Final report

Review of Ramsar Scientific and Technical Guidance

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Capybara *(Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris)* in the Pantanal (Ramsar Site - Brazil). Photo: © PJ Stephenson

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Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this report are those of the consultants, and do not necessarily reflect those of any of the Ramsar bodies or Parties. Any errors or misinterpretations are exclusively those of the consultants.

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Acronyms List

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPA	Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
COP	Conference of the Parties
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
EC	European Commission
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IAC	Interamerican-Convention for the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles
ICOMOS	International Council of Monuments and Sites
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
IFI	International Financial Institution
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organization
IOP	International Organization Partner
IPCC	Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
RFP	Regional Focal Point
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SRA	Senior Regional Adviser
STAC	Scientific and Technical Committee
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change
WHC	World Heritage Convention

Executive Summary

In 2012, Ramsar Contracting Parties adopted Resolution XI.16 to "ensure efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention" in which they approved "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention". The review was conducted by two independent consultants in collaboration with a Review Committee set up for this purpose. The methodology used consisted of: a) desk top reviews, b) interviews (52 in total), and c) an online survey (conducted through Survey Monkey) which was completed by 45 Ramsar stakeholders. Interviews were held in English, French and Spanish, and the survey was also available in all three languages. The review was divided into five components, of which this is the final and overarching one.

A strong message emerging from this review is that Ramsar scientific and technical guidance is well appreciated and fills a niche. Yet, at the same time, it is not reaching all of its intended audiences. Equally, the guidance does not respond to the needs of all Ramsar stakeholders.

Through this review a number of challenges to improve and optimise Ramsar scientific and technical guidance have been identified.

Challenge 1: Reaching out and understanding audiences - Ramsar's first challenge is to clearly identify and understand the audiences whom the scientific and technical guidance is intended to reach.

Challenge 2: Responding to the audiences' needs - The Ramsar Convention as a whole is currently not responding in a balanced manner to the needs for scientific and technical guidance of its four categories of key target audience (policy-makers, practitioners (including wetland managers), scientists and users of wetlands).

Challenge 3: Ensuring local relevance - Guidance should be targeted at the right level so as to be understood and applied by the target audience: general guidance may prove of moderate utility to a large number of stakeholders, while site-specific guidance may be of greater value to a smaller number of stakeholders.

Challenge 4: Identifying guidance that already exists - Much wetland-related guidance already exists, especially in different regions and languages, including guidance stemming from indigenous or traditional knowledge. However, much of this guidance remains to be identified, collected and widely promoted.

Challenge 5: Ensuring content, format and design of guidance are suited to the audience - Content, format and design of guidance need to be given due consideration to effectively reach the intended audience.

Challenge 6: Reducing complexity of the scientific and technical review panel's workplan and modus operandi - Simplification in the scientific and technical review panel (STRP) workplan and modus operandi would help to make them more practical and realistic.

Challenge 7: Diversifying and simplifying language used - Today, as in 2008[1], the language of existing guidance remains a challenge: both in its complexity and in the near exclusive use of English.

Challenge 8: Improving distribution channels - Guidance that is available is frequently difficult to find and appropriate distribution mechanisms – adapted to the audience - are needed.

Challenge 9: Following up and monitoring of guidance uptake - Producing guidance is not sufficient; follow up is frequently needed to ensure that it reaches its intended audience and is used optimally.

Challenge 10: Learning from the process - Monitoring and lesson learning are needed to support direct improvements to the guidance content and process.

A Way Forward

Today, Ramsar scientific and technical guidance predominantly falls under the responsibility of the STRP. Yet, there are several bodies and processes within Ramsar that could and should play a stronger role if Ramsar wishes to strengthen its approach to the provision, use and uptake of scientific and technical guidance. There is a need to significantly review the roles of at least four bodies/functions: the STRP, the STRP National Focal Points (NFPs), the COP and the Secretariat.

Partnerships should also be strengthened to support the identification of available guidance, to advise on the type of guidance, to promote capacity building, to ensure guidance delivery and to assist in monitoring and evaluating uptake and effectiveness of guidance.

Regionalisation of the scientific and technical guidance process would serve to promote a more balanced approach to reach all key target audiences and to engage effectively with a wider range of partners.

Allocating realistic human and financial resources is a key lesson emerging from this review.

Finally, improving understanding of the value of wetlands, notably in the framework of global priorities such as the post-2015 development agenda, may also help to increase resources and enhance collaboration in wetland conservation.

Next steps

The recommendations above imply a number of fundamental changes:

1. a **re-allocation of responsibility** for the "guidance chain", and in particular reducing the overall burden on the STRP, while increasing that on the COP and on the Secretariat.

2. a complete change in the current **"STRP National Focal Point" format.** Three options can be considered: a) the roles and commitment of current STRP NFPs are changed so that they are empowered to act as liaison between their national wetland practitioners and Ramsar's scientific body, b) they are removed and replaced by Ramsar NFPs who could take on some of their key responsibilities, notably the liaison role, or c) they are replaced by Regional (or sub-

[1] See: van Boven, G. (2008?). An Evaluation of the Use & Utility of Ramsar Guidance. A report to Ramsar Scientific & Technical Review Panel and Ramsar Secretariat.

regional) Focal Points (RFPs) that would be empowered to act as an important link for the region, to build and nurture regional partnerships, to relay needs to the Secretariat and to bring guidance products back to the region.

3. **stronger partnerships at the regional level** that would support dissemination of guidance and capacity building in the appropriate language.

4. stronger **international partnerships** that would enable Ramsar scientific information on wetlands to be directly connected to the work of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and relevant organizations.

5. a **re-design of the STRP**, to divide the global, higher level wetland-related scientific work that caters to both other scientists and other MEAs, from the regional level work that caters to a more regional and national level group of practitioners and policy-makers directly engaged with the Ramsar Convention.

6. commitment of requisite **resources (both human and financial)**. Some external funding could be raised via other sources (e.g. GEF, EC etc.) Equally, closer collaboration with a range of partners, notably at the regional level, could serve to leverage in-kind support from these institutions.

Overview of Recommendations

Recommendation 1:	Ramsar needs to conduct a target group analysis prior to the development of guidance.
Recommendation 2:	Ramsar needs to have a comprehensive contacts database so that it can better reach out to all of its audiences. Collaboration with relevant partners and governments can support this process.
Recommendation 3:	Ramsar should undertake a needs assessment – in terms of guidance topics required by the target audience – (Annex 3 provides a starting point and has emerged from the review).
Recommendation 4:	To better tailor guidance to the audience's needs, Ramsar could consider three approaches: a) using the same scientific guidance as a source and using communications and capacity building expertise to adapt the source material into guidance for its four audiences, b) designing guidance from the start that responds to the specific needs of each target audience, c) having four individual bodies (or sub-bodies) each responsible for developing guidance for a specific audience.
Recommendation 5:	When developing scientific and technical guidance, Ramsar needs to decide at which level it is worth investing: a more general level suited to a larger audience, or a more specific level, suited to a smaller audience. This decision has repercussions on the audience it is reaching, on the value of the guidance and on the overall investment.
Recommendation 6:	An assessment or review of existing wetland-related scientific and technical guidance, particularly at the regional level, in different languages and from diverse sources, should be conducted (with regional partners) and the results made widely available to Ramsar stakeholders. The results of this assessment may also form the basis for translation and/or adaptation of some guidance.
Recommendation 7:	The distinction between scientific and technical guidance will facilitate the

