

Asian Rhino

During the 2001-2004 quadrennium, the Asian Rhino Specialist Group (AsRSG) has concentrated on implementation of the *Action Plan for Asian Rhinos* published in 1997. The strategies and action plans in this document for the various taxa of Asian rhinos remain applicable, especially with the adaptive modifications produced through regional workshops, reconnaissance, and consultations during this quadrennium.

In 1998 AsRSG reoriented to a more regional approach recognizing that Southeast Asia and South Asia have rather different sets of problems, personalities, and parameters. An Executive Committee was created, consisting of the Chair (from Southeast Asia), two Deputy Chairs (one each from Southeast Asia and South Asia), and Principle Representatives from the six known range states (India, Nepal, Peninsula Malaysia, Sabah, Indonesia, and Vietnam). This Executive Committee has not been particularly effective at an interregional level for a variety of reasons, including fundamental differences of the two regions, changes in the positions of members, and events like the insurgency in Nepal.

Implementation of action plans requires funds. Hence, the AsRSG has devoted much of its effort to recruiting funds for programs and projects. AsRSG has continued and increased its partnership with the International Rhino Foundation (IRF) which provides funds both for the operation of the AsRSG itself under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with IUCN and for the implementation of conservation action. AsRSG has also collaborated closely with WWF, especially through AREAS (Asian Rhino and Elephant Action Strategy). AsRSG has provided encouragement and guidance for several other NGOs: SOS-Rhino, the Asian Rhino Project, and Save the Rhino International. AsRSG has worked closely with US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Rhinoceros & Tiger Conservation Fund. Finally, AsRSG has liaised with the African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG). Through regional workshops as well as individual surveys and consultations by the Chair and Program Officers, AsRSG has also provided much technical assistance for rhino conservation in all range states.

AsRSG has ceased publishing a paper newsletter but instead disseminates information electronically primarily by maintaining a website as a subsection of the IRF website: www.rhinos-irf.org. AsRSG has also provided Chair reports regularly to *Pachyderm*. The Group has compiled current estimates of rhino populations in all range states. AsRSG provides this information to the SSC through participation in the SSC Global and Regional Mammal Assessments. Updates of rhino numbers also appear on the AsRSG/IRF website.

The various technical and financial activities and achievements of the Group and/or its members by range state include:

Southeast Asia

Indonesia

AsRSG, in conjunction with IRF, has continued to be the primary provider and recruiter of financial (USD 500,000 per year) and technical support for the system of anti-poaching teams known as Rhino Protection Units (RPU), the mainstay of the *in situ* Action Plan for both Sumatran (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) in Bukit Barisan Selatan (BBS), Way Kambas, Kerinci Seblat National Parks and Javan Rhino (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) in Ujung Kulon. AsRSG has also provided technical training and assistance for the RPUs in Gunung Leuser National Park, the other major Sumatran rhino population in Indonesia. A notable accomplishment is a major grant (USD 700,000 over two years) from the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF) for the RPUs in BBS. AsRSG and IRF have also continued to provide financial and technical assistance for the Sumatran Rhino Sanctuary in Way Kambas, an integral part of the Global Captive Propagation Program for the Sumatran rhino. Regional meetings for rhino conservation in Indonesia occurred under AsRSG auspices in 2000 and 2003.

Peninsula Malaysia

The AsRSG Chair, as Chair of the Malaysian Rhino Foundation (MRF), has continued to provide the main coordination for the RPU Program in Peninsula Malaysia. As in Indonesia, AsRSG through IRF/MRF is the primary source of external funds (USD150,000 per year). Regional meetings for rhino conservation in Peninsula Malaysia occurred under the auspices of AsRSG in 2000, 2003 and 2004. This last meeting produced some significant modifications to the *in situ* Action Plan. Major disease events caused the deaths of all seven Sumatran rhinos in captivity in Peninsula Malaysia in 2002-2003. AsRSG and IRF/MRF have been leaders in diagnosing the cause and hence preventing recurrence of these problems.

Sabah

SOS-Rhino, another rhino NGO associated with the AsRSG, has primary responsibility for providing financial and technical assistance for Sumatran rhino programs in Sabah, Borneo. SOS-Rhino supported activities include RPUs, a very extensive community outreach program and an *ex situ* sanctuary. The AsRSG Chair and Program Officer, Nico van Strien, have also provided technical assistance by visits to the Sabah program

Vietnam

AsRSG, through missions conducted in 2001 and 2003 by Program Officer Nico van Strien, has provided technical assistance for the valiant efforts to save the direly endangered population of Javan rhinos where only two to seven individuals remain in the Cat Loc area of Vietnam.