



FAILURE TO PROSECUTE AND MIXED MESSAGES

HOW SOUTH AFRICA CAN SINGLE-HANDEDLY LOSE THE SECOND RHINO WAR

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RECOMMENDATIONS

SOUTH AFRICA SHOULD APPOINT A SPECIAL COURT TO DEAL WITH ALL RHINO HORN CASES

SOUTH AFRICA SHOULD VIGOROUSLY PROSECUTE MIDDLEMEN AND KINGPINS

SOUTH AFRICA SHOULD REINSTATE THE COMMERCIAL RHINO HORN BAN USING THE CORRECT PROCEDURE

SOUTH AFRICA SHOULD URGE MOZAMBIQUE TO PROSECUTE CORRUPT OFFICIALS AND THOSE INVOLVED IN POACHING AND SMUGGLING

SOUTH AFRICA SHOULD FORMALLY SUPPORT DEMAND REDUCTION EFFORTS, PARTICULARLY IN CHINA AND VIETNAM



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INTRODUCTION

In the first rhino war, between 1970 and 1994, Africa lost more than 50,000 rhinos. All range states except South Africa were severely impacted. Although the Apartheid government reportedly smuggled rhino horn and elephant ivory out of Angola and Mozambique, there was very little poaching within South Africa. Through the entire period, the South African rhino population grew unaffected by poaching. The country's southern white rhino population recovered to some 20,000 individuals from a low of fewer than 100 individuals in the early part of the 20th century.

Demand for rhino horn from Yemen for dagger handles was funded by the Saudi oil boom. In Taiwan, mainland China, Hong Kong and other Asian countries, demand was for the traditional medicine market. In 1994 this war ended, as Asian countries banned sales of rhino horn, enforced their bans, and carried out public education to reduce demand.

For around 15 years rhinos across Africa and Asia were recovering, and very little poaching occurred. Everything changed in 2008, when South Africa began to experience a devastating assault on its rhino population. The second rhino war appears to have been stimulated by organized crime, the emergence

of Vietnam as a new player in the rhino horn trade, and increasing affluence in China, which has reinvigorated a market that had been dormant for 15 years. In South Africa, the recent rhino crisis has been facilitated by corruption, procedural incompetence, and a failure to prosecute mid and higher level trade operators.

South Africa's response in fighting the second rhino war has been focused on paramilitary intervention in Kruger National Park. Although more than 300 poachers have been shot, few middlemen and even fewer kingpins have been brought to justice. This has been despite actionable intelligence generated from sophisticated investigations implicating officials in South Africa and Mozambique. New systems in Kruger appear to have reduced poaching very slightly in the last two years, but the problem has shifted to other areas, KwaZulu-Natal province in particular.

At the consumer end, there has been considerable progress in raising awareness and reducing demand for rhino horn in Asia, with a more than 50% decline in the wholesale price there (see below). New laws come into effect in Vietnam this year, which will effectively ban sales of rhino horn for the first time.

Meanwhile, the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) decisively rejected a proposal to legalize rhino horn trade from Swaziland in October 2016. South Africa has subsequently sidestepped CITES by overturning the moratorium on domestic rhino horn trade, and the country is now proposing to allow exports of up to two horns per person, although this limit applies only to foreigners. The previous domestic trade moratorium was rejected by the courts because the South African Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) had failed to follow correct procedures when it introduced the moratorium.

It is rare to hear a statement about rhinos made by the DEA that does not include the sentence "we're doing everything we can," but the department's promotion of legalized rhino horn trade sends a mixed message to Asian consuming nations. Further, its failure to detect pseudo-hunting (where fake hunters exploited legal hunting trophy exports to facilitate illegal commercial trade), and the lack of higher level prosecutions have deeply undermined rhino protection efforts.

FAILURE TO PROSECUTE

In recent years, South Africa has taken great pride in publishing statistics on the number of rhino poachers who have been jailed or even killed. However, the country's performance when it comes to actors higher up the chain is less than stellar.

