Can a Basic Income Stop The Illegal Wildlife Trade?

Lynn Johnson, PhD
Founder, Nature Needs More
CEO, Leadership Mastery
Melbourne, Australia
The Idea – 2 Stages

**Stage 1:** Can a Basic Income stop the Illegal Wildlife Trade and reduce Human-Wildlife Conflict?

**Stage 2:** Can a Tiered Basic Income help to rebuild the natural world, supporting the new 3-Rs?
- Re-habilitation
- Re-vegetation
- Re-wilding

This presentation focuses on Stage 1
The Idea – Stage 1

Can a Basic Income stop the Illegal Wildlife Trade and reduce Human-Wildlife Conflict?

- International Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) is valued at USD ~$20bn annually (4th largest transnational crime)
- Subsistence poaching and human-wildlife conflict further contribute to decimation of wildlife in Africa
- Lack of food security and absolute poverty play a big role in all 3 issues
- A Basic Income will address food security. Could it also greatly reduce motivation to poach for IWT traffickers?
- Design and implement a trial in Zimbabwe starting 2018
The Problem – IWT

- **High value**: USD ~$20bn annually
- **Low risk**: ‘Easy’ crime – lax enforcement, low penalties, mostly ignored
- Legal trade system (CITES) full of loopholes
- Targets ‘high-value’ species:
  1. Elephants: 35,000 (10% of total) killed annually
  2. Rhinos: 1,300 (5% of total) killed annually
  3. Pangolins: 100,000 – 1million killed annually
- **Growing demand**: mainly from China & SE Asia as high status goods
**Current Solutions Not Working**

- ~USD $1.0bn spent on protection, anti-poaching and law enforcement between 2010-16

![Graph showing cumulative ITW commitment amounts by intervention category, 2010-2016](image)

- No significant effect on poaching levels
- ~USD$200M spent on promotion of sustainable use/livelihoods (trade)
Sustainable Use Not Working

- A 2013 study by conservation-minded economists, found that on average only 3% of money generated by trophy hunting winds up in the hands of local people.
- Most development projects don’t consider local wildlife populations and can end up decimating them.
- Sustainable use/livelihoods model of neoliberal donors contributing to decline in wildlife.
Sustainable Use Bracket Creep

- **Ecologically sustainable use** e.g. eco-tourism, ‘true’ trophy hunting, ...has become

- **Sustainable use** e.g. canned hunting and its supply chain, ...has become

- **Farming (and Farming is NOT Conservation)**
  - Bracket creep not challenged by global conservation
  - Over generalization of the benefits of sustainable use model e.g. accepted even when it won’t stop poaching
Future Can’t Be Human-Centric

Human-centric model adopted by society and global conservation, don’t let the Basic Income go the same way:
Other Solutions to IWT

• No agreement and lack of cooperation on international law enforcement, kingpin usually protected in their home countries

• Demand Reduction campaigns in Asia can work, but demand reduction is poorly understood, poorly executed and poorly funded

• Appealing to ‘higher’ values useless as wild animals have no intrinsic value in main demand countries (China, Viet Nam, Thailand, Laos)
If US$1bn for Protection Can’t Stop The Poaching What Can?

- Lack of economic opportunities and lack of food security lead to poaching
- Proximity is the main factor – most poaching is done by communities surrounding the protected area
- Risk / reward equation clearly favours reward with current policy settings and prices paid for high-value species

Poverty + Opportunity + Incentives = Poaching
Poaching Incentives

- **Poachers** can earn up to USD $10,000 for a pair of rhino horns
- **Informers** offered USD $200-500 for info on animal location or anti-poaching measures
- Protected areas surrounded by very poor communities (< USD $2/day)
- Huge incentive to help traffickers compared to relative risk
- Traffickers supply the means to poach – rifles/machine guns etc
- Traffickers rely on info and/or recruitment from local communities
Lack of Food Security

- Wildlife in reserves/parks provides easy opportunities to poach via snaring
- Snares are easy to set and cheap, but indiscriminate (e.g. kill lions, not just antelopes)
- Wildlife intrusions into community destroy crops (elephants) or kills stock (big cats) or kill/injure humans (elephants)
- Often community attitude towards reserves/conservation is negative
- Illegal harvesting of animal feed/fire wood destroys forests and increases potential of injuries caused by wildlife
The Solution - Basic Income?

Already evidence that a BI can address poverty and food security. Nature Needs More would like to test if providing a BI of ~ USD $1,000 pa would:

• **Reduce incentives to poach for IWT** – is the level of income high enough to change the risk/reward equation?

• **Reduce/eliminate subsistence poaching and reduce human-wildlife conflict**?

• Be a solution and is it affordable and feasible on a larger scale?
Prior Evidence? BI On Crime Rates

- Namibia Basic Income Grant Pilot in 2008 in Otjivero
- Not designed to measure impact on poaching, BUT
- Poaching was cited as most common criminal activity:
  - “Poverty and unemployment are the reasons for these criminal activities. Otjivero is a tiny place and there is no source of income there. **Most people hunt or poach just for survival.**”

- In 2007, 20 instances of illegal hunting and trespassing were recorded between January and October
- In 2008, after the introduction of the basic income pilot, the count fell to only ONE instance during the same time period
The Solution – Feasibility

Feasibility = Geography + Demographics

• Most protected areas are in regions with low population densities
• Even very large reserves such as Kruger NP in South Africa are mostly surrounded by other protected areas
• Most communities around reserves are quite small and depend on subsistence farming
• The terrain is usually rough, roads are poor and access is difficult
• Low population density keeps trial cost contained whilst covering large area
• Example: Hwange NP in Zimbabwe
Feasibility Example – Hwange NP

- Surrounded mainly by other parks and hunting reserves
- Only one main access road
- Only along SE border are community and farming areas
The Test – BI Trial

Basic Income Trial to Test Hypothesis

- Can be run in many suitable locations in Southern Africa at a relatively small scale (1,500-2,000 people)
- Scale would be sufficient to test hypothesis that it reduces IWT and subsistence poaching, and human-wildlife conflict
- Stage 1 - 2 year trial duration would be sufficient to test effect
- Baseline data can be gathered from parks management and from community surveys
- Poaching of elephants and rhinos can be monitored (patrols, aerial surveys)
- Behaviour change can be measured effectively
The Test – Basic Income Trial

Partnerships & Implementation

1. Nature Needs More – trial design, fundraising, stakeholder management, project management
2. Research Partner(s) – trial design, baseline measurement, ongoing measurement, final evaluation, publication
3. Implementation Partners – local NGO for enrolment and monitoring, park management, community leaders
4. Payments Partner – mobile payments
Next Steps

1. Circulate project proposal
2. Location scouting trip in Zimbabwe in Nov 2017
3. Set up advisory board
4. Approach potential research partners
5. Approach potential funders
6. Select location and implementation partners
7. Finalise trial design
8. Secure funding
9. Anticipated trial start in late 2018