

The Drivers of Illegal ELEPHANT KILLING

To effectively manage the conservation of elephants in Africa, we must first understand what drives their illegal hunting

A new [study](#), partly funded by the National Research Foundation, looks at the motives and drivers behind the illegal killing of elephants across 64 African sites in an effort to facilitate policy development, management, and protection of the continent's rapidly disappearing herds.

Using criminology theory and literature evidence as well as extensive poaching datasets, which included data on 10 286 illegal elephant killings across 64 sites in 30 African countries from 2002 to 2020, the researchers found strong evidence to support the acknowledged drivers for the activity, namely poor national governance; low law enforcement capacity; low household wealth and health; and global elephant ivory prices. In addition, it was found that forest elephants were being illegally killed at higher rates than savannah elephants and that the evidence for the notion that armed conflicts increased the illegal slaughter of the animals was very weak and that there was no evidence >

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WHEN YOU SEE THE LIGHT

The world of science opens up to you

Think about light for a second. Without it, the Universe would simply not exist.

Meanwhile, back here on Earth, we have discovered that light has many uses from microscopes to telescopes, the Internet to the infinite. The science and technology of light is, quite literally, illuminating.

The South African Agency for Science & Technology Advancement (SAASTA) is committed to engaging South Africans in understanding the benefits and risks of science. Its programmes and initiatives not only shed light on how science can help build society, but also excite learners about careers in science, technology, engineering and maths.


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that factors such as site accessibility; vegetation density; elephant population density; precipitation; or site area played any role at all.

The illegal wildlife trade is a high value illicit trade globally and of the species hardest hit by its practice is the African elephant whose population has decreased by around 30% since 2006. The result is a huge loss of tourism revenues for African countries; the dilution of the ecosystem function of elephants and loss of life of rangers and hunters.

The study looked at a total of 20 factors that could contribute to the increase in illegal elephant killing. One

of the strongest drivers is the global price of ivory which creates incentives for poachers, usually part of criminal syndicates, to engage in their activities. The researchers claim that by bolstering law enforcement capacity (criminal syndicates are more likely to operate in areas where they know the risk of being caught is low) combined with strong national governance in those African countries affected by high poaching rates, illegal poaching would be mitigated.

At the same time, the study proposes that improving human development, particularly in the areas of health and wealth, would also contribute positively to reducing poaching activities. 

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