

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: ASIAN RHINO SPECIALIST GROUP

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The IUCN/SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group conducted a plenary meeting at Jaldapara Sanctuary, West Bengal, India, from 6-11 December 1993. (Note: The Asian Rhino Specialist Group designates itself the AsRSG to distinguish its acronym from the African Rhino Specialist Group which AsRSG designates AfRSG.) As part of this meeting, a population and habitat viability analysis (PHVA) workshop was also conducted to initiate this process as one of the tools for conservation of this species. The PHVA was conducted in collaboration with the Wildlife Departments of Assam and West Bengal and the Ministry of Wildlife of the Government of India.

Representatives from 10 countries including the four major range states(\*) for Asian rhinos participated in these sessions: India\*, Nepal\*, Malaysia\*, Indonesia\*, Thailand, Singapore, Kenya, United States, United Kingdom, Switzerland. Unfortunately, representatives from Myanmar and Viet Nam were unable to attend. The major objectives of these sessions were to:

1. Review the status of all three species of Asian rhinos and compile the latest estimates of numbers in the wild.
2. Assess the activities and accomplishments of the AsRSG over the last six years and develop priorities and directions for the next three years.
3. Revise the AsRSG Action Plan which was originally developed in 1987.
4. Recommend changes in AsRSG structure and function for the 1994-1996 triennium.
5. Prepare a first draft of the southeast Asian Rhino GEF Project Programme Document which will provide US \$2,000,000 for rhino conservation in Indonesia and Malaysia over the next two years.
6. Commence formulation of a Strategic Funding Plan for Asian Rhino Conservation.

7. Initiate the PHVA process for *Rhinoceros unicornis*.

The latest estimates of Asian rhino numbers are presented in Tables I to 3. The most notable and unsettling fact from these figures is the revelation that numbers of the Sumatran rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) have now declined to no more than 500. Previous estimates had been 700 to 1,000. The decrease is attributable mostly to a 50% reduction in the numbers estimated for Sumatra in Indonesia. Although the Javan rhino is fewer in number and the African black rhino has perhaps decreased more precipitously over the last 10 years, the combination of low numbers and decline rate may render the Sumatran rhino now the most critically endangered of all rhino species.

There was also confirmation from the latest transect and photographic surveys in Ujung Kulon that the number of the Javan rhino is approximately 50, as previous censuses and estimates had contended.

The Indian/Nepalese rhino (*Rhinoceros unicorn is*) remains the success story among Asian rhinos with the total population in India at about 1,450 and in Nepal at about 440. However, levels of poaching in both countries are significant and intensifying. In Assam, still the stronghold for this species, poaching in most of the protected areas is estimated at around 5% per year. This level is approximately equivalent to the annual rates of population growth so that any further intensification may cause decline of the populations. Indeed, such decline has already occurred in at least two areas: the population in Laokhowa being completely annihilated in 1993 and the population in Manas reduced by at least 50%.

Another major topic of discussion at the Jaldapara meeting was the great concern expressed by most of the Asian rhino conservationists in attendance that these species do not receive their fair share of attention or resources from the international rhino conservation community. It was emphasized that despite the drastic

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decline in African black rhino numbers over the last decade, the numbers of that species were probably still no lower than the total of all three Asian rhino species combined.

In terms of structure and function, the AsRSG extensively discussed:

1. The activities, accomplishments and problems over the last 10 years.
2. Future objectives, needs, and function of the group in relation to the challenges for Asian rhino conservation.

These activities and accomplishments include:

1984 • Mohd Khan bin Momin Khan became Chairman representing the first range national to occupy this position.

- A Conservation Strategy Session on Sumatran rhino was developed at a meeting in Singapore.
- The *ex situ* programme for Sumatran rhino was initiated concurrently in Malaysia and Indonesia.

1986 • A meeting of the AsRSG was conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia.

1989 • A PHVA workshop was conducted for Javan Rhino in Bogor, Indonesia.

