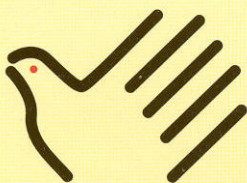


SADC REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR RHINO CONSERVATION

Implementation of Model for "Rhino Endowment Model" for
Community Participation in Rhino Conservation
Save Valley Conservancy, Zimbabwe

R. du Toit

Task 5.3-1



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ABOUT the SADC Regional Programme for Rhino Conservation:

The Programme is funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate General for Development Cooperation (Project AID 5064).

The Programme is contracted to CESVI and implemented through a regional consortium which comprises:

- The Secretariat of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)
- IUCN-ROSA (The World Conservation Union - Regional Office for Southern Africa)
- The IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group
- WWF-SARPO - (World Wide Fund for Nature - Southern Africa Regional Programme Office)
- CESVI (Cooperazione e Sviluppo)

The **Programme goal** is to contribute to maintain viable and well distributed metapopulations of Southern African rhino taxa as flagship species for biodiversity conservation within the SADC region.

The **Programme objective** is to implement a pragmatic regional rhino strategy within the SADC region following the acquisition of sound information on, firstly, the constraints and opportunities for rhino conservation within each range state and secondly, the constraints and opportunities for rhino metapopulation management at the regional level.

DISCLAIMER

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**REPORT ON SADC REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR RHINO CONSERVATION
TASK 5.3-1: IMPLEMENTATION OF MODEL FOR “RHINO ENDOWMENT
MODEL” FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN RHINO CONSERVATION
Save Valley Conservancy, Zimbabwe
June 2005**

Report by R. du Toit, WWF-SARPO, Harare

Background

The Save Valley Conservancy (SVC) is situated in Zimbabwe’s south-east Lowveld. Provided the socio-political environment is conducive to its further development, it will remain one of the largest private protected wildlife areas in Africa (over 300 000 hectares). It was established in 1991 through the adoption of a conservancy constitution which binds 24 former cattle ranches into a single wildlife management unit. It aims to become a cornerstone of a wildlife tourist industry in the region which would also involve the Great Limpopo TFCA, linking with Gonarezhou National Park and other private and community-based wildlife projects.

From the outset, the conservancy has followed the principle that its land use must be sustainable at the ecological, economic and socio-political levels. The ecological and economic attributes of a large conservancy such as Save Valley have been well-demonstrated. Prior to a phase of political uncertainties associated with Zimbabwe’s “fast track” land reform programme (which commenced in 2000), attention was paid to the socio-political dimensions, notably through the formation in 1995 of a trust (the Save Valley Conservancy Trust) to serve as the agency for catalyzing development projects at the interface between SVC and its surrounding communities. Some 120,000 people (20,000 families) living in 16 neighbouring wards are the primary beneficiaries of the trust.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between SVC and the five relevant Rural District Councils (Chiredzi, Bikita, Chipinge, Zaka and Buhera). This established a Joint Committee of these RDCs and confirmed the SVC Trust as their fiduciary instrument for projects related to the SVC. The MoU establishes the basis of liaison whereby both the RDCs and SVC, through a positive incentive arrangement, support the objectives of conserving biodiversity and sustainably utilising biological resources for the benefit of all those who live in this area.

Upon the formation of the SVC Trust, it was proposed by WWF that this trust should secure funds to purchase wildlife as founder stock in the SVC, from which a sustainable revenue flow can be generated for the Trust through the annual sale of progeny at market prices. This would be a “win-win” situation for all parties since this wildlife endowment would enhance the economic viability of the conservancy’s tourism operations, and thereby stimulate employment, by adding to the area’s wildlife attractions; at the same time it would give adjacent communities a significant stakeholding in and a sense of proprietorship of the wildlife resources within the conservancy. Additionally, there may be opportunities for the SVC Trust to acquire shares in tourism ventures or possibly in land that can be allocated or leased to the trust for tourism or hunting concessionaires, under the wildlife-based land reform programme. The income derived from the trust’s investments will be ploughed into community projects of a socio-economic (enterprise), conservation, food security and social welfare nature.

A proposal was submitted via the World Bank for a Medium-Sized Grant from the Global Environment Fund to set up this wildlife endowment plan for the SVC Trust. However, with political and economic problems that developed in Zimbabwe led to a withdrawal of World Bank support and a general decline in donor interest, so the wildlife endowment plan did not progress.

During 2005 it became apparent that the nearby Malilangwe Trust needed to destock the white rhino population on the land owned by that trust. This land comprises 40,000ha and the white rhino population (being developed from breeding stock imported from South Africa by Malilangwe Trust) had built up to 78, which was an overstocked situation as shown by increased fighting between the rhinos, that led to two mortalities in 2004. At the same time, Save Valley had a very small population of only 9 white rhinos which required supplementation in order to achieve genetic and demographic viability. WWF therefore proposed to Malilangwe Trust that some rhinos be moved to Save Valley under the community endowment concept.

