

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE WEST AFRICA MIKE SUB-REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

Cotonou, 29 of August 2003

1. Introduction

At the last sub-regional meeting in Ouagadougou in 19-21 February 2001, it was agreed to hold the Steering Committee (SC) meetings regularly. The Cotonou meeting was therefore organized by the Sub-Regional Support Unit (SSU) of the MIKE Programme in line with this agreement.

At the start of the meeting the SSU recalled that Nigeria was nominated as Chair of the SC at the Ouagadougou meeting, and therefore Mr M. A. Oyebo, Director, Federal Department of Forestry in Nigeria should chair the meeting.

The Chairman of the SC after taking his position, gave thanks to the SSU and made a brief recall about the MIKE programme since the CITES CoP 10 in Harare in 1997. In the context of Nigeria, he explained that the services in charge of wildlife have been confronted with recent institutional changes, and that they are now grouped under the Division of Forestry from which he has been recently appointed as the Director.

At this juncture, the other participants were asked to introduce themselves after which the delegates duly approved an agenda for the meeting presented by the SSU.

2. Welcome note from Benin

The delegate from Benin presented apologies on behalf of the SC Member of the host country for his absence and presented a welcome speech on his behalf. (Annex 1)

3. Introduction note from the CITES-MIKE Director (Annex 2)

4. Presentation of the progress report (Annex 3)

Presented by the SSU.

5. Comments from the participants about the report

Benin :

Benin recognised that there are some missing reports concerning the flow of data to the SSU.

The National Officer (NO) for Benin, Mr. Mama Gao Seïdou, explained that the missing reports were due to a transmission problem and to the annual holidays of the Site Officers (SO). The NO confirmed that the means for data flow are actually available and that he had written officially to request for the latest reports.

The NO of Benin noted that he would undertake the necessary measures to provide all the reports to the SSU.

The MIKE Director thanked Benin and advised that all reports would be required for each site, otherwise, the analysis would be impossible to carry out.

The MIKE Director clarified that if no patrols had occurred during the month, this should be mentioned in the Monthly Report with the relevant explanation.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso equally recognised the problem of data flow as highlighted in the progress report and explained that this has been caused by the fact that all Site officers have been transferred elsewhere thus causing the lack of information.

The National Officer (NO) of Burkina Faso, M. Ouédraogo Lassané, suggested the implementation of the training of additional officers other than the nominated Site Officers, as this would provide a more reliable back up and would ensure that the information and capacity building are not lost due to these transfers.

Guinea expressed the wish that the range States be informed in advance of the MIKE reporting requirements rather than be told of them at the present meeting.

Mali underlined the communication difficulties between the Site Officers and the National Officers. Nevertheless, taking into account the size of the Gourma site, he equally supported the idea of training additional officers and members of local community.

Niger agreed with Burkina Faso concerning the need for a reliable training scenario that would avoid the loss of knowledge and skills at the time of personnel transfer.

The MIKE Director recalled that the range States are aware that the data needs to be provided before the next CoP 13 of CITES, which takes place in 12 months' time. The MIKE Director next underlined that members should not consider the problems presented by the progress report as a negative criticism but rather, as a positive step to solving the problems together.

Ghana underlined the communication problems and the fact that the Directors should also be kept informed of any email correspondence between the SSU and the NOs.

The SSU recalled that at the meeting in Niamey in 2002, the range States were requested to provide the reports, if at all possible, at the end of each month, but at any rate on the occasion of MIKE meetings or during SSO visits to the range States, or during the MIKE Database training workshops in Accra and Ouagadougou. The

SSU requested Guinea to work with the SSU on making the flow of reports fully operational.

The SSU underlined also their routine for sending email to the addresses provided by the range States. Each time an email is sent to the NO, a copy is also sent to the Director on the private and/or service email addresses. SSU gave Mali, Nigeria and Niger as examples of this routine.

Senegal followed by underlining the importance of information flow for the MIKE Programme and urged the range States to endeavour to cover the information gaps. In regards to the particular problem of too frequent staff transfer, the constant movement of Site officers not only depends on the States sovereignty but also the career ambitions of the officers themselves.

Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire acknowledged the gaps and explained that their territory is currently divided by civil strife, as such some areas are inaccessible and hence all the Site officers are not at their posts under these difficult conditions.