According to Sarah Pappin of the non-governmental organization Saving Rhinos, only 5% of the 397 rhino-related arrests made in South Africa between 2010 and 2011 were what Pappin described as "white guys" working in the

game industry. Pappin reported that, since 2006, twenty-nine white people have been arrested in connection with rhino crimes. Only two were sentenced to jail time, while more than 93% were granted bail. Shockingly, seventeen of them were repeat offenders, and more than 20% worked in the veterinary field.¹

Many reports of high-profile arrests indicate that the suspects were apprehended while already out on bail for previous rhino-related offences. In one notorious case, the defen-

dant was granted bail, given back his passport, and permitted to fly to another country in order to pursue business interests.

It should be noted, however, that a number of East Asian trafficking suspects have also been released without penalty or received paltry fines. By contrast, some very heavy jail sentences have been imposed on poachers, including a 77-year sentence for a South African poacher in 2011,² and a 25-year sentence for a group of Mozambican poachers in 2012.³

WALKING FREE

DAWIE GROENEWALD

arrested in 2010, out on bail ever since and reportedly advocating for legalizing rhino horn trade

VETERINARIAN DOUW GROBLER

arrested in 2011, turned state's witness and walked out of court

THE FLETCHER GANG

case dismissed

DUMISANI GWALA

suspected rhino kingpin in KwaZulu-Natal, released on bail

MARNUS STEYL

arrested, released, arrested again and bailed. Flew to Zambia "on business" while out on bail and released after a plea bargain was upheld

CHRISTAAN FREDERIK VAN WYK

convicted in 2010 for an illegal hunt with a Vietnamese client, but free to repeat the offence in 2011 with another Vietnamese client. Fined only USD 4,246⁴ (about ZAR 57,800⁵)

MICHAEL CHU

convicted for illegal possession of five rhino horns, fined about USD 3,000 (ZAR 40,000⁶) and deported

MA SHUPENG

arrested after buying rhino horn from undercover investigators in 2014, walked out of court⁷

THE “BOERE MAFIA”

In 2010, a newspaper identified a network of alleged rhino poachers. Reported members were brothers Nicolaas, Deon and Andre van Deventer, as well as George Clayton Fletcher, Gert Saaiman, Kumaran Moodaley, Johannes le Grange and Pieter Johannes Swart.⁸ Most were either owners of hunting companies or professional hunters.

Two of the van Deventer brothers had already been caught in possession of four rhino horns at the gates of a game reserve.⁹ At the time, Deon was out on bail of ZAR 10,000 (USD 733¹⁰), having previously been arrested for illegal possession of rhino horn. Deon was later sentenced to an effective eight years in jail, and Nicolaas to two-and-a-half years for several offences.¹¹

George Clayton Fletcher was the alleged leader and primary buyer of rhino horns. Gert Saaiman and Andre van Deventer are hunters alleged to have helped the gang in various ways.^{12,13}

Fletcher, Saaiman, Andre van Deventer and Moodaley were due to stand trial in October 2010, but the case was thrown out when Deon van Deventer reportedly withdrew his offer to testify. He said that he had been visited in prison, offered money not to testify, and that threats had made to his children if he did.¹⁴

In January 2017, Deon and Nicolaas Deventer were arrested again, having thrown a rhino horn out of a car window while the police gave chase.¹⁵



THE GROENEWALD GANG

The Groenewald brothers are probably the most notorious suspected rhino criminals in South Africa. Quite apart from the charges brought against them in South Africa, they are also wanted in the United States.

In 2010, Dawie Groenewald was arrested along with ten others, including his wife, veterinarians, and professional hunters. The indictment against the group is 637 pages long and it charges them with a total of 1,872 crimes, including illegal hunting, dealing in rhino horns, money laundering, and fraud. The Groenewald gang allegedly made about USD 6.8 million (ZAR 62.6 million¹⁶) from the illegal sale of rhino horns.¹⁷

Seven years and several postponements later, the case has yet to come to trial.

