

WILL HARD TIMES
IN YEMEN BRING
BETTER TIMES FOR RHINOS?

RHINO WATCH

YEMEN'S TROUBLED ECONOMY CRIMPS RHINO-HORN TRADE

In the small Arabian country of Yemen (known until recently as North Yemen), rhino horn is used to make the handles of the traditional jambiyyas, or daggers, worn every day by many Yemeni men. Wildlife investigators ESMOND BRADLEY MARTIN and LUCY VIGNE have monitored the deadly commerce in rhino products for many years. They returned to Yemen last October and report here on what they discovered.

DURING THE OIL BOOM OF THE 1970S, MORE THAN A million Yemenis found work in neighboring countries, mainly Saudi Arabia. The money they sent back to Yemen, along with aid from donor nations, became the mainstay of the country's economy. As oil prices fell in the late '80s, the value of the remittances sent home by the overseas workers dropped significantly.

The year 1990 saw more-dramatic changes: The Marxist regime in South Yemen united with the more-democratic government in the north. Saudi Arabia then introduced strict new employment rules that forced more than 700,000 workers to return to Yemen. Meanwhile, following the Gulf war, foreign aid to Yemen plummeted. The result: the decline of the economy and a sharp devaluation of the Yemeni currency.

How has the rhino-horn trade been affected by these events? On our recent visit to the *souk*, or marketplace, in Sanaa, the capital, we found that rhino horn was still being carved into dagger handles, but in much smaller quantities. We estimated that the jambiyya carvers are consuming about 265 pounds of horn a year (equivalent to horn from 40 rhinos), less than a quarter the amount used four years ago, and most of this appears to be old stock.

Importing rhino horn has been illegal in Yemen since 1982, but throughout the '80s, horns continued to enter the country. Now, however, traders from eastern Asia offer much more for African rhino horn (\$900 per pound) than can be obtained in Sanaa (less than \$700), so fewer people are willing to risk smuggling horn into Yemen.

But the carving industry itself has not shrunk. We counted 57 jambiyya workshops and 87 craftsmen,

compared with 51 and 84, respectively, in late 1986, when we last visited the souk, and many children are entering the profession. The demand for jambiyyas is actually increasing. Growing numbers of plastic handles and cheap camel-nail handles are being carved, enabling more people to afford jambiyyas. With unification, more men in the south may decide to wear them again. If, as is likely, additional oil deposits are found in Yemen, the economy may recover, and rhino horn could again become a sought-after commodity.

During meetings with the minister of state and the foreign minister, we learned that the government has tried hard to eliminate the trade in rhino horn. Nevertheless, more effort to enforce the import ban is needed. We discussed the possibility of marking each horn individually and having stocks checked periodically to prevent mixing of new, illegal horns with the old supplies. To encourage further the use of rhino horn substitutes, the foreign minister said he would ask the governor of the Central Bank to allocate foreign

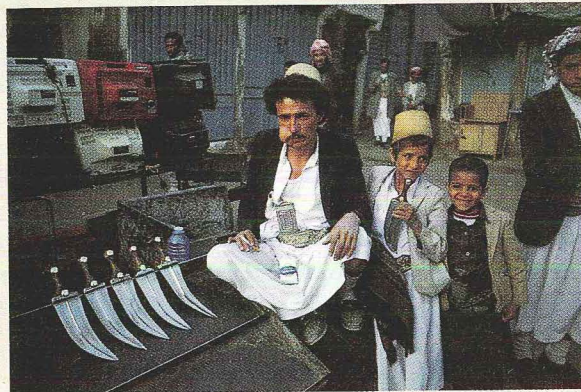
exchange for importing domestic water-buffalo horns from India. Traders have had difficulty obtaining them because of the scarcity of hard currency.

Yemenis who can afford them still prefer jambiyyas with rhino-horn handles. The best way to lessen demand for them is through education. We were delighted to discover that an Environmental Protection Council had just

been set up, under the minister of state. He has agreed to invite jambiyya makers and traders to a seminar to discuss the rhino-horn problem.

While we were in Sanaa we had the privilege of an audience with the Grand Mufti, Yemen's revered 83-year-old religious leader. The American ambassador, who was with us, explained to him in Arabic our wish that he issue a *fatwa* (religious edict) stating that it is against the will of God to cause the extinction of an animal species—in this case, the rhinoceros. He said immediately that he was willing to do this. Wide dissemination of such a fatwa could be an excellent way of reducing the demand for rhino horn.

With trade in rhino horn at a low ebb in Yemen, it is vital to try to stamp it out *now* in order to prevent its expansion when the economy picks up.



A retailer sells rhino-horn daggers in Sanaa, Yemen.

How to raise a child on \$12 a month

Here in America \$12 a month will not even pay for school lunches. But overseas, \$12 will work a miracle.

For example, please take a close look at little Larni. Twelve dollars a month can change her life forever...

...a life spent in a wooden shack, built on stilts, over a disease-infested swamp. And at night she gets a bowl of rice to eat and goes to sleep on a floor mat.

Her only toys are a worn-out teddy bear and a ragged doll. Her secondhand dress is patched and too small for her. She desperately needs a better diet to build strong bones, medicine when she is sick, water that is not contaminated, and a chance to go to school.

And all this can happen for only \$12 a month! Will you help raise a child like Larni?

This is a full sponsorship program—designed for Americans who are unable to send \$20, \$21, or even \$22 a month to other sponsorship organizations.

Here's what you will receive:

- a 3 1/2" x 5" photograph of the child you are helping.
 - two personal letters from your child each year.
 - a complete Sponsorship Kit with your child's case history and a special report about the country where your child lives.
 - regular issues of "Sponsorship News."
- And if you wish, you can send the child you are helping special birthday and Christmas cards.

All this for only \$12 a month?

Yes, because we work hard to reduce the cost without reducing the help that goes to the child you sponsor. Your \$12 a month will provide so much:

- emergency food, clothing and medical care.
- a chance to attend school.
- help for the child's family and community with counseling on housing, agriculture, nutrition and other vital areas.

Will you help raise a child?

Here's how you can become a sponsor:

1. Fill out the coupon and tell us if you wish to sponsor a boy or girl and select the country of your choice.
 2. Or better yet, just mark an "X" in the "Emergency List" box, and we will assign a child to you that most urgently needs your love.
 3. Mail the coupon and your first \$12 monthly payment to Children International. And then in just a few days, you will receive your child's name, photograph and case history. And you will be on your way to an exciting adventure.
- May we hear from you? We believe our sponsorship program protects the dignity of a child and family, and at the same time provides Americans with a positive and beautiful way to help a needy youngster.



At nightfall, Larni eats her bowl of rice and sleeps on a floor mat. She lives in a wooden shack, built on stilts, over a disease-infested swamp.

Sponsorship Application ^{KKRL}

- Yes, I wish to sponsor a child. Enclosed is my first payment of \$12. Please assign me a Boy Girl
- Country preference: India The Philippines Thailand
 Chile Honduras Dominican Republic Colombia
 Guatemala Ecuador Holy Land Child
- OR, choose a child who most needs my help from your EMERGENCY LIST.**

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____
 STATE _____ ZIP _____

- Please send me more information about sponsoring a child.
 I can't sponsor a child now, but wish to make a contribution of \$ _____.

Please forward your U.S. tax-deductible check, made payable to:

Children International[®]

Joseph Gripkey, President
 2000 East Red Bridge Road • Box 419413
 Kansas City, Missouri 64141

A worldwide organization serving children since 1936.
 Financial report readily available upon request.