

**AFRICA BIODIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE GROUP (ABCG):**

***Working Together to Help Conserve  
Africa's Biodiversity***



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**REVISED  
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

**Prepared** by the *Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group*  
**Submitted** by the *World Wildlife Fund and Conservation International*

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## Introduction

In order to revise its communications strategy, the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group (ABCG), used the 4-P methodology<sup>1</sup> developed by Conservation International to design communications and education strategies for conservation projects.

The 4-Ps include:

1. **The Problems:** issues, threats or challenges that a conservation effort faces in a specific region or circumstance.
2. **The Publics:** targeted sectors of the population or audiences to whom the conservation message is addressed.
3. **The Products:** different communications tools, activities or events to reach the target publics.
4. **The Plan:** the strategy to create conservation awareness for the region or circumstance.

## Background on the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group

Since 1999, the major international U.S.-based conservation non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Africa have proven the value of collaborating on priority conservation issues facing communities and ecosystems across the continent. Through the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group (ABCG), African Wildlife Foundation, Conservation International, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Resources Institute, and World Wildlife Fund regularly explore critical African and Malagasy conservation issues and share lessons learned through meetings, workshops, exchanges, and analytical projects.

ABCG's mission is to tackle complex and changing conservation challenges by catalyzing and strengthening collaboration. It engages the best resources from across a continuum of conservation organizations to effectively and efficiently work toward conservation in Africa. Some important results of this groundbreaking information exchange and collaboration have been increased field-level action on capacity building, the bushmeat trade, HIV/AIDS and conservation linkages, and community rights and participation in natural resource management.

The ABCG accesses some of the top thinking and analysis of conservation approaches, lessons and tools at field and policy level, both in Africa and elsewhere. It brings together experts across many different disciplines and sectors, to review the most effective approaches to the complex and cross-cutting challenges to conservation today.

### ABCG's Objectives:

- Promote networking, awareness, and the sharing of information and experience among U.S. conservation NGOs working in Africa;
- Encourage information exchange and idea sharing with African partners;
- Identify and analyze critical and/or cutting edge conservation issues in Africa as priorities for both future NGO action and donor support; and

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<sup>1</sup> Conservation International. *The 4-P Workshop: Designing Communications and Education Strategies for Conservation Projects.* 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Washington, DC: August 2003. The 4 P's stand for problem, public, products, and plan.

- Synthesize collective lessons from field activities and share these lessons with a broader multi-sector community.

### **Findings of the ABCG Communications Assessment**

ABCG's work to date has been conducted mainly in the U.S., benefiting partner organizations and others based in the U.S. Although ABCG has extensive networks, the group did not know how effective its communication was with partners in Africa, nor how useful ABCG materials were.

In order to ensure that relevant information, analysis, lessons and tools on conservation approaches are more widely communicated in appropriate formats by accessible methods to conservation practitioners and policy-makers in Africa, ABCG received funding from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) to conduct an assessment of ABCG communications activities. The assessment analyzed how new conservation concepts, tools and lessons are best shared with conservation decision-makers and practitioners in all regions of Africa. ABCG conducted four case studies to gain an in-depth view of the effectiveness of different communications methods, activities, and products used by their collaboration and others. The case studies included:

1. Biodiversity Support Program (BSP) Armed Conflict and the Environment Project;
2. ABCG HIV/AIDS and Conservation Linkages Project;
3. ABCG General Communications Activities; and
4. ABCG Product Cost Analysis.