According to an affidavit provided by South African Police Service Colonel Johan Jooste, more than 39 rhinos were killed on Groenewald's farm and the carcasses sold to a neighboring farm without their horns.¹⁸

Groenewald and another co-accused allegedly induced other farmers to dehorn rhinos and sell their horns. Some of the rhinos were not killed, but were dehorned after being tranquillized. Those rhinos that were killed were at first reportedly sold to a local butcher, but when this arrangement fell through, they were buried, and later burnt on Groenewald's farm. A company believed to be partially owned by Groenewald was allegedly used to launder the money received from the illegal activities.¹⁹

In October 2014, while their South African court case was still dragging on, Dawie and Janneman Groenewald and their company, Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris, were indicted in the US on 18 counts, including conspiracy, money laundering, and wildlife crime. Between 2005 and 2010, the Groenewalds allegedly tricked a number of American hunters into shooting rhinos illegally. They were suspected of then cutting off the horns and selling them on the black market. The pair may have also solicited hunters to shoot "problem animals" deemed to be aggressive and therefore legal to hunt.

Although the hunters could not take the trophy, they could have their hunts photographed and filmed. Hunting permits were never acquired, and after the hunt, the horns are thought to have been sold in Asia.²⁰

CHU DUC GU LIT AND NGUYEN ĐANG KHÁNH

In 2012, Chu Duc Gu Lit and Nguyen Đang Khánh were arrested in a police raid on a house, where three rhino horns - two very fresh - were found. A plea bargain was made, in which Chu pleaded guilty to charges of illegal possession of rhino horn and the charges against Nguyen were dropped.

In December 2013, Chu was sentenced to five years but was released after serving about half of his sentence.²¹

DUMISANI GWALA

With around 80% of rhino horns from KwaZulu-Natal believed to pass through his hands, Gwala is reported to head up the province's biggest rhino crime syndicate. Arrested in 2014 in a sting operation, Gwala was still awaiting trial in 2016. Intelligence officers had sold rhino horns to Gwala on five separate occasions.

There had been several cases against him before, but the cases had either been withdrawn, or the dockets had "gone missing." While he claims to be unemployed, six luxury vehicles were seized from his premises. When Gwala appeared in court he was granted bail of USD 600 (ZAR 8,200²²), and the magistrate ordered all his vehicles to be returned to him.

The magistrate, a Mr. Ngcobo, who is reported to have stayed at the home of Gwala's defense attorney, has a long history of leniency toward rhino criminals. In one case, he acquitted Warrant Officer Christopher Gumbi, who had been charged with armed robbery, possession of rhino horn, and defeating the ends of justice.²³

MICHAEL CHU, AKA CHU ĐĂNG KHOA

In December 2016, it was reported that five rhinos had been shot in a boma, while awaiting export to Vietnam.²⁴ The boma was on a farm owned by a purported Vietnamese rhino horn syndicate operating under the name DKC Trading and headed up by Michael Chu.

Michael Chu is a wealthy Vietnamese businessman who registered his company in South Africa in 2005. His entity owns Voi Game Lodge, a farm in North West province, where around 50 tigers and numerous rhinos are kept in captivity. Pseudo-hunting of rhinos, featuring Vietnamese "hunters," was alleged to have taken place there. Tigers have also been canned hunted at the farm, and it has been alleged that their bones may have been exported as "lion bones."²⁵

In 2011, after being convicted for illegally possessing five rhino horns, Chu was fined ZAR 40,000 (USD 3,000²⁶) and deported.²⁷

DAVID MAHLOBO

In 2016, an Al Jazeera investigation uncovered an apparently close relationship between South African Minister of State Security David Mahlobo and a suspected Chinese rhino horn trafficker who runs a massage parlor. According to the alleged trafficker, the minister is a frequent visitor to the parlor.²⁸ He alleged that Mahlobo was a customer of the women who work there, and that his wife was the one involved in “projects,” while Mahlobo stayed behind the scenes.²⁹

Mahlobo has denied knowing the trafficker, but has admitted to visiting the massage parlor. The police are reportedly investigating, but South African organizations fear that his government position will ensure that the investigations will come to nothing.

