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Launching Protected Area Network Management and Building Capacity in Post-conflict South Sudan

Project Coordination Meeting

1. MEETING MINUTES

Date and time: 22 August 2013; 10.00 – 12.30

Location: MSI Conference Room, Juba, South Sudan

Participants:

- ▶ Lt Gen. Charles Acire, Undersecretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Tourism, Animal Resources and Fisheries (chair)
- ▶ Lt Gen. Alfred Akwoch, Advisor, Ministry of Interior and Wildlife Conservation
- ▶ Lt Gen. Fraser Tong Kuotwel, Advisor, Ministry of Interior and Wildlife Conservation
- ▶ Joeseph Orot, Director General, Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Tourism, Animal Resources and Fisheries
- ▶ Col. Minasona Lero Peter, Director of Wildlife Management, Ministry of Interior and Wildlife Conservation
- ▶ Col. Martin Ring Malek, Director for Officers Affairs, Ministry Interior and Wildlife Conservation
- ▶ Kristin Joplin, Team Leader - Office of Transition and Conflict Mitigation, USAID
- ▶ Tom Rhodes, Director – Economic Growth, USAID
- ▶ Rachael Karioki, Deputy Chief, Office of Transition and Conflict Mitigation, USAID
- ▶ Marianne Kajokaya, Program Management Specialist, Office of Transition and Conflict Mitigation, USAID
- ▶ Malick Haidara, Agriculture Officer, USAID
- ▶ Dr. Amanuel Gebremedhin, Team Leader CPRU, UNDP
- ▶ Martin Dramani, Programme Analyst, UNDP
- ▶ Kennedy Chibvongodze, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, UNDP
- ▶ Dr. James Kahurananga, Technical Advisor, AWF
- ▶ Rob Craig, Deputy Country Director, WCS
- ▶ Michael Lopidia, Boma N.P. Coordinator, WCS
- ▶ Paul Peter Awol, Badingilo N.P. Coordinator, WCS
- ▶ Dave Henson, Protected Area Project Coordinator, WCS (rapporteur)

Introductions and welcoming remarks

- Rob Craig, WCS Deputy Director, opened the meeting by welcoming the project partners and to the third quarterly coordination meeting supporting the implementation of the GEF Project, and thanked USAID for hosting the meeting.
- Rachael Karioki reminded participants that this project is a priority for USAID, and highlighted President Obama's recent executive order to combat wildlife poaching and trafficking and that the US government has allocated additional funding to help address this issue
- Amanuel Gebremedhin then spoke and highlighted that this project is also a key project for UNDP and

that while there may be the need for the adaptation of some activities in response to government restructuring project implementation it must continue.

- Tom Rhodes highlighted that USAID has been working with WCS and the government of South Sudan since 2007 and that they have maintained this relationship through previous restructurings, and that the recent changes can easily be adapted to.
- Rob Craig, WCS Deputy Director, then briefly provided an overview of the agenda for the meeting. David Henson followed this with a brief review of the action items that resulted from the last meeting, and the minutes were endorsed as accurate by participants.

Summary of Discussions and Presentations

- Rob Craig then provided an overview of progress made supporting the MWCT at the central level. This was followed by a brief review of each focal protected area by:
 - Michael Lopidia, Southern N.P. Coordinator providing an overview of Southern N.P; and
 - Paul Peter Awol, Badingilo N.P. Coordinator, reviewing Badingilo activities.
- An overview of the presentations on central support, Southern National Park and Badingilo National Park is provided in the Annex. Activities in Boma National Park are on hold pending an improvement in the security situation.
- Discussions were held following the presentations, and a number of resolutions and action items were discussed and agreed. The resolutions and action items are summarized in more detail in Section 2 below.
- One key point that emerged from the discussions and was a shared concern by a number of participants was the level of community involvement in the project, and in the development and management of the focal protected areas.
- Rob Craig highlighted that this meeting was focused mainly on the activities implemented under the GEF project, which was developed to match the ongoing work being supported by USAID. The USAID project continues to involve a significant amount of community engagement, capacity building and livelihood support, and WCS has a strong track record of working with communities in all areas.
- All participants were in agreement that the separation of the Wildlife and Tourism Directorates into difference ministries, while perhaps not ideal from an implementation perspective, need not undermine project implementation, and activities will continue as before – including regular coordination meetings.

