

May 2008 update from the GRASP Secretariat

## **New Initiatives**

### **1. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD)**

- The GRASP team has devoted considerable time recently to developing a Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) programme for UNEP and for great apes. While it is not strictly GRASP partnership work, it does appear that this is from where a significant chunk of new funding for forest conservation will come. For example:
  - UK government has set aside USD 100 million for Congo basin forests,
  - Norway has set aside USD 2.7 billion, of which 37Million is likely to come through UNEP for ecosystem services related activities.
  - World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility has USD 100million for REDD readiness mechanism.
  - Australia - approximately USD 200 million for REDD.
- The speed at which this issue is moving has caught many off guard. As GRASP personnel have some expertise and have been working on these issues, we have been drafted in to assist in the development of the wider UNEP programme on REDD.
- This has given us an exception opportunity to influence UN agencies, the World Bank and governments to prioritize biodiversity (including ape) benefits from REDD, and we do see the potential for increased funding and systematic change, not specifically for great apes, but for the forests of Congo Basin and SE Asia in general.
- In January, UNEP/GRASP secured funds for a pilot REDD project addressing multiple benefits from REDD in Sumatra and Cameroon/Nigeria. Developing the project document for this is time consuming, but very informative, and we thank those Executive Committee and Scientific Commission members who have been advising us for their time. The GRASP site selection process, based on the GRASP Scientific Commission priority population list, was presented at the recent December 07 Bali climate change conference and can hopefully influence how and where REDD money is spent.

### **2. UNEP DR Congo Programme**

- Achim Steiner, UNEP's Executive Director, launched this programme in August 2007, in response to the ongoing crisis. While the UNEP response has a number of aspects, including a full post-conflict assessment, the GRASP team is currently concerned with facilitating dialogue between all relevant stakeholders in the Virunga region.
- A Stakeholder forum was conducted on 7-8 April, with assistance from International Institute for Sustainable Development (iisd) and WCS. It was attended by around 35 participants, and all felt it was very timely, and constructive. Recommendations and action points will be available shortly.

- GRASP is working very closely with the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, as they also have related activities in the field.
- On a related note, with the help of our UK government partner, we were able to influence the UN Security Council to modify the UN Mission in DRC (MONUC) mandate to include “natural resources”. Since this time, MONUC has started joint patrols with ICCN, however the situation remains too difficult to implement such initiatives fully. UNEP along with other parties engaged with UNHCR regarding the fuel wood crisis in the region.
- The Spanish Ministry of Environment has pledged funds to GRASP, initially approximately USD 368,000 for work primarily in Eastern DR Congo. We are currently working with them to develop a comprehensive project.

### **Other field activities**

- Filming has now been completed for the documentary film on the Petit Loango National Park in Gabon, which is being produced jointly by GRASP and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, investigating the impact of a Chinese state oil company’s exploratory activities within this pristine ecosystem. The film is now in post-production and is expected to be completed around mid 2008. It will be distributed to all Ramsar member states and GRASP partners and we hope to use it as a conduit into UNEP influencing Chinese companies’ operations in African range states.
- GRASP has recently re-opened discussions with Liberia and Ivory Coast on a possible long-term transboundary conservation and peace-building initiative, and this will take some lessons from the Virungas experience. Consultations with all partners on the ground are already underway. Guinea may be involved later. We hope to eventually expand this into a small number of transboundary great ape cooperation programmes that showcase the benefits that great ape conservation can bring to peace and stability. One small but interesting component of this work will be an attempt to link up elephant and chimpanzee surveys and monitoring to cut costs and share data – the CITES programme on monitoring the illegal killing of elephants (MIKE), submitted a joint proposal to the US Fish and Wildlife Service in this regard.
- GRASP and the Great Ape World Heritage Species Project (GAWHSP) started to implement a project that is assessing High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) to identify areas for palm oil development, conservation and sustainable land use in Borneo and Sumatra, with funding from the United Kingdom. Lessons learned from this can also help African range states to make better decisions on land use planning relating to biofuels.
- The GRASP European Commission project *‘Preservation of forest resources and improved livelihoods of forest peoples through conservation of great apes as flagship species’* is now in its third year. Reports for both the first and second year are available on-line at:  
[http://www.unep.org/grasp/Activities\\_and\\_Projects/pf\\_EC.asp](http://www.unep.org/grasp/Activities_and_Projects/pf_EC.asp)
- Two GRASP funded projects were recently completed: (1) a conservation enterprise and micro-financing programme in DRC implemented by the Bonobo Conservation Initiative,

and (2) an ecotourism development project in the Cyamudongo forest in Rwanda, implemented by the Wildlife Conservation Society.

