
Regional Report Summaries

The following reports are direct summaries of the minutes of the 3 regional working groups, which were arranged as fairly informal discussions. It should be noted that these summaries do not reflect final decisions on any of the issues raised. In fact, 2 of the groups were in the process of organizing separate meetings in their respective regions, during the first half of 1993. A meeting of the Southern African region had already taken place in September 1992.

1. Central/Western Africa

Population Updates

The group was able to make revisions of elephant range data, particularly for Congo, Guinea, Ghana, Senegal, Liberia and Sierra Leone, after examining the 1:1,000,000 UNEP-based African Elephant Database maps. Modifications of previous elephant population estimates were also made based on analysis of ground survey data from Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Senegal and Zaire. The group noted the need for obtaining real numbers rather than estimates.

Several key elephant populations were listed for which conservation projects should be prioritized. At the same time it was recognized that local human populations would have to be integrated into any such projects. The key populations are:

Central Africa

Cameroon: Nki, Lobeke, Boumba-bek, Korup, Waza

Gabon: Gamba Complex, Minkebe, Lope

Central African Republic: Dzanga-Sangha, Manovo-Gounda-Saint Floris

Zaire: Salonga, Garamba, Ituri, Manko, Kahuzi-Biega

Congo: Nouabale-Ndoki, Odzala (& possible extension areas) Lefini (& areas in savannah where elephants are discovered) Conkouati

Equatorial Guinea: Mt Alen

Chad: Zakouma

West Africa

Ivory Coast: Tai

Senegal: Niokolo-Koba

Ghana: Bia Park, Enkasa Park

Liberia: Sapou NP, Grebo NF

Attitudes Towards a Continental and Regional Database

The group felt that there was a need for a "low-tech" regional database, with a modest infrastructure in the 2 sub-regions (Central and West), which would act as a repository for database information. At the same time it was felt necessary for each country to submit data to a central repository (the African Elephant Database at IJNEP in Nairobi). It was agreed that each country's Elephant Action Plan be updated every 2 to 3 years, thereby acting as the main vehicle for dissemination of information.

Pros and Cons of Regional Conservation Efforts

It was felt that West and Central regions should be discussed separately in future as the problems arising from each are so different.

It was suggested that a regional plan would be advantageous for managing migrating cross-border populations, for addressing the problem of relict populations, and for finding solutions to problems stemming from broadly similar ecological and political systems.

At the same time the group recognized the sovereignty of each nation, with a resulting diversity of legislation, land-use management and planning priorities. The group felt that the problem of coordination between countries in the region is a real one which is not likely to improve soon.

Summary of Regional Initiatives and Country Priorities

Several suggestions for action at a regional level were noted including the necessity for a regional census, identification of cross-border projects (including anti-poaching protocols and initiatives), input of appropriately trained individuals to lead in country management strategies, and the establishment of a regional database. In general the group deplored the current paucity of regional coordination and absence of political will to deal with natural resources management. The wildlife management tradition needs to be developed on a country-by-country basis with promotion of relevant training.

The group applauded the 1989 CITES ban on trade in African elephant products. However, it also felt that this "stop gap" measure would have to be eventually replaced by a medium-term solution. Any future solution would have to ensure that countries are able to manage their own elephant populations and that poaching does not reach pre-ban levels.

The Role of the AESG

The group discussed the regional role of the AESG and concluded that it was very important for (i) ensuring the development of relevant management and conservation techniques, (ii) the coordination of scientific research on elephant conservation, (iii) the sharing of knowledge within and beyond the region, and (iv) the regional monitoring (through TRAFFIC) of illegal trade.

Other Issues of Concern

The group concluded their discussions by recognizing that the increasing problems of human-elephant conflict need to be seriously addressed. Each group member was urged to prepare a report on the situation in their respective countries for further discussion at the forthcoming regional meetings in 1993.