Closing and Next Steps

- Charles Acire drew the meeting to a close by thanking all participants for their attendance, and highlighting that although it may take a while for people to adapt to the new government structure, things will settle down and implementation should continue as planned.
- Rachael Karioki concluded the meeting by highlighting that it was encouraging to see the continued high level engagement of all the key stakeholders involved in the project and that USAID hopes that this will continue into the future.

2. MEETING RESOLUTIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

Technical Priorities

- Directorates need to collect equipment to support development of publicity materials, ecological surveys and protected area planning/monitoring activities that are ready for hand over but are currently being stored on their behalf by WCS.
- Development and implementation of a Communications Strategy. Building on recent progress with newsletters, calendar and documentary filming, this will include website, brochures and posters and be linked to training and the provision of media equipment under the GEF project
- Training is needed for staff in the Wildlife Directorate. This includes both HQ and field based staff.

Funding is available under the GEF project to support targeted in-situ/on-the-job training. Specific needs will be identified.

- Carry out the scheduled institutional review/ assessment of potential management models and mechanisms that could be utilized to improve the effectiveness of protected area management in South Sudan
- Follow-up to the Wildlife and Tourism Bills consultation workshop, focusing on incorporating all pertinent feedback and comments from the stakeholder into updated drafts of the Bills, before their submission to the relevant government bodies for review and approval for enactment

MWCT Administrative Issues

- Badingilo N.P. still requires a senior officer to be appointed to the area as park warden to oversee all operations and serve as a focal point for project activities. This problem has persisted now for almost two years and has been raised previously.
- Again, there are persistent problems regarding the deployment of sufficient ranger forces to the focal areas. This issue was also raised at previous meetings and specifically includes:
 - Badingilo N.P. requires more than the current actual deployment of around 60 rangers to the park to enable effective management of the area
 - Southern N.P. requires more than the current deployment of around 65 rangers in the Lakes State section to enable effective management of the area (ideally around 250)

Project Management

- The next project coordination meeting will take place in early November. As the secretariat, WCS will send of the necessary documents, including the agenda in advance of the meeting.
- A GEF focal point has now been appointed for South Sudan, Mr David Batali, housed in the Ministry of Environment, and should be invited to the next coordination meeting.

3. ANNEX: SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY PROGRESS AND PLANS

Central MWCT Support and Capacity Building

Policy & laws:

- Stakeholder consultation workshop to review the Tourism and the Wildlife Conservation & Protected Area Bills with representatives from the ten states, central government and international partners held on 23-24 July
- Presentation and report summarizing the status of wildlife and protected areas and the progress made by the MWCT with support from its international partners to:
 - Council of States at the Legislative Assembly on 12 June 2013
 - Committee of Land, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
- Progress was made in finalizing and submitting the initial drafts to Tourism Directorate of:
 - National Tourism Strategy, which provides strategic guidance for development of the tourism sector building on best practice from other African countries.
 - Regulations in support of tourism bills: Hotel Standards and Tourism Business Licensing; South Sudan Tourism Training College; Tourism in Protected Areas

Land use planning

- Third phase of elephant collaring completed with an additional 26 elephants collared during the quarter - for continued tracking and monitoring of the majority of South Sudan's remaining populations.

- Extensive aerial reconnaissance collecting systematic data on the relative abundance and distribution of other large animals. Information on human activity in and around the protected areas and wildlife corridors was gathered as well.
- Three week socio-economic research and awareness raising carried out in Wulu County, Lakes State, bordering Southern Park from late March into April. Almost 3,000 people were reached during the survey.

Law enforcement

WCS expert visited for two weeks in April to undertake assessment and training for developing a standardized Law Enforcement Monitoring system for South Sudan's PAs. This will support an overall strengthening of law enforcement capacity and operations at both protected area (strategic planning and motivation of rangers) and national level (standardized reporting, improved communications). The system will utilize software called SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) and mobile hand-held data collection devices to help simplify and standardize mapping and reporting. Information needs and system requirements will be developed in coming months.

Key Challenges

1. Conflict in Boma
 - a. Operations in Boma suspended. Assets vandalised and stolen
 - b. Prevented moving forward on Akobo-Pochalla UNDP-SSRF project
2. Government austerity measures have restricted the operations and ability of MWCT and other government counterparts in undertake their role in project activities.
3. Clarity of jurisdictional roles and responsibilities between the central ministry and the state governments, and effectively integrating non-military technical staff into Wildlife Service hierarchy.

