

**Sub-regional Implementation Meeting
of
a long-term programme for
Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants
(MIKE)
in South East Asia**

Bangkok, Thailand
03 – 04 March 2003

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Subregional Implementation Meeting of a long-term programme for Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) in Southeast Asia

Bangkok, Thailand
3 –4 March 2003

1. Welcome and Opening

Welcome and opening remarks were made by Mr Nigel Hunter, Director of the MIKE Programme. He expressed gratitude to the donor community, in particular the US Fish and Wildlife Service who was represented by Dr Karl Stromayer (Division of International Conservation) and which had made available the funding for this implementation meeting. He thanked the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation of the Thai government and the Wildlife Conservation Society in facilitating the meeting in Bangkok.

The Director introduced the representatives of Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. The CITES Secretariat was represented at the meeting by the Deputy Secretary-General, Dr Jim Armstrong.

On behalf of the Secretary General of CITES, Dr Armstrong welcomed the participants from the eight range States to the important meeting for the launch of a long term programme for the monitoring of the illegal killing of elephants (MIKE) in Southeast Asia. The origin of the MIKE programme can be traced back to CITES at the CoP 10 in 1997 with the adoption of Resolution Conf. 10.10. It is a site based sampling system which has had great support from the African range States in its initial phase of implementation. The CITES Secretariat is keen to see its implementation start in Asian sub-regions as the information provided at site, national, sub-regional and continental levels will help the conservation of the Asian elephant. Dr Armstrong thanked the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Japan for their financial support. He welcomed the assistance of Dr Tony Lynam to the Secretariat in assisting the implementation of the MIKE system in the Southeast Asia subregion.

2. Objectives of MIKE

A presentation summarizing the objectives and intended benefits and results of the MIKE programme was made by the MIKE Director. A copy of the presentation is attached here in Annex I.

In summary, the purpose of MIKE is to provide information needed for elephant range States to make appropriate management and enforcement decisions, and to build institutional capacity within the range States for the long-term management of their elephant populations. The importance of capacity building and providing the range States with information was emphasized.

The main benefit therefore will include an increased knowledge of elephant numbers and the changes in these numbers and a better understanding of the threats to their survival, as well as the associated knowledge of other species and their habitats generally.

3. Institutional Arrangements

3.1 Structure and Coordination

The diagram depicting the MIKE institutional arrangements adopted in African and South Asia Sub-regions is attached in Annex II and this structure was being recommended for consideration by the Southeast Asian range States.

The administrative structure of MIKE is innovative and serves as an effective conduit for communication between the CITES Secretariat and range States. The institutional benefits of MIKE will last long after the external support for the MIKE programme has ended. It was emphasized that the MIKE Programme aimed at providing the long-lasting institutional capacity necessary for CITES Parties to sustainably manage their wildlife resources.

As mandated by CoP 11, the implementation of MIKE is the responsibility of the Standing Committee, who have in turn set up a Sub-committee, known as the MIKE Sub-group, to carry out that responsibility. Prior to the establishment of the Central Co-ordinating Unit (CCU) and a MIKE Director to head the unit, the implementing action has been undertaken by the CITES Secretariat, but this has now been delegated to the Director, who reports to the Deputy Secretary General and the MIKE Sub-group. The Director and his Central Co-ordinating Unit are located in Nairobi, Kenya.

Each of these Sub-regions will have their MIKE implementation supervised by a Sub-regional Steering Committee (SSC), comprising of range State representatives (usually nominated at the level of a Wildlife Director or equivalent). The SSC will elect a chairperson who will become the main contact person for the MIKE Director. The MIKE implementation will be facilitated by a Sub-regional Support Office (SSO), who reports to the MIKE Director. Each range State would then have a National Officer (NO) and Site officers (SO) as the core staff employed by the range State for implementing MIKE in their respective countries. The NO and SO would be contributed by the member governments and not employed by MIKE.

The roles of the NO and SO were outlined by the Director and these are attached as Annex III. The terms of reference for the SSO are attached as Annex IV.

In addition, there is a MIKE Technical Advisory Group (TAG), a global body providing technical input to the CITES secretariat, the Conference of the Parties and the CCU. This group comprises one expert drawn from each subregion and, to date, 4 extra nominated specialists. Two additional TAG members would be appointed to represent the South Asian and Southeast Asian subregions. Participants were asked to suggest suitable candidates for selection by the MIKE Subgroup of the CITES Standing Committee in April 2003. TAG members are selected for their technical expertise and although they may be representing a given region they are not speaking on behalf of any country in that sub-region.

