

The WOZA Africa Initiative of the African Association of Zoos and Aquaria (PAAZAB): An update

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A brief history

In the evolution of the International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens (IUDZG) into the World Zoo Organization (WZO), and finally into the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, increasing emphasis has been placed upon the formation and formalization of regional zoo associations under the WAZA umbrella. It was inevitable that this process should extend itself to the African region, so the Pan African Association of Zoos and Aquaria (PAAZAB) was formed in 1989 at the National Zoological Gardens of South Africa. Chief Executive Officers and Directors from a number of African zoological and botanical institutions from S. Africa, Zaire, Ivory Coast and Zimbabwe attended the inaugural meeting. At this meeting a draft constitution was created and an interim *ad-hoc* executive committee elected.

In 1990 PAAZAB was formally constituted at the first Annual General Meeting. In 1996 PAAZAB was accepted by then the World Zoo Organization - now the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) - as an Association member - and also formulated a mission statement; "Conservation through Cooperation" through the coordination, representation and promotion of the interests of Zoos and Aquaria at national and international levels. Membership in ISIS came about in 2002.

In 2002 the writer was appointed as Executive Director of the Association, having been a zoo director, founder member of PAAZAB, a member of its Executive Committee, and holder of several offices. At the 2003 Annual General Meeting of the Association, PAAZAB changed its name from the "*Pan-African Association of Zoological Gardens, Aquaria and Botanic Gardens*" to the more simplified "*African Association of Zoos and Aquaria*". The acronym "PAAZAB" remained. PAAZAB currently represents a total of 42 institutional and affiliate members in 5 African countries.

The South African Angle

As the Association was formally promulgated in South Africa in 1989, it has logically followed that the bulk of the membership of PAAZAB has always been South African. This has been predominantly a factor of physical geography, regional politics and cost of travel. At no stage in the Association's history has the non-South African membership of PAAZAB ever exceeded 5% of the total institutional membership. This disparity is reflected in the current 2004 membership of PAAZAB whereby of the 31 Institutional members of PAAZAB, only two members in good standing are located outside of South Africa (Zambia and Uganda). With its involvement at an international level through the auspices of WAZA and the CBSG, PAAZAB has also been in a position to contribute meaningfully to the development of the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy (WZACS). This participation has allowed PAAZAB to put WZACS forward for inclusion into the South African National Biodiversity Strategy. This history of legislative and standards involvement has ensured that the Association has maintained an operational philosophy for,

albeit its predominantly South African constituency, compliant with international norms and standards of the developed world. This is of vital importance when the developing countries of the rest of Africa are considered.

Pan Africa?

A total of 55 nation states and island groupings fall within the geographical parameters that PAAZAB has defined in its constitution as falling within its ambit. This represents the largest single regional landmass grouping of any zoo/aquarium association in the world.

With the inauguration of the Association in 1989 under the auspices of the National Zoological Gardens of South Africa, efforts were made then to ensure the involvement of facilities north of Limpopo River. With the assistance of the then South African Department of Foreign Affairs, sponsorship monies were sought and obtained to cover the costs of delegates from Cote d'Ivoire and Zaire. Unfortunately changing political regimes throughout Africa made this particular source of funding for non-South African involvement in the Association tenuous and finally, impractical. It was accepted and understood from the onset that the probability of most African Zoos north of South Africa being able to afford their own costs of membership and involvement in PAAZAB was remote.

In 1993 PAAZAB formally initiated its "Outreach Africa" project. The primary intention of this initiative was to assist the Association in its pan-African requirement. Various approaches to this objective were considered. The primary strategy adopted was the invitation to and sponsorship of, senior zoo personnel from facilities in Central and North Africa in their attendance of PAAZAB annual general meetings held in South Africa. Sponsorship funds were solicited from institutions in the USA to facilitate this end.

In 1997 the constitution of PAAZAB was also amended to allow for the establishment of regional and/or national chapters of PAAZAB. An especial focus was placed upon North African zoos in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt in the hope that these countries would formulate such a regional chapter at the northern end of the continent. To this end, several invitees were selected from these countries.

In addition to utilising donor funds to cover travel, accommodation and registration costs, additional funds were also used to sponsor invitee institutional membership to the Association for limited time periods. Since 1993 personnel from a total of 16 African Zoos representing 11 African countries received sponsorship to attend PAAZAB meets. As a strategy intended to increase the Association's relevance north, the results of this approach have been mixed. A number of these zoo personnel were able to attend PAAZAB conferences and were consequently exposed to PAAZAB. Institutional Membership was also conferred upon

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some of these same attendees. However continued input from almost all (with some noteworthy exceptions) of these sponsored zoos has been almost non-existent.

Why bother?

On a global scale, there are an estimated 10-15,000 facilities that go by the voluntary appellation of “zoo” or at least serve a related function. An estimated 200 of these are located in Africa. It is not important whether or not all these facilities fit any specific definition of a zoo. The main issue is that the larger community - including animal rights activists - perceives them as being zoos. In this regard they reflect upon the greater “aligned” zoo community who are trying to contribute to conservation in an ethical and efficient manner. Such facilities for the most part do not appear to be guided or constrained by any apparent scientific or ethical structure and in many respects are estranged from the “aligned” zoo community which is characterized by various international, regional and national codes of welfare, trade, service quality and ethics.