The key finding of the ABCG communications assessment was that:

*U.S.-initiated projects that articulate conservation linkages and identify key messages and lessons on emerging, high priority issues can more effectively build capacity of field-based partners in Africa (in terms of learning, behavior change, and organizational change) when they develop and implement a focused, effective, multi-tiered communications strategy that takes into account different levels of target audiences and identifies the most useful means of communications while considering timing and outreach.*

### **The Problems**

ABCG focuses on cutting edge and high priority conservation issues facing Sub-Saharan Africa. Priorities in terms of **regional focus** are:

- Albertine Rift
- Lower Guinean Forest
- Madagascar

**Key issues for analysis** by ABCG include:

1. HIV/AIDS and conservation linkages
2. Role of public and private sector funding available to support conservation in Africa and Madagascar
3. Raising awareness of African conservation issues among U.S. policy makers and donors
4. Migration impacts on conservation
5. Human rights and conservation

**Key themes for forecasting** future conservation needs and opportunities include:

1. Food security and wildlife conservation
2. Conservation and corruption

3. Conservation in the Gulf of Guinea
4. Oil development and protected areas
5. Invasive alien species
6. Urban environment and biodiversity conservation
7. Intersection of wildlife, domestic animals, and human health
8. Rapid environmental impact assessment in disasters
9. Mining and conservation in Africa

## **The Publics**

Broadly speaking, ABCG has two distinct audiences in different locations; different subsets of these audiences are targets of different messages:

1. U.S. based:
  - a. ABCG members (e.g. AWF, CI, IUCN, WCS, WRI, and WWF)
  - b. policy-makers and donors (e.g. U.S. Congress, Government Agencies, Foundations, World Bank, etc.)
  - c. Africa-focused community (e.g. relief, development, health, food security NGOs, universities, etc.)
  - d. Private sector (e.g. oil companies, mining companies, logging companies, retail companies, etc.)
2. Africa based:
  - a. ABCG members field offices and national organizations
  - b. local African NGOs
  - c. wildlife colleges and universities (e.g. the three regional wildlife colleges, ecology and wildlife management departments at national universities)
  - d. African government agencies (e.g. protected area and wildlife authorities, ministries of tourism, etc.)
  - e. local communities
  - f. policy-makers and donors

## **The Products**

The key findings from the communications assessment revealed that the ABCG methods/activities that were considered the most useful for the **U.S.-based audience were:**

1. **Networking** - through ABCG meetings, brown bags and other activities, participants were able to meet colleagues from a variety of conservation and development institutions and gain insight about what their partners and donors were working on and how these organizations functioned.
2. **List serve** - by participating in the email list serve, participants were able to learn about upcoming conservation events, publications, job announcements, etc.
3. **ABCG thematic meetings** - by attending ABCG thematic meetings based in Washington, DC, participants were able to learn about cutting edge conservation issues, who is working on these issues, key resources, and opportunities for next step and potential collaboration.
4. **Publications** - through documents such as the Nairobi workshop proceedings cutting edge thinking on the linkages between HIV/AIDS and conservation was documented.
5. **African workshops and Presentations at international and regional conferences** - by organizing sessions such as the AIDS and the Compensation sessions at the College of African Wildlife Management symposia, participants learn about critical conservation issues.

- 6. ABCG website** - by placing the materials that ABCG collects from our bimonthly technical meetings on the website as well as web links, case studies, and other materials, participants can access and share information.

The key findings from the communications assessment revealed that the ABCG methods/activities that were considered the most useful for the **Africa-based audience were:**

- 1. Africa-based workshops** – by organizing the 2-day workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, organized by ABCG, hosted by the World Wide Fund for Nature’s Eastern Africa Programme Office and facilitated by the Mweka College of African Wildlife Management, more than 70 African partners helped to identify the impacts of the AIDS pandemic on natural resources and shared coping strategies.
- 2. Publications** - by documenting the findings of the Nairobi workshop in the widely circulated proceedings those African partners not attending the workshop had access to the information.
- 3. Networking opportunities** - by providing opportunities, ABCG helped conservationists from East and Southern Africa to share coping strategies to deal with the impacts of HIV/AIDS on natural resource management.
- 4. ABCG website** - by placing the materials that ABCG collects from our bimonthly technical meetings on the website, African partners have access to web links, case studies, and other materials, and can share additional information.
- 5. Posters** - by distributing the ABCG AIDS and conservation posters widely (in French and English) many African partners received information on potential AIDS coping strategies.
- 6. Presentations at international and regional conferences** - including the World Parks Congress in South Africa, the Global Biodiversity Forum for Africa in Tanzania, the College of African Wildlife Management in Tanzania, key findings from ABCG were shared directly with African audiences.