	subsequent development of each category of guidance, with the respective audience in mind. It is proposed to consider the following to differentiate between the two: "technical guidance" is methodological in nature, such as handbooks, manuals or fact sheets, aimed at practitioners (wetland managers), policy-makers and users of wetlands; "scientific guidance" is based on original research and helps to advance knowledge in the field, and is aimed at scientists, notably peers in the water and wetlands spheres of interest and from other multilateral conventions.
Recommendation 8:	Recognising that some scientific and technical guidance produced by STRP might be targeting a narrow audience of scientists, the material should be (re-)written, (re-)designed or (re-)packaged by non-scientists to better target their respective key audiences, i.e. policy- and decision-makers, wetland managers, wetland users and other scientists. In particular, the topics, design and approach for delivery of the guidance may differ.
Recommendation 9:	A typology of scientific and technical guidance tools should be developed and made clearly visible and accessible to target audiences. As a starting point, these tools could include: fact sheets, briefing notes, technical reports, scientific articles, manuals, technical guidelines and case studies.
Recommendation 10:	A realistic list of tasks needs to be delineated for the work plan for each triennium. The workplan could take a modular approach with core activities being set by the COP and provided with adequate resources. It may be necessary to set a limit at five tasks to avoid the list continuously growing, unless additional funding can be obtained. A neutral facilitator may assist Ramsar's scientific body in conjunction with COP, to prioritise the work load and turn it into a realistic workplan given real resources and timelines. Additional elements could then be added to a "wishlist" of activities that could be fed by different stakeholders (including the Secretariat, Ramsar partners, individual Parties, etc.) but only acted upon in second order priority and provided the necessary resources were available.
Recommendation 11:	The STRP workplan that is ratified by the COP should contain actual names of responsible people that should be held accountable, as well as containing the timelines of delivery for implementing different activities; and if funding is needed, it should be committed by Parties for it to be included in the approved workplan.
Recommendation 12:	To avoid any conflict of interest, STRP members either should not undertake any substantive technical work, or should not be involved in the definition of the prioritised workplan. Equally, members involved in any substantive work should not be involved in reviewing it. A "conflict of interest" clause should be signed by all members involved in the scientific body at each meeting.
Recommendation 13:	Language of Ramsar guidance needs to be simpler and concise. Documents should be shortened and simplified thereby making them easier to understand and translate.
Recommendation 14:	All guidance documents should be provided at a minimum in the three languages of the Convention: English, French and Spanish.

Recommendation 15:	Ramsar's scientific body should be able to operate in several languages so as to promote a broader range of scientific input. This may require funding for interpretation during face to face meetings, or it may require more representatives that are multi-lingual and can help each other. Another option could be to hire the services of a tri-lingual translator or interpreter for specific meetings or sessions.
Recommendation 16:	Ramsar should consider using a number of different tools in order to reach its different audiences. These tools should consider the type of audience (i.e. scientists, policy-makers, practitioners or wetland users) and their ease of access to technology.
Recommendation 17:	Ramsar should establish solid and practical partnerships with regional and/or national technical, research and implementing bodies with which it can develop and disseminate some of the guidance in such a way as to be more regionally-relevant and adapted to cultural mores.
Recommendation 18:	Ramsar should design a programme of outreach to ensure that scientific and technical guidance effectively reaches its intended audiences. Such a programme would encompass Ramsar Secretariat regional team staff, regional (sub-regional) focal points, partners, as well as other key stakeholders and could include simple indicators of success, such as document downloads.
Recommendation 19:	Monitoring use and application of guidance should be more widespread, using local partners when appropriate, as a way of promoting lesson learning and adaptive management in Ramsar's approach to scientific and technical guidance.
Recommendation 20:	Ramsar should consider whether it needs more than one body (and whether that should be subsidiary bodies or external partners) to fulfil the different guidance roles its audiences require. One option is for the STRP to be split into two bodies: one that maintains an outward-looking and future-scoping role to identify key and emerging issues in wetland conservation (for which it would commission work as and when necessary, and given sufficient funding) and another more inward-looking body that would focus on directly supporting practitioners and policy-makers to achieve the aims of the Convention.
Recommendation 21:	Membership to the scientific body should ensure better representation in terms of regions, gender and disciplines, and should remain apolitical. This can be achieved by electing experts in their independent capacity and defining a given number of seats per criteria (e.g. related to themes, gender or regional representation). Members should rotate on a set timeframe (3 years) to ensure that different Parties can be accommodated, with some continuity provided by lagging the terms. Participation at meetings should be an obligation for all members so that it is not the same small group that takes all of the decisions.
Recommendation 22:	The size of the scientific and technical group for Ramsar should be maintained at a reasonable number not exceeding 20 members.
Recommendation 23:	The current role of STRP NFPs should change to be more effective. Three options can be envisaged: a) STRP NFPs could be replaced with a regional person (regional or sub-regional focal point - RFP) who would have as a main responsibility to channel regional needs into the STRP and to take the STRP outputs back to the region. The RFP would also be a key link with regional partners, as well as with the senior regional advisers (SRAs); b) alternatively, STRP NFPs could remain but their terms of reference would be changed (and

	simplified) so that they can better act as the key link between national interests in wetlands and the STRP/Ramsar Secretariat; c) finally, STRP NFPs could be removed and some of their key functions included in the role of the NFPs. In all scenarios, it would be important to provide the person with the resources to hold at least one meeting of key wetland stakeholders per year in their country/region and to link up effectively with STRP.
Recommendation 24:	The role of the Secretariat in scientific and technical guidance should be strengthened. In particular there is a role for the Secretariat in all steps of the "guidance process": • reaching out to Ramsar audience(s); • identifying and communicating (to the STRP) needs for scientific and technical guidance; • facilitating the design, communications and dissemination of scientific and technical guidance; • mediating and facilitating between the diverse audiences of the Ramsar Convention and the scientific body; • capacity building; • reviewing use of the guidance.
Recommendation 25:	In the short term, Ramsar Contracting Parties, via the COP, should do a reality check in terms of funding and capacity associated with the priorities they adopt for scientific and technical work.
Recommendation 26:	Ramsar should consider options for expanding partnerships particularly at the regional or national level to "outsource" identification and adaptation of already available guidance, development of new guidance, dissemination of guidance, capacity building and monitoring uptake and effectiveness of guidance.
Recommendation 27:	Ramsar's scientific work should re-focus around a regional approach which can serve to break down some of the real or perceived isolation currently surrounding the STRP work. In a first phase, it would require strengthening collaboration between the Senior Regional Advisers, regional partners (including Ramsar Regional Centres) and either regional (sub-regional) focal points or national focal points, to define regional priorities and needs.
Recommendation 28:	All activities approved in the Ramsar workplan for scientific and technical guidance, should have commensurate funding and human resources.
Recommendation 29:	Ramsar should seek additional funding, in-kind resources or partnerships with inter-governmental organizations to fund a clear workplan for effective functioning of all elements in the "guidance process" (as well as linkages between those elements).
Recommendation 30:	A strong communications and marketing campaign on the importance of wetlands more generally would help to increase appreciation and funding (notably from the private sector) for scientific and technical guidance emerging from Ramsar.

