

## Exerpts from Chapter 7 Partnerships and Politics (related to previous article)

This chapter presents a vision of increased global cooperation between zoos and aquariums and other organizations to achieve conservation goals. Zoos and aquariums can be mutually supportive by exchanging training, programmes and material and by involving local zoos in conservation projects and outreach programmes. By developing strong collaborative relationships with a broad spectrum of partners, zoos and aquariums can substantially increase their conservation impact.

### Vision

. . . . Partnerships will strengthen global cooperation and help all zoos, aquariums and other conservation organizations to improve and to achieve their conservation goals. Zoos and aquariums will be encouraged to help one another, particularly those that have fewer resources and/or expertise.

### Introduction

7.1 There is a growing trend for them to cooperate with each other and with other government and non-government organizations. In the coming years, zoos and aquariums that are truly effective will improve and expand upon these activities, as well as helping less successful zoos to use their individual potential constructively. Working with sensitivity and patience, paying respect to the diverse political, historical, social and economic characteristics represented in each culture, each zoo and aquarium will make the most appropriate contribution to conservation in the context of its own culture and economy.

**7.2 No zoo is an island.** Zoos and aquariums need other zoos and aquariums in order to be relevant and effective in their contribution to conservation: they cannot independently carry out all tasks related to the conservation of biodiversity. They are most effective when they have the assistance of other organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental. A potentially vast and impressive network will become ever more achievable if all zoos develop sincere and creative means to communicate and collaborate with others. The first priority must be international cooperation between the zoos themselves. In particular, zoos and aquariums should consider forming partnerships with: other zoos and aquariums (local, regional and international); national and regional zoo and aquarium associations.

**Field projects.** Zoos and aquariums that undertake field projects will usually need to form partnerships with other organizations, whether the projects are situated in a distant country or locally. When zoos and aquariums conduct field projects in the future, they need to coordinate their activities with those of national and regional zoo associations, and local conservation organizations.

**7.3 Not all zoos are equal.** Poorly maintained animal collections are a negative reflection on all well-maintained zoos and aquariums, and they can be a drain on wildlife resources and a cause for welfare concern. Such facilities may seem an impediment. Nonetheless, some of them may have good intentions and may even be close to being

accreditable. These zoos can be seen as an opportunity for institutions with high standards to assist in solving this serious problem. Appropriate mentoring, and technical, logistic and perhaps financial support, will help these facilities to achieve their potential within the world conservation community. Field conservation projects provide a good opportunity to forge zoo-to-zoo and aquarium-to-aquarium. It is not appropriate for a well-resourced zoo or aquarium involved in a field project to ignore or snub poorly maintained or under-resourced animal institutions in the region.

Well-resourced institutions should attempt to work with local institutions to improve their standards and capabilities. Such interaction and partnerships will establish trust and cooperation between zoos and aquariums in all parts of the world. They will also expose local zoos to the standards and ethics of the international zoo community.

Substandard facilities often contribute to the regional destruction of wildlife and promote dubious values among their visitors. Sensitive mentorship, interaction and partnership in these cases may be useful to regional conservation, as are field research and habitat improvement.

Where possible, zoos with *in situ* projects should coordinate with national and regional associations; if such associations do not exist in the area, they should cooperate with individual zoos.

Equal partnerships, such as the exchange of training, can promote understanding and friendship on both sides. Visiting zoo personnel can be trained in the host country's culture and economics, as well as in technical subjects related to conservation. Conversely, people of ancient cultures can share their knowledge of alternative management techniques, local medicines and natural foods. The exchange of such knowledge can improve our understanding of species held in zoos and aquariums and our ability to interpret the importance of some animals in other cultures. Such an arrangement will create an atmosphere where equal and genuine partnerships are possible. (See also Chapter 5.)

### 7.6 Conclusions

The strongest incentive may be to reinforce the fundamental belief that an individual's actions should have merit in the eyes of a greater community. In this regard, recognized, *bona fide* zoos and aquariums will be quick to support and encourage facilities taking their first steps towards developing partnerships. This will help them to fully appreciate the merit and benefits of networking and partnerships.