To this, the MIKE Director advised that if the Law Enforcement Monitoring (LEM) patrols are not possible due to civil strife, this should still be mentioned in the Monthly and Annual Reports and sent to the SSU.

Ghana

Ghana noted that many LEM patrols have occurred, in both Mole and Kakum. However, the Site officers had been recording patrol information on Ghanaian forms. The information needs to be converted into the MIKE formats and this requires a lot of time because of the huge numbers of patrol effort involved.

Ghana underlined also that the GPS units (Garmin E-trexes) do not function well in forest areas. The reports that currently exist have been produced with the assistance of two other GPS units coming from another project.

The MIKE Director informed Ghana that new GPS units (Garmin 72) were available. The availability of these new GPS units was confirmed by the SSU and that they could replace the old E-trexes currently in use in the forest areas.

Guinea

Guinea acknowledged the gaps in data flow. However, it has only one MIKE site. While communication problems have increased, the war in Liberia near the location of the site has obliged Guinea to stop all patrols. Furthermore, for several months the rains have created difficult conditions to reach the site.

Nevertheless, the reports were ready and Guinea would undertake to send it on to the SSU.

The MIKE Director highlighted that if there is no patrol report, this should be mentioned in the Monthly Reports to the SSU. The Director also emphasised that priority must be given to the Carcass Reports as well.

Guinea noted that one MIKE site is too few. It has identified two other possible sites for monitoring and registration. To this, the MIKE Director noted Guinea's concern regarding the choice of sites but presently, any further registration of sites is unlikely.

Mali

Mali gave thanks to the MIKE staff and indicated that this meeting was a baptism for his SC Member as he was nominated only 7 months ago as the Head of the "Direction de la Conservation de la Nature of Mali."

On behalf of his Director, the representative from Mali affirmed the political will of their highest authorities in the field of wildlife conservation, particularly in monitoring the elephants.

Mali currently has a « Direction de la Conservation de la Nature » (DCN) in which the 'Division de Conservation de la Faune et de son Habitat' exists, and through which the monitoring objectives of MIKE can be met.

The department has received from a NGO (Save The Elephant) the donation of a Land Rover for elephant monitoring, as well as funds from the US Embassy, following the publication of a press article in the United States that would help in developing ecotourism.

Mali congratulated and thanked the MIKE Programme for the computer systems and equipment, which would reinforce their surveillance capacities of the Gourma elephants. It pledged to provide the MIKE reports on time.

It noted that the ongoing recruitment that is underway should tackle the lack of staff and reinforce the current staff force at the DCN.

The NO of Mali, Mr. Bourama Niagaté took the floor to acknowledge the gaps in information flow attributing them to the lack of means of communication and the rainy seasons.

Niger

Niger equally acknowledged that there are the gaps in the data flow to the SSU. He explained that the SO of Babah Rafi had woefully inadequate means at his disposal, and his subsequent replacement has meant the loss of a trained officer for the department.

There are currently no patrols being carried out in Babah Rafi. A lot of effort has been spent developing synergies with an existing development project, however success

has been slow up to now. The Niger representative requested MIKE's assistance in getting further donor support for funding the activities in Babah Rafi.

The SSU noted a meeting of the Nigero-Nigerian Commission is being called and proposed that MIKE be invited to attend the said meeting in order to discuss how to improve the situation in Babah Rafi as its elephant population moves between Niger and Nigeria.

Nigeria supported the suggestion and agreed to register this issue as part of the agenda of the next Commission Meeting.

Niger noted that FAO and UNDP have released a publication on the development strategy in the region. Niger requested Nigeria to read the said document before the Meeting in order to allow the two States to be in a same position at the meeting.

Nigeria

Nigeria acknowledged that there are gaps in its data flow to MIKE. It was recalled that the MIKE SSO visited the Nigerian sites in February 2003. He noted that the attention then was focused on the elections of April 2003 and as a consequence, no LEM work has been carried out. During this same period, there was a fuel-shortage problem throughout the country. On the other hand, the representative from Nigeria noted that with the nomination of a high-ranking site staff in June 2003, the LEM and data flow were likely to improve.