2. Southern Africa

Population Updates

The group decided to distinguish national and regional baseline elephant populations. While national populations were confirmed for Zimbabwe, S. Africa, Namibia, Malawi, Zambia and Botswana, the following were agreed upon as belonging to the regional category:

1. Upper Zambezi/Cubango (Angola/Namibia/Zambia/Botswana/Zimbabwe)
2. Kunene/Namibe (Namibia/Angola)
3. Luangwa Valley (Zambia/Malawi)
4. Middle Zambezi (Malawi/Zambia/Mozambique/Zimbabwe)
5. Save/Limpopo (Mozambique/Zimbabwe)

Attitudes Towards a Continental and Regional Database

The group reported that at the Southern African Elephant Range States Regional (SACIM) meeting (Etosha, September 1992), a proposal had been developed for a database network which would be coordinated by SACIM (irrespective of SACIM's membership and policy).

The group agreed that a continental database had its value but felt that this was limited where the southern African states were concerned basically because of the coarseness of the data. Further information about the running costs of the continental database was requested and it was suggested that more attention be given to data quality and definitions of range boundaries for mapping. It was also felt that there should be more peer review of the data.

Summary of Regional Initiatives and Country Priorities

Key issues for regional action which had already been discussed at the Southern African regional meeting, included the initiation of ELESMA (Elephant Survey and Monitoring Action Programme), expansion of tracking VHF and satellite programmes, law enforcement, training (in relevant languages) and management of cross-border parks. Within ELESMA, each country developed a national survey programme based on coordinated timing and consistent methodology, with the aim of establishing a source of accurate information on elephant status throughout the region.

Pros and Cons of Regional Conservation Efforts

The group realised that a substantial amount of conservation action, training and security measures are more feasibly undertaken at a national or bilateral level. The regional approach would be most important for cross-border population management, security and monitoring.

The Role of the AESG

The group agreed that the “AESG was an important forum for sharing regional and continental expertise”. Regional issues such as those developed at Etosha would benefit from AESG support. It was also felt that there was a need to emphasise the management and conservation terms-of-reference of the AESG in the light of changing conservation priorities. The group thought that the AESG should also look at the costs of protected area management versus conservation of elephants as an integral part of rural development.

Other Issues of Concern

A major topic of increasing regional concern is poaching. Issues to be addressed include security, investigation and cross border controls, the need to maintain ivory trade studies (and all their ramifications) and the need to coordinate statistics on regional poaching, trade and intelligence data.

3. Eastern Africa

Population Updates

The group added new data on elephant populations for only the countries represented: Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Priority projects for support in Uganda were identified as the Queen Elizabeth (QE) National Park, the QE elephant study, and forest studies. In Tanzania, preference was given to forest studies, pocket populations and elephant range studies.

The group felt that previous AERSG baseline populations were no longer relevant as each country now has its own management priorities. Regional populations for support were identified as follows:

Kenya/Tanzania: Amboseli/Kilimanjaro corridor; Meru to Longido ecosystem.

Kenya/Uganda/Sudan: Kidepo/Northern Kenya/Sudan/Ethiopia

Tanzania/Mozambique: Ruvuma

Tanzania/Uganda: Sango Bay

Attitudes Towards a Continental and Regional Database

There was a general agreement that the continental database should continue but it was suggested that it would have more value if maps with a finer scale were used. The group felt that it would be helpful to centralize regional data, and suggested having a regional coordinator for inputting data.

Pros and Cons of Regional Conservation Efforts

The advantages of a regional conservation effort were listed as (i) enabling the monitoring of cross border areas, (ii) leading to improved security and control of illegal trade, and (iii) generating a forum to discuss issues of common concern, such as the approach leading up to CITES meetings. Practical problems such as lack of finances and poor communication were seen as definite disadvantages to regional efforts.

Summary of Regional Initiatives and Country Priorities

Priorities for the 3 countries represented were categorized as law enforcement, (anti-poaching, ivory trade and intelligence), surveys and monitoring, research, elephant/community problems (including fencing) and training. Further regional priorities included ivory trade monitoring, surveys to detect elephant population trends, training, and improved communication leading to sharing of ideas. As a first initiative, a regional meeting in Tanzania is already planned for the first half of 1993.

The Role of the AESG

The AESG's role was seen by the group as being primarily technical, with emphasis on helping to compare methods and ideas, and monitoring overall status and trends across the continent.

Other Issues of Concern

In conclusion it was noted that elephants face a wide array of threats that must be responded to on an individual basis with regard to the area and country. Issues related to management of increased human-elephant conflict need to be highlighted.