1991 • A follow-up workshop in Bogor, Indonesia was co-sponsored by the AsRSG and PHVA to develop the Indonesian Rhino Conservation Strategy Workshop.

1992 • The first Programme Officer was appointed for AsRSG with financial support from the International Rhino Foundation (IRF).

- The AsRSG Programme Officer represented the AsRSG and the IUCN/SSC at the preparatory UNEP Rhino Conference.
- As a result of that Conference, the AsRSG initiated the development of a Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project for US \$ 2,000,000 to assist implementation of the conservation strategy for rhinos in Indonesia and Malaysia.

1993 • The AsRSG Programme Officer assisted with the preparation of the Rhino Conservation Action Plans for Malaysia and Indonesia through a grant from IJNEP.

- The AsRSG participated in the full UNEP Rhino Conservation Conferences in Nairobi, Kenya.
- In preparation for and as a product of this UNEP Rhino Conference, the AsRSG developed a continuing process of compiling overviews of priority actions and required funds for Asian Rhino conservation through the national rhino conservation action plans. This process will be the basis of a strategic funding plan developed by the AsRSG.
- The development of the GEF Project and grant of US \$ 2,000,000 on South East Asian Rhinos was continued.
- A full meeting of the AsRSG was held at Jaldapara, West Bengal, India.
- Technical and financial assistance was provided with population and habitat viability analyses (PHVAs) for Sumatran Rhino in Indonesia and Indian Rhino in India.

In general, it was observed that traditionally the AsRSG, like other Specialist Groups, had concentrated on technical information and advice. There was general agreement that in the future the AsRSG needed to assume a more active role in advocacy and fund-raising for Asian rhino conservation.

In particular, it was agreed that the AsRSG would initiate a newsletter to be published quarterly. It is intended to publish the first issue by the end of June 1994.

There was then much discussion of the future structure and leadership of the AsRSG to facilitate achievement of the objectives. The purpose was to develop recommendations which the Chairman of the AsRSG would submit to the Chair of the SSC in his consideration of appointments for the next triennium (which commenced in January 1994). A number of scenarios for Chairs, Deputy Chairs, and Programme Officers were considered.

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There was strong agreement that the two major regions where Asian rhinos occur, the Indian Sub-Continent and South-East Asia, needed to be represented in the leadership of the AsRSG. Hence, there was strong agreement that there should be a Chairman and Deputy Chairman, with one position occupied by a person from South-East Asia and the other from the Indian Sub-Continent. There was strong support for Mohd Khan to continue as the Chairman and consensus for Mr. S.C. Dey to become the Deputy Chair.

It was also agreed that it would be useful to expand the Programme Officer's function into more of a secretariat. Currently, this function is provided by Dr. Tom Foose resident outside the range states. An objective for the next triennium will be to move this function to one or more Asians in one or more of the range states. In the meantime, it was recommended that a second Programme Officer, Dr. Nico van Strien, be appointed. A major activity of the Programme Officers will be to assist with fund-raising. Dr. Foose will concentrate on North America; Dr. van Strien on Europe. Other administrative and technical functions will be divided between Foose and van Strien by mutual agreement.

Objectives for the 1994-1996 triennium include:

### **Initiation of newsletter**

It is intended that the first issue will be published by the end of June 1994.

### **Revision of the AsRSG Action Plan**

A draft will be prepared by 15 May 1994 with publication of the final plan expected by mid-August 1994.

### **Activation of GEF project for S.E. Asian**

It is expected that funds will be available and activities initiated by September 1994.

### **Development of a Strategic Funding Plan**

As a first step toward development of a strategic funding plan, the AsRSG devoted time to improving definition of projects and estimation of their costs. These figures are presented in Tables 4 and 5. The

total cost estimated is approximately US \$ 57,000,000 with US \$ 35,000,000 required from external donors by the range states.

### **Better publicity for the plight of Asian rhinos**

### **Establishment of a secretariat for the AsRSG**

This process has largely been initiated with the appointment and operation of the Programme Officer. The addition of the second Programme Officer and initiation of the newsletter will advance this objective.