It was noted that the NO had not yet received the August reports from the Yankari site. It was agreed that the routine of sending reports by DHL rather than email to the SSU in Ouagadougou be explored in the case of Nigeria.

Senegal

The representative from Senegal accepted that there are gaps in their data flow. He explained that the two departments in charge of wildlife management, La Direction des Eaux et Forêts and La Direction des Parcs Nationaux work in a complementary way. However, the problem has been that the site of Niokolo Koba does not always have sufficient means to carry out LEM patrol work and he underlined some of the organisational problems.

Senegal accepted that the training of the site officers has been an expensive undertaking and expressed the wish that some practical solutions be undertaken in order to better capitalise on the trainings provided by MIKE for the range States, such as the training of several officers at one go, as there is a difficulty of keeping the site officers at their post. He also requested assistance from MIKE on finding adequate mechanisms for data transmission, especially the sending of reports.

The MIKE Director assured that should the Programme obtain the long-term funding required under the EC, the database and GIS training would be extended to other selected staff and not limited only to the National Officers and Site Officers.

He noted that the EC funds should come in by the end of 2004. He projected that the training for supplementary officers could occur between 2005 and 2007. However, the MIKE Director noted that the budget must be in hand before a decision to train supplementary officers can be made.

The MIKE Director suggested that should a State detect that an officer has the requisite skills to be the NO or SO, he should be trained immediately on MIKE reports and on GPS usage. He urged each range State to train groups of officers or their deputies in accordance with their individual situations.

Togo

Togo gave thanks to the MIKE Programme for the donation of the computer systems and equipment

Togo accepts that there are gaps in data flow. He noted that the MIKE site has recently switched from "Fosse aux Lions" to Fazao NP. The new site has recently been visited by the SSU. The Togo representative apologised that they have not formally informed the MIKE programme that their Site officer has had health problems from March to August 2003.

It was confirmed by the SSU that they would be carrying out site visit to Fazao and Keran with the continuing purpose of capacity building and training of the Site officers. The SSU also confirmed that there are GPS units available to equip the Fazao Site officers.

The representative from Togo requested the SSU to provide training and support to the Fazao Site staff, as well a recommendation whether an elephant census in Fazao can take place in the near future.

There was a query from the NO of Guinea, Mrs Sagno Christine, as to the measures that are envisaged for the forthcoming census of Ziama NP. To this query, the SSU confirmed that they would need to first proceed with training of the Site officers for the census. There are currently no official dates yet set for the census. However, discussions are currently ongoing with Dr Richard Barnes with a view to undertake the censuses in both Togo and Guinea.

On conclusion of the progress report on data flow, the MIKE Director reiterated his request for the formal undertaking of each range States to provide the necessary LEM reports in order to cover the gaps in data flow. He emphasized that the Carcass Reports should not be limited only to carcasses found within the MIKE sites but any carcass found at the national scale. He further informed that there are plans for the production and distribution of A5 sized LEM forms which could be more practical for usage by Site officers in the fields.

After several discussions and clarifications with the different delegates, the range States collectively agreed to provide all the missing reports from November 2002 up to end August 2003.

6. Issues from Accra and Ouagadougou Training Workshops

The SSU recalled that during the training workshops, several range States expressed their concerns over the lack of departmental funding for computer consumables.

The MIKE Director confirmed that the MIKE programme would look into providing an amount of 300.000 FCFA, for a limited period of 3 years, for the purchase of the following consumables annually for each site:

- 50 CDs
- 2 ink cartridges
- 10 paper reams

The MIKE Director, however, stressed that those consumable expenses need to be integrated in the future recurrent budgets of the range States.

Concerning the lack of internet access for certain departments, the MIKE Director informed that negotiation are ongoing with various internet service providers. However, it was difficult to have a global solution to cover all range States because the situation is different from country to country. Concern was also expressed on the maintenance cost of computers as well as the cost of internet connection.

On the formal procedure to follow in case of computer failure, the MIKE Director noted that all MIKE computers are covered by an international IBM warranty of three (3) years. In case of a serious technical problem, the range State must send the computer back to the SSU for repairs. Spare power units and hard-drives are available at the SSU. The maintenance beyond the warranty period will be supported by the Programme after discussions with the range States.

The MIKE Director implored the States to protect and restrict their computers for the purpose of the Programme.

