

The SADC Rhino Recovery Group is established

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Establishment

The SADC Rhino Recovery Group (RRG) was established in May 2002. It comprises six member states: Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. These countries have very small rhino populations or none at all, and the RRG was formed to help them re-establish or build their populations into viable ones.

Inaugural meeting

The RRG inaugural meeting was held in Mangochi, Malawi, in May 2002. At this meeting, terms of reference of the group were drawn up and activities for each member state for the coming year according to its needs were determined as follows:

1. Facilitate and assist with the development of national policies, strategies and plans.
 - Zambia is to develop a national rhino plan with funds from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
 - Malawi needs a rhino plan and should link with South Africa to be considered in its strategy.
 - Mozambique does not need an immediate plan but should implement the approved SADC Regional Programme for Rhino Conservation (RPRC) for Limpopo National Park when funds become available.
 - Angola needs a team of experts to visit either Iona or Kissana National Park to discuss management issues.
2. Identify key issues and priority needs including sourcing of rhinos for regional metapopulation management.
 - The RRG Chair is to facilitate a review and prioritize common needs in each RRG country using a matrix table.
3. Facilitate capacity building in RRG management agencies, including targeted training and staff development and development of appropriate tools and techniques.
 - The RRG Chair is to follow up with RRG countries to determine training needs, levels and numbers of personnel to be trained.
4. Assist RRG countries to assess potential areas for reintroduction and to prioritize these areas.
 - This is particularly important for Angola and Mozambique considering point 1 preceding.
5. Disseminate information among RRG members on best practices through workshops, publications, exchanges and study visits, and staff assignments.
 - The RRG Chair is to document available documents produced under the SADC Rhino Programme, the Rhino Management Group and AfRSG.
6. Confirm the presence of remnant rhinos and promote surveys of remnant populations.
 - Tanzania is to report on the status of the rhino surveys to determine if there were any constraints or requirements for assistance.
7. Circulate guidelines on the reintroduction of rhinos and consolidation of remnant populations.
 - Raoul du Toit of the SADC RPRC is to submit a report, 'Guidelines on the reintroduction of rhinos'.
8. Network and share expertise with regional and continental rhino conservation bodies such as SADC Rhino Management Group (RMG), AfRSG, SADC Rhino Programme, and donor communities including creating links with RESG on security needs. The Chair is to initiate contacts.
9. Monitor and evaluate progress towards achieving national rhino conservation goals and the effectiveness of rhino recovery projects implemented in RRG countries.
 - The RRG Chair is to develop a monitoring plan and a reporting schedule on progress of RRG states towards implementation of RRG projects.
10. Assist RRG countries in developing and funding proposals based on identifying common needs and facilitate the funding of common proposals.
 - The RRG Chair is to assist in developing and reviewing RRG projects for funding.

Second meeting

The second meeting of the RRG was held in March 2003 in Maun, Botswana. Member states presented reports on what they had done in the past year, as shown following. Progress on the above terms of reference and activities were reviewed and a plan of action for the coming year of 2003 was developed.

Country reports

ANGOLA

There is still no information on rhino numbers and no expertise on rhino management. The Institute of Forestry Development (IDF MINADER—the relevant Angolan authority) intends to approach Namibia and to conduct surveys in all historical areas of rhino distribution. The visit by rhino experts did not take place in 2002.

BOTSWANA

The country now has 51 white rhinos and 1 black rhino, and is expecting 21 more white rhinos from South Africa. A national rhino management strategy was adopted recently. With SADC Rhino Project funding, some staff were trained in rhino ID monitoring and experts assessed the suitability of both Mombo and Khama sanctuaries. The WILDb rhino database has also been obtained. More staff training and a new computer are needed.

MALAWI

The country has only seven black rhinos, located in Liwonde National Park. The park's management plan is being reviewed and upgraded with support from the Frankfurt Zoological Society. The rhino plan will be part of the upgrading process. A boundary fence is being constructed at Liwonde.

MOZAMBIQUE

The Limpopo National Park Project with South Africa needs to develop a rhino management programme. Mozambique has no expertise in rhino management and it needs guidelines to set up this programme.