Table 1. Most Useful Communications Methods Identified by ABCG Communications Assessment for U.S.-based and Africa-based audiences

<b>U.S.-based audience</b>	<b>Africa-based audience</b>
1. Networking	1. African Workshops
2. List serve	2. Publications
3. DC Thematic meetings	3. Networking
4. Publications	4. Website
5. African Workshops and Presentations at conferences	5. Posters
6. Website	6. Presentations at conferences

### **The Plan**

The role of ABCG is to articulate key conservation problems, identify linkages, spell out key messages, raise the profile about conservation impacts and sharing coping strategies, and promote lessons learned on cutting edge conservation issues.

According to the ABCG communications assessment, as shown in Table 1 above, the following activities and products considered the most effective for sharing information on cutting edge conservation issues impacting Africa:

1. Networking **and** List serve;
2. African workshops (2-3 days);
3. Thematic meetings in Washington, DC (2-3 hours) **and** Publications;
4. Website **and** Posters; and
5. Regional and international conferences.

Therefore, ABCG plans to do the following (that are further described in Table 2 below):

- Promote networking opportunities for both U.S.-based and Africa-based partners.
- Expand the current ABCG email list serve of more than 100 U.S.-based members to include at least 100 new African participants in order to promote dialogue and networking with conservation practitioners. New African participants will be suggested by ABCG members from their extensive networks. The targeted publics will include: ABCG members field offices and national organizations, local African NGOs, wildlife colleges and universities, African government agencies, local community representatives, and policy-makers and donors. The list serve will seek to promote information exchange and establish a dialogue and networking among its members.
- Host workshops in the Albertine Rift, Lower Guinean Forest, and Madagascar on the key issues of HIV/AIDS and conservation linkages, funding available to support conservation in Africa and Madagascar, migration impacts on conservation, and human rights and conservation.
- Continue to host 3-hour ABCG thematic meetings in Washington, DC with the goal of articulating key conservation problems, identifying linkages, spelling out key messages, raising the profile about conservation impacts, sharing coping strategies, and promoting lessons learned on cutting edge conservation themes including:
  - Food security and wildlife conservation
  - Conservation and corruption
  - Oil development and protected areas
  - Invasive alien species
  - Urban environment and biodiversity conservation
  - Intersection of wildlife, domestic animals, and human health
  - Rapid environmental impact assessment in disasters
  - Mining and conservation in Africa
- Develop ABCG publications and redesign the summaries/minutes from ABCG thematic meetings in Washington, DC, into 3-5 page dissemination notes or fact sheets that are more attractive and user friendly so that they are more effective in reaching targeted audiences through both electronic and hard copies. Translate materials into French and other languages as necessary.
- Improve and promote the ABCG website including placing links on our members' and partners' websites (e.g. AWF, CI, IUCN, WCS, WRI and WWF). There currently are no links. This will help improve the visibility of the website and increase information access. Specific revisions include enhancing the design, navigability, and user friendliness of the ABCG website for those with internet access.
- Participate in key international and regional conferences on Africa to articulate key conservation problems, identify linkages, spell out key messages, raise the profile about conservation impacts, share coping strategies, and promote lessons learned on cutting edge conservation issues.
- Monitor and evaluate the usefulness of communications products and activities whenever possible and appropriate.

