

NOTES FROM THE AFRICAN RHINO SPECIALIST GROUP

SADC Regional Programme for Rhino Conservation update

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In the last *Pachyderm*, the AfRSG Chair reported on the activities funded by the SADC Regional Programme for Rhino Conservation up to July 2001. The program has continued to support a number of regional rhino conservation projects with funding from the Italian government. Many of these projects have involved the provision of expertise available within the SADC region towards the rhino conservation efforts of individual countries, or collaborative activities addressing the needs of several range states, or regional and continental priorities as identified by AfRSG. Apart from assistance provided for the development of new or revised national rhino management plans for Botswana and Namibia (funded by the WWF African Rhino Programme), the programme has provided regional expertise for evaluating and guiding future plans for reintroducing rhinos to Zambia (with focus on Luangwa National Parks) and Botswana (Moremi Game Reserve), and technical advice for future management and development of existing rhino reserves in Malawi (Liwonde National Park), Botswana (Khama Rhino Sanctuary) and Zambia (Mosi-o-Tunya National Park). In August, a team of rhino survey and tracking specialists from Zimbabwe assisted Tanzania with monitoring remnant black rhinos in the Selous Game Reserve.

Funds have been approved for projects in Namibia that will assess biological factors limiting the black rhino population of Kunene Region, and for building a capacity to monitor rhinos in the north-west of the

country by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. The programme is also supporting a project (now implemented by TRAFFIC) to improve the security and management of rhino-horn stocks in the SADC region. The rhino database software (WILDb) produced under the programme continues to provide field testing and refinement of its site-based modules in Intensive Protection Zones and conservancies in Zimbabwe. A national database module is now being developed to import summary data for analyses from different areas and report on rhino conservation status along with performance of populations. Following the meetings and workshops supported in the last six months of the Rhino Management Group (RMG), the Rhino and Elephant Security Groups, and the RMG Biological Management of Black Rhinos (see reports by AfRSG Scientific Officer in this issue), the programme will convene the first meeting of the SADC Rhino Recovery Group to coordinate support for range states whose rhino conservation programmes are at a relatively early stage of development, where there is need for more emphasis on re-establishing rhino populations, and developing local expertise in rhino management. Further training courses will be provided for instructors in rhino monitoring techniques (revised Sandwith/AfRSG course), as well as specialist instruction in scene-of-crime investigations. Implementation of several approved projects in the last six months has been constrained by delayed release of funding to the programme.