Introduction

The core mission of the Ramsar Convention (1971) is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world". Contracting Parties commit to three key issues which are: 1. Wise use of wetlands, 2. Listing (and effective management) of wetlands of international importance and 3. International cooperation (particularly as concerns transboundary wetlands).

Over the years, Ramsar has grown rapidly from 35 Parties and 300 Wetlands of International Importance ("Ramsar Sites") in 1984, to 77 Parties and 610 Ramsar Sites in 1993, and 168 Contracting Parties and 2,187 Ramsar Sites today.

Since its third meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP), Ramsar has formalised its approach to scientific and technical guidance: first via a working group on wise use (at COP 3), then through a working group on advising on the formulation and implementation of the Convention's wise use concept, and on elaborating criteria and guidelines for identification of wetlands of international importance (at COP 4), and finally by setting up a subsidiary body: the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) at COP 5 in 1993.

Rapid growth of the Convention has inevitably impacted on the roles of different bodies to the Convention, and notably on the scientific and technical function. A number of reviews of different issues surrounding scientific and technical guidance have been undertaken, notably in 2006, 2007 and 2008. The current review draws, where relevant, on the conclusions from these previous reviews.

Background

In July 2012, Ramsar Contracting Parties adopted Resolution XI.16 to "ensure efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention" in which Contracting Parties approved "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention", the findings of which would be reported to the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12) in June 2015. The review was commissioned and undertaken in collaboration with the Review Committee set up at the 46th meeting of the Standing Committee (Decision SC46-14).

Methodology

Two independent consultants, Stephanie Mansourian and Veronica Lo, were contracted during the period of May-July 2014 to undertake this review, with input from the Secretariat and the Review Committee.

The methodology utilised consisted of: a) desk top reviews, b) interviews (a total of 52 stakeholders – see Annex 2), and c) an online survey (conducted through Survey Monkey) which was completed by 45 Ramsar stakeholders. Interviews were held in English, French and Spanish, and the survey was also available in all three languages.

The review was divided into five components, as listed below (see Figure 1). These components are separate reports with each consultant taking the lead on a component.

1. Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, its utility, use, application, conversion into practical tools etc;
2. Review of the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders;
3. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of other MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar;
4. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of relevant non-MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar; and
5. Final report drawing on the above analyses, that summarizes major findings, lessons and recommendations for: 1.) Improving the way scientific guidance is developed, applied and converted into tools; and 2.) Improving scientific support and delivery by Ramsar bodies and processes.

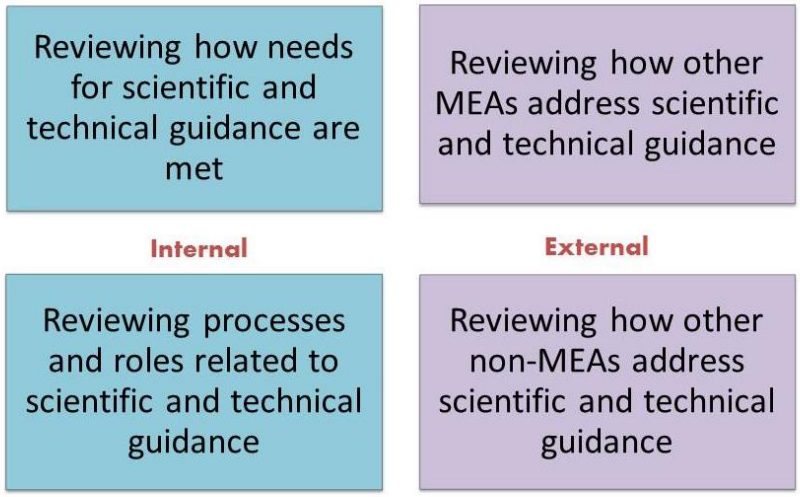


Figure 1: Four pillars of the review

The present report is Component 5 of this process and is based on the findings of the first four reports.

For further details on a particular component, please see the associated report available online at www.ramsar.org. The executive summaries of Reports 1 – 4 are also included in Annex 1 to this report.

Framework

For the overall review, the framework adopted is represented in Figure 2:

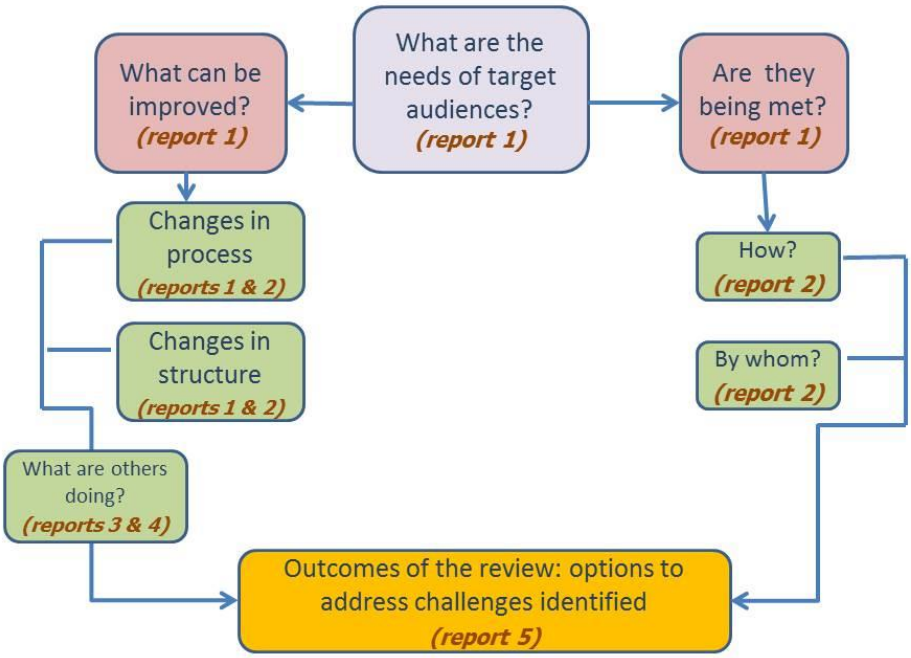


Figure 2: Framework for the Review

At the core of the framework is the question of identifying the needs of target audiences and whether those needs are met (see Report 1). Determining by which means those needs are currently addressed and by whom is central to Report 2. For identified gaps, both Reports 1 and 2 considered potential changes in processes and in structures.

In the second phase of the review, the scientific and technical guidance processes of other conventions and organizations were considered as a means of learning from their experiences and considering best practices (also see Reports 3 and 4) that could be applied to Ramsar. The fifth and final report draws on all four reports and provides a series of recommendations to support Ramsar in improving the way it defines and delivers scientific and technical guidance.

Section 1: Problem Statement: What are the needs for scientific and technical guidance?