**Table 2.: ABCG Communications Plan**

<b><u>Products/ Activities</u></b>	<b><u>Theme/ Issue</u></b>	<b><u>Publics</u></b>	<b><u>Dates</u></b>	<b><u>Materials</u></b>	<b><u>Resources/ Budget</u></b>
Promote networking opportunities	Africa's natural resources	U.S. and Africa-based Audiences	On-going	Email list serve, website, African workshops, Washington meetings, conferences, publications	ABCG members' and staff time
Expand the current ABCG email list serve	Africa's natural resources	Africa-based Audience	3 months	Contacts from ABCG members field offices, local African NGOs, colleges/ universities, government agencies, local communities, policy-makers, donors	ABCG members' and staff time
Redesign ABCG website	Cutting edge issues and themes	U.S. and Africa-based Audiences	3 months	Powerpoint presentations, website links, resources	ABCG and FRAME staff time
Host African workshops in the Albertine Rift, Lower Guinean Forest, and Madagascar (additional funds would have to be raised)	HIV/AIDS; Conservation funding, Migration, Human rights	Africa Audience	2 months to plan each 2-day workshop	ABCG members' and staff time. participant lists, logistical support, partnership with local NGO, facilitator, hotel, transportation for regional participants	\$25,000 needed per 2 day workshop in capitol city in Africa (e.g. Nairobi, Kenya)



(Table 2.: ABCG Communications Plan continued)

<b><u>Products/ Activities</u></b>	<b><u>Theme/ Issue</u></b>	<b><u>Publics</u></b>	<b><u>Dates</u></b>	<b><u>Materials</u></b>	<b><u>Resources/ Budget</u></b>
Hold ABCG Meetings held in Washington, D.C.	Food security; Corruption; Oil, Invasive species, Urban environment, Health, Environmental impact in disasters, Mining, etc	U.S. – based Audience	3 weeks per 3-hour theme meeting	ABCG members’ and staff time, Travel by African/U.S. participants, supplies	\$400-\$4,000 range depends on resources, staff time, (typical \$700)
Conduct ABCG study on African Conservation Funding produced (additional funds would have to be raised)	Conservation funding	U.S. and Africa-based Audiences	1 year	Consultant, ABCG members’ and staff time	Consultancy (Approx. \$10,000), ABCG members’ and staff time
Promote Findings on Human Migration and Conservation (widely disseminated)	Migration	U.S. and Africa-based Audiences	2 years	ABCG members’ and staff time	ABCG members’ and staff time
Produce ABCG materials	Cutting edge issues and themes	U.S. and Africa-based Audiences	On-going	ABCG members’ and staff time, in-kind graphics support	<u>Posters:</u> Approx. \$12,000 for 5000 copies <u>Publications:</u> Approx. \$8,000 for 3000 copies
Facilitate input of ABCG Members on U.S. policy and donor strategies	Africa’s natural resources	U.S.-based Audience	On-going	ABCG members’ and staff time	ABCG members’ and staff time

## **Appendix 1: Key issues for analysis by ABCG:**

- **HIV/AIDS and Conservation Linkages:** ABCG is leading the charge to improve understanding about how the HIV/AIDS pandemic is affecting Africa's natural resources, and ways to mitigate impacts. This entails promoting coping strategies (e.g. to reduce loss of conservation capacity, avoid adverse changes in land uses, and reduce over-use of natural resources), while simultaneously bringing the issue to the forefront of the international conservation agenda. As a result of ABCG's efforts, HIV/AIDS and Conservation was listed as an "Emerging Issue" in the Durban Accord from the 2003 World Parks Congress, and ABCG also rallied our members and partners to put forth a Motion at the upcoming World Conservation Congress in Thailand in November 2004. In addition, ABCG helped organize AIDS sessions at the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium at the College of African Wildlife Management, Mweka, Tanzania in December, 2003, and at the Global Biodiversity Forum for Africa in Tanzania in June 2004.

ABCG is currently assisting our member organizations, partners, and African training institutions to develop organizational policies on HIV/AIDS that address conservation capacity; conduct research on the impacts of HIV/AIDS on protected areas; and work with AIDS-impacted communities on conservation-based enterprises that are not labor intensive. As a result of ABCG's efforts, a consultant previously engaged with the group returned to Kenya to found a new NGO, Organization for the Conservation of Natural Resources and the Combat of HIV/AIDS (OCRA), to work with local communities in the North on sustainable use of medicinal plants to deal with AIDS-related illnesses and agroforestry initiatives. In Malawi, ABCG supported an AIDS Awareness to Action Campaign at Lengwe National Park which is a model that can be replicated throughout Malawi. ABCG encouraged the College of African Wildlife Management to establish an AIDS policy, procedures and action plan.