The African situation reflects this global state of affairs and of the 200-odd “zoos” in Africa the majority is, in terms of the values of the “aligned” zoo community, substandard. However it is also important to realize that such zoos are substandard because their administrators or personnel are unaware of the implications of their actions; uncaring due to a lack of peer or governmental pressure, or even under pressure from their own administration that puts politics and economics ahead of welfare, ethics and conservation. In many cases it is because the financial and technical capacity to improve is simply inaccessible. Such facilities are caught in a vicious circle of bad management for which there may be genuine reasons, but nonetheless continue to consume animal resources and ravage the image of effective zoos worldwide. The implications for conservation and welfare of wild animals, and most certainly the image of zoos globally, are very serious.

As a consequence a certain moral responsibility, if not a simple public relations requirement rests with the more organised zoos and zoo associations to bring such facilities into the fold. Further to this, the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy soon to be launched in 2005 specifically states that developed world zoos should seek means of engagement with zoos in developing countries. PAAZAB acknowledges this responsibility and the capacity that it has built up in its 15-year history and its South Africa prominence more than adequately qualifies it to spearhead such a requirement in Africa.

WOZA AFRICA - The African Zoo and Aquarium

Renaissance. PAAZAB embarked on a more specific stratagem in 2003. This initiative is known as “WOZA Africa” taken from the Zulu word “wozani” referring to, “come together and push forward”. This initiative is broken down into three primary phases: Phase 1: -- identification all known zoo and aquariums, & related facilities, within the geographical area concerned. Phase 2: -- identification of areas/facilities of concern/ capability and capacity. Phase 3: -- mobilization of PAAZAB resources as required.

WOZA Africa Update

Phase One 2003 -- Information gathering and data base. Initiation of Phase Two 2004. The primary objective of

Phase Two was the identification of interest areas/facilities through an analysis of the database to be followed up with site-visitations/inspections by PAAZAB personnel. Only three facilities were identified for physical visitation in 2004 namely Parc Zoologique d'Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire, Uganda Wildlife Education Centre, Entebbe, Uganda and Lubumbashi Zoo, Lubumbashi Democratic Republic of the Congo. A variety of activities were undertaken during the visits. These are described in detail in the full version of this Report.

The Road Ahead

At this time, Phase Two of WOZA Africa is ongoing. However, the three visitations that have occurred have reinforced the preliminary assessment strategy adopted on the basis of the primary selection criteria from the database analysis. In a nutshell, there are too many zoos in too many countries in Africa, most in substandard and unsustainable circumstances for effective or meaningful engagement.

In the early days of the development of the WOZA Africa initiative, a vague assumption was made that somehow PAAZAB in the fullness of time would get to them all. Following two years into the initiative this has now been deemed idealistic and impractical – if not downright impossible. A rationale for prioritising certain facilities with establishment, sustainability and hotspot characters is based on the premise that mutually meaningful engagement between these facilities and PAAZAB is most likely to occur. It is further conjectured that by bringing these more significant facilities into the international zoo community network, they themselves might act as mentors and role models for other facilities within their countries or regions that will for the moment, remain off the screen of PAAZAB's radar. It is hoped that these facilities will act as regional or national centres within the PAAZAB network.

The preliminary analysis of the database has identified a total of 17 facilities in 9 countries that might most benefit from this approach. None are located in countries north of the Sahara as many of those zoos have already established a strong affinity to Europe and are already active members of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA).

Consequently targeted facilities are located solely in sub-Saharan Africa and are : 1. Cameroon, Mvog Betsi Zoo, Yaounde, Limbe Wildlife Centre, Douala; 2. Ghana Kumasi Zoo, Kumasi, Accra Zoo, Accra; 3. Kenya Safari Walk, Nairobi, Nairobi Animal Orphanage, Nairobi Snake Park; 4. Madagascar, Parc Zoologique et Botanique de Tsimbazaza, Antananarivo, Parc Zoologique d'Ivoina, Toamasina; 5. Malawi, Lilongwe Wildlife Sanctuary, Lilongwe, Blantyre Zoological Gardens, Blantyre; 6. Mali Parc Biologique, Bamako; 7. Mocambique, Jardim Zoologico de Mocambique, Maputo; 8. Sudan, Khartoum Zoo, Khartoum; 9. Tanzania, Engosheraton Zoological Gardens, Arusha, Saa Nane Island Zoo, Mwanza Mnarni Natural Turtle Aquarium, Zanzibar

Our strategy now requires that three countries per year are visited and all facilities per listed country visited and assessed starting in 2005. This in turn sets a timeline of 3 years to Phase Two of the WOZA Africa initiative ending in 2007. The final objective of WOZA Africa has now been set at PAAZAB representation in 17 African countries.