The concurrent workshop on Indian rhino initiated the PHVA for this species. The results of this PHVA are not yet ready to be reported but will be subject of a future article in *Pachyderm*. In the meantime, it should be noted that the PHVA was conducted at Jaldapara in West Bengal rather than at a site in Assam for two major reasons. One was to direct attention to the protected areas for rhino in West Bengal which had not been explicitly discussed in the previous edition of the AsRSG Asian Rhino Action Plan. These protected areas are limited in both rhino population and size of habitat but are nevertheless being well managed and are likely to be important for conservation of this species. A more important reason was to emphasize that the rhino in India occurs not just in one, but in three states, thus qualifying rhino conservation efforts eligible for financial support from the federal government. Current Government of India policy does not permit funds to be provided for species restricted to a single state. Assam had previously been receiving federal funds but they were discontinued when the new policy was enacted; restoration of federal support is vital if Assam and the other states are to respond successfully to the intensifying challenge of the poachers. Indeed, it is an objective of the PHVA workshop to provide support for development of a Project Rhino by the Government of India, analogous to Project Tiger which has been so critical to the conservation of that species in India.

*Anyone desiring further information on Asian rhino conservation or the work of the AsRSG is requested to contact the AsRSG Programme Officer, Dr. Tom Foose, International Rhino Foundation, 85 East Gay Street, Suite 603, Columbus, OH, 432 15, USA  
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Table 1: Wild population estimates of the Indian/Nepalese rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*). 31 December 1993.

Country	Location	Number of Rhino	Habitat Availability km <sup>2</sup>		Protection Status	Potential Carrying Capacity
			Presently	Potentially		
INDIA	Manas	50	391	391	National Park; World Heritage Site	>100
	Dudhwa	11	490	490	National Park	>100
	Kaziranga	1164 ± 134	430	490	National Park	1200+
	Laokhowa	0	70	70	Wildlife Sanctuary	50+
	Orang	90+	76	76	Wildlife Sanctuary	>100
	Pabitora	56	18	18	Wildlife Sanctuary	60+
	Pockets-Assam	25	508	508	Insecure	100+
	Jaldapara	~ 33	216	225	Wildlife Sanctuary	80+
	Garomara	13	8.6	66	Wildlife Sanctuary	20+
	NEPAL	Royal Bardia	39	968	968	National Park
Royal Chitwan		375-400	932	1200	National Park	500
PAKISTAN	Lal Sohanra	2	?	?	National Park	?
TOTAL		1870-1895 ±134	4100 +	4500 +		2600+
			1900			

Table 2: Wild population estimates of Javan rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*). 31 December 1993.

Country	Location	Number of Rhino	Habitat Availability km <sup>2</sup>		Protection Status	Potential Carrying Capacity
			Presently	Potentially		
INDONESIA	Ujung Kulon	47-60	761	761	National Park	100+
VIETNAM	Nam Cat Tien	Small	350	?	National Park	?
	Bugiamap	Small	160	?	Reserve	?
	Various	?	?	?	Not known	?
CAMBODIA	Various	?	?	?	Not known	?
LAOS	Various	?	?	?	Not known	?
TOTAL		<100	1200+	1200+		

Table 3: Wild population estimates of the Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*). 31 December 1993.