Resolution XI.16 identifies the following audiences for Ramsar scientific and technical guidance:

- managers of individual wetland sites;
- managers of networks of wetlands such as on migratory waterbird flyways;
- wetland policy makers;
- those responsible for regulating use of and impacts on wetlands;
- policy-makers in other sectors such as water, agriculture, health, urban development, and energy;
- stakeholders and local communities who may depend upon wetlands and wetland ecosystem services;
- educators and researchers;
- private sector organizations.

It is possible to re-group these audiences under the following categories:

1. **Scientists** – including scientists from other institutions, those from other MEAs, researchers and educators;
2. **Policy-makers** – including from the environment and water sectors, but also other related sectors;
3. **Practitioners** – in particular wetland managers, but also others from related fields such as protected area managers;
4. **Users of wetlands** – including communities and the private sector.

The **fundamental problem posed** for this review is that currently Ramsar scientific and technical guidance falls short of satisfying its broad and diverse stakeholder community.

A simplified six-step "guidance process" can be described and used to analyse Ramsar scientific and technical guidance (see Figure 3). The process starts with identification of the audience and ends with the review and evaluation of guidance use. The next section describes these steps and uses them to organise the challenges encountered and make suggested recommendations.

Figure 3: Ramsar scientific guidance process

Section 2: Challenges and Proposed Solutions

"I have been impressed by the quality of documents produced" (quote from an interviewee)

A strong message emerging from this review is that Ramsar scientific and technical guidance is well appreciated and fills a niche. The effectiveness of the key Ramsar body that develops scientific and technical guidance - the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) - in comparison to those of several other conventions, is generally considered superior. Outside stakeholders in particular, such as representatives of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other scientists, are generally most appreciative of Ramsar guidance. Within the Ramsar community, opinions are more varied, with some feeling that they are obtaining what they need in terms of guidance, and others feeling that guidance is not at the right level. The picture also varies depending on the region with, for example, more policy-makers in Europe than in Asia or Latin America feeling that their needs are being addressed.

While there is a large amount of valuable guidance produced by Ramsar and its partners, it is not readily accessible or relevant to all Ramsar stakeholders.

This review identified a number of challenges to improve and optimise Ramsar scientific and technical guidance so that it better responds to the needs of Ramsar's diverse audiences. These challenges are listed below in a concise form (more detail can be found in Reports 1-4 under this review). For each challenge, recommendations are proposed. This section draws significantly on the findings of the research phase and on the first four reports.

Step 1: Identifying audiences

Challenge 1: Reaching out and understanding audiences

Each category of stakeholder has different requirements in terms of scientific and technical guidance. Indeed a key lesson emerging from the review of other MEAs (see Report 3), is that guidance should be practical and relevant to the audience. Ramsar's first challenge is to clearly identify and understand its audiences. At a basic level, it also needs to be able to reach out and contact them, something which requires the establishment of a comprehensive database of contacts.

Identifying and clearly catering for different audiences is something that most MEAs appear to struggle with. In some cases, e.g. the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), there is one main audience group (policy-makers from the South Pacific region) which simplifies the process. In other cases however, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), audiences are diverse and as a result, different tools are needed to reach them (see Report 3 for more on this).

The great diversity of Ramsar's constituency throughout the world creates additional challenges in terms of designing tools (i.e. printed matter, versus more modern online solutions) and languages.

Recommendation 1: Ramsar needs to conduct a target group analysis prior to the development of guidance.

Recommendation 2: Ramsar needs to have a comprehensive contacts database so that it can better reach out to all of its audiences. Collaboration with relevant partners and governments can support this process.

Step 2: Defining needs for guidance

Challenge 2: Responding to the audiences' needs

While the STRP produces sound scientific guidance, the Ramsar Convention as a whole is currently not responding in a balanced manner to the needs for scientific and technical guidance of its four categories of target audience. Currently, there is a bias towards addressing the needs of the scientific audience over and above policy-makers, practitioners and wetland users. The technical content, length, format and language of the guidance is a limiting factor.

Wetland managers also may have diverse needs that are quite specific (related to the type of wetland, local environmental conditions, local regulations etc.) which adds to the complexity and uniqueness of their needs.

Recommendation 3: Ramsar should undertake a needs assessment – in terms of guidance topics required by the target audience – (Annex 3 provides a starting point and has emerged from the review).

Recommendation 4: To better tailor guidance to the audience's needs, Ramsar could consider three approaches: a) using the same scientific guidance as a source and using communications and capacity building expertise to adapt the source material into guidance for its four audiences, b) designing guidance from the start that responds to the specific needs of each target audience, c) having four individual bodies (or sub-bodies) each responsible for developing guidance for a specific audience.

Challenge 3: Ensuring local relevance

For guidance to be understood and applied by the target audience, a certain level of local specificity may be required. This is a particular challenge as there is a fine line between being able to address all wetland stakeholders' needs and responding to specific needs of individual wetland managers. General guidance may prove of moderate utility as background information for a larger number of stakeholders, while site-specific guidance may be of great value to a much smaller number of stakeholders (see Figure 4).

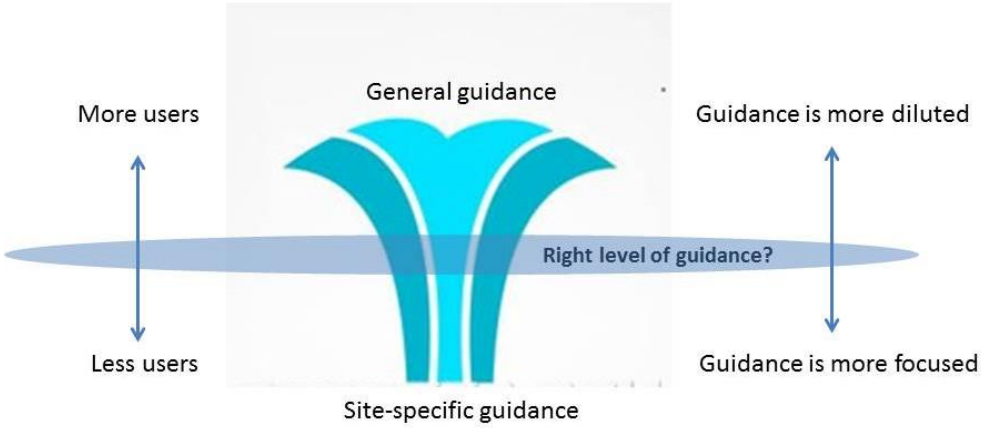


Figure 4: Targeting the right level of scientific and technical guidance

Recommendation 5: When developing scientific and technical guidance, Ramsar needs to decide at which level it is worth investing: a more general level suited to a larger audience, or a more specific level, suited to a smaller audience. This decision has repercussions on the audience it is reaching, on the value of the guidance and on the overall investment.

Step 3: Identifying sources of guidance, developing and designing guidance

Challenge 4: Identifying guidance that already exists

Much wetland-related guidance already exists, especially in different regions and languages, including guidance stemming from indigenous or traditional knowledge. It would be valuable to tap into the various sources of guidance and promote and/or adapt them to Ramsar's audiences.

