

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

CITES INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Title: Supporting conservation and sustainable trade of threatened timber species. Project supported by Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund

Submitted by: Botanic Gardens Conservation International

Relevant Resolutions: Conf. 19.4 (Materials for the identification of specimens of CITES – listed species); Conf 16.7 (Non-detriment findings); Conf 14.7 (Management of nationally established export quotas); Conf 13.2 (Sustainable use of biodiversity: Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines); Conf 12.8 (Rev. CoP18) Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix II species.

1. Project Background

Since September 2024, Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) has been working with partners on a three-year project funded by the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund (IWTCF), titled *Supporting conservation and sustainable trade of threatened timber species*. For the execution of the project BGCI are collaborating with Forest Research Institute Ghana (FORIG), Missouri Botanical Garden - Central Africa Programme and the IUCN Species Survival Commission Madagascar Plant Specialist Group (inc. staff from the University of Antananarivo and Missouri Botanical Garden – Madagascar Programme). This builds on the work of these groups towards global IUCN Red List assessments for trees, and in-country conservation for some of their most threatened timber species. For BGCI, this follows on from the Global Tree Assessment and the completion of the Red List of Threatened Timber Trees (Hills *et al.* 2022).

1.1 Project relevance to the implementation of CITES

At CoP19, 150 new timber tree species were listed, bringing the total number of trees listed on the CITES Appendices to 946. Many of these species now require a Non-detriment findings (NDFs) to support quota setting, proper implementation of CITES Appendices and to inform sustainable use and conservation decision making. Consequently, strengthened guidance on NDFs and quotas was a key recommendation from CITES CoP19.

Progress towards, and support for, increasing positive NDFs for listed timber trees are being made, with the development of key resources including the 2024 [Regional Workshop for Range States of African Rosewood \(*Pterocarpus erinaceus*\)](#) and PC27 Doc27 *Report on the conservation and trade of CITES listed rosewood tree species* (CITES Secretariat 2024). Support has also been provisioned by the CITES NDFs for timber (Wolf *et al.* 2018), CITES NDF module 10 and other work by the CITES NDF Working Group. However, progress is slow, funding dependent and many CITES listed timber species remain without a positive NDF.

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that information needed to complete NDFs is often not widely available (Ratsimbaxafy *et al.* 2016). This is also a problem found in the production of IUCN Red List assessments for timbers. A 2022 report found that the majority of timber trees are assessed on the threat of habitat loss rather than impact of trade, largely because timber data is difficult to access and often collected under trade or genus names (Hills *et al.* 2022). Consequently, the impact of the timber trade on the extinction risk of timber trees at the species level is still not fully known.

Therefore, an effective method for gathering data for timber trees at the species level is needed. With limited resources duplication of effort must be avoided to ensure that new data collection methods inform a variety of conservation activities. Considering the synergies between CITES and the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, the well documented data needs for these metrics and existing knowledge within BGCI and partner organisations, a project (supported by the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund) has been established to develop such a method.

1.2 Project statement

The illegal trade of timber must be reduced to ensure that tree species avoid extinction and remain a source of sustainable timber. For most timber species the data to monitor the impact of trade on tree populations is incomplete or inaccessible. We are working with partners in three countries (Gabon, Ghana and Madagascar), to develop and disseminate a data collection protocol (DCP) and produce a report, with best-practice case studies and recommendations, to enable better data capture and analysis towards the completion of Non-detriment findings (NDFs) and IUCN Red List assessments.

1.3 Project aims

This project aims to investigate the data gap that often leads to negative NDF and identify where the data may be available across stakeholders, different resources or opportunities to fill the identified data gap. The DCP will provide guidance on how to identify potential existing, but previously neglected, data sources, and how to use these to prepare NDF and IUCN Red List assessments for timber. The DCP will also provide guidance on existing field methodologies that can be used to collect data that are still missing even after identifying new data sources and stakeholders. This project builds on resources such as the CITES NDF for timber (Wolf *et al.* 2018), CITES NDF module 10 and PC27 Doc27 *Report on the conservation and trade of CITES listed rosewood tree species* (CITES Secretariat 2024). The DCP will direct users to where they will be able to source and collect information to meet data needs, how to interpret and use the data that are available and how to fill the data gaps. Alongside the DCP the project report will include case studies of use of the protocol as well as recommendations and insights from across the project on data needs for IUCN Red List assessments and CITES NDF.

