CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA
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Forty-ninth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 22-25 April 2003

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Elephants

Baseline information for MIKE

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT MIKE AND ETIS
IN REGARD TO COP 12 DECISIONS

This document has been prepared by the MIKE Central Coordinating Unit (CCU) and TRAFFIC.

1. Introduction

The decisions taken at CoP12 have led to a number of submissions prior to the 49th Standing Committee meeting. These submissions comment upon, and make suggestions about, what is required to achieve the conditions set out at the Santiago CoP in regard to elephants and an ivory trade. It has become apparent that these submissions contain some information and perspectives in regard to MIKE and ETIS that are incorrect or confusing. It is hoped that the following question and answer approach will reduce the chances of potential misunderstandings and errors that could arise if no clarification was provided.

2. Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

Does the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meet enough to realise its full potential?

A. More would be better, funds and time permitting, but this does not mean that the TAG has therefore not been fully engaged addressing methodology and other important issues. Much of the first TAG meeting in November 2001 was taken up with unifying, refining and simplifying the Law Enforcement Monitoring (LEM) forms and protocols. TAG work has continued providing population methodology standards. Work on methodologies suitable for Asian circumstances has started and the TAG will increasingly be looking at data analysis issues.

3. LEM Methodology

Q. *Has the Garamba experience been ignored in developing the MIKE LEM methodolgy?*

A. It might be helpful to know that the Garamba experience was directly incorporated into the evolution of MIKE forms (see MIKE Pilot Project report no. 3). However, there are

several fundamental misconceptions embedded for example in the IFAW paper[1]. It is an essential feature of MIKE that it is, as much as possible, a standardised process. This is what the range states specifically requested, otherwise how does MIKE build up patterns of what is occurring across borders, within sub-regions, etc.

Even so, MIKE forms as such, have not been imposed or substituted where existing LEM forms exist. What has been agreed, in those situations, is the need to harmonise such forms so that field staff have only one set to handle, as long as the needed information is available. This is exactly what has happened at Garamba, where ICCN staff (not MIKE staff) undertook a harmonisation process. To suggest that MIKE has required law enforcement systems to change, and thus reduce the protection effort or prevent its optimisation, is simply false. The whole essence of MIKE has been to promote the monitoring of existing effort and law enforcement patterns. Nor is there any suggestion in MIKE of not using existing information, wherever possible.

Q. Should incentives be paid to produce MIKE LEM or other information?

A. It is absolutely crucial to keep in mind that the MIKE programme was initiated by the range states so that information would be available for every range state through the improvement of the institutional capacity of that range state to achieve this in a long term routine manner. Indeed the range states reinforced these points by the revisions adopted for Resolution Conf. 10.10 at CoP11 and CoP12. It has therefore been an absolutely fundamental policy of MIKE that it would not pay any wildlife agency staff bonuses, incentives, etc. to undertake MIKE work, as this work is intended to be part of the normal routine of such staff. Furthermore, MIKE's first objective is to produce, for example, LEM information using existing manpower. The case for not paying incentives is strengthened by very recent experience, where incentives have stopped due to projects coming to an end, leading to a cessation of patrols, which fully demonstrates the validity of the MIKE policy. This policy does not argue with the situation prevailing in countries such as DR Congo, where no salaries have been available, that some incentive scheme may have been merited. But to argue that because Garamba pays incentives, all MIKE site staff should receive such incentives in order to improve LEM reporting contradicts the MIKE mandate. Furthermore, Garamba still faces the dilemma of what will happen to patrolling when the current project finishes. It is not unreasonable to suggest that, for Garamba, the issue has been merely postponed and the issue of sustainability remains unresolved in the long term.

Q. Is the LEM approach adequate for forest situations and unprotected areas?

A. The claim that LEM is insufficient to handle forest situations or the Samburu/Laikipia (Kenya) situation is also misleading. It would be correct to say that patrolling as a method of LEM may be inadequate in those situations, but the whole approach to using local information networks as an LEM approach has been fully encouraged under the MIKE process. New methodologies will continue to be explored, as the intention is to keep on improving MIKE, but that is an ongoing process and does not negate current

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[1] March 2003. Defining and Implementing Conditions for the Proposed Sale of Ivory from Botswana, Namibia and South Africa as Approved by CoP XII of CITES. IFAW

approaches. Obviously where information is not being derived from patrols, then the measure of effort is more complex. But the TAG is actively addressing this issue.

Q.   Should countries have selected sites with lower poaching levels compared to other sites?

A. To criticise MIKE in terms of site selection covering some low poaching areas, etc. misses another fundamental point. The essence of MIKE is to look at the factors influencing elephant trends. It would increase the bias if we did not have sites with different characteristics, otherwise how will MIKE be able to do site comparisons and determine why poaching may be less in one site compared to another. The bias in some areas in regard to protected area coverage has been fully recognised and is being addressed. For example, because a site is defined as a protected area does not preclude the extension of the monitoring effort into adjacent areas which are not afforded the same degree of protection.

4. Population Surveys

Q.   Are dung counts an appropriate methodolgy?

A. There is certainly a perception that the dung count methodology is controversial, but it should be recognised that all survey methods have built-in limitations of one kind or another.   It is correct to say that dung count methodologies are evolving and improvements continue to be made. This evolution is under TAG scrutiny, including setting up a working group to take the method forwards. However, it is not just a claim that dung counts can match aerial survey for precision and variance.   There are published refereneces. The counts do need to be of good quality, but MIKE is already working to guidelines which set minimum standards. The fact that the method is based on sampling indirect indices does not in itself make the method inappropriate.   But it is also correct to say that MIKE is not advocating dung counts as the only method to be considered for forest sites.

5. Data Analysis

Q. Can MIKE staff adequately undertake data analysis in the field?

A. It is suggested that data analysis will be a problem because of the lack of scientifically trained field staff and because desk top computers can not be run by solar power. Surely it is now widely accepted that computer skills and usage do not require a high degree of scientific or academic training. It is presumably suggested that desk tops are not suitable for solar, because they use more power than laptops. The reason that flat back monitors are being provided is because they use 40% less power than conventional monitors, but even then, this is the first time that there has been a suggestion that desk tops can not be run by solar power.

6. MIKE and ETIS

Q. How well linked are MIKE and ETIS?

A. The issue of linkages between ETIS and MIKE is important. It has always been the objective to achieve as much linkage as possible. This can be best achieved through several processes. The first relies on range states taking full responsibility to contribute the required information to both systems. The second is to use the two systems to

monitor each other. The third is to link the analysis as much as possible. Achieving these processes is currently being addressed by MIKE and ETIS.

Q. Does ETIS track law enforcement effort?

A. It has been suggested that ETIS, which is based upon global data on elephant product seizures, does not measure the effort taken to intercept illegal shipments. This is a false statement. The ETIS submissions to CoP12 (see CoP12 Doc. 34.1, Annex 1) fully describe the proxy measures used to assess law enforcement effort, efficiency, and rates of reporting with respect to the seizure data. These measures are country-specific and time-based, and play an integral role in the ETIS analyses.

Q. Does ETIS actively collect data on seizures?

A. The ETIS data on seizures is derived from both active and passive means. Parties are obliged, through Resolution Conf. 10.10, to submit information on elephant product seizures to the CITES Secretariat within 90 days of their occurrence. Through this manner, there is a steady flow of data into ETIS. To complement this passive flow of information, TRAFFIC, the organisation that manages ETIS, actively contacts key countries and directly solicits data. Prior to CoP12, some 2,000 cases of elephant product seizures were received and input into ETIS through active data collection efforts.

April 2003