An assessment can help to better understand what guidance exists and where it can be found, as well as identifying gaps. Some specific gaps in terms of topics already highlighted by stakeholders and Ramsar bodies in reports 2 and 3 have been collated in Annex 3.

Recommendation 6: An assessment or review of existing wetland-related scientific and technical guidance, particularly at the regional level, in different languages and from diverse sources, should be conducted (with regional partners) and the results made widely available to Ramsar stakeholders. The results of this assessment may also form the basis for translation and/or adaptation of some guidance.

Challenge 5: Ensuring content, format and design of guidance are suited to the audience

Key dimensions to the guidance are its content (topic, level of detail, etc.), its format (scientific versus technical, technical language, etc.), and its design (presentation, language). Each of these dimensions will need to differ depending on the audience.

While the research phase of this review did not find any particular distinction between scientific and technical guidance, some conclusions can be drawn that are of relevance to Ramsar. Firstly, most other conventions seem to consider scientific and technical as two sides of the same coin. In many instances, it was clear that technical guidance relied on solid scientific information. Some conventions produce a number of technical documents – some for practitioners, others for policy-makers - out of the same original scientific guidance. Technical guidance may also be best termed "methodological" guidance, such as handbooks, aimed at practitioners. Scientific guidance is based on original research and helps to advance knowledge in the field, and is produced, for example, in the form of peer-reviewed journal articles. It is frequently the foundation for several forms of guidance and for decision-making.

Distinguishing between scientific and technical guidance is useful for Ramsar in light of its main audiences. Thus, scientific guidance would underpin (or be the basis for) technical guidance, while also responding to the needs of the scientific audience. In turn, technical guidance, would respond to specific methodological needs of both policy-makers and practitioners, with each receiving a different type of technical guidance (see Table 1). For example, fact sheets may be more suited to policy-makers, while manuals might be more valuable to wetland managers. Through this review, there was also an overwhelming call for more case studies as a means of concretely illustrating issues and solutions.

Category of guidance	Audience	Purpose
Scientific	Scientists	Further advance the science of wetlands Expand knowledge on wetlands and water resources Identify new and emerging issues and threats to wetlands Source for other methodological guidance
Technical	Policy-makers	Inform policy-makers Support policy-making
	Practitioners	Support the management of wetlands Support managers through training Support the integration of wetland conservation within landscapes and with other conservation priorities
	Users of wetlands	Support the management of wetlands Improve understanding of the values of wetlands

Table 1: Examples of intended purposes of the guidance by audience

Tools for guidance vary from printed documents to a range of modern and/or interactive solutions. The latter will however, be best suited for regions where Ramsar's stakeholders have easy and affordable access to modern technologies. A simple typology of guidance tools may facilitate access to these tools. This could include: fact sheets, briefing notes, technical reports, scientific articles, manuals, technical guidelines and case studies.

General guidance may need to be massaged into more specific types of guidance. The expertise of a communications officer and/or a capacity-building expert, who may be situated either within the STRP, or more usefully within the Secretariat, would be required. The roles of national and the international CEPA officers may need to be enhanced and further resourced.

Recommendation 7: The distinction between scientific and technical guidance will facilitate the subsequent development of each category of guidance, with the respective audience in mind. It is proposed to consider the following to differentiate between the two: "technical guidance" is methodological in nature, such as handbooks, manuals or fact sheets, aimed at practitioners (wetland managers), policy-makers and users of wetlands; "scientific guidance" is based on original research and helps to advance knowledge in the field, and is aimed at scientists, notably peers in the water and wetlands spheres of interest and from other multilateral conventions.

Recommendation 8: Recognising that some scientific and technical guidance produced by STRP might be targeting a narrow audience of scientists, the material should be (re-)written, (re-)designed or (re-)packaged by non-scientists to better target their respective key audiences, i.e. policy- and decision-makers, wetland managers, wetland users and other scientists. In particular, the topics, design and approach for delivery of the guidance may differ.

Recommendation 9: A typology of scientific and technical guidance tools should be developed and made clearly visible and accessible to target audiences. As a starting point, these tools could include: fact sheets, briefing notes, technical reports, scientific articles, manuals, technical guidelines and case studies.

Challenge 6: Reducing complexity of the STRP workplan and modus operandi

The STRP functions on a triennium basis, but the delay between approval of the workplan and delivery of draft products is generally tight. The workplan is unrealistically long, with elements regularly being carried over from one triennium to the next. The process, as outlined in DOC. SC46-16, is lengthy. While COP approves the workplan, much is left to STRP to define independently which also raises conflict of interest issues as some of the work is also directly undertaken by STRP members.

The *modus operandi* detailing the functioning of the STRP is equally lengthy and complex, and few people are aware of its modalities.

Recommendation 10: A realistic list of tasks needs to be delineated for the work plan for each triennium. The workplan could take a modular approach with core activities being set by the COP and provided with adequate resources. It may be necessary to set a limit at five tasks to avoid the list continuously growing, unless additional funding can be obtained. A neutral facilitator may assist Ramsar's scientific body in conjunction with COP, to prioritise the work load and turn it into a realistic workplan given real resources and timelines. Additional elements could then be added to a "wishlist" of activities that could be fed by different stakeholders (including the Secretariat, Ramsar

partners, individual Parties, etc.) but only acted upon in second order priority and provided the necessary resources were available.

Recommendation 11: The STRP workplan that is ratified by the COP should contain actual names of responsible people that should be held accountable, as well as containing the timelines of delivery for implementing different activities; and if funding is needed, it should be committed by Parties for it to be included in the approved workplan.

Recommendation 12: To avoid any conflict of interest, STRP members either should not undertake any substantive technical work, or should not be involved in the definition of the prioritised workplan. Equally, members involved in any substantive work should not be involved in reviewing it. A "conflict of interest" clause should be signed by all members involved in the scientific body at each meeting.

Step 4: Communicating and distributing guidance

Challenge 7: Diversifying and simplifying language used

Today, as in 2008 (see Van Boven and Annex 4 that compares the key issues raised in three previous reviews), the language of existing guidance remains a challenge. The level of technical content, and the fact that the majority of the guidance is in English - even though a vast number of users of the guidance do not speak English - signify that much of the guidance cannot be used. Furthermore, because the language of the guidance is too technical, translation proves difficult.

Limiting the working language of STRP to English, is also a major shortcoming of Ramsar's scientific body.

Recommendation 13: Language of Ramsar guidance needs to be simpler and concise. Documents should be shortened and simplified thereby making them easier to understand and translate.

Recommendation 14: All guidance documents should be provided at a minimum in the three languages of the Convention: English, French and Spanish.

Recommendation 15: Ramsar's scientific body should be able to operate in several languages so as to promote a broader range of scientific input. This may require funding for interpretation during face to face meetings, or it may require more representatives that are multi-lingual and can help each other. Another option could be to hire the services of a tri-lingual translator or interpreter for specific meetings or sessions.

Challenge 8: Improving distribution channels

Guidance that is available is frequently difficult to find with a lot of data available on the Ramsar, STRP and Wetlands International websites but frequently organized in a sub-optimal manner. In addition, not all stakeholders have easy access to the Internet. Ramsar should not assume that all those needing

guidance will necessarily seek it out on the web. Alternative and more proactive means of disseminating the guidance will be necessary (Report 4 lists a number of tools used by other organizations to disseminate guidance).