Next Steps

- Completion of collaring remaining elephant populations and aerial survey work in October/ November
- Follow-up to the bills consultation workshop.
- Continued work on PA assessment and development of the strategy with MWCT to guide rationalisation of the country's protected area network and preparation for workshop on subject
- The option for supporting an institutional assessment for potential management models and mechanisms that could be utilized to improve the effectiveness of PA management in South Sudan.
- The MWCT website will be completed and work will start on developing brochures and other targeted conservation messages (especially relating to key species at risk of extinction in the coming years).

Southern National Park

Community Engagement

- Socio-economic surveys and awareness raising activities completed in/around the borders of Southern National Park in Wulu County, Lakes State
- Estimated that nearly 3,000 people reached, including community leaders, local politicians, and wildlife forces

Infrastructure and equipment

- Establishment of Dokteku ranger outpost. Opening of access road from Dokteku outpost to the Mvolo-Rumbek road, delivery of LEM monitoring tools and field equipment
- Refresher training provided to rangers in Dokteku in the use of LEM monitoring tools (GPS, camera and filling in monitoring tools).

- Establishment of Bahr Gel ranger outpost (reallocating the rangers and the HF radio to the office after its construction; they were previously using a classroom for the radio).
- Construction of the SNP HQ and a store in Motoronyo completed
- A joint reconnaissance mission by MWCT, WCS and FFI to identify the location for the construction of a ranger post in Western Equatoria, Yambio completed
- Construction of the ranger post in Western Equatoria, Yambio, completed. The wildlife forces selected the site; FFI funded road clearance, and WCS funded the construction of the post.
- Collection and transportation of stones for construction of operational basecamp, and, road repair along the Motoronya HQ access road, as well as fixing the River Gulmar river bridge.
- Opening the airstrip (cut and cleared trees, termite mounds, and smoothed earth), and clearance and cutting of access road to the strip airstrip complete
- Establishment of operational basecamp at the HQ site underway (clearing the site, digging and filling foundations with stones; digging pit latrines).

Key Challenges

- Insufficient men deployed to SNP to enable management of the area. Around 250 requested, and have been ordered to the park but are not yet deployed. Rations not delivered to the field.
- Many of the 45 rangers trained by MWCT/WCS in SNP have been redeployed. Ideally these men should be included in any men redeployed to the park, where possible.

Next Steps

- Continue with transportation of sand and stone for the construction of the basecamp, and continue with fixing the HQ access road and improvements to the airstrip.
- Complete construction of the tent platforms
- Equip the HQ and ranger posts with furniture, HF radios and establish Internet in the Operational Base.
- Continue supporting the rangers in LEM and other activities related to wildlife conservation, including training rangers on monitoring, food rations and field equipment.
- Education outreach campaigns on wildlife conservation with communities and rangers, including meeting with communities members on SNP borders

Badingilo National Park

Law Enforcement:

Notable successes were achieved by maintaining patrols over the larger area of the park that had been established in the last quarter, these include:

- Arrest of three SPLA soldiers on Mogiri-Lafon road on April 16th 2013, and handed over to divisional headquarters in Mogiri for trial
- Ivory dealer arrested in Eastern Equatoria State, trail held and prosecution successful with the offender receiving two years imprisonment and a fine of SSP 3,000
- In addition, 17 rangers trained in LEM techniques and reporting across the park
 - Nine trained at Bala Pools HQ (three from HQ; one from Mangala; five from Gerkesi)
 - Eight trained at Lafon

Infrastructure and Construction work:

- Garage construction and the fencing of the Park HQ have now been completed - platforms for accommodation tents at HQ are also now complete
- The construction of a room to house the generator at the HQ has begun, and will be completed in the following quarter
- Construction of ranger administration post in Lafon area is now complete, and the clearance of Lafon airstrip is continuing

- Panamkor ranger site identified and process to start construction are underway (this is in the tiang migratory corridor)

Community Awareness and Security:

- Community awareness raising and community security partnership in Gemeiza is progressing through community livelihood programmes (fisheries project)

Next Steps

- Continued support to law enforcement and patrols
- Delivery of additional equipment required to operationalise the HQ
- Community leadership training re-scheduled for the following quarter
- Continued community awareness raising and development of security partnerships in Gemeiza

Key Challenges:

- Unresolved issue of there being no park warden for what is now an extensive period of time.
- Insufficient number of wildlife forces for effective control and management of the area.
- Lack of a ranger posts north of park's HQ (there is an urgent need for one at Sudan Safari).
- Increasing tree felling, charcoal production and agriculture by rangers, SPLA and communities.
- Need for cooperation with SPLA, including initiation of joint patrols and sharing of information.