

A few guidelines from ZOO and SAZARC ref zoo improvement and legislation

- Many countries in the “other zoo world” (this is the developing countries parts of the world) NEED strong zoo legislation in order to maintain at least some of their zoos in reasonable condition.

- Peer pressure and zoo association regulation does not have the same impact as in western regions, such as AZA, EAZA and ARAZPA which have national, provincial or even regional legislation (EU) along with their strong and effective associations. This fact will not be welcome immediately but conscientious zoo managers and their government associates can be convinced of this over a few years of patient work and a little openmindedness.

- Every zoo and every country is different : even though making a list of unknown zoos generated a positive and effective reaction in India and Nepal, other countries may need a different approach.

- In general, anything one does ideally should be done only after fully understanding the country situation and establishing a genuine presence and trust there, both with government and with zoo officials.

- Outsiders to zoo and government want to help and are well meaning, but too much help is no help in the long term. Ideally, if one can make the point and point the way to an in-country individual, or officer zoo or department or even Ministry to take the lead, see it through and get all credit and publicity, the result will probably be more stable.

- Stability and effectiveness of the zoo legislation are the most important aspects.

- However, if legislation is not implemented by an objective group of persons whose interest is solely in the improvement of zoos, expanding the expertise of zoo staff (both senior and junior) and the welfare of the animals, it will not be of value. In other words, zoos themselves can't be the implementing agency of zoo legislation.

Case example : one of the South Asian country recently put up zoo legislation for the approximately eight zoos in the country, which is to be administered and implemented by one zoo considered to be the national zoo. This will have to be re-considered as the zoos in the country are under different administrative authorities and there is almost certain to be a conflict of interest between the national zoo and the zoos under the different ministries and departments.

- Zoo legislation should be feasible first ... if zoos simply cannot carry out the requirements due to lack of money or space, then the whole exercise may be discredited.

Case example : Then Indian Minister for Environment, Sri Kamal Nath, told the first Central Zoo Authority Inspection Committee to inspect the zoo and give directives in such a way that the zoo would be capable of carrying them out and build up confidence in the Act, in CZA and of the zoo itself. After improvements at this level, he said, you could “raise the bar.” This has worked admirably well in India.

- Zoos are complex institutions. Legislation which does not cover and provide for all aspects cannot be effective. A committee or group of people which represent various disciplines such as both zoo and wildlife conservation, wildlife veterinary science, animal welfare, education and public awareness, design, etc. should participate in the exercise. While too many people on the drafting committee can make a mess of the situation, the review stage should include enough persons to spot lacunae and particularly areas of vested interest.

- When working with government, it is advisable to stay out of the limelight as much as possible. Reasons for this are varied and can ruin a good relationship, for example

- . Resentment due to simple jealousy,
- . Resentment due to territorialism,
- . Resentment due to naivety and lack of understanding of local conditions and problems by the NGO / NGI
- . Embarrassment over not having done the work themselves.
- . Etc., etc., etc.

- On the other hand, producing press material in support of government activities, or providing information about modern trends in zoo management without criticism of existing facilities can enhance a relationship between NGO or NGI and governments.

There are many things NGO's can do of a positive and constructive nature that will really help, although there is always risk that something can go awry !

- The road to success in catalyzing and encouraging zoo legislation is paved with the:

**“Three P's of Progress, that is
Presence,
Persistence
and
Patience”**