Recommendation 16: Ramsar should consider using a number of different tools in order to reach its different audiences. These tools should consider the type of audience (i.e. scientists, policy-makers, practitioners or wetland users) and their ease of access to technology.

Recommendation 17: Ramsar should establish solid and practical partnerships with regional and/or national technical, research and implementing bodies with which it can develop and disseminate some of the guidance in such a way as to be more regionally-relevant and adapted to cultural mores.

Step 5: Applying guidance

The main responsibility for applying guidance falls outside of the immediate realm of influence of Ramsar. Nevertheless, it is within Ramsar's control to actively promote the use of guidance, to determine whether the guidance is being used and to assess its utility.

Challenge 9: Following up and monitoring of guidance uptake

One lesson emerging from the review of other MEAs and other organizations and processes (see Reports 3 and 4) is that producing guidance is only the tip of the iceberg, following up on guidance is of critical importance. Ensuring guidance is used and applied may be done by actively distributing the guidance, via webinars, outreach workshops and capacity building. Quick metrics for distribution success include monitoring the number of website visits and document downloads.

Recommendation 18: Ramsar should design a programme of outreach to ensure that scientific and technical guidance effectively reaches its intended audiences. Such a programme would encompass Ramsar Secretariat regional team staff, regional (sub-regional) focal points, partners, as well as other key stakeholders and could include simple indicators of success, such as document downloads.

Step 6: Reviewing use of guidance

Challenge 10: Learning from the process

Monitoring uptake, reviewing the use of guidance and learning from the process are all useful means of improving future guidance. Regularly assessing whether guidance is being used allows lessons and feedback to input into the next cycle of guidance development. In this respect, Report 4 outlines different evaluation methods applied by different organizations.

Recommendation 19: Monitoring use and application of guidance should be more widespread, using local partners when appropriate, as a way of promoting lesson learning and adaptive management in Ramsar's approach to scientific and technical guidance.

Section 3: A Way Forward

What do the recommendations imply?

Today, Ramsar scientific and technical guidance predominantly falls under the responsibility of the STRP. Yet, there are several bodies and processes within Ramsar that could and should play a stronger role if Ramsar wishes to strengthen its approach to the provision, use and uptake of scientific and technical guidance. A more detailed description of roles and responsibilities of Ramsar bodies and processes, as they pertain to guidance provisioning, is outlined in Report 2.

3.1. Reviewing Roles of Ramsar Bodies and Processes

Role of Scientific and Technical Review Panel

The STRP is a body made up essentially of natural scientists working voluntarily. While membership is balanced in terms of both regional and gender representatives, those that tend to be most active are generally men from developed countries.

A review of other MEAs and organizations, demonstrates that in the more successful cases, either terms of reference are very focused, for example those of the two scientific committees of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), or there are several bodies dealing with scientific and technical guidance, for example the World Heritage Convention (WHC) relies on three external organizations plus its own World Heritage Committee and Secretariat to provide scientific guidance. Equally, smaller advisory bodies appear to be more effective than larger ones. More on this can be found in Report 3.

Recommendation 20: Ramsar should consider whether it needs more than one body (and whether that should be subsidiary bodies or external partners) to fulfil the different guidance roles its audiences require. One option is for the STRP to be split into two bodies: one that maintains an outward-looking and future-scoping role to identify key and emerging issues in wetland conservation (for which it would commission work as and when necessary, and given sufficient funding) and another more inward-looking body that would focus on directly supporting practitioners and policy-makers to achieve the aims of the Convention.

Recommendation 21: Membership to the scientific body should ensure better representation in terms of regions, gender and disciplines, and should remain apolitical. This can be achieved by electing experts in their independent capacity and defining a given number of seats per criteria (e.g. related to themes, gender or regional representation). Members should rotate on a set timeframe (3 years) to ensure that different Parties can be accommodated, with some continuity provided by lagging the terms. Participation at meetings should be an obligation for all members so that it is not the same small group that takes all of the decisions.

Recommendation 22: The size of the scientific and technical group for Ramsar should be maintained at a reasonable number not exceeding 20 members.

Role of STRP National Focal Points

The role of STRP NFPs was intended essentially to provide input and support to the implementation of the workplan of the STRP. In order to do this, STRP NFPs are expected to be in regular contact and communication with the other Ramsar NFPs (Administrative Authority and the CEPA Focal Points) in their country and, as much as possible, with other STRP NFPs in the region. They are also required to consult with and seek input from other experts, expert bodies and wetland centres in their country.

While national differences exist, the overwhelming impression we obtained from this review is that STRP NFPs are not functioning effectively: very few participate at STRP meetings, very few are known in their respective countries by those involved in wetlands, and their role in linking national experts to the STRP is generally non-existent. This is to a large extent because of a lack of resources and limited empowerment.

Recommendation 23: The current role of STRP NFPs should change to be more effective. Three options can be envisaged: a) STRP NFPs could be replaced with a regional person (regional or sub-regional focal point - RFP) who would have as a main responsibility to channel regional needs into the STRP and to take the STRP outputs back to the region. The RFP would also be a key link with regional partners, as well as with the senior regional advisers (SRAs); b) alternatively, STRP NFPs could remain but their terms of reference would be changed (and simplified) so that they can better act as the key link between national interests in wetlands and the STRP/Ramsar Secretariat; c) finally, STRP NFPs could be removed and some of their key functions included in the role of the NFPs. In all scenarios, it would be important to provide the person with the resources to hold at least one meeting of key wetland stakeholders per year in their country/region and to link up effectively with STRP.

Role of the Ramsar Secretariat

The Secretariat is at the core of Ramsar. In its official functions, the Secretariat plays at least four roles of relevance to scientific and technical guidance:

- Assisting in convening and organizing the meetings of the STRP;
- Providing scientific, and technical support to Contracting Parties;
- Making known the decisions, Resolutions, and Recommendations of the COP and the Standing Committee;
- Providing secretariat functions for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and maintaining the functionality of the Web-based STRP Platform.

It can be argued that two of these roles are key to the overall provision of scientific and technical guidance, namely: “providing scientific, and technical support to Contracting Parties” and “making known the decisions, Resolutions, and Recommendations of the COP and the Standing Committee”.

Both of these roles relate to steps 3-4 in Figure 3 above. Yet, the Secretariat is currently not perceived as a central player in the delivery of scientific and technical guidance.

One finding of this review is that the Secretariat has a critical role to play in scientific and technical guidance, and should be empowered and strengthened to do so effectively. Arguments in favour of this are that the role of designing, distributing, disseminating and following up is time consuming and should fall on staff rather than on volunteer scientists. The Secretariat (via its Senior Regional Advisers) is also the one Ramsar body that communicates most regularly with both wetland managers and policy-makers, and therefore is able to assess the needs for guidance as well as communicate the guidance back to these audiences. At the same time, the Secretariat is also the face of Ramsar when it comes to collaboration with other organizations and conventions and therefore, can best establish and follow up on relevant partnerships.

