

CITES MIKE PROGRAMME

MINUTES OF THE 1st TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP (TAG) MEETING

HELD IN NAIROBI ON THE 28th & 29th NOVEMBER 2001

In Attendance :	Nigel Hunter, Programme Director and Chair of the Meeting Richard Barnes, TAG Specialist member Holly Dublin, TAG Specialist member Iain Douglas Hamilton, TAG member for E. Africa Colin Craig, TAG member for S. Africa Martin Tchamba, TAG member for C. Africa Moses Kofi Sam, TAG member for W. Africa Philip Stander, MIKE Support Officer for S. Africa Philippe Bouché, MIKE Support Officer for W. Africa Sani Massalatchi, MIKE Support Officer for W. Africa
Absent with Apologies :	Hugo Jachmann, TAG Specialist member
Absent but Invited :	Rahman Sukumar, TAG member for S. Asia Zhang Yue, TAG member for S.E. Asia
Invitees:	Rene Beyers, Resource Specialist Pauline Lindeque, Resource Specialist Julian Blanc, AfESG AED Manager Leo Niskanen, AfESG Programme Coordinator Geoffrey Howard, IUCN EARO
Rapporteur :	Linda Yeo

The Chair noted that the agenda and background paper on MIKE were circulated to members prior to the meeting.

1. TAG TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToRs)

- 1.1. The Chair was aware of draft ToRs for the TAG and tabled these with some refinements for consideration by Members.
- 1.2. During the course of discussions, it became apparent that the ToRs had been formalised in a Notification to the Parties N° 2000/025.
- 1.3. The Chair agreed to obtain copies of this and provide it to all Members.

2. LESSONS FROM MIKE CENTRAL PILOT

- 2.1. A presentation was made to give the TAG the benefit of lessons learnt and issues arising from the MIKE Central Africa Pilot project.

- 2.2. The importance of a strong institutional base as well as good digitised base-maps were emphasized. The experience of the pilot project had helped to cope with some of the constraints faced by the forest eco-system. Of particular significance was the work on Population ground surveys in Forests looking at Transect and Recce Transect systems. The Pilot experience does suggest that further work is needed, but where Transects are not easy, a combination of Recce and Transect systems can be effective in terms of cost and speed.
- 2.3. The Pilot experience had not addressed the conversion of dung counts into elephant population numbers due to concerns over differing decay rates. Nevertheless, the Central African Pilot experience could now be shared with the West African experience facilitated by Richard Barnes in Ghana and elsewhere, leading to a more comprehensive consideration of these issues.
- 2.4. The Pilot experience suggested that the sites in the MIKE population survey work for Central Africa may need to consider boundaries that extend beyond the protected area boundaries which largely coincide with high-density habitat. The Pilot report also suggested that if absolute numbers as well as trends in the population are required, then a much more extensive sampling system across the whole Central African eco-system would need to be considered.
- 2.5. Discussions agreed that it was not a MIKE objective to know absolute numbers, but that it was a MIKE objective to have a live population trend estimate to help provide a context for the law enforcement monitoring (LEM) efforts, and to overcome the difficulty of locating carcasses in forest eco-systems. It was agreed, therefore, by the TAG that the site boundaries for population survey work should be investigated to determine if some of the MIKE sites could include adjacent areas outside the protected areas. This would have the benefit of reducing potential bias as well as providing some indications as to whether there were different trends inside and outside the protected areas. The Director was asked to commission a review and seek recommendations.
- 2.6. The third specific item reviewed was the contribution which Spatial Modelling could provide to the analysis of MIKE data. The Pilot experience suggested that Spatial Modelling of data not only facilitated site-level analysis, but would also greatly facilitate the linking of external influencing factors required to be considered in the analysis of MIKE data.

3. HARMONIZATION & STANDARDIZATION OF FORMS

- 3.1. Recognizing the consensus that the LEM forms should be harmonized across forest and savannah eco-systems, the Director had commissioned a form standardization process in order that these forms provide the basis for moving into the full implementation programme. The results of the form standardization process were put before the TAG for their input and recommendations.
- 3.2. Elephant Carcass Report

Recommendations by TAG:

- 3.2.1. to utilize checkbox format wherever possible in the Forms for data processing ease;
- 3.2.2. to rework question 11 on 'cause of death';
- 3.2.3. to put 'degrees', 'minutes', 'decimal minutes' in question 5;
- 3.2.4. to remove the 'tip to lip' measure in question 13; and
- 3.2.5. to re-order question 12.

3.3. Ground Patrol Report

Recommendations by TAG:

- 3.3.1. to delete question 15 in its entirety because GPS and maps will be used instead; and
- 3.3.2. to replace the words 'weather conditions' and 'visibility' in Section 16 with 'habitat'.

3.4. Monthly Report

Recommendations by TAG:

- 3.4.1. to make general amendments to the monthly report consistent with the changes adopted in the other reports;
- 3.4.2. to delete Section A6 in its entirety;
- 3.4.3. to qualify the 'number by persons' in Section A7;
- 3.4.4. to add 'other' in Section A8;
- 3.4.5. to split Section B5 into 'ivory seizures' and 'ivory found';
- 3.4.6. to report cases and weight (by fresh, dried and smoked categories) in Section B6; and
- 3.4.7. to amend Sections C4 and C5, consistent with the Ground Patrol changes.

3.5. Annual Report

Recommendations by TAG:

- 3.5.1. to make general amendments to the annual report consistent with the changes adopted in the other reports;
- 3.5.2. to delete Sections A10 and A11;
- 3.5.3. to add 'logging' and 'mining' to Section A17; and
- 3.5.4. to replace Section B11 with a comment box to cover changes in elephant behavior.

