

Evaluation Abstract

Title, author and date of the evaluation report:

Support to Activities of the IUCN/SSC African Elephant Specialist Group, Project Evaluation, prepared by S.D. Turner and J.P. d'Huart, September 2004

Name of project, programme or organizational unit:

African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG)

Objectives of the project, programme or mandate of the organizational unit:

Overall objective:

- To promote the long-term conservation of Africa's elephants throughout their range.

Specific objectives:

- To compile and synthesize information on the conservation and status of the African elephant across its range;
- To provide and improve technical information and advice on the conservation of Africa's elephants;
- To promote and catalyze conservation activities on behalf of Africa's elephants;
- To build capacity through the exchange of ideas, information and technical expertise among the members of the Group.

IUCN area of specialisation: Species Conservation

Geographical area: Africa

Project or programme duration, length of existence of organisational unit:

March 2000 – November 2004

Overall budget of the project, programme or organizational unit: EUR 1,178,800 (EC funding representing 67% of the total eligible project costs)

Donor(s): The European Commission (EC) is the major donor of this project. Other contributors have included the United Kingdom Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); the World Wildlife Fund (WWF); Conservation International's Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund; the International Elephant Foundation and the Chicago Zoological Society.

Objectives of the evaluation:

1. To assess the performance of the project against its objectives; and
2. To identify lessons learned that may be relevant to future projects and initiatives.

Type of evaluation: Final project

Period covered by the evaluation: March 2000 – November 2004

Commissioned by: European Commission and African Elephant Specialist Group

Audience: The AfESG Secretariat, the Species Survival Commission, IUCN and the donor community

Evaluation team: External

Methodology used:

The evaluation is based on a review of documents, semi-structured interviews, and a questionnaire that was e-mailed to 72 people, with a 50% response rate (36). Interview and questionnaire informants included AfESG members and Secretariat staff; others working in the field of African elephant conservation; and donor representatives.

Questions of the evaluation:

Five performance criteria guided project evaluation:

- (1) Effectiveness (i.e. whether the planned objectives were in fact achieved);
- (2) Relevance (i.e. whether project design has been and is still targeting the real needs and problems of the right beneficiaries)
- (3) Impact (i.e. the wider outcomes for a larger group of persons or for society as a whole);
- (4) Efficiency (i.e. whether the same results could have been achieved at lower costs; or whether there might have been different, more appropriate ways of achieving the same results); and
- (5) Sustainability (i.e. whether the flow of benefits to the beneficiaries is likely to continue or not, and why).

Findings:

- Relevance: The Evaluation Team found the AfESG Project to have been appropriately designed and its objectives highly relevant to the target users. The latter are considered to have been correctly identified, with AfESG taking the right approach in emphasising coordination and policy functions in its work, rather than direct intervention, as a group, at the field level. It is also considered appropriate for AfESG to commit itself to the socio-economic aspects of elephant conservation – notably human-elephant conflict – and the implications for poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods.
- Effectiveness: The AfESG has been effective in compiling, synthesising and improving information on the conservation and status of African elephants, as well as in providing and improving technical advice on African elephant conservation. The Group's advisory services to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) are considered critically important to African elephant conservation. Another effective area has been catalysing and promoting conservation action through the promotion of appropriate policy at national and regional levels. Although at an unacceptably high administrative cost, the Group has also built capacity for African elephant conservation through the support for a Small Grants Fund provided by the EC.
- Efficiency: The AfESG has efficiently planned, monitored and reported on its work, with the standards of its Secretariat operations assessed as unusually high. Efficiency has partly been hampered, and some workloads increased, by inadequate communication and differing work methods between the Nairobi, Yaounde and Ouagadougou offices. Inaction on behalf of the Central African office is seen as continuously constraining work. In terms of financing, the AfESG has effectively mobilised additional resources. However, having to devote so much planning and administrative time to the constant search for funds is seen as inefficient.
- Impact: While it is considered premature to evaluate AfESG's impact, it has been emphasized that the group's work has improved the prospects for long-term conservation of the species. The project's positive impact is contingent upon sustaining the group's resources.
- Sustainability: Although not amenable to conventional sustainability analysis, continued funding of the AfESG's core costs and work programmes is considered strongly justified.

Recommendations:

- **Relevance:** It is recommended that the EC and other donors provide further support for the core costs of the group, thus resisting the urge of 'projectising' every tranche of support by structuring grants around outputs and outcomes that can supposedly be achieved in the short term. In addition, the group should retain its emphasis on coordination and policy, while endorsing a growing commitment to vertical integration between the field and policy levels.
- **Effectiveness:** Work on compiling, synthesising and improving information on the conservation and status of African elephants should continue, particularly on sustaining and building the quality and coverage of the African Elephant Database. Further effort should also be put into expanding AfESG's technical advice element, maintaining its advisory services, and increasing the Group's role and resources for policy. Any commitment to the operation of the Small Grants Fund should also be coupled with an adequate provision for its high overhead costs. Finally, it is important that the AfESG continues its efforts to build elephant conservation capacity in Central and West Africa.
- **Efficiency:** The Group would operate more cost-effectively if its funding were consolidated into fewer grants over longer periods. It is considered that this approach would be more cost-effective for donors too. It is also suggested that identifying more efficient modalities for the administrative and programmatic integration of SSC Specialist Groups into IUCN should be a priority for the second phase of the Union's Regionalisation and Decentralisation Review.
- **Impact and Sustainability:** The sustainability of the group should be built around *two qualitative assumptions*: (1) despite the complexity and costs, the AfESG's status as part of an IUCN Commission is an important attribute and (2) the group has a special status and role in African elephant conservation, as a professionally credible provider of impartial information and advice. It should further be achieved through the following *two operational priorities*: (1) that IUCN integrate the work of the AfESG more explicitly into its Programme and accept the logical implication that it has as much responsibility for funding it as it does for funding other parts of the Programme, and (2) that the three core scientific bodies in African elephant conservation, and the donors committed to their cause, move towards more integrated, longer-term funding of their complementary roles and programmes.

Lessons Learned: Not specified

Language of the evaluation: English

Available from: IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC); IUCN Global Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative, Gland, Switzerland