

Summary Report to AHEAD-GLTFCA Working Group on meetings with SADC Secretariat in March, 2004

Prepared by

David Cumming on behalf of the AHEAD-GLTFCA Working Group

Two meetings were held with Members of the SADC Secretariat following the 25th February AHEAD GLTFCA Working Group Meeting held in Pretoria. Both meetings with SADC were arranged by Peace Parks Foundation (PPF). The first was held with Dr. Themba Mhlongo, Chief Director, SADC Secretariat, at the Johannesburg Airport on the 3rd March and the second was an informal meeting with a few members of the SADC Secretariat in Gaborone on the 16th March. A brief summary of the main points emerging from each of these meetings follows. I should emphasize that these reflect my own notes and perceptions of the meetings and in no way constitute an “official” record of them.

1. Meeting with Dr. Mhlongo, Chief Director, 3rd March 2004.

The was held in the lobby of the Hilton International Hotel at Johannesburg Airport between 0815 and 0930 and was attended by Dr. Mhlongo of SADC, Sedia Modise, Cobus Raath and Frans Stroebel from PPF and David Cumming. Dr. Mlongo was given a 3 page Executive Summary entitled “Sustaining animal and ecosystem health in large landscapes: Draft concept/discussion paper for a programme to address Wildlife, Livestock and related Ecosystem and Human Health issues in the SADC Region with particular reference to Transfrontier Conservation Areas.” David Cumming went through the power point presentation of the programme with Dr. Mhlongo, following which the topic was briefly discussed before Dr. Mhlongo had to leave. The following points emerged from the meeting.

1. The AHEAD Forum at the WPC had a very full representation of vets, ecologists and social scientists from SADC and from East Africa and the WPC had as a result of the Forum included an official IUCN resolution on animal health and conservation (protected areas) as a critical emerging issue. The concept being presented to SADC had been initiated by one of the working groups at the Forum and further developed with support from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).
2. There was need to consider how the programme could be rolled out to other TFCA areas sooner rather than later and it would be useful to prioritise TFCAs on the basis of their disease or animal health problems. Dr Mhlongo pointed out that such action would have to be linked to those TFCAs where agreements between governments already existed. Trying to take action where there was not an agreement or MOU in place could raise objections from governments. Sedia Modise, however, noted that progress in the development of some TFCAs was being held up by animal health issues. The signing of the MOU for the Shashe - Limpopo TFCA was a case in point where Botswana was very reluctant to sign up on the TFCA because of FMD in Zimbabwe.
3. Economic issues, particularly in relation to international markets, were the key bottom line and this aspect of the programme (although included in the themes in the draft) needed to be more explicitly drawn out.
4. The theme on building interdisciplinary understanding was considered by Dr. Mhlongo to be very important and an essential component.
5. It was important to have a clear objective on which we could deliver, as Dr. Mhlongo put it “we need to clearly define the problem and demonstrate that we can cut the meat.” The central issue needed to be very clearly spelt out.

6. The development of an animal health policy document and protocol must not duplicate what is already in the Wildlife and Law Enforcement Protocol and those parts of it already dealing with the TFCAs.
7. It would be necessary to get buy-in from governments of countries involved and particularly from the veterinarians in the region and to build consensus. Frans Strobel said they had funds for two posts dealing with the TFCA support to SADC one of which would be attached to Onderstepoort who could be assigned to this task.
8. If the Secretariat just pushed the proposal forward there would be high risk that the project would be seen within SADC and the region as a “Consultants” project and be rejected.
9. Sedia Modise noted that it was important to move with caution on this programme and avoid the perception that it was a South African baby – there was great sensitivity about initiatives emanating from South Africa and this is why he is based in Gaborone and not in Stellenbosch. Frans Stroebel emphasized that PPF wished to be no more than a facilitator in the process.

2. Informal meeting with members of the Food Agriculture and Natural Resource (FANR) sector of the SADC Secretariat. 16 March 2004 in Gaborone.

This was an **informal** meeting and was arranged with the help of Dr. B. Mtei (Senior Livestock Expert, FANR) and Sedia Modise, PPF Coordinator based in Gaborone. It was attended by seven members of the FANR staff and chaired by Dr. B. Chaura (Senior Statistician/Economist, FANR). Sedia Modise and Leonard Dikobe attended from the PPF Office in Gaborone together with Cobus Raath, Mike Kock and David Cumming.

The two hour meeting began at about 0830 and after introductions a power point presentation on Sustaining Animal and Ecosystem Health in Large Landscapes was given by David Cumming. The background to the origin of the concept at the World Parks Congress and the subsequent follow up by the AHEAD-GLTFCA with WCS support were explained. It was also emphasized that while the concept presently focused on the GLTFCA it could form a suitable template for tackling essentially similar problems in TFCAs across the region.

Following the presentation there was an extended question and discussion session and the main points and comments made by members of the SADC group were:

1. The concept was accepted as valuable and should be moved forward. The complexity of health issues related to TFCAs was emphasized several times hence the need for an approach like the AHEAD initiative.
2. There was a need to create awareness of the AHEAD initiative and bring it onto the agenda of SADC especially that of the SADC Veterinary Committee.
3. It was emphasized that it was important to engage with national veterinary services in the SADC region particularly since animal health issues were recognised as a significant constraint to the full development of TFCAs and the transborder management of natural resources in the SADC region.
4. Land tenure was raised as a potentially important issue in the control of animal diseases since in many border areas communal tenure and an associated lack of coordination in the implementation of disease control measures could be a problem.
5. It was noted that part of SADC’s policy was to concentrate cropping and food production in those areas where intensification of agricultural production was appropriate and to eventually reduce the tendency to try and grow crops in marginal areas that might be much better suited to other land uses – such as wildlife and tourism and the GLTFCA.
6. It was agreed that the initial part of the Power Point presentation should emphasize the broad-based regional origin of the AHEAD initiative and demonstrate its evolution through several meetings with reference to the GLTFCA.

7. There idea of David Cumming and others from the group attending the Veterinary Committee meeting due to be held in Malawi on the 19th April was discussed. The meeting had a very tight schedule and at this late stage it may not be appropriate to add it to the agenda. Dr Mtei suggested that as a default option he could table the revised version of the concept document for noting or that a poster could be prepared.
8. The two SADC Secretariat contact people for veterinary and wildlife issues at the meeting were Dr B. Mtei (Senior Livestock Expert <bjmtei@sadc.int>) and Manuel Enock (Wildlife Expert <manuele@sadc.int>) and they wished to be kept abreast of the AHEAD-GLTFCA working group activities and development of the programme.

David Cumming

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