



Technical Support Team (TST) Update

Item 2b(En)

GRASP Executive Committee Meeting
10 - 11 September 2009

B. Technical Support Team Update

The GRASP Technical Support Teams (TST) are implemented by the Born Free Foundation with funding from the European Commission (until December 2009). There is a permanent, part-time team which conducts ongoing activities and administration, whilst additional people or groups can be nominated as TST representatives and/or supported by the TST for specific activities. The permanent team consists of Ian Redmond (Chief Technical Advisor to GRASP and UN Year of the Gorilla (YoG) Ambassador), David Jay (TST Co-ordinator), Chris Wright (additional capacity at Born Free), and Katy Jedamzik (assistant to Ian Redmond). The TST's priority areas are: working with range states and their GRASP Focal Points; funding field-oriented activities; supporting the Secretariat on internal administrative activities especially meetings; and representing GRASP at an international level. Over the ten month period covered by this report the team has been engaged in a range of activities for GRASP and for YoG (working with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)) covering all of these areas. In particular we are pleased to have been able to fund field survey equipment and training workshops in several locations, and assist with the administration, logistics and promotion of the UN Year of the Gorilla, of which GRASP is one of the key supporting agencies.

The activities of GRASP are structured around the Objectives detailed in the Programme of Action, which are:

1. To prevent habitat loss and population decline in 50% of priority populations and habitats of each taxon of great apes, and to reduce the rate of loss or decline in 95% of the other populations
2. To increase great ape habitat in protected areas by 20% and eliminate habitat loss and population decline within protected areas
3. To identify and promote, in cooperation with local communities, economic activities compatible with great ape conservation and mitigate development activities detrimental to great ape populations and habitat
4. To use a habitat and population monitoring and evaluation system to inform conservation decision-making
5. To provide the enabling conditions for the GRASP Partnership to achieve its objectives

Objectives 1&2:

Whilst support for field work over the last ten months has largely focussed on monitoring activities (see Objective 4) the TST has provided funding for a local community participation workshop in Mali to assist in developing strategies for the protection of chimpanzees in and around the Bafing Nature Reserve, having supported the development of the proposal. Administrative support was also provided in transferring a donation from a British wildlife

photographer to a wildlife law enforcement project in Republic of Congo. Progress has been made in arranging to supply basic equipment for use by Range State Focal Points in Angola, Gabon and Rwanda (14 range states have received IT equipment through this programme to date).

Objective 3:

The TST represented GRASP at the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) meeting in Poland in January 2009, maintaining contact with this important convention at a critical time, and promoting the linkages between reduction of CO₂, maintenance of healthy standing forests, and great ape conservation.

Objective 4:

In collaboration with the Scientific Commission the TST has been facilitating the collection of robust survey data on great ape populations in areas identified as currently lacking in such data. This has included support (both financial and to some degree administrative) for workshops to train local personnel in scientific survey techniques both in West Africa (February 2009, through Wild Chimpanzee Foundation) and in Sumatra (June 2009, through Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme). In addition, field survey equipment was provided to the Wildlife Conservation Society to be deployed in Gabon for use by WCS and other survey teams. Funding was also provided to support surveys conducted by Wildlife Conservation Society in Mone, Cameroon.

Objective 5:

The TST has undertaken several activities to promote awareness and understanding of GRASP and great ape conservation around the world, including attendance at the showing of the GRASP-sponsored film 'Apes and Gorillas?' (about Petit Loango, Gabon) both at the WildTalk Africa show in South Africa and at the inauguration of new RAMSAR sites in Gabon. In August Ian Redmond began his State of the Gorilla journey, as YoG Ambassador, intending to visit all ten range states in five weeks. By the end of the month he had visited four countries (Uganda, Rwanda, DRC, and RoC), attended the Great Ape Health Workshop in Uganda on behalf of GRASP and attended press conferences in Uganda and Rwanda, as well as meeting various professionals and officials, conducting interviews about gorillas and providing a blog on the Wildlife Direct YoG page.

The TST also provided logistic support for and attended the memorable launch of the Year of the Gorilla in London in January, and over the course of the year assisted National Geographic Kids magazine in the production of an extensive cover piece about gorillas. Administrative support for YoG was provided for the production of a short film for YoG featuring George Shaller and for the establishment of the YoG blog on Wildlife Direct, whilst an active role was played in negotiations for arranging a GRASP football match. The TST also attended a WWF regional planning meeting in Cameroon to facilitate the inclusion of GRASP priorities in this major NGO Partner exercise.

One of the main functions of the TST is assistance with operations of the GRASP Partnership itself. Over the last ten months this has included administrative and funding support for both the last and the present Executive Committee meeting, and the meeting of the Scientific Committee in Germany in March 2009, which the TST also attended. Since January 2009 the TST has also contracted the services of three consultants to the GRASP Secretariat, one permanent and two temporary or on a specific project basis. Recently the TST has worked with the Focal Point for Guinea to plan a regional meeting of Focal Points, a proposal for which has now been approved. In addition, the TST has played an active role in internal discussions, decision making and planning for the GRASP core operating team.