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# Asian Rhino Specialist Group

## Triennial Report 1997-2000

The AsRSG has continued to be very active during the current Triennium, 1997-2000. The revised action plan *Asian Rhinos: Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan, New Edition* was published in 1997. AsRSG has continued its partnership with the International Rhino Foundation, which provides financial and administrative services to AsRSG under an M.O.U. between IUCN and IRF.

The situation for Asian rhinos continues to be critical to precarious. The Indian/Nepali Rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) is in the best condition of all the Asian rhinos with overall populations still increasing and now at approximately 2,500 in the wild. However, great threats and risks confront the species in both India and Nepal and only continuing, and indeed intensified, action, will sustain this success. Both the Sumatran (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) and Javan (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) remain two of the most endangered mammal species on the planet. Numbers of the Sumatran are about 300 and of the Javan about 70. However, *in situ* efforts exerted under AsRSG auspices appear to be stabilizing the status of these two species.

In particular, the Global Environment Facility (G.E.F.)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Project "Conservation Strategy for Rhinoceros Conservation in South East Asia—Indonesia and Malaysia" initiated at the end of the last Triennium continued under AsRSG coordination through December 1998. Since then, AsRSG in collaboration with IRF, AsRSG has assumed even greater financial, technical, and administrative responsibility for the Rhino Protection Unit (RPU) program established under the GEF project. Under AsRSG/IRF auspices, approximately 30 RPUs are operating in Indonesia and Malaysia.

To reinforce the *in situ* conservation efforts for Sumatran rhino, AsRSG has been active in development of the managed breeding centers in native habitat (sanctuaries) for this species in Indonesia (The Suaka Rhino Sumatera (SRS)

in Way Kambas National Park), Peninsula Malaysia (The Sumatran Rhino Conservation Center—Sungai Dusun), and Sabah (Sepilok Rhino Center). These managed breeding centers have evolved due to the lack of success of the traditional captive program which was initiated for this species under IUCN/SSC auspices in 1984. To facilitate the managed breeding program, AsRSG has provided auspices for two meetings of all managers and researchers involved in Sumatran rhino under intensive management: one at Sungai Dusun in February 1999 and another at both Way Kambas and Sungai Dusun in March 2000.

Attempts by AsRSG with other partners to develop a conservation tourism program oriented around the Sumatran rhino sanctuaries as a means of generating significant income for *in situ* rhino conservation has been retarded by the economic and political perturbations in South East Asia. However, the objective will be pursued as circumstances permit.

AsRSG, in concert with IRF, has provided technical assistance to:

- Vietnam for development and implementation of their rhino conservation action plan
- The European Union for the rhino conservation component of its Gunung Leuser Project in Sumatra, Indonesia.
- WWF for development of its Asian Rhino and Elephant (AREAS) Conservation Strategy.
- CITES Indicators of Success initiative under leadership of the IUCN/SSC African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG)

In an endeavor to become more effective, AsRSG has reorganized during the last Triennium. There continues to be a Chair (Mohd Khan Momin Khan) as well as two Deputy Chairs: one for South East Asia (Effendi Sumardja) and one for South Asia (S.C. Dey). More recently, an Executive Committee has been formed which comprises the Chair, Deputy Chairs, the two Program Officers (Tom

Foose and Nico van Strien), and Principal Representatives for the six significant Asian rhino range states: India, Nepal, Indonesia, Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Vietnam. Additionally, AsRSG has significantly expanded its membership which has grown to 76 members.

AsRSG has also adopted a policy of conducting only regional rather than plenary meetings. The first regional meeting, for South Asia (India and Nepal) was conducted in Kaziranga National Park in February 1999. A regional meeting for South East Asia is intended for Vietnam in 2000 or 2001. AsRSG received generous support from three WWF national organizations for the Kaziranga meeting: WWF-Netherlands, WWF-US, and WWF-UK.

*Asian Rhinos*, the AsRSG Newsletter, has resumed publication after a hiatus of four years with the issue No. 3 being distributed in March 2000. Two issues will be published a year in March and September. L.C. (Kees) Rookmaaker has been added as a third editor to assist Nico van Strien and Tom Foose. A Chairman's Report has been published regularly in each issue of *Pachyderm*. AsRSG also has a webpage on the IRF website at: <http://www.rhinos-irf.org>

Partnerships are crucial to AsRSG. In the last Triennium, AsRSG has developed partnerships with:

- Two IRF members and donors have become major partners in the AsRSG/IRF programs in South East Asia: The Howard Gilman Foundation/White Oak Conservation center and the Disney Wildlife Conservation Awards.
- WWF-Indonesia Programme for financial and technical support of the RPU's there
- The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and its Rhino and Tiger Conservation Fund (RTCF). AsRSG Program Officers have served as reviewers for many of the proposals submitted to the RTCF. Moreover, AsRSG in collaboration with IRF, has received and executed ten grants from the RTCF.

- Anna Merz Trust
- SOS-Rhino
- AfRSG

Overall, AsRSG in concert with IRF has recruited over US \$3 million for Asian rhino conservation during the Triennium.

Finally, AsRSG has formed a Red List Authority as requested by the SSC Chair. Nico van Strien is the focal person.

Among objectives for the next triennium are:

- To achieve some recovery of Sumatran and Javan rhino populations, largely through success of the RPU programs;
- To succeed in reproducing Sumatran rhino under managed conditions;
- To provide more assistance to rhino conservation efforts in India and Nepal;
- To initiate the conservation tourism program to generate funds for in situ rhino conservation in South East Asia;
- To establish a sanctuary for Javan rhino in Ujung Kulon.

*Mohd Khan bin Momin Khan, Chair*  
*S.C. Dey and Effendy Sumardja,*  
*Deputy Chairs*  
*Tom Foose and Nico van Strien,*  
*Program Officers*