Recommendation 24: The role of the Secretariat in scientific and technical guidance should be strengthened. In particular there is a role for the Secretariat in all steps of the "guidance process":

- *reaching out to Ramsar audience(s);*
- *identifying and communicating (to the STRP) needs for scientific and technical guidance;*
- *facilitating the design, communications and dissemination of scientific and technical guidance;*
- *mediating and facilitating between the diverse audiences of the Ramsar Convention and the scientific body;*
- *capacity building;*
- *reviewing use of the guidance.*

Role of the Conference of the Parties

"The buck stops with COP" (quote from one interviewee)

The COP plays an essential role in providing the support (both political and financial) for the STRP and more broadly, for the effective development of scientific and technical guidance. Indeed, Ramsar Parties determine the terms of reference for the scientific body, they approve the workplan for scientific and technical work, they provide funding for it and they are recipients of much of the guidance. If they are not satisfied with the process, it is in their power to ensure that it is changed. Nevertheless, they should also ensure that they do not place overly ambitious targets without concomitant resources (human and financial).

Recommendation 25: In the short term, Ramsar Contracting Parties, via the COP, should do a reality check in terms of funding and capacity associated with the priorities they adopt for scientific and technical work.

In conclusion, the respective responsibilities of four key Ramsar groups, namely COP, STRP, STRP NFPs and the Secretariat, need to be re-considered, both in terms of their importance and in terms of the specific detailed responsibilities (see Figure 5).

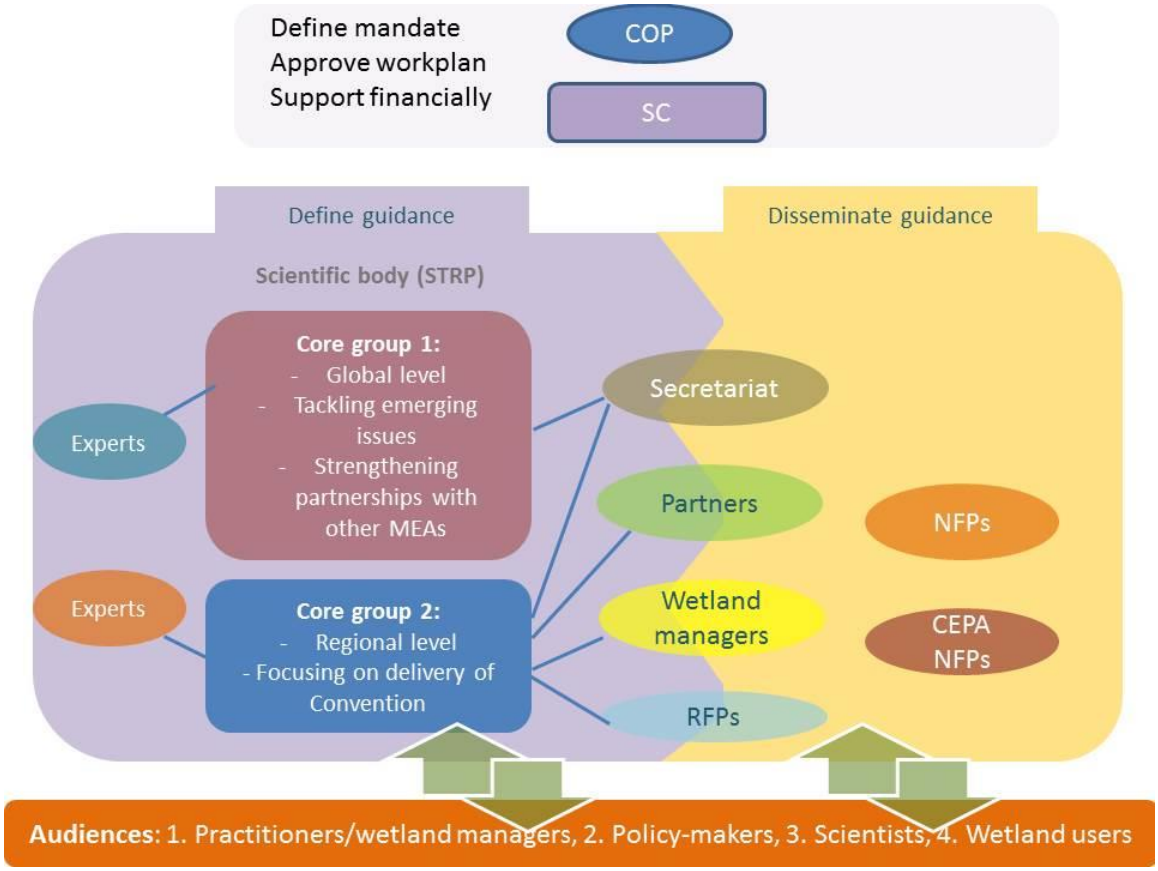


Figure 5: **Possible structure for defining and delivering scientific and technical guidance within Ramsar**

The scientific body would consist of two core groups: one for global, outward (broader wetland- and water-focused) and forward-looking issues, and one for inward (Ramsar-focused), regional and practical guidance. Core group 1 would include international experts, as well as representation from the Secretariat. Core group 2 would include regional and thematic experts, wetland managers , partners and regional/sub-regional focal points. Chairs of each core group would report to COP/SC.

(COP= Conference of the Parties; SC= Standing Committee; NFP= Ramsar National Focal Point; RFP= Regional/sub-regional focal point; CEPA = Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness; STRP = Scientific and Technical Review Panel)

Table 2 below begins to outline key responsibilities for each of the four groups.

Table 2: Key responsibilities for COP, STRP, RFPs and Secretariat

		Key responsibilities
COP		Communicating their needs for scientific and technical guidance Approving Ramsar's workplan on scientific and technical guidance Applying relevant scientific and technical guidance Funding scientific and technical guidance
Secretariat		Facilitating the process of defining, developing and disseminating scientific and technical guidance Coordinating the process from the definition phase to the follow up phase Communicating between various stakeholders engaged in the process Collecting needs from target audiences Disseminating guidance back to target audiences
STRP	**Core group 1**	Developing and providing scientific guidance Identifying emerging issues Collaborating with other global conservation entities
	Core group 2	Developing and providing technical guidance Linking science to effective technical guidance Coordinating and communicating with Secretariat (including Senior Regional Advisers) to understand guidance needs at regional and national levels
RFPs		Channelling regional needs into the STRP Taking the STRP outputs back to the region Harnessing regional partnerships and collaboration

3.2. Establishing Strong Partnerships

Partnerships in the context of Ramsar scientific and technical guidance have several values, including:

1. to support the identification of available guidance in different regions and eventually the promotion and/or adaptation of this guidance;
2. to advise on the most effective modality of guidance for a particular target audience in a particular region;
3. to promote capacity building via local or regional institutions;
4. to ensure effective delivery of guidance in the relevant language;
5. to assist in monitoring and evaluating uptake and effectiveness of guidance.

Recommendation 26: Ramsar should consider options for expanding partnerships particularly at the regional or national level to "outsource" identification and adaptation of already available guidance, development of new guidance, dissemination of guidance, capacity building and monitoring uptake and effectiveness of guidance.