MA SHUPENG

Ma Shupeng was arrested along with two others in a casino complex in South Africa in 2014 after buying rhino horn from undercover investigators. The investigators, from Focus Africa, had been invited to set up an operations center in Kruger National Park. At the end of Ma’s court case, one member of the group was given a fine, and the other two, including Ma, were released.³⁰ A few days after the court case, Focus Africa was told that its contract with Kruger National Park was cancelled.

A month before the casino arrests, the new Minister of State Security David Mahlobo had stated that organizations receiving overseas money (as Focus Africa was) were a risk to national security.³¹

“It has long been suggested that the illegal rhino poaching in South Africa is happening on such a large and sophisticated scale that there may well be people of influence and power either benefiting from it or turning a blind eye to it. It is for this reason that the allegations against Mahlobo must be investigated urgently.”³²

- Judith February, South African governance specialist, columnist and lawyer

MARNUS STEYL

Accused alongside Thai smuggler Chumlong Lemtongthai, who was acting on behalf of a notorious Laotian wildlife smuggling company, Xaysavang Trading Import Export Company, Marnus Steyl was arrested in 2011. His farm was allegedly used by Lemtongthai's syndicate to hunt rhinos, with Thai prostitutes and strippers posing as rhino hunters in order to circumvent the "one rhino per hunter per year" rule. It was reported that Steyl had allowed 26 rhinos to be shot on his property.³³

In November 2012, the charges against Steyl were withdrawn, reportedly in exchange for a guilty plea by Lemtongthai, who told the court that he was solely responsible for the crimes, and that the other members of the gang were unaware of the fraud.³⁴ Lemtongthai himself was sentenced to forty years in jail, which was later commuted to 30 and then to 20 years.

However, footage of a pseudo-hunt involving Steyl and a public outcry against the court's decision prompted the National Prosecuting Authority to reinstate the charges.³⁵ Steyl was re-arrested in December 2012 but granted bail. While out on bail, he was reported to have travelled to Zambia "on business."³⁶

In March 2013, Steyl was charged with 29 counts relating to fraud and illegal killing of rhinos. However, he appealed to the High Court for a permanent stay of prosecution on the grounds that the original agreement to withdraw the charges against him should stand. In June 2015, the judge agreed and stated that further charges would "not be fair" on Steyl.³⁷



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THE ONE WHO DID NOT GET AWAY – YET

In 2011, the police raided the home of hunter and game farmer Hugo Ras and confiscated an illegal firearm and five crates of the controlled veterinary drug M99. Ras is reported to have been convicted on 20 charges between 2000 and 2009, including numerous charges involving illegal hunting and importing game, crimen injuria, assault, and possession of an unlicensed firearm.³⁸ Nonetheless, he was released on ZAR 5,000 (USD 370³⁹) bail.

Subsequently, veterinarian Douw Grobler, a former head of Kruger's game capturing unit, was also arrested in connection with the Hugo Ras case, and charged with contravening the Medicines and Related Substances Control Act.⁴⁰

In September 2014, Ras was arrested again and charged with theft, fraud, malicious damage to property, money laundering, intimidation and illegal possession of firearms and ammunition. Bail was denied. Ras was arrested in court, while appearing in connection with a separate rhino poaching case, possibly the 2011 case.

Ras and his nine co-accused, who included a Hawks unit federal police officer and a pilot, were alleged to have been involved in the killing of 22 rhinos and the mutilation of two others between 2008 and 2012. In total, the gang was alleged to have illegally obtained 84 rhino horns.⁴¹ Ras faces 248 charges, including racketeering, the unlawful possession of controlled medicine, the receipt of two elephant tusks, and a large number of rhino crime charges.⁴²

Since his arrest, Ras has repeatedly - but unsuccessfully - applied for bail. As far as is known, Ras is still in custody, awaiting trial.

However, others connected to the Ras case got off more lightly. Three veterinarians, including Douw Grobler, appeared in court in March 2012, on charges relating to the illegal use of a tranquillizing drug that is favored by rhino poachers.⁴³ Grobler is reported to have turned state's witness⁴⁴ and walked out of court. He is still practicing as a vet in South Africa.