1.4 Focal species

- *Guibourtia pellegriniana* (Bubinga) (EN)
- *Guibourtia tessmannii* (Bubinga) (EN)
- *Khaya agboensis* (Not Evaluated)
- *Khaya grandifoliola* (African Mahogany) (VU)
- *Khaya ivorensis* (African Mahogany) (VU)
- *Khaya madagascariensis* (Bungoma) (VU)
- *Khaya senegalensis* (African Mahogany) (VU)
- *Pericopsis elata* (Afromosia) (EN)
- *Pterocarpus erinaceus* (Keno) (EN) -
- *Pterocarpus soyauxii* (African Coral Wood/Padouk) (to be published LC)

- *Dalbergia* spp. (Rosewood) (Madagascar) (EN – CR)
- *Diospyros* spp. (Ebony) (Madagascar) (EN – CR)

3. Project progress so far

The Data Collection Protocol (DCP), in alignment with the aims of the project discussed above, is a three-stage method that will help identify existing data, fill identified data gaps and guide the completion of CITES NDF and IUCN Red List assessments. Both assessments are covered by the DCP due to the heavy overlap between the requirements of these two assessments. The DCP initially provides an explanation on these similarities and differences between the two assessment types. Thereafter it goes on to guide through the three stages of the DCP.

The first stage of the protocol outlines a process of desktop analysis, for the project's focal species. The second stage is qualitative interview schedules which can be tailored to gather information from a variety of stakeholders to address the data gaps from the desktop analysis. The third stage supports the selection of field methodologies to fill in data gaps that remain following stages one and two. The protocol is aimed to reduce field resource need, which can often be a time, labour and finance intensive process. Therefore, across the use of the DCP for Red List assessment and NDF there is advice on identification of gaps, and refining and tailoring stages two and three to fill these gaps.

3.1 Stage 1 –literature review and desktop data collection

Stage one explores existing data sources, and either where data is available and accessible to complete assessments or identifies if data is not available and accessible. A desktop survey can identify where more research is needed and thereby inform the stakeholder interview (stage 2) and failing that, inform field data collection needs using existing methods as guided by the DCP (stage 3).

- Comparison of CITES NDF data needs vs. IUCN Red List assessment data needs, to identify where one can be a source of information for the other and where data gathering can provide information for both.
- A list of key online resources to be used, and how to optimise searches online for information.
- Provision of templates for data collection tables, designed in alignment to the data needs of NDFs and Red List assessments. These can be used to collect available data, record sources and identify existing data gaps in desktop resources. The templates, and across the DCP, consider data capture at a species level and at the national level but also accommodate for information under generic or common names and at a non-national level.

3.2 Stage 2 – stakeholder interviews – qualitative data collection to address the gaps identified from the desktop data collection

A stakeholder interview is a novel approach to the compilation of data for these conservation assessments that are crucial to decision-making. Although both metrics encourage inclusion of information and insight from different stakeholder groups there has not been a method of how to do this before. The stakeholder interview is targeted at different respondent groups to address the data gaps from stage one of the DCP.

- Using the IUCN assessment and CITES NDF comparison from stage 1 and the data collection tables, a stakeholder interview of key questions was prepared in line with the data needs of the assessments and our findings from the desktop data collection.

- The interview was tailored to be delivered to three stakeholder [respondent] groups (1) government officials, (2) specialists (logging/conservation), (3) communities.
- The interview was delivered across the three project countries, and across the three respondent groups. In total there were 49 respondents.
- The responses were compiled, and a thematic analysis was completed to understand what knowledge is held in the different respondent groups, where information is available to support Red List assessments and NDFs and where a data gap remains.
- Some of the major gaps identified during stage 2 included - (i) standard methods for taking and recording population information needed for conservation metrics, (ii) gathering of life history and biological risk information (e.g. mortality, recruitment, regeneration), (iii) data storage, management and knowledge sharing.

3.3 Stage 3 – field data collection methodologies – a guide to pick the right method for the right data gap

Several methods for collecting data for tree species and surveying timber concessions and other forestry management areas already exist, however the information from these do not always fulfil the needs of CITES NDF and IUCN Red List assessments. Additionally, it is often confusing to understand which methodology should be adopted to fulfil the data requirements for these metrics. Stage 3 of the DCP provides a decision-tree like support for selecting the best method for the identified data gap, and potential adaptations to consider when completing the field work to ensure the assessments' needs are met.

- Initial research has been conducted to create a directory of recommended field methodologies, including those used and recommended by project partners, that could be used to resolve the identified data gap that still persist after stage 2.
- A step-by-step guide on how to pick relevant field methods and prepare to deliver practical field work, is being prepared.

Draft resources for stage one and two can be made available on request. Documents for stage three are still being prepared.

4. Next steps in 2026

Training

- Alongside the DCP stages an online training will be produced. This will teach participants the process of the three stages of DCP. Training will include case studies of the project partners and their teams who have conducted each stage. It will also provide background on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and CITES processes.
- Training to fill some of the specific data gaps such as tree identification and data storage and management will also be produced, as informed by the data and project partners

Guidance documents

- As the project operates in three countries case studies and worked examples of the protocol will be written.
- Additional guidance documents on how to use the data identified in the DCP for IUCN Red List vs. CITES NDFs will also be developed.

