

- Debate key/controversial issues
- Evaluate performance of populations
- Manage South Africa's black rhino plan

Rhino and Elephant Security Group (RESG) of southern Africa

Goals:

- To develop guidelines, strategies and databases for the effective and efficient protection of African rhino and elephant populations
- To assist agencies, communities and private landowners to minimise poaching and the illegal trade in products

Membership:

- Government representatives and NGOs within SADC range states

Activities:

- Detailed in current Terms of Reference (endorsed at meetings in 2001 (South Africa) and 2002 (Zimbabwe))

National Committees

These are operational in several countries (e.g. Namibia) and are an essential component in a successful national rhino conservation programme, along with a conservation strategy and action plan and its endorsement and implementation. Implementation of plans depend on commitment from the government rhino management authority.

The key points were: (a), to maintain linkages between coordinating structures, and (b), to ensure commonality and consistency of representation from range states at regional and continental rhino conservation bodies or groups.

2.2 SADC RMG: background, achievements and common benefits (Martin Brooks)

Aim

“to provide coordination, research and management advice to assist the conservation agencies and private landowners in achieving the various national metapopulation goals for black rhino”

Membership

- State Conservation Agencies
- Private Land Owners
- Rhino Owners
- RESG

Activities

- Ensure conservation objectives and programmes in place
- Develop and promote appropriate techniques
- Debate key/controversial issues
- Evaluate performance of populations

RMG main focal areas/achievements

- Subspecies recognition
- Historical ranges of subspecies
- Private ownership/custodianship
- Use of surplus male black rhino
- Game scout training
- Population monitoring
- Management to maximise rate of increase
- Property suitability and Ecological Carrying Capacity (ECC)
- Introductions
- Evaluating population performance

RMG Annual Status Reports

- Population sizes and methodology for population estimation
- Population history table (all individuals known)
- Sex/age structure – not all individuals
- Breeding records of known females
- Home range sizes
- Introductions
- Translocations
- Mortalities – post mortems
- Poaching levels – all species
- Neighbours programmes
- Research

Annual Status Reports were submitted annually for each population, and a consolidated report was produced every 2-3 years. Status reports contained updated information on progress towards national goals and the performance of individual populations, and also provided advice to members on improved rhino management.

Discussion

(Southern White Rhinos) Asked about the reasons for the successful conservation of white rhinos in South Africa, Dr Brooks stressed the historical differences, and the relative wealth of South Africa and resources for rhino conservation, which provided a better environment for improvement. All ingredients had to be in place for conservation programmes to be effective. He highlighted the need for motivated staff, an uncorrupted judiciary and well-informed magistrates.

(SADC Rhino Groups: RMG and RRG) Several members asked about the future relationship between the RRG and RMG, the need for exchange of information between groups, and how this would be achieved. Dr Brooks said that AfRSG could assist with this, but linkages needed to be built as well. Messrs Theophilus, Kingengo and Sefu suggested the holding of RMG and RRG meetings side-by-side, with a joint third day. Bilateral contacts (e.g. between Angola and Namibia on transfrontier conservation) were still possible at any time.

(RMG funding and structure) Mr Jiah asked how the funding of RMG was organised. Dr Brooks said that the RMG countries generally had sufficient funding to send representatives in the past and no funding was needed. Meetings were hosted by member countries. However this was becoming more difficult, and there was now need to get funding from elsewhere. Dr Kampamba asked about the structure and terms of reference for the RMG, and Dr Brooks said that the ToR could be circulated, and that an active Chair or coordinator for the group had to be elected by the members.

2.3 National Strategy Development: Common Issues and Lessons Learnt (Rob Brett)

The important ingredients in the development of a national rhino conservation strategy were summarised, based on the history of development of rhino strategies in several range states, including two RRG countries (Tanzania and Botswana). The remaining four RRG countries (Malawi, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique) have still to develop their own rhino conservation strategies, and it is hoped and expected that the planning process in their countries can be informed by the experience of other range states.

(a) Planning Cycle

A typical planning cycle for a national rhino conservation programme was described (illustrated below), comprising the use of a rhino conservation Strategy to guide the development of annual work plans, and their implementation and monitoring. Evaluation of the work programme feeds back to the revision of the Strategy (e.g. on a 5-year basis), where the goals and objectives are re-evaluated in the light of progress achieved.