Some years earlier, Grobler had been fired from his job in Kruger National Park for the unauthorized sale of animals from the park's disease-free buffalo breeding project. He was found guilty of nine charges of misconduct, five of which constituted dismissible offences.⁴⁵

THE MORATORIUM ON DOMESTIC TRADE IN RHINO HORN

In 2009, the then Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Marthinus van Schalkwyk imposed a moratorium on domestic trade in rhino horn. He argued that prospective hunters had received permits to hunt rhinos, but that some of the hunts had not taken place. This enabled hunters to export illegally-obtained rhino horns by labelling them as hunting trophies.⁴⁶

The moratorium remained in place for eight years until, after a series of petitions and appeals, it was overturned in April 2017. Petitioning the court was a game farmer and hunter called Johan Krüger, along with John Hume, the world's biggest rhino farmer. Reports put the number of rhinos on Hume's farm at over 1,000. Hume is also reported to have been de-horning his rhinos on a regular basis and stashing the horns, which are reported to be worth USD 50 million⁴⁷ (ZAR 681 million⁴⁸).

However, Dawie Groenewald (see above), has claimed to be

the mastermind behind the court case. In an interview with Bryan Christy for National Geographic, Groenewald stated that Johan Krüger's name was "on the papers," but that he was behind the plan.⁴⁹ According to Christy, Groenewald and Krüger have been in the buffalo business together and they hunt together. Krüger's photograph has appeared in Groenewald's hunting brochures and Krüger's lawyer is also Groenewald's lawyer.

Some in South Africa have speculated that, since many of the legal charges brought against Groenewald were based on domestic trade having been subject to a moratorium at the time, the prospect of having those charges dropped could be his motivation for bringing the case.

In February 2017, while waiting for the final Constitutional Court decision, the DEA published its Draft Regulations for the Domestic Trade in Rhinoceros Horn, or a Part, Product or Derivative

of Rhinoceros Horn.⁵⁰ The draft contemplates legalizing domestic trade in rhino horn, which raises questions about the DEA's motivation for defending the moratorium so vigorously in three courts. The draft law also contemplates legalizing exports of rhino horn "for personal purposes."

These draft regulations highlight an extremely worrying trend within the DEA, where the benefit of the doubt is almost always given to the private sector, despite the fact that, to a significant extent, it is plagued by corruption, greed and criminality.

The fact that the 2008 sale of over 100 tones of ivory to China and Japan resulted in a sharp increase in elephant poaching across Africa is reason for caution, yet it appears not to have reduced the DEA's confidence in the "sustainable utilization" advocated for by the private sector.



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PSEUDO-HUNTING

Under the CITES treaty, authorized rhino hunting trophies may be exported to the domicile of the hunter, provided that they are for non-commercial purposes. Until 2008, the system appeared to be functioning as normal. At a meeting in July 2008, the CITES secretariat produced a report stating that some horns “had been obtained as a result of legal trophy hunting but where horns had subsequently been used for commercial purposes.”⁵¹ Reports surfaced of Vietnamese “hunters” who were unable to use a gun and who required the rhinos to be shot on their behalf by professional hunters.

It later transpired that Vietnamese hunters had, in fact, been exploiting the trophy loophole since 2003, although on a smaller scale.⁵² It has been reported that law enforcement officials were aware of the fraud as far back as 2006,⁵³ and some professional hunters had been profiting from pseudo-hunting for years. Yet no steps were taken until 2009, when the South African government introduced new regulations in an effort to prevent these abuses. By then, over 200 white rhino trophies had already been exported to Vietnam.⁵⁴ The new regulations required that a hunter may shoot only one white rhino per year, that the hunt must be supervised, and that the horns must be photographed, measured and microchipped.⁵⁵

In 2012, amendments were made to the regulations, mainly to address the continuing problem of pseudo-hunting.⁵⁶ The new regulations required that the hunter must provide proof of membership of a hunting association in his/her country of usual residence, proof of having hunting experience in his/ her country of usual residence, or proof of previous experience in the hunting of any African species.

In addition, the authority issuing the hunting permit must “consider” whether the country of usual residence of the hunting client has adequate legislation to ensure that the rhinoceros horns will be used for the purpose indicated on the CITES export permit.

