

# WHY DESTROY MALAWI'S IVORY STOCKPILES?



## THE IVORY TRADE COULD LEAD TO AN ELEPHANT EXTINCTION

At least 20,000 African elephants are poached for their ivory every year. The IUCN 'threshold of sustainability' was crossed in 2010. At current rates of poaching elephants could be extinct by 2025.

In Malawi elephant numbers have more than halved since the 1980s, from 4000 to c.1600. Between 1964 and 1970 there were 12,000 elephants. In Kasungu alone, numbers have dwindled from 2000 in the 1980s to just 50 in the present day. This is due to poaching for the ivory trade.

## THE IVORY TRADE AFFECTS MORE THAN ELEPHANTS

Wildlife crime costs the global economy \$23 billion per year. The ivory trade is linked to international organised crime and terrorism, thus impacting national security. Malawi is a soft target for ivory traffickers who are exploiting our country as both a transit and processing hub. Vulnerable communities around protected areas are also targeted by these criminal gangs to become poachers or help with trafficking. Poachers receive a fraction of the

Elephants are a keystone species and their extinction could mean the collapse of a whole ecosystem. Ecosystem services are key for our own survival. The loss of such an important species can have knock on effects to a range of issues from disaster resilience to agriculture and human health.

Elephants are important to the economy through tourism. Analysis shows that an elephant alive is worth 76 times more to a country's economy vs the value of its ivory tusks. Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa is the fastest growing economy (with 300% growth since 1990) and is worth \$36 billion per year. It is one of Malawi's 5 key pillars of economic growth. However tourism relies on the wildlife experience and without elephants (and the loss of other species because of their demise) Malawi will not be attractive to tourists.

## IVORY IS NOT FOR TRADE

**The international trade in ivory was banned in 1989** by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), to which Malawi is a signatory. Malawi's elephant population, (together with all African elephant populations except South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe which are listed as Appendix II) is listed on Appendix I of CITES, which prevents all international trade.

Malawi also placed a **domestic moratorium** on any trade in ivory in 2014.

Sadly, the illegal market for ivory is growing. This is mainly from increased consumer demand in China who turn the ivory into ornaments and jewellery. Whilst public awareness there is slowly improving, with more people understanding that ivory should not be a sign of status but instead a sign of slaughter, this may not be quick enough to save the elephant from extinction.

## **MALAWI MUST UPHOLD ITS INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS**

In the past two years Malawi has signed a number of other international agreements regarding the illegal wildlife trade including:

- The Clinton Global Initiative (Sept 2013)
- The London Declaration on Illegal Wildlife Trade (Feb 2014)
- The Arusha Declaration on Wildlife Crime (Nov 2014)
- The Kasane Statement on Illegal Wildlife Trade (June 2015)
- The Elephant Protection Initiative (March 2015)

...and this includes putting ivory stockpiles out of economic use.

## **LET'S BE CLEAR: IT IS ILLEGAL TO SELL MALAWI'S IVORY**

Pursuant to CITES<sup>1</sup> **seized illegal ivory may never be sold**. This is consistent with its status as an unlawful product, and with international norms on the disposal of seized contraband. Therefore, only ivory from natural deaths or problem animal control can ever be considered for sale, all seized ivory must either be disposed of or securely held forever. **Only a tiny fraction of Malawi's stockpile is from natural deaths/problem animal control.**

**It is extremely unlikely that CITES will ever agree to any sales again.** Two one off sales allowed in 1999 and 2008. Instead of flooding the market with ivory to bring the price down it instead created an increase in demand and thus poaching.

A few countries have applied to have their elephants. In 2010 Tanzania and Zambia applied to downlist their elephant populations to become eligible to sell ivory in a future application. The 2010 applications were rejected due to concerns that both countries had not adequately combated poaching and addressed illegal trade. For the four countries with elephant populations listed under Appendix II, there is a **moratorium on sale until at least 2017 and, considering the on-going threat to African elephant populations, little chance of a sale after that.**

**Malawi's elephant population is at serious risk of local extinction** within the next decade if poaching is not halted. Law enforcement and park management are currently deficient to protect elephants. **CITES would therefore refuse any application** made by Malawi to downlist their elephant population, for the foreseeable future.

**It is therefore impossible for Malawi to legally sell any of its stockpile.**

## **THE IVORY STOCKPILE IS IN EFFECT WORTHLESS TO MALAWI**

Malawi's ivory is reputed to be worth millions of dollars. But this is a speculative value on illegal markets. Even if the ivory could be sold on the black market, the money could never be re-invested back into the country, because it is breaking international law and the repercussions for any Government choosing to break international law would be catastrophic. Since it can never legally be sold, it is only worth these millions of dollars to **criminals**.

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## **WHY DESTROYING IVORY STOCKPILES IS A SENSIBLE MOVE**

- **No security costs:** Maintaining a strong room, and security personnel to protect a nation's stockpile is costly and diverts critical resources within the Wildlife Department away from protecting live elephants and other wildlife.
- **Prevent leakages into the illegal market:** Destruction prevents the risk of the law being under-mined and confiscated ivory being leaked back into the illegal market. In recent years there have been reports<sup>2</sup> of leakages of ivory from government stockpiles in several countries into the black market.
- **Avoid international embarrassment:** Stockpiles are both a target for theft and an inducement to corruption, and their disposal would avoid the risk of embarrassment of such misappropriation.
- **Send a message of zero tolerance on wildlife crime:** Destroying ivory stock piles sends a clear message that the ivory trade is not to be tolerated, and with an increasing number of countries destroying their ivory stockpiles it shows a clear and unified voice to demand countries (those using ivory in mainly Asian countries) that ivory is not for trade. Maintaining stockpiles sends mixed messages to consumers, traffickers and speculators, and is a source of discord between Range States, which risks prolonging the poaching crisis. The international media attention of destruction events will strengthen demand reduction efforts to reduce the market for illegal ivory and thereby reduce the poaching.
- **Join other countries in a show of force:** Ivory destructions in the past 2 years include:

<b>Destruction Date</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of tonnes</b>	<b>Method of destruction</b>
27 <sup>th</sup> June 2013	Gabon	4.8	Burn
21 <sup>st</sup> June 2013	Philippines	5	Crush and burn
14 <sup>th</sup> November 2013	USA	6	Crush
6 <sup>th</sup> January 2014	China	6.1	Crush
6 <sup>th</sup> February 2014	France	3	Crush
21 <sup>st</sup> February 2014	Chad	1.2	Burn
9 <sup>th</sup> April 2014	Belgium	1.5	Crush
15 <sup>th</sup> May 2014	Hong Kong	3	Burn
3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2015	Kenya	15	Burn
20 <sup>th</sup> March 2015	Ethiopia	6.1	Burn

**IVORY IS NOT FOR TRADE. THE IVORY IS WORTHLESS TO MALAWI BUT THE IVORY TRADE WILL BE THE DEATH OF OUR ELEPHANTS. MALAWI NEEDS TO PUT ITS IVORY STOCKPILES OUT OF ECONOMIC USE BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.**

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