Guinea next brought up the issue of cost of transport and rangers' per diem whilst on field patrols and requested MIKE's contribution in these areas. The MIKE Director recalled that this issue has been settled in the meetings held in Ouagadougou (2001) and Niamey (2002), that it is not sustainable for MIKE to fund these costs. These costs have been agreed to be range States' contributions.

Mali also re-expressed a request for various measuring devices such as tape-measure and scale for weighing elephant tusk.

7. Survey capacity in the sub-region

The MIKE Director noted that in the past, the surveys of forest sites have been mainly conducted by consultants and these lengthy surveys have proved to be costly and unsustainable in the long run. A less costly and more sustainable approach would be for the range States to develop a subregional team of officers to carry out these surveys on a regular basis. He urged the range States to consider the formation and training of this subregional team.

It was noted that savannah census is less costly than forest surveys. However, there is a lack of support systems, e.g. avgas, in the sub-region, which makes such surveys administratively difficult and more expensive compared to other Sub-regions.

Côte d'Ivoire raised their concern that these specialised survey teams, consisting of well qualified and trained young people are not used as often as they should be because the range States lack the funds for such surveys. At the same time, the indirect dung count method has recently been receiving more and more critics. To this, the representative from Ghana pointed out that there is currently no other method more reliable in forest situations.

Mali believed that the results of the recent total aerial count in Gourma (2002) gave a more accurate estimate. Nevertheless, the estimate was lower than that produced by the sample count done in Gourma in 1991 (i.e. 375 elephants found by Save The Elephants in 2002 compared with 750 found by Jachmann in 1991).

Nigeria shared their experience of micro-light (power-shut) counts that are less expensive to run, which has been considered as an interesting method by the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG).

8. The future of the CITES-MIKE Programme

The SSU recalled that a draft of the letter to the National Authorities to request for support by the EC for the next phase of funding of the MIKE Programme under the 9th EDF during next ACP-EU meeting has been sent to all the range States (except Nigeria), as well as to ECOWAS and UEMOA.

The SSU listed the States that have responded:

Benin : a letter from the "Ministre de l'Agriculture" has been sent to the Ministre des Finances et de l'Economie"

Burkina Faso : a letter of the "Ministre de l'Environnement" has been sent to the "Ministre des Finances"

Guinea: the "Ministre du Plan" wrote to the Secretary General of ACP

Ghana : letter sent to Ministry of Lands & Forestry through the Forestry Commission

Liberia : no answer

Côte d'Ivoire : no answer

Mali : a draft from the "Ministre de l'Environnement" has been sent to the "Ministre des Finances"

Niger : a letter from the "Ministre de l'Environnement" has been sent to the "Ministre des Finances"

Senegal: a letter from the "Ministre de l'Environnement" has been sent to the Secretary General of ACP

Togo : The "Ministre de l'Economie, des Finances et de la Privatisation" wrote to the Secretary General of ACP.

The MIKE Director thanked the participants for their letters of support. He reported that MIKE has funds for 18 months from the EC and CEPF that were extended by 12 more months. He indicated that the EC was willing to fund for 5 more years under

the 9th ACP EDF for an amount of 10 million Euro. This funding would notably allow the introduction of new states into the Programme like Sierra Leone, Malawi and Ethiopia.

He explained that the letters of support were necessary and that EC funding for MIKE needs to be achieved in the next 12 months, hopefully by the end of 2004. For the period between May 2004 and the end of the year, other donors have been solicited for bridging funds, notably the Netherlands.

If the bridging and EC funding is secured, the MIKE Director noted that there would be 6 years of supplementary budget available and this would secure the operation of the MIKE programme to the range States for 8 years.

MIKE Director noted that the future is hopeful and thanked the range States for their support. He further reported that a SSO has been nominated for the South Asia sub-region, while a SSO for South-East Asia will soon be nominated.

On behalf of the range States, the Chairman expressed his gratitude to the Director and to the SSO for their work.

Nigeria expressed their wish to also send a letter of support from their Minister of Finance. Côte d'Ivoire noted that they would need to have a project document from MIKE before the National Authority could send a letter of support.

The MIKE Director informed the participants that a draft of the project document has been written for the ACP. A copy of this document would be sent to Côte d'Ivoire as their support letter will be welcomed. Guinea then requested a copy of the project document as well.