In the coming phase, ABCG will facilitate development of a true community of practice in which conservation organizations will share coping strategies and develop organizational policies on HIV/AIDS and conservation linkages. We will share these lessons and best practices widely in order to engage with other sectors such as health, agriculture, and food security.

- **Funding for African Conservation:** How much foreign funding is available to support conservation in Africa? What is it being used for: biodiversity conservation, natural resource use, or poverty alleviation? Who is funding it? What are the regional, thematic, and institutional priorities of international donors? What are the evolving goals and driving factors of funding? What are the objectives of new funders such as private sector developers through ecotourism or other conservation-based enterprises? How can the African conservation community tap into new resources? How do the funds flow? With these and other questions in mind, ABCG will conduct an analysis of funding available for African conservation by donor type, project category, by region, by country, and where possible by ecosystem or habitat type. This analysis will identify the overall gaps and opportunities for new funding for African conservation, and will assess in detail how much funding goes directly or indirectly to governments, international, national and local NGOs, and what the funds are used for. The study will supplement experiences of WWF's former Biodiversity Support Program, Conservation International, and other similar analyses in the past. Special attention will be paid to funding in Madagascar, the Albertine Rift, and Lower Guinea Forest. The results of this study will be shared with members, partners in Africa and Madagascar, and will also form the basis for articulating a long-term funding strategy to ensure the sustainability of the ABCG.

- **Facilitating Input by ABCG Members into U.S. Policy and Donor Strategies**—ABCG will facilitate our members’ input into U.S. policy and donor strategies by supporting members’ efforts to push forward the Natural Resource Conservation Initiative recommended by the Africa Policy Advisory Panel. ABCG will reach out to contacts in the U.S. State Department, USAID, and Congress. In 2003, ABCG assisted the Africa Policy Advisory Panel (APAP) in drafting policy recommendations to Secretary of State Colin Powell for a Natural Resource Conservation Initiative for Africa. The Panel, for which the U.S. Congress authorized monies in the 2003 omnibus spending bill, guides a review of U.S.-Africa policy. The Initiative makes six recommendations to the U.S. State Department on which the ABCG plans to conduct outreach to relevant decision makers:
  - **Scale up and sustain U.S. assistance** (diplomatic, technical, and financial) to regional partnerships aimed at conserving key transboundary ecosystems (e.g. Congo Basin Forest Partnership and pursue similar initiatives for the Miombo-Mopane Woodlands complex in Southern Africa and the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem off the West African coast);
  - **Prioritize improved natural resource management** as a key component in U.S. efforts to promote good governance (e.g. affording a higher priority to community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) as a tool for promoting democracy, good governance and rural development, and working with key governmental and NGO partners to strengthen African judicial systems to better develop, understand, and enforce natural resource laws);
  - **Expand and better coordinate U.S. government activities** to address the African bushmeat crisis (e.g. coordinating an integrated U.S. government response);
  - **Develop stronger programs and incentives** to more effectively engage the U.S. diplomatic corps in Africa on natural resource conservation issues;
  - **Restore and expand U.S. technical assistance programs** that build capacity of Africans (from practitioners to political leaders) in natural resource conservation (e.g. restore and expand cost-effective programs run by the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Interior, and other agencies to train African students, management professionals, and political leaders in conservation); and
  - **Increase U.S. investment in African parks and protected areas** by encouraging the U.S. President to invest in park protection, engage other major donors, conservation NGOs, and interested private-sector parties in catalyzing greater support for African protected areas. This can be made possible through a Partnership for Africa’s Parks. Incentives should be strengthened for creating and properly managing protected areas by giving special recognition to Madagascar, Gabon, and other nations that undertake strong conservation action. Adequate funding for the President’s Initiative against Illegal Logging, that targets protected areas in Africa is also needed.
  