TANZANIA

The status of rhinos in Selous Game Reserve is not known although monitoring in selected areas is under

way. The area of about 55,000 km² is vast and staff density low. No remnant *D.b. minor* is left in other areas in Tanzania. Staff training in rhino management is important.

ZAMBIA

There is a rhino reintroduction programme in Luangwa Valley and the initial founder group of five was being introduced in May 2003. A project to develop a national rhino plan was approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Rhino and Tiger Conservation Fund (USFWS RTCF), and the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) is awaiting the funds. Training staff in rhino monitoring has been identified as a key need.

RRG action plan for 2003

National policies, strategies and plans

ANGOLA

- Draw up a statement of intent and commitment on rhino conservation for the government as a basis for rhino strategy.
- Use the preliminary assessment mission by SADC RPRC to assist with developing a rhino management policy document.

MALAWI

- Proceed with developing a management plan for Liwonde National Park, with input from SADC RPRC. Integrate the Liwonde evaluation report into the plan. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife is to refine priorities for Liwonde National Park regarding rhinoceros and biodiversity conservation.
- Follow up with South Africa National Parks on their continued role in regional metapopulation management of rhinos between Malawi and South Africa.

MOZAMBIQUE

- Draw up a statement of intent and commitment on rhino conservation by the government as a basis for rhino strategy.
- Develop a rhino management policy document.

ZAMBIA

- Proceed with strategy development with funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service's RTCF. SADC RPRC is to assist ZAWA expedite transfer of the agreed funds from USFWS RTCF. Additional technical input is available from SADC RPRC and IUCN SSC AfRSG, with facilitation of participation of focal points from other RRG countries.
- Submit updated proposal for evaluating other areas in Zambia for reintroduction of rhinos.

Priority needs for rhino reintroductions

Review and set priorities on common needs for each RRG country for reintroduction and management programmes.

Capacity building and training needs

Include the RRG working group in the next AfRSG meeting, including attendance of Angola and Mozambique (dependent on funding from SADC RPRC).

The Chair will follow up in RRG range states on training needs, confirm requests for training inputs available from SADC RPRC, and develop a training plan and schedule for RRG countries.

Assistance with assessment of areas for reintroduction

Assistance currently comes through SADC RPRC inputs (for example, policy development, assessment of realistic options, evaluation of specific areas). Angola and Mozambique need generic guidelines for drawing up a preliminary definition of intent (species, range areas, and so on).

MOZAMBIQUE

Carry out a feasibility study on the reintroduction of rhinos to Limpopo National Park.

Dissemination of information on rhino management

Establish the distribution pattern for SADC RPRC task reports. Make available task reports and other

relevant documents on regional projects on the SADC RPRC Web site.

Surveys on remnant rhino populations

MOZAMBIQUE AND ANGOLA

Follow up and confirm rhino presence in Niassa Game Reserve and Cuando Cubango Province using the checklist of information developed by SADC RPRC.

Guidelines for reintroductions

Specific RRG countries are to provide input from case studies on management and security guidelines that range states can use. Reintroduction guidelines are to be completed and circulated to RRG countries.

Networking with other rhino conservation bodies and sharing of expertise

- RRG is presenting the terms of reference to the SADC RMG in its June 2003 meeting.
- The RRG Chair is to be a member of AfRSG.
- The RRG Chair will use the Rhino Notes section of *Pachyderm* to circulate news from RRG countries on country reintroduction projects.

Monitoring action towards achieving national population goals of RRG countries

- Ensure minimum biannual coordination visits between the SADC RPRC coordinator and the RRG Chair.
- The RRG Chair is to submit biannual progress reports (end of June, end of December 2003) to SADC RPRC to incorporate issues of concern into its planning and reporting cycle.

Developing project proposals for funding by SADC RPRC

- The SADC RPRC coordinator and the RRG Chair are to coordinate in conceptualizing projects with good potential for funding by SADC RPRC, particularly where assistance is needed from the RRG Chair in developing new proposals from RRG countries.
- The RRG Vice-chair should be instrumental in proposal development.