3.2 Decisions taken

The following decisions on the Institutional Arrangements for MIKE were reached by the range States :

- i) The establishment of the Sub-regional Steering Committee, National Officers and Site Officers was approved. (It was recognized that this structure was the essential one and did not preclude developing it to take into account the participation of different institutions and federal/state relationships)
- ii) The nomination of Thailand as Chair of the Sub-regional Steering Committee for the period up to the CoP 13 was unanimously approved. The Chair shall be elected by the range States on a rotational basis in line with the CoP cycle.

iii) The location of the Sub-regional Support Office in Bangkok was approved.

As a result of these decisions, each range State was requested to send their nominations to the MIKE Director for the Steering Committee member, National and Site Officers before the end of March 2003.

4. Site Identification

The sites for Phase I implementation were identified by the range States for the start-up of MIKE implementation. Phase II and III sites were also identified for future implementation. The list of sites is attached here in Annex V.

The Director indicated that he would facilitate meetings between Myanmar, Bangladesh and India on their cross border populations that occur along their sub-regional boundaries.

5. MIKE Forms

The model example of the MIKE forms that are currently being used for data collection in the four sub-regions in Africa were tabled. Analysis at national and site level is the ultimate aim of MIKE, and this can be realized once the tools and training are provided at all levels. While there are national differences in data collection, MIKE requires objective, standardized protocols to obtain information that is comparable for analytical purposes. A key issue is the quality control of information which is important. It is crucial to ensure data flow from the site level to the national level and up to the sub-regional levels.

It was emphasized that these forms need to be harmonized with the existing forms currently used in some range States. Following acceptance of the basis of the MIKE forms, it was agreed that the range States would send their existing patrol forms to the Director to begin the process for harmonization with MIKE Forms.

6. Population Survey

The Director informed the range States of a technical meeting which was being convened in Bangkok on 17-18 March 2003. He clarified that this meeting was intended to give the NGOs working in Southeast Asia the opportunity to share their concerns on population survey methodology. The feedback from this meeting would be reported to the TAG at a meeting convened on 28-29 April 2003. This would be followed by a dialogue with the range States in order to present the options being suggested and to agree on a site by site basis, the most appropriate methodology to be used.

7. Data Management

Inputs were provided by the range States for improving the draft Data Policy which prescribes the procedure for information and data handling, access and release policy and protocols under the MIKE process.

The revised draft of the Data Policy is attached in Annex VI.

8. Next Steps

The following list outlines the next steps that need to be taken towards the full implementation of MIKE in the Southeast Asia subregion:

Range States :

- Formal nominations of Steering Committee/National Officer/Site Officer before March 31, 2003
- Suggestions for TAG members before March 31, 2003
- Send existing forms to MIKE SSO before March 31, 2003

Director of the MIKE Central Coordinating Unit :

- Finalise SSO office in Bangkok (March)
- Procure equipment (March/April)
 - GPS
 - Computers
- Harmonise forms (April/May)
- Convene the 1st Regional LEM Training Workshop (June/July)
- Follow up on Population Survey Methodology (August/September)
- Identify the Regional Training Workshop on Data Management

The Director shall follow up with each range State on the agreed list of actions.

The Director would commence the process for grant applications to donors, in particular the Asian Elephant Conservation Fund of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The matching funds from Japan will be utilized for start-up implementation in Southeast Asia.

The meeting welcomed the recommendation by Malaysia that a formal proposal for funding be submitted to the ASEAN Secretariat based in Jakarta. The Director assured that although China is not part of the ASEAN group of nations, other alternative sources of funding would be explored.

9. Concluding Remarks and Closure

The Director expressed his gratitude to the range States for their participation and to the Thai government and the US Fish and Wildlife Service for their hosting and support of this important meeting. Special thanks were also given to WCS for their logistical support.

The meeting was closed by Dr Armstrong on behalf of the CITES Secretariat who congratulated Thailand as the first chair of the Subregional Steering Committee. He expressed his admiration and personal satisfaction to the range States in their commitment to adopt MIKE as an operational programme in the Southeast Asia subregion. This is an important outcome for elephant conservation in the region and he looks forward to visiting each country in the run-up to the CoP13 in Thailand next year.

The level of cooperation, collaboration and constructive dialogue experienced during this meeting bodes well for the development of the MIKE into a valuable national management tool and a crucial mechanism for effective management of the Asian elephants. He extended his gratitude to the Thai government for their hospitality as well as the donor for their funding commitment. On behalf of the CITES Secretariat, he wished each range State every success in their implementation of MIKE.

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