Recommendations

- Recommendations will be put together to be shared with IUCN and CITES groups, summarising findings and recommendations they can consider and take forward in terms of data needs, management and research for their metrics.

5. Relevant CITES Resolutions

Several CITES Resolutions are relevant and inform the design of this project, including:

Conf. 19.4 – Materials for the identification of specimens of CITES – listed species

The Data Collection Protocol (DCP) as trialled by project partners thus far informs that there continues to be challenges and limitations in tree species identification in the field. This is consistent across stakeholders in government, specialists and communities. Therefore, as part of the final project outputs a brief training on the basics of tree identification will be produced.

We support the continued focus on identification of specimens for CITES-listed species and reiterate the need for on the ground skills in botany, ecology and field survey to be able to support identification and wider implementation of CITES processes for timber trees.

Conf 16.7 (Rev. CoP17)– Non-detriment Findings

The DCP is in alignment with Conf 16.7 and responds to the recommendations made by the Resolution. The DCP is comprehensive of all aspects (A-F) noted under “*x) The sources of information that may be considered when making a non-detriment finding include but are not limited to...*”.

Stage 2 of the DCP provides a novel approach of both capturing relevant information from stakeholders and is built from the data needs recommended under section IX. Each stage of the DCP is comprehensive to ensure data is captured to address the information needs listed in A-H of section IX.

The protocol and associated report will provide guidance that can be shared widely on CITES websites as case studies and will present options on how to work towards production of NDF using different methodologies and through the identification of relevant data sources.

There remains a need to implement capacity building and allocate financial and knowledge resources for NDF to be completed across all listed timber taxa.

Conf 14.7 (rec. CoP15)Management of nationally established export quotas

The DCP will improve information and data available for which to establish national export quotas that are sustainable and reflective of species biology, population size and extinction risk. It will support the use of export quota systems as a management tool to ensure the off take of individuals in the wild does not cause detrimental effect.

With more information available for focal listed timber species, it is hoped that there is an improved ability to link species at the point of trade with their wild population or management area. Thus, illegal activity can be more easily identified and legal quotas better enforced to support sustainable logging.

The Protocol aligns and informs clause six of the Resolution which calls for “*decision-making regarding the level of sustainable exports must be scientifically based, and harvests managed in the most appropriate manner. This requires that implementation, including administrative, legislative and enforcement measures, take account of the regulatory and biological context.*”

Support is still required from the CITES Secretariat to reconcile export quota reporting for timbers where consistent metrics are not used e.g. number of specimens (count), mass of specimens (kg), length of specimens (cm/m³) . This presents a number of different issues, but in relation to NDF's

and quotas for trees, field data may often be collected as a count of trees or number of stems and there is a need to further reconcile how these measurements can all be counted towards a quota and the decisions making process.

Conf 13.2 (Rev. CoP14) Sustainable use of biodiversity: Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines

The Data Collection Protocol collects information on the principles provided in Annex 1 Conf 13.2 (as listed below). The protocol also operates in alignment with the Resolution, as such it is an interdisciplinary, participatory designed and an implemented approach.

- Principle 4 (Adaptive Management)
- Principle 5
- Principle 6
- Principle 7
- Principle 9
- Principle 12

By endorsing the Data Collection Protocol more Addis Ababa Principles will be recognised by CITES.

Conf 12.8 (Rev. CoP18) Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix II species

This project supports range states and provides a resource, to support their data gathering and evidence base for Review of Significant Trade (RST) processes. It provides information on sources of data to use for RST reports. It is hoped that through the application of the DPC, further trade and species biology information is made available towards the completion of NDF and therefore the overall RST process will be better supported and informed.

6. Conclusion

Overall, this project - *Supporting conservation and sustainable trade of threatened timber species* - builds on the success of existing timber NDF guidance documents. It provides clarity on how and where to source data from and offers solutions to resolve reoccurring data gaps in the NDF process. The collaboration with in-country partners will highlight the adaptability of the Data Collection Protocol and provide worked examples for other range states to take this approach forward. The training and resource development aspects of the project provides capacity building for CITES. The project will illustrate the similarities and difference between NDF and IUCN Red List assessment, and where one can (or cannot) be used to inform the other. The research, analysis and results of this project will be shared in a variety of tools and documents for different stakeholders. This will broadly support improved implementation of CITES and with improved data knowledge, availability, sharing and data analysis - logging, will be better regulated, and illegal logging will be better understood for mitigation and sustainable management. .

7. Project Partners



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of Ghana**
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8. References

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9. End note

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