

TRAFFIC International
Technical Report to CEPF – Project Title: Asia Wildlife Trade Strategy:
Planning Phase

a) Project Background:

Trade in wild animals and plants is a key conservation challenge in the Asia region. Over-exploitation of wildlife is causing catastrophic impacts on populations of a wide range of threatened species (such as Asian Big Cats, rhinoceroses, Chiru, freshwater turtles, Ramin and Agarwood), the integrity of priority biodiversity hotspots (including Sundaland, Indo-Burma, SW China and the Philippines) and the future of key wildlife resource sectors such as medicinal plants, fisheries, wild meat and timber.

In global terms, Asia is not only a key source area for wildlife trade (both legal and illegal), but also a dominant consumer region. Wildlife trade is a ubiquitous element of Asian markets, and economic growth in the region has fuelled increased demand for a wide range of wildlife products. As supplies of particular species are exhausted in one area, trade shifts elsewhere in well-established patterns related to transport routes, trade chain structure and other factors. As regulatory measures are introduced by governments in the region, the trade often moves underground, beyond the reach of under-resourced enforcement officials. The rate of decline of populations of many species affected by this trade is alarming. All too often, remedial action is failing to keep pace with the growing scale and dynamics of the trade.

Action by governments and civil society to improve understanding of and address wildlife trade problems in Asia has increased significantly over the past fifteen years. Nevertheless, the issue is often treated as a low priority by governments and civil society actions have tended to be fragmented, short-term and under-resourced. Observations by CEPF, Save the Tiger Fund (STF) and other donors interested in helping to address these short-comings include concern about:

- lack of clarity about the strategic needs for work on wildlife trade issues in Asia, within priority landscapes/hotspots/ecoregions and across the region as a whole (in terms of producer/consumer relationships etc.); and
- lack of cohesion (and sometimes overlap) between activities planned/proposed by different NGOs and other actors.

To move ahead with creating a consolidated approach to mitigate these problems, CEPF and STF invited TRAFFIC and WildAid to a roundtable consultation in Washington DC in February 2004.

b) Progress Report:

Two days of open discussions were held in Washington DC (during the week of 2 February, 2004). A roundtable format provided opportunities to assess differing approaches outlined by both TRAFFIC and WildAid, and to look for possible synergies

between the two agencies and their on-ground experiences, and to see how they could together provide leadership to a coalition of actors in the Asian region. Both CEPF and STF expressed support for the directors of TRAFFIC Southeast Asia and WildAid (Asia Programme) to take the concept development forward.

After some debate on the merits of simply beginning an implementation phase, it was generally acknowledged that an over-arching strategy would be useful to guide a sustainable effort over a 3-4 year period. In addition to the roundtable discussions, TRAFFIC and WildAid met several times in Washington DC to discuss what this strategy might look like, and continued the formulation of such an approach once back in Southeast Asia over subsequent weeks. It was generally agreed that activities should be designed to interact with the trade chain on three levels:

- 1) Source (anti-poaching);
- 2) Market (anti-trafficking); and
- 3) Consumers (anti-consumption)

The strategy of engagement, with draft budget, was presented to CEPF and STF in time for the STF board meeting in mid-February. Following that, several rounds of email discussion ensued between the donors and the TRAFFIC/WildAid consortium in Southeast Asia. After some weeks of deliberation, the donors concluded that it was not yet clear how either CEPF or STF envisioned the creation of a wildlife trade strategy for Asia. The decision was made to regroup and further refine the donor approach to the problem, in the hope that refinement will lead to specific terms of reference for a way forward. It was stated that once a satisfactory TOR was delineated, a RFP would be sent to a select group of specialists including TRAFFIC and WildAid in the hope that a proposal would be submitted by the two agencies at that time.