- **Migration and Conservation:** Human migration is a key issue in the Albertine Rift, Lower Guinean Forest, and Madagascar as people move due to conflict, environmental degradation and economic opportunities. ABCG will therefore catalyze and support our partners to conduct analyses on human migration and conservation. World Wildlife Fund and Conservation International, for example, are starting to study the environmental impacts when people migrate to areas of high biodiversity importance. With this in mind, ABCG will seek to identify tools and interventions that influence migrations or mitigate their impacts, and will share lessons learned about the local development around national parks and in-migration. These tools will be useful in focusing in on landscape-specific impacts in the Albertine Rift, for example, where habitat fragmentation and deforestation from expanding agriculture and declining numbers of large mammals resulting from the bushmeat trade are linked to population/migration pressures. The root cause of these

environmental crises can be found in the mass movement of refugees fleeing armed conflict in the region. In the Spiny Forest of Madagascar migration occurs due to food insecurity; reduced job opportunities in major urban centers; local pressures to meet social needs including dowries and funeral costs; and poor access in many rural areas to markets and social services.

In response to information and capacity needs in each of these areas, ABCG will create a forum for experts and conservation professionals to examine the underlying causes of human migration, related impacts on conservation in selected countries in the Albertine Rift, Lower Guinean Forest and Madagascar, and potential interventions to address the push-pull factors that cause people to migrate. We will actively disseminate lessons learned and tools to build the capacity of ABCG member organizations to tackle migration issues through their extensive networks and partnerships in Africa and Madagascar.

- **Human Rights and Conservation**

To build upon our work on “Compensation for Land Lost for Protected Areas”, ABCG will study the broader human rights implications of conservation. What are the roles and responsibilities of conservation organizations to local communities affected by protected area management? What happens over the long term to displaced people and their cultures, and what has been the effect of compensation? Are conservation benefits distributed equitably or are they only captured by elites? Who has the right to receive benefits? How long do conservation organizations have a moral obligation to continue to help people once their land has been taken for conservation? How do we ensure that the legal rights of poachers and encroachers are respected and that they receive fair treatment? Is there a need for conservation sector guidelines on this issue?

## **Appendix 2: Key themes for forecasting future conservation needs and opportunities in Africa**

ABCG will organize meetings in Washington, DC, on Cutting-Edge African Conservation Issues. Themes include:

- **Food security and wildlife conservation**, learning about successful efforts to prevent poaching by addressing the hunger situation and farming practices of local communities, and discussing potential collaboration between the conservation community, agricultural and food security sector and other stakeholders in Africa;
- **Conservation and corruption**, drawing upon lessons from transparency and governance experts on how to tackle the issue of natural resource corruption and reduce the effects of corruption on conservation projects in Africa;
- **Conservation in the Gulf of Guinea**, recognizing the value of this region in the African conservation context, discussing current conservation interventions, and holding a roundtable on plans for future conservation action and opportunities for collaboration;
- **Oil development and protected areas**, building on our ABCG February 2004 Oil and Gas Development meeting, case studies of oil development in Uganda and plans for the Albertine Rift will be explored;
- **Impact of invasive alien species on conservation in Africa and Madagascar**, sharing information about competition and predation for endemic biodiversity and intervention efforts to control or eradicate invasive species;
- **Urban development and conservation**, discussing growing urban populations in Africa and the threats that the urbanization process poses conservation and ecosystem use and health in marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems;
- **Interface between wildlife, domestic animals, and human health**, building on the ABCG/BCTF/WCS March 2004 meeting, efforts will focus on mapping out the links between animal health, public health, conservation and human security to identifying creative approaches to protecting the health of people, animals, wildlife, and ecosystems;
- **Rapid environmental impact assessment in disasters**, learning about the role of conservation NGOs in emergency situations; how to quickly identify salient environmental issues in disasters and improve the overall effectiveness of relief operations at the community as well as organizational levels; and
- **Mining and conservation in Africa**, building on our ABCG December 2001 meeting, ABCG will explore case studies of the environmental impacts of small-scale artisanal and large scale mining in the Albertine Rift, Lower Guinea Forests, and Madagascar.