmandu, Nepal (October 2009); and the First Asia Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation, Hua Hin, Thailand (January 2010). Both Nepal meetings were World Bank funded. They doubled as SAWEN events and were important its formation. The final meeting Thailand meeting was bankrolled by USAID, and carried an ASEAN-WEN banner. All of them carried promises of broader World Bank financial support for transnational wildlife crime initiatives.

This support has been forthcoming, just not in ways anticipated by many of the WEN representatives. Instead of financing for country and regional law enforcement initiatives, the World Bank has provided International Development Association (IDA) credits to the TRCs. These loans and grants are designed to boost economic growth, reduce inequalities, and improve people's living conditions. They tend not to be focused on biological conservation, transnational coordination, or improving law enforcement.
Instead, the World Bank’s most concerted engagement in these areas has come through participation in the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) (van Asch, this volume). ICCWC’s formation was motivated by many of the same factors that fostered the WENs, namely the increasingly transnational nature of wildlife crime and the need for coordinated multi-national, multi-agency responses. It is therefore not surprising that ICCWC originated during roughly the same period as the WENs, that it relies like the WENs on CITES resolutions for validation, or that it employs language similar to the WENs in its self-descriptions. Many of these commonalities are doubtless linked to the intensification of wildlife crime securitization rhetoric identified by Elliott in this volume.

Beyond these contextual convergences, it is noteworthy that even ICCWC’s partnership structure is similar to that of the WENs. ASEAN-WEN and SAWEN are built around national level task forces that include representation from CITES, police, and customs agencies. All participating agencies have similar status within their respective networks, but the main WEN focal points reside in CITES offices. This structure is reflected at regional levels. ASEAN-WEN’s international coordination is through the Royal Forest Department hosted PCU in Bangkok. SAWEN’s international coordination is through Nepal’s Department of National Parks and Wildlife. Each of these secretariat bodies is linked closely to a national CITES office. In ICCWC, the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank and the World Customs Organisation (WCO) all act as equal partners. The CITES Secretariat is the Chair of the group, however, and has played a coordination role as part of its duties.

Management of WENs and ICCWC work is likewise comparable. In much the same way that decision-making in the WENs has been guided by Senior Forestry Officials and Experts Groups, ICCWC is informed by a ‘Senior Experts Group’ (SEG), comprised of technical authorities from its various member organisations. Both the WENs and ICCWC meet annually to discuss and

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14 ICCWC’s formal establishment in 2010 makes it five years younger than ASEAN-WEN, and three years younger than SAWEN.
decide future actions, which may be initiated by any partner. All network activities are agreed by consensus prior to their implementation, and agencies take responsibility for them based on their respective sectoral expertise and willingness to lead.

Finally, ICCWC seems to have taken a page from the WENs' public relations driven playbooks. The consortium broadcasts its activities consistently through promotional press releases, Internet outlets, and high-profile expert interviews.

**Connecting and Synchronizing the WENs**

If ICCWC apes the WENs, it also complements them. As a consortium of international organizations, its scope is global. There are officially designated ICCWC offices in more than 25 countries (CITES Secretariat, 2015), but this number fails to represent accurately the coordination potential of the consortium. Local enforcement counterparts to any of the five partners may theoretically be engaged on ICCWC projects. Their capabilities include secure communication through INTERPOL’s Ecomessaging system and the WCO’s Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILOs). The WENs are much less even in their information sharing capacities.

Similarly, ICCWC has enormous convening power. It has demonstrated this already by acting as host for a gathering of WENs at the 16th Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP16). In the words of the meeting’s organisers, this event was, “aimed at enabling existing and proposed Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) to share experiences and to discuss the need for enhanced cooperation and coordination amongst these WENs” (CITES, 2013).

WEN proliferation has led to a need for the development of inter-network linkages. In spite of their multinational compositions, all the current WENs are geographically restricted. They grew out of preexisting regional defense or trade pacts. While such previously established arrangements provide (relatively) easy entry into international cooperation on wildlife crime, there is no reason to expect enforcement activities will be functional if they remain
restricted solely to nearest neighbor geographies. Inasmuch as transnational wildlife crime spans countries, it also spans regions.

NGOs, even large international NGOs, are not well placed to foster such coordination. They may call meetings, but they lack the collective standing, enforcement authority, and secure communication mechanisms provided by the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the UNODC, the WCO, and the World Bank. This point has not been lost on U.S. donors. Both DoS and USAID have made funds available to support ICCWC activities, which include globalizing network approaches against wildlife crime.

Closing Thoughts

The WENs represent a sea change in transnational wildlife crime remediation. They have set new expectations for geographic coordination and interagency cooperation. Their creation has elevated policy discussions about wildlife crime and forced governments to reevaluate their financial allocations to enforcement. The WENs have also helped set the stage for similar coordination between intergovernmental organizations such as CITES, INTERPOL, the UNODC, and the WCO.

Heavy dependence by WENs on civil society organizations and foreign assistance has been the model for their formation. It carries both plusses and minuses. On the positive side, it can serve to overcome perceived financial and political barriers to new international initiatives. On the negative side, it can render the continuation of those initiatives contingent on external guidance and funding. Going forward, it remains to be seen whether the WENs will develop the sort of self-sufficiency that allows them to operate independently. Relatedly, NGO driven publicity presents mixed blessings for the WENs. By virtue of the way they are funded, NGOs are under considerable pressure to self-promote. They must look constantly toward future grants in order to sustain themselves. At best, grant chasing imposes varying levels of distraction on already funded projects. At worst, it subverts entire work streams, turning them into mere public relations or branding exercises. In the case of the
WENs, dependence on NGO generated publicity has at times been a motivator for enforcement actions. While this is not necessarily bad, it risks creating a culture of expectation that fame flows freely from enforcement.