This proposal was made in view of the fact that there are very few situations in Africa that involve community involvement and benefit from rhino conservation. The communal conservancies in the Kunene Region of Namibia are the only significant example of community-based projects that involve rhinos. The KZN/WWF Rhino Range Expansion Project in Kwazulu-Natal aims to establish rhino populations on communal land but this will still take some time to achieve. Given the fact that the SADC Regional Programme for Rhino Conservation aims to explore innovative models for rhino conservation that include community participation, the opportunity to move rhinos from Malilangwe to SVC under the wildlife endowment concept was agreed to justify technical and funding support from the SADC –RPRC. This is an innovative model for incentives-based community involvement in the breeding of an endangered species and, once demonstrated, is likely to have broader applicability in the region.

Restocking of the Great Limpopo TFCA with rhinos from Save Valley is envisaged as the optimum scenario, including payment by donors to the SVC Trust for these animals.

Features of the agreement

All parties to the agreement (which included the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, which has management control over Specially Protected species) agreed that:

1. Pro-active management to prevent overstocking of white rhinos (at Malilangwe) and to prevent inbreeding (at Save Valley) is clearly in the interests of the species.
2. The rhinos are to be allocated in accordance with a community endowment scheme under which the Save Valley Conservancy Trust will be entitled to the tradable asset value of the first three progeny to be born, and to 50% of the progeny thereafter.
3. The remaining 50% of the progeny will become available for further restocking initiatives in the Lowveld (notably, into the Great Limpopo TFCA).

Given that the Malilangwe Trust purchased and imported the founder stock at considerable expense, and has further invested in the protection and management of

the population, it was agreed that the allocation of these ten rhinos would be a custodianship arrangement under which the Malilangwe Trust has the right to reclaim ten rhinos in future. In addition, the Malilangwe Trust would wish to be consulted on the allocation of the progeny that are translocated from the Conservancy, while the SVC Trust gains the income from sale of those rhinos. It was agreed as a matter of principle (and as a factor that could well influence further investment of the private sector in rhino importations) that the Malilangwe Trust should retain due rights over assets that it had invested in.

SADC RPRC funded the translocation but did not make any payment for the rhinos, the latter issue being subsumed in the above arrangements.

Undertaking the operation

A rhino capture unit comprised of WWF personnel, a veterinarian from the Wildlife Veterinary Unit of the Department of Veterinary Services, and staff of the Malilangwe Trust, undertook the capture and translocation of 10 white rhinos over the period 22 May to 4 June 2005. No injuries or mortalities arose during this operation, which followed standard rhino translocation procedure, including the use of a WWF fixed-wing aircraft for surveillance and coordination of the rhino darting exercises, and a helicopter that enabled the veterinarian to dart the rhinos from this aircraft once the correct identities of the rhinos had been confirmed. The list of rhinos to be translocated was very specific as to known individual rhinos, taking genetic and demographic considerations into account for both the source population (Malilangwe) as well as the recipient population (Save Valley).

The 10 rhinos were: 2 adult males, 4 adult females, 3 subadult males and 1 female calf. Of these, 8 were fitted with horn implant transmitters for radio-tracking, while 2 of the smallest rhinos had horns that were too small to fit these devices.

The rhinos were held in pre-release pens (bomas) on Sango Ranch in the north of Save Valley and were released after they settled down. Thereafter they have been regularly radiotracked and by September 2005 had settled well. Two of the translocated rhinos joined with white rhinos that were already in Save Valley.

The Zimbabwe Minister of Environment and Tourism, Hon. Francis Nhema, visited Save Valley on 15 June 2005 and officiated in a ceremony to hand the rhinos over to the SVC Trust. This ceremony was attended by local MPs, senior district government officials, and representatives of Malilangwe Trust, the SVC Trust and the Save Valley Conservancy.

Anticipated outcome

In view of the slow rate at which rhinos breed this will be a long-term programme. Until Zimbabwe's wildlife operations regain tourist interest and donor confidence, the opportunities to sell progeny from the breeding herd will be limited, which also adds to the long-term nature of a return from this community investment. Nonetheless, a new model for community involvement has clearly been established and the principle of community involvement is likely to be as important to building better community relations, as the actual financial return on this investment.

The following model gives a general indication of the possibility of rhino breeding over 20 years.

If 10 rhinos are introduced, with the first 3 calves and then 50% of all other calves going to the Trust:			
YEAR	RHINO NUMBERS	ANNUAL GAIN	GAIN TO TRUST
2005	10	0	0.0
2006	11	1	1.0
2007	11	0	0.0
2008	12	1	1.0
2009	13	1	1.0
2010	14	1	0.5
2011	15	1	0.5
2012	16	1	0.5
2013	17	1	0.5
2014	18	1	0.5
2015	20	2	1.0
2016	21	1	0.5
2017	23	2	1.0
2018	24	1	0.5
2019	26	2	1.0
2020	28	2	1.0
2021	30	2	1.0
2022	32	2	1.0
2023	34	2	1.0
2024	36	2	1.0
Total gain to Trust			14.5