The MIKE Director emphasized the fact that this budget line will not compete with other EC funds that national governments may be applying for.

9. Aerial Census of WAPOK Ecosystem

The results of the aerial census of the WAPOK Ecosystem were presented to the meeting by the SSU. The duration of the census was 13 days.

Mali congratulated the SSU for the work done and expressed their confidence in the work and the results presented.

The representative from Niger noted the good quality of the results presented. However, he expressed his concern over the population structure as it showed a significantly higher proportion of adults to infants. Further concerns were expressed over the distribution of the elephants and the carcasses data. With the number of observed carcasses, Niger wanted to know if the poaching rate is increasing or decreasing and whether the elephant population was also increasing or declining.

The SSU explained that the results did not mean that the population was old because not all young animals might have been seen in the herds as they could have been

hidden under the larger elephants. More than that, the term 'adult individuals' did not mean that the individuals are aged. However, he acknowledged that without a picture of each herd and the individuals, it is difficult to describe more precisely the population structure. It was currently not possible to determine if the poaching level is increasing or decreasing because the number of carcasses seen is very low. It seems, however, that the population has been increasing for the past 10 years.

Côte d'Ivoire requested for a copy of the survey results. The representative from Côte d'Ivoire sought clarifications of the increase in number based on the fact that in 1998, there were only 2550 definite animals which were counted in the surveys done in this ecosystem compared with 4500 in the recent survey. How was the increase possible?

The MIKE Director first recalled that under the MIKE Data Policy, there is a confidentiality issue in that the range States not involved in the survey would have a copy of the results once the survey report is in the public domain. He further clarified that the WAPOK report did not mean that elephant population had doubled since 1998. Instead, what the report means is that the range States now have a more precise base-line than in the past to work on, because previous surveys were piecemeal compared to this survey covering the whole ecosystem.

Burkina Faso also underlined the reliability of the data. He emphasised the sustainability of forming a sub-regional team of observers and pilots who are trained and synergies that this would create. He finally congratulated the Programme for this operation.

Ghana also requested for a copy of the survey report.

The Chairman thanked and congratulated the SSU for the work done.

10. Working of the Steering Committee

The MIKE Director recalled that a sub-group was nominated in Ouagadougou (2001) and thought that it was a good idea. However, he did not see its need in the current scheme of things and hence requested the meeting to consider dissolving it and having the Subregional Steering Committee (SSC) replace it. This proposal was accepted with unanimity.

The MIKE Director said that a new Chairman of the SSC must be elected every 2 years in accordance with to the rules agreed in Ouagadougou. The SSU underlined the necessity to have a Director as the Chair.

Mali presented his candidature for the Chair of the SSC and was seconded by Ghana. The participants overwhelmingly accepted this.

Mali then thanked the participants and undertook the challenge to boost the SSC.

11. Miscellaneous

Ghana brought up the problem of batteries for GPSs as well as adequate numbers of GPS for monitoring in general. There was the problem of lack of power in some sites. He also requested for detailed maps per site.

The request for detailed maps was supported by the MIKE Director who confirmed that there is an ongoing undertaking for the creation of maps with referenced grid for each site in order for the site to carry out patrols without GPS.

At the same time, the MIKE Director confirmed that solar panels would be provided where it is necessary but subject to two conditions being satisfied :

- that the security for the installation of the solar panels is ensured; and
- that good quality batteries can be found.

Closure

The Chairman thanked the MIKE Director and the SSU for the progress reports and reiterated the undertakings given by the range States to provide all missing LEM reports which would enable data analysis to take place. He next thanked Benin and his Government as host country for this important meeting.

The MIKE Director expressed his confidence in obtaining the full support of the range States in getting the baseline information and data analyses. He emphasised the importance of the subregion for the Programme. He next gave thanks to the interpreters and Nigeria for chairing the meeting.

The new SSC Chairman (Mali) gave thanks to the MIKE Programme. Mrs Christine Sagno of Guinea, closed the meeting by giving thanks to the MIKE Programme on behalf of all the range States.

Cotonou, 29 of August 2003

Philippe Bouché
Sub-Regional Support Officer
Programme CITES-MIKE

Liste des participants/ List of the Participants.

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