- 3.6. Noting the wide use of point patrol systems (e.g. road blocks) in Central and other parts of Africa, a form has been devised which could be used for such occasions. The TAG agreed that it could be valuable, particularly if it measures influences not readily apparent in the sites themselves. However, given that some of the information collected in these circumstances could have relevance to the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS), the Director was requested to liaise with Tom Milliken with the purpose to develop the form further.

- 3.7. It was further noted that field experience in using the LEM forms would still be used to improve these forms and that in the attempt to standardize and simplify them, information requested should be restricted to data that will be used in the analyses of MIKE data.
- 3.8. It was also important to recognise that these LEM forms provide the yardstick of what was important for MIKE, but this did not mean that they could not be integrated to existing forms used by range states or that supplementary data could not be collected and used.

4. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND DATA MANAGEMENT

- 4.1. The Chair wished to reassure the TAG that the need for an analytical framework and data management process had now become an urgent priority and that it was the intention of the Chair to commission a team to develop the proposal for the analytical framework system, which shall then be submitted for consideration by the TAG at the next meeting.
- 4.2. Suggestions by the TAG included:
 - 4.2.1. the use of test sites in developing the analytical framework system;
 - 4.2.2. to avoid divergence of development between the four sub-regions;
 - 4.2.3. to ensure that the development of the analytical framework system did not lose sight of an overall system design;
 - 4.2.4. the need to develop a sense of ownership at the site level and to recognise that this would need a partnership approach in certain countries;
 - 4.2.5. to ensure a good understanding of data base flows between the various levels (site, national, sub-regional offices and the CCU); and
 - 4.2.6. the Director should ensure that the range states were comfortable with the ownership process and that this process is agreed to at the Regional Implementation meetings.

5. POPULATION SURVEY

- 5.1. Given the need to achieve a systematic approach and consistency in population survey work, the Director was requested to commission a report by aerial survey specialists on the following issues:
 - 5.1.1. the precision to effort required in population survey work;
 - 5.1.2. the circumstances in which sampling counting and total counting would be the right approach to use; and

5.1.3. the minimum specifications to be used when undertaking either of those two techniques.

5.2. In respect of the Forest population work, a similar report would be commissioned by the Director, but it was recognised that this could really only be based on the evidence so far produced and that the guideline for best practice would continually evolve as experience continues to provide feedback. However, it was emphasized that some form of guideline has to be in place for facilitating the population survey work across MIKE forest sites.

6. MIKE and AED

6.1. The TAG recognised that the MIKE database and the African Elephant Database (AED) was not a convergence exercise but that a close collaboration would be beneficial.

6.2. It was agreed that the collaborative efforts would center on MIKE feeding population data into the AED and that the data managers of both could collaborate on the analytical, technical and accuracy aspects of the site data.

7. USAGE OF PREVIOUS SURVEY INFORMATION

7.1. In order to avoid the loss of previous survey information giving rise to a need to reinvent the wheel, the TAG recommended that MIKE initiate a process through the sites officers as to the following aims :

7.1.1. to provide a site profile and history on any previous information and trends for elephants in an appropriate storage format;

7.1.2. to identify good data sets under that process; and

7.1.3. to make use, as a source of such information, the AfESG/STE web-based bibliography.

8. NEW TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGIES

8.1. Regarding the introduction of new sampling techniques or technologies by MIKE, it was noted that the general principle would be for MIKE to utilize sampling techniques that are proven and sustainable, however, the TAG agreed that it should not restrict MIKE from commissioning the research and development of innovative sampling techniques or technologies, if funding resources permit.

8.2. In that context, preliminary discussions took place regarding the potential use of Distance Sampling in aerial population survey works. Whilst the TAG agreed that the theory of Distance Sampling did suggest a reduction in underestimating population estimates, it was however still important for the TAG to see the results of the field work experiments that were being undertaken before a conclusion could be made as to whether such a technique could facilitate the MIKE process. In addition, the TAG would need to be assured that such a technique was sustainable and would not have much higher costs in terms of training, technology and analytical corrections.

9. CYBERTRACKER

- 9.1. The TAG took advantage of Rene Beyer's presence for him to update the members on the use of Cybertracker in the Pilot process.
- 9.2. The potential advantage of Cybertracker lay in the benefits of allowing much faster and wider range of data collection, a considerably less arduous task of information gathering, and the ability to download the information instantaneously on return from the field.
- 9.3. The potential cost for putting together such an equipment in the field was currently estimated to be US\$500 per Cybertracker.
- 9.4. The technical problems still to be resolved are the durability of the life of the batteries, the robustness of the equipment to withstand the arduous fieldwork, and access to software.
- 9.5. The TAG concluded that the use of Cybertracker was still promising and worth pursuing.

10. NEXT TAG MEETING

- 10.1. Proposed that the timing and venue of the next TAG Meeting be scheduled sometime in April 2002 in Ghana.
- 10.2. The Chair tabled the request of organisations such as the WWF to have an open-dialogue session with the TAG.
- 10.3. It was agreed that the Chair should revert to the WWF and indicate a willingness to have a one day meeting immediately following the next TAG meeting, such meeting to be structured, so as to have a combination of presentations and discussions in response to issues flagged by the WWF and other similar organisations.
- 10.4. Agreed that the Chair should request WWF to liaise with other institutions who might be interested to attend the open-dialogue session.

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking members of the TAG, MIKE staff and the Resource Specialists for their input to the first TAG Meeting.