AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR WILDLIFE IN HUMAN CARE (AAWHC)

Conservation Policy

Contents

1. Purpose 3
2. Scope and exemptions 3
3. Definitions 3
4. Policy Statement 5
5. Objectives 6
6. Responsibilities 7
7. Related Documents 8
8. Resources 8
9. Policy review 8
10. Approval 8

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the commitment of the African Association for Wildlife in Human Care (AAWHC) to align its activities and the actions of its member institutions with the goals of global biodiversity conservation. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission states:

"The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) recognises the significant contributions that botanic gardens, aquariums and zoos can, and do, bring to conserving wild animals, fungi and plants.

SSC values the key roles that botanic gardens, aquariums and zoos can, and do, play at the intersection between ex situ and in situ conservation. These roles span applied genetic, behavioural and veterinary science, husbandry, wildlife reintroduction and translocation, research, education and community engagement, policy development, access to nature-based experiences and conservation funding. SSC also believes that there is opportunity and interest to increase participation in these roles.

SSC urges all botanic gardens, aquariums and zoos to meet their conservation potential and to work as valued members of a well-integrated conservation community to ensure the survival and health of wild populations of animals, fungi and plants.

Finally, SSC encourages all its partners including government agencies to collaborate with botanic gardens, aquariums and zoos in the collective work of saving species through the One Plan Approach".

This policy sets out a framework for contributing meaningfully to international strategies including:

- The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)
- The Reverse the Red movement
- The IUCN Global Species Action Plan (GSAP)

2. Scope and exemptions

This policy applies to all accredited members of the African Association for Wildlife in Human Care (AAWHC). All other members are encouraged to abide by or achieve the standards set by the policy.

3. Definitions

Conservation - AAWHC supports the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) definition, whereby "Conservation is an action leading to healthy and resilient wildlife populations and natural ecosystems. These outcomes underpin the sustainability of the global environment and human societies and are achieved through direct interventions to manage populations, habitats and landscapes; promoting behaviour change at all levels of society through engagement and advocacy; and research and knowledge sharing to build conservation capacity".

Ecosystems - Communities of living organisms interacting with each other and their physical environment (such as air, water, and soil). Healthy ecosystems support biodiversity and human well-being.

Biodiversity - The variety of all life forms on Earth, including animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms, as well as the genetic differences within these species and the ecosystems they form.

Sustainable practices - Actions and approaches that meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs—balancing environmental health, economic viability, and social equity.

Community inclusion - Actively involving local people, especially Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, in conservation planning, decision-making, and implementation to ensure meaningful participation and mutual benefit.

Member - Any AAWHC accredited or or associate member involved in wildlife health and conservation. This includes, but is not limited to, sanctuaries, veterinary programs, conservation NGOs, field projects, and educational centres.

Global Species Action Plan (GSAP) - A framework developed to support coordinated global action for species conservation under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) - A global strategy adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity to guide biodiversity conservation efforts through 2030.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) - An international treaty with the goal of conserving biological diversity, using biological resources sustainably, and fairly sharing the benefits of genetic resources.

National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)- Country-level plans required under the CBD that outline national strategies for conserving biodiversity and meeting international targets.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) - A global authority on the status of the natural world and measures needed to safeguard it, known for tools like the Red List of Threatened Species.

IUCN Red List Index - A measure of trends in extinction risk for sets of species, showing changes in overall conservation status over time.

Green Status of Species - An IUCN framework that assesses species recovery and the effectiveness of conservation actions toward their long-term survival.

Species Conservation Action Plans - Strategic documents that guide conservation efforts for species or groups of species, typically at the regional or national level.

Species Recovery and Reintroduction Programmes - Efforts to rebuild wild populations of threatened species, often involving breeding, habitat management, and reintroduction into the wild.

Reverse the Red - A global movement to unite people and organizations in halting and reversing species decline, promoting success stories and hopeful narratives.

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities - Communities with strong cultural and historical ties to their local environments. Their knowledge and participation are crucial to effective, equitable conservation.

Nagoya Protocol - An international agreement under the CBD that ensures fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge.

Access and Benefit-Sharing - A principle that ensures those who provide genetic resources or traditional knowledge receive a fair share of the benefits when these resources are used.

GSAP SKILLS Platform - An online tool developed under the Global Species Action Plan to build and share practical conservation knowledge and skills globally.

Conservation Strategy - A document outlining an organization's goals, priorities, and planned actions for contributing to biodiversity conservation.

4. Policy Statement

The African Association for Wildlife in Human Care (AAWHC) is committed to the conservation of biodiversity and to contributing to the protection of natural ecosystems. Our approach is rooted in science, community engagement, and the belief that a healthy natural world is essential for the well-being of all life on Earth.

As per the definition of Conservation, these outcomes are fundamental to the long-term sustainability of the global environment and human societies.