Generally, the amended regulations appear to have been effective, despite a temporary shift in operations to the Czech Republic, where there is a sizeable Vietnamese community. Czech citizens were paid to go rhino hunting in South Africa and hand over the horns when they returned,⁵⁷ according to media reports. Since then, reports indicate that applications from Vietnamese “hunters” have declined from around 150-160 per year between 2009 and 2011, to 3 or 4 per year between 2012 and 2015.⁵⁸ There are early indications, however, of other countries becoming part of the pseudo-hunting network.⁵⁹

According to an Oxpeckers report, at the same time that CITES CoP17 was being held in Johannesburg, a Vietnamese hunter was permitted to shoot a white rhino with a group of professional hunters who are currently facing thousands of criminal charges. The client was reported to be hunting regularly in South Africa and may have hunted with Dawie Groenewald’s outfit, Wild Africa Hunting Safaris (previously Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris), in the past.⁶⁰ This example indicates that the South African authorities are not yet in full control of the hunting industry.

There are reports of individual professional hunters facilitating dozens of Vietnamese pseudo-hunts. Yet most of them have gotten away with it and, until 2012, nine years after the first pseudo-hunts occurred, there was no real scrutiny of the clients. Nonetheless, it is hard to believe that the DEA was unaware of the fraud, particularly when many of the horns exported to Vietnam are recorded in the annual trade data submitted to CITES by South Africa.

DEMAND REDUCTION - SHOWING CLEAR RESULTS

Much of the rhetoric around legalization of wildlife trade is centered on the notion that demand for rhino horn is fixed and immutable. This does not bear scrutiny, in that the demand has very distinctly changed in recent years. Some countries are no longer consuming significant quantities of rhino horn, and use is expanding from purely fever-reducing medicine to purported cancer and hangover cures, and for use in carvings, jewelry and statues sometimes claimed to be antiques.

The notion that demand for endangered species products in Asia is insatiable can be easily challenged by those familiar with recent developments in China and Vietnam. Over the past decade, a steady process of change has been occurring in China, in particular. Support for anti-consumption campaigns has increased steadily, and evidence shows that that demand-reduction messaging is having a significant impact on public opinion and consumer behavior.

This public consciousness has been reflected in political action at the highest level. In September 2015, President Xi announced that China would enact a near-total ban on the ivory trade. At the end of 2016, China announced

that domestic ivory trade would be banned by the end of 2017, and stated that China would gradually stop the processing and sale of ivory for commercial purposes.⁶¹ Surveys had shown that 95% of the Chinese public supported a ban.

In March 2017, China closed down a third of its ivory retailers and factories, ahead of the total ban. In all, 67 carving factories and shops were shut, with the remaining 105 to close by the end of the year.⁶²

REDUCTION IN IVORY SMUGGLING INTO CHINA

In February 2017, China announced that the volume of seized illegal ivory imports had dropped by 80% in 2016 from previous peak years.⁶³ This should not be taken as absolute proof of a reduction in illegal activity, since ivory movements do fluctuate from year to year but, combined with a simultaneous fall in the price of ivory (see below), it appears that the announcement of the ban and demand reduction efforts have had a positive effect on the attitudes of those engaged in the illegal trade.

IVORY PRICES PLUMMET

In March, a report by Save the Elephants revealed that the price of ivory in markets across China had fallen by two-thirds since 2014, from USD 2,100 per kilogram to USD 730. The report also said that the 130 licensed ivory outlets in China had been reducing the quantity of ivory items on display for sale and cutting prices to improve sales in anticipation of the ban.⁶⁴

WildAid's market inquiries in China in May 2016 indicated raw ivory prices ranging from USD 450-900 per kilogram, representing a decrease of 57-78% from a high of USD 2,100 per kilogram in mainland China in 2014.

A similar WildAid telephone survey of ivory traders in Hong Kong, conducted in late September 2016, confirmed that the dramatic 69% decline in the price of raw ivory recorded in March of that year had held steady resulting in a price around USD 645 per kilo. Traders stated that the proposed ban on domestic ivory trade had contributed to the price drop.