Country	Location	Number of Rhino	Habitat Availability km <sup>2</sup>		Protection Status	Potential carrying Capacity
			Presently	Potentially		
<b>INDONESIA</b>						
Kalimantan	Sabah Border	Small	?	?	Unknown	?
Sumatra	Gunung Leuser	90-120	1400	8000	National Park	140-800
	Gunung Patah	10-15	400	500	Production forest	40-50
	Kerinci Seblat Gunung	64-77	5000	10000	National Park	500-1000
	Abong-Abong & Lesten-Lukup	5-10	?	?	Unprotected	?
	Berhak	1-2	?	?	National Park	?
	Torgamba	3-5	?	?	Production forest & oil palm plantation	?
	Barisan Selatan	25-60	700	3600	National Park	70-360
	Sungai Ipoh	6-7	10000ha	-	Production forest (corridor to Kernici Seblat)	50
	Gunung Batu Hitam Listen	3-5	?	?	Production forest	?
	Serbojadi	15-25	?	?	Production forest	?
	Lokop	3-5	300ha	?	Nature Reserve	?
	Batu Tapan	5	?	?	National Park	?
	Way Kambas	3-5	?	?	National Park	?
<b>Subtotal</b>		233-341	7500 +	22000		800—2200
<b>MALAYSIA</b>						
Peninsular	Endau Rompin	20-25	1600	1000—1600	State Park	110—160
	Taman Negara	22-36	4400	4400	National Park	200+
	Sungai Dusun	1-2	40	140	Wildlife Reserve /disturbed forest	15
	Gunung Belumut	3-4	230	230	Forest land	23
	Mersing Coast	3-5	?	?	Secondary forest	0
	Sungai Depak	2-4	?	?	Secondary forest	0
	Sungai Yong	3-5	?	?	Secondary forest	0
	Kuala Balah	2-4	?	?	Secondary forest	0
	Bukit Gebok	1-2	?	?	Secondary forest	0
	Krau	1-2	500	500	Wildlife Reserve	50
	Selama	10-15	?	?	Primary and secondary forest	?
	Belum	10+	?	?	Primary and secondary forest	?
	Bubu	-23	?	?	Primary and secondary forest	?
	Besut	3-5	?	?	Secondary forest	?
		Gunung Inas	2-4			
<b>Subtotal (Peninsular)</b>		85-126				

Table 3: Wild population estimates of the Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) (cont.).

Country	Location	Number of Rhino	Habitat Availability km <sup>2</sup>		Protection Status	Potential carrying Capacity
			Presently	Potentially		
Sabah	Tabin	7-17	1200	1200	Wildlife Sanctuary	120
	Danum Valley	13-23	2000	2000	Secondary forest	200
	Kretam/Other Areas	20	1000	0	Deforestation	0
<b>Subtotal (Sbh)</b>		40-60				320
Sarawak	Limbang	10+	600	600	Primary & secondary forest	60
<b>Subtotal (Srwk)</b>		10+				60
<b>Subtotal (Malaysia)</b>		135-196	11000+	11000+		300
<b>MYANMAR (Burma)</b>						
	Tamanthi	Small	2150	?	Game Sanctuary	?
	Lassai Tract	6-7	?	?	Unknown	?
<b>Subtotal</b>		10+	?	?		
<b>THAILAND</b>	Hala-Bala	4+	?	?	Wildlife Sanctuary	?
	Khoi Soi Dao Reserve	2+	745	745	Wildlife Sanctuary	35
	Phu Khieo	4+	1560	1560	Wildlife Sanctuary	75
<b>Subtotal</b>		10+				
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		388-557	4000+	2000+?		110

Table 4: Asian rhino conservation in major range states. Total costs over next 5 years (US\$).

	CAPITAL	OPERATIONS	TOTAL
<b>INDIA</b>	21000000	15000000	36000000
<b>NEPAL*</b>	225000+	2500000	2755000
<b>INDONESIA</b>	3445000	6840800	10285300
<b>MALAYSIA</b>	4464000	4051000	8515000
<b>TOTAL</b>	13586000	10826000	57555000

\* Information incomplete

Table 5: Asian rhino conservation in major range states. External funds needed over next 3 years (US\$).

	CAPITAL	OPERATIONS	TOTAL
<b>INDIA</b>	19000000	1000000	20000000
<b>NEPAL*</b>	255000	1000000	1255000
<b>INDONESIA</b>	3445000	4514000	7959000
<b>MALAYSIA</b>	2739000	1893000	4632000
<b>TOTAL</b>	26439000	7407000	33846000

\* Information incomplete