The contribution of each AAWHC member to conservation will naturally vary, depending on their focus, resources, and expertise. Contributions may include activities such as:

- Managing populations of threatened species.
- Creating assurance populations.
- Participating in in-situ conservation projects by breeding ex-situ for the purposes of re-wilding.
- Conducting or supporting conservation research in line with the ethics requirements.
- Delivering conservation education and building local capacity.
- Managing and restoring habitats.
- Raising public awareness, encouraging behaviour change, and promoting sustainable practices.
- Gaining knowledge and applying conservation science through processes such as biobanking and wildlife health research.

Each member organisation is responsible for determining how it can best contribute to conservation, in alignment with AAWHC's broader mission and principles. Conservation strategies should be tailored to the institution's context and capabilities, while upholding shared values of integrity, scientific evidence, and community inclusion.

This policy outlines the minimum conservation requirements for all AAWHC members. It should be considered alongside other relevant national and international policies, best practice guidelines (e.g. IUCN), and legal frameworks. Failure to comply may affect accreditation status or eligibility for association benefits.

5. Objectives

All AAWHC members are expected to support, to the best of their ability, the following conservation objectives as part of their organisational responsibilities and contributions to the wider conservation community, depending on the financial and resource sustainability of each member:

5.1 Strategic planning

- Develop and maintain a publicly available conservation strategy.
- Ensure alignment with GSAP, GBF, and CBD goals.

5.2 Action and implementation

- Be actively involved in the protection, management, and/or rehabilitation of wild species and ecosystems, either in-situ or ex-situ.
- Establish an animal collections plan that supports conservation of local threatened species.
- Support and participate in species conservation action plans for regional priority species.
- Implement or contribute to species recovery and reintroduction programmes, using best practices from IUCN guidelines.
- Participate in the global Reverse-the-Red campaign.

5.3 Monitoring and reporting

- Record, evaluate, and report all conservation-related activities and outcomes using globally recognized indicators such as:
  - IUCN Red List Index
  - Green Status of Species
- Submit to, and support publications, for example WAZA, Reverse-the-Red, IUCN, and more.

5.4 Collaboration and partnership

- Partner with governments, NGOs, indigenous peoples, local communities, and scientific networks.
- Contribute to IUCN Red List assessments, species status reviews, and national biodiversity planning where possible (e.g. NBSAPs).

5.5 Knowledge and capacity sharing

- Use and promote the GSAP SKILLS platform to build conservation knowledge and skills.
- Support research, data sharing, and technical training for staff and local partners.

5.6 Public education and advocacy

- Provide accessible, engaging interpretation of their conservation work to the public.
- Develop sustainable practices within their facilities with which to engage the public.
- Deliver conservation education programming aligned with global biodiversity priorities.
- Encourage environmentally responsible behaviour among visitors and surrounding communities.
- Promote narratives of hope, resilience, and action—as championed by Reverse-the-Red.
- Participate in curriculum development of schools and tertiary education facilities as well as development of legal frameworks where possible.
- Advocate for the use of sustainable products within their facilities by incorporating separation and recycling of waste, saving water and electricity, as examples.

5.7 Resource commitment

- Support off-site conservation initiatives.
- Support community-based conservation through funding, capacity building, or in-kind support.

5.8 Ethical and equitable practice

All conservation activities must:

- Respect the rights, knowledge, and roles of indigenous peoples and local communities.
- Adhere to the Nagoya Protocol on access and benefit-sharing when working with genetic resources or traditional knowledge.
- Promote fair partnerships that share benefits equitably and transparently.

These expectations help guide AAWHC members in aligning their operations with shared goals for wildlife protection and ecosystem resilience. AAWHC encourages all members to engage with available guidance and resources to support planning, implementation, and evaluation of effective conservation efforts.

6. Responsibilities

Management of the AAWHC member or their delegated representative, must ensure that their organisation can satisfy the requirements of this Conservation Policy, as well as the requirements of all relevant conservation legislation and regulation as per the countries in which they operate.

AAWHC's Accreditation Programme assessors shall regularly evaluate accredited member's conservation activities through the AAWHC accreditation programme.

AAWHC Conservation committee must keep abreast of changes in global biodiversity targets, such as revisions to the CBD, GBF, or IUCN frameworks and update this policy as appropriate.

7. Related Documents

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies, procedures and guidelines of the Association:

- Ethics policy
- Animal Visitor Interactions Position Statement
- WAZA strategies
- IUCN Guidelines for Species Conservation Planning
- CBD National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)
- Reverse the Red Tools and Resources
- IUCN Red List and Green Status training materials

8. Resources

- WAZA Committing to Conservation
- BIAZA Conservation Policy
- WAZA Biodiversity Strategy

9. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every **five years** by the relevant committee of the AAWHC Board.

10. Approval

This Policy was approved by the AAWHC Board.