### **Meetings and Missions**

- GRASP participated by teleconference in a meeting to discuss the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Gorilla Agreement in April. It was attended by CMS secretariat, German Environment Ministry and German Development Ministry who are the facilitators of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), and GRASP. The draft Action Plans are available for online editing by parties, GRASP partners, and other interested parties at <http://www.gorillawiki.org>. Germany and Italy have pledged small amounts for activities leading up to the Conference of Parties (COP)/Meeting of Parties (MoP).
- GRASP/UNEP attended a Ministerial Meeting on the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Programme on the Sustainable Management of the Congo Basin Forest Ecosystem in Libreville, Gabon from 25-28 February 2008 to discuss opportunities for GEF funding for REDD activities in the Congo Basin. GRASP briefed the meeting on UNEP's current and proposed activities in this field.
- A GRASP side event on "*Site Selection for Carbon and Multiple Benefits: the Case of Great Ape Habitat*" was held at the Forest Day of the UNFCCC COP 13 in Bali, December 2007. GRASP was represented by Ian Redmond and UNEP Division Director, Ibrahim Thiaw. The Director made a presentation based on the indicative list of priority population sites, which had been drawn by the GRASP Scientific Commission through wide consultation with emphasis on where ape, and carbon hotspots overlap. Work to further refine the list is on going.
- GRASP/CITES Mission - A technical mission to Malaysia took place in November 2007 to investigate the illegal trade in orangutans, as part of the implementation of the resolution on the conservation of and trade in great apes, adopted by CITES in October 2004 (CITES Res. Conf. 13.4). The complete mission report is available online at: [http://www.unep.org/grasp/Meetings/other\\_related\\_meetings.asp](http://www.unep.org/grasp/Meetings/other_related_meetings.asp)

### **Support to Range State authorities**

- Liberia Focal Point, Mr. Joseph Toah, becomes the 10<sup>th</sup> GRASP focal point to receive IT equipment which includes a laptop, scanner, digital camera, flash-drive, and a printer as part of the on-going GRASP European Commission project. This component of the project is administered through the Born Free Foundation.

### **Announcement**

- The great ape conservation community has suffered two recent losses. The GRASP team was saddened to hear of the death of the GRASP Focal Point in Gabon, Mr. Joseph Mazonga-Mbina and the death of Stella Marsden, founder of the Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Association in Gambia – a charter member of the Pan African Sanctuary Alliance. We mourn the loss of these valuable colleagues and send our condolences to their respective families.

### **Publicity and Awareness**

- The 7th edition of the GRASP newsletter was produced in English and French in November 2007 and hardcopies have been distributed to all great ape range states. Electronic copies can be downloaded from [www.unep.org/grasp](http://www.unep.org/grasp) and hardcopies are available upon request by contacting grasp at [grasp@unep.org](mailto:grasp@unep.org)

- The GRASP Secretariat is beginning to gather articles and news bits from partners for the next issue of the GRASP newsletter. Please send any information you would like to be included in the upcoming issue to [grasp@unep.org](mailto:grasp@unep.org)
- The United Africa Association (UNAFAS) Conservation Values Programme has been making good use of GRASP gorilla and chimpanzee posters as educational resources in secondary schools in Cameroon. The programme, which helps teachers present conservation information to students will soon be extended to primary schools as well.
- GRASP Chief Consultant Ian Redmond, gave the following GRASP related lectures:
  - *'GRASP-the last chance for the Great Apes'* at an event put on jointly by Flora and Fauna International and the Royal Geographical Society in Chester Zoo on 30 November 2007. At this event, £1,100 was raised and put towards the Great Apes Film Initiative (GAFI), a GRASP partner.
  - *'Great Apes and Climate Change'* at the Linean Society, London in March 2008.
  - *'Great Apes and Climate Change'* at the London's Natural History Museum in April 2008. Two lectures in March and April 2008.
- Please forward any new partner admission requests to [grasp@unep.org](mailto:grasp@unep.org)

And finally, we are pleased to report that the 2007 UNEP/GRASP report on oil palm, logging and fires in Indonesia (*Last Stand of the Orangutan*) was recently used by the UK parliamentary advisory committee to demonstrate how Europe's new bioenergy policies may increase deforestation and biodiversity loss in the tropics.

This update covers the period of November 2007 – May 2008