RHINO HORN PRICES FALL

According to an article by Vigne and Martin, published in *Swara* (the magazine of the East African Wildlife Society), interviews with rhino horn traders in Vietnam in late 2015 revealed that wholesale and retail prices of rhino horn were down by half compared with 2013 data. Similarly, in Guangzhou, China, the article cites market research documenting a drop in wholesale prices for raw rhino horn from USD 65,000 per kilogram in 2012 to USD 30,000 in 2015.⁶⁵

In China and Vietnam, WildAid implemented a communications campaign in partnership with the African Wildlife Foundation, featuring TV advertisements and billboards featuring Jackie Chan, Yao Ming, Prince William and David Beckham, among others.

Subsequent surveys show that Chinese public awareness that rhino horns were obtained from poached wild rhinos increased from 33% in 2012 to 50% in 2014.

At the same time, belief that rhino horn has a medicinal effect fell from 58% to 24%. More than 90% of Chinese survey respondents said they agreed that poaching poses a serious or very serious threat to rhinos, up 22% from 74% in 2012. This increase was most pronounced in Beijing where it increased from 6.1% to 54% in two years.

Similar changes, albeit at a slower rate, can be seen in Vietnam, too. Local organizations are starting to implement behavior change programs, and the youth of the country appears far more engaged in conservation issues than it was a decade ago.

WildAid's survey findings in Vietnam were as follows:

- Recognition of the fact that rhino horn is composed of substances found in hair and fingernails increased by 258% between 2014 and 2016, from 19% to 68%.
- More than half of respondents are now aware that rhinos are killed for their horns: 54% in 2016 versus 31% in 2014, a 74% increase.
- Belief in the medical efficacy of rhino horn dropped by 67% between 2014 and 2016, from 69% to 23%. Only 9.4% of respondents believed that rhino horn could cure cancer, down from 34.5% in 2014.
- Respondents showed a stronger intent to avoid buying rhino horn in the future (72% in 2016 versus 61% in 2014).
- 89% of people who had heard rhino protection messages recognized WildAid's tagline and 99% agreed that the messages would discourage people from purchasing rhino horn.

SHARK FIN IMPORTS INTO CHINA DOWN BY OVER 80%

In 2014, WildAid reported an 82% decline in shark fin sales, along with a decrease in prices (47% retail and 57% wholesale), between 2012 and 2014, based on information received from shark fin vendors in Guangzhou, China. In its report, entitled *Evidence of Declines in Shark Fin Demand, China*, WildAid also noted a 50-67% decrease in wholesale fin prices, from USD 270-300 per kilogram in 2011 to USD 90-150 in 2014.⁶⁶

Of twenty restaurateurs interviewed for the report, nineteen reported a significant decline in consumption, and all twenty cited Yao Ming's campaign with WildAid as having raised awareness among their customers.

A 2015 publication from the China Seafood Logistic and Processing Association entitled *An Overview of China's Shark Resource Utilization and the Current Monitoring Mechanism*, reiterated this trend stating that shark fin imports into China decreased by 81% from 2011 to 2014.

CONCLUSIONS

It is demand for wildlife products that drives the poaching and, therefore, it is demand that must be tackled as an urgent priority. South Africa, however, it has done little to advance demand reduction efforts in rhino horn and ivory consuming countries. Perhaps this may be explained by the fact that those very countries are the potential customers for South Africa's ivory and rhino horn if and when international trade is permitted.

Hampered by escalating anti-poaching costs, an ineffective

judicial system, political cronyism, and a blind adherence to the belief that selling wildlife products protects the species from which they are taken (despite increasing evidence to the contrary), South Africa's plan to export rhino horn is likely to worsen the situation for these animals.

A proactive approach to the rhino crisis would include, at a minimum, the appointment of a special court to prosecute middlemen and kingpins implicated in poaching and trafficking; the

reinstatement of the moratorium on domestic rhino horn trade, this time using proper procedure; a firm rejection of international trade in rhino horn; support by South Africa for demand reduction efforts in Vietnam and China; and collaboration with Mozambique on the prosecution of corrupt officials and others involved in rhino poaching and the smuggling of horn.



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