3.3. A Regional Approach

To date it is probably fair to say that Ramsar's emphasis has been predominantly on developing general guidance that applies at a global level. At the same time, STRP NFPs are intended to operate at a national level. This creates a significant disconnect. A more balanced approach would be to strengthen the in-between level, namely the regional (or sub-regional) level, via regional advisers, regional (sub-regional) focal points, regional partners and regional training workshops. Existing Ramsar regional centres (RRCs) should be used and strengthened in this respect.

Recommendation 27: Ramsar's scientific work should re-focus around a regional approach which can serve to break down some of the real or perceived isolation currently surrounding the STRP work. In a first phase, it would require strengthening collaboration between the Senior Regional Advisers, regional partners (including Ramsar Regional Centres) and either regional (sub-regional) focal points or national focal points, to define regional priorities and needs.

3.4. Resources

Ramsar's main scientific body, the STRP, had CHF 150,000 at the time of approval of its 2013-2015 workplan, for a total estimated need of CHF 1,915,000. Parties need to decide to what extent they consider scientific and technical guidance a necessity and allocate sufficient resources to ensure that priority needs for guidance can be met. Indeed the importance of allocating realistic human and financial resources is a key lesson emerging from the review of other MEAs (see Report 3).

Not all funding will necessarily need to come from Ramsar Parties, with some possibly being raised (given fundraising capacity within Ramsar) independently from inter-governmental agencies, or other funds being provided "in-kind" from partner organizations (notably at the regional or national level).

Marketing wetlands more generally may also require better framing of the value of wetlands in the context of global priorities such as the post-2015 development agenda, the sustainable development goals and the key roles of wetlands in providing ecosystem services.

Recommendation 28: All activities approved in the Ramsar workplan for scientific and technical guidance, should have commensurate funding and human resources.

Recommendation 29: Ramsar should seek additional funding, in-kind resources or partnerships with inter-governmental organizations to fund a clear workplan for effective functioning of all elements in the "guidance process" (as well as linkages between those elements).

Recommendation 30: A strong communications and marketing campaign on the importance of wetlands more generally would help to increase appreciation and funding (notably from the private sector) for scientific and technical guidance emerging from Ramsar.

Next steps

The recommendations above imply a number of fundamental changes:

1. A **re-allocation of responsibility** for the "guidance chain", and in particular reducing the overall burden on the STRP, while increasing that on the COP and on the Secretariat.

2. A complete change in the current **"STRP National Focal Point" format.** Three options can be considered: a) the roles and commitment of current STRP NFPs are changed so that they are empowered to act as liaison between their national wetland practitioners and Ramsar's scientific body, b) they are removed and replaced by the NFPs who could take on some of their key responsibilities, notably the liaison role, or c) they are replaced by Regional (or sub-regional) Focal Points (RFPs) that would be empowered to act as an important link for the region, to build and nurture regional partnerships, to relay needs to the Secretariat and to bring guidance products back to the region.

3. **Stronger partnerships at the regional level** (notably building on existing Ramsar Regional Centres) that would support dissemination of guidance and capacity building in the appropriate language.

4. Stronger **international partnerships** that would enable Ramsar scientific information on wetlands to be directly connected to the work of other MEAs and relevant organizations.

5. A **re-design of the STRP**, to divide the global, higher level wetland-related scientific work that caters to both other scientists and other MEAs, from the regional level work that caters to a more regional and national level group of practitioners and policy-makers directly engaged with the Ramsar Convention.

6. Commitment of requisite **resources (both human and financial)**. Some external funding could be raised via other sources (e.g. GEF, EC etc.) Equally, closer collaboration with a range of partners, notably at the regional level, could serve to leverage in-kind support from these institutions.

Annexes:

Annex 1: Executive summaries of Reports 1-4

Annex 2: Interviewee list

Annex 3: Draft list of topics for guidance

Annex 4: Comparison of Issues Raised in Three Previous Reviews

ANNEX 1: Executive Summaries, Reports 1 – 4

Report 1: Executive Summary

Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, their utility, use, application and conversion into practical tools

At Ramsar's 2012 Conference of the Parties (COP), Resolution XI.16 was adopted to undertake "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention." The review is made up of five components and five reports, of which this is the first.

This report specifically focuses on "*reviewing the application and utility of Ramsar guidance and the full range of processes by which scientific and technical Convention implementation needs are identified, articulated, prioritized, and converted into tools and guidance for the range of implementation stakeholders, and the extent to which the tools and guidance are disseminated to, and taken up by, identified stakeholders*". It is based on the analysis of 15 interviews, 45 survey responses and a desk top review of key documents.

Findings

Audiences – Ramsar's audience can be divided into four major categories, each requiring different guidance: 1. policy makers require guidance on turning Convention requirements into policy, reporting back on Convention requirements, policy implementation and strategic decision-making, 2. practitioners and wetland managers require concrete guidance on how best to manage wetland sites, 3. scientists require more in depth and rigorous studies on key and emerging issues related to wetlands, and 4. wetland users require information on the values of wetlands, general background information on wetlands etc.

Process to define guidance – Guidance needs are defined by Parties via the COP.

Communicating needs for guidance - Needs for guidance are communicated to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) in part by the Ramsar Secretariat (whose Senior Regional Advisers collect requests from their respective regions), and in part by Parties.

Awareness and use of guidance - A significant proportion of respondents (both interviewees and survey respondents) were either not aware of Ramsar scientific and technical guidance, or either rarely or never used it.

Disseminating guidance - Published guidance is essentially disseminated via the website, webinars and workshops.

Responsiveness of guidance to needs - The majority of survey respondents (66%) felt that existing guidance addressed their needs while, in contrast, interviewees generally felt that the guidance that exists is too general.

Effectiveness of the content and format of guidance - The largest share (36%) of survey respondents used handbooks, then resolutions (25%), technical reports (21%) and briefing notes (12%).

Scientific versus technical guidance – Interviewees and survey respondents did not distinguish between scientific and technical guidance. A significant majority (68%) of survey respondents reported that they felt that the guidance was neither too scientific nor too technical.

Modus Operandi - A majority (53%) of survey respondents reported that they were familiar with the STRP *modus operandi*.

Challenges

Although Ramsar's scientific and technical guidance, and particularly the work of the STRP and its value, are widely recognized, a number of key challenges were identified through the research phase. These are:

Disconnects – there are visible disconnects at different levels: a) between the practical needs of wetland managers and policy-makers and the scientific and technical products emerging from the STRP and Ramsar, b) between STRP National Focal Points and both wetland managers at one end and the STRP at the other. In terms of communicating guidance needs from the "ground-up", there is no obvious mechanism to collect nationally-relevant (and/or regionally-relevant) requests for scientific and technical guidance related to wetlands and refer them back to the STRP. Equally, the dissemination of STRP products to target audiences is not as effective as it could be.

Audiences – Ramsar is faced with a diverse audience when it comes to scientific and technical guidance and this has not been sufficiently reflected in its processes and products.

Language – the technical nature of the language used in STRP guidance as well as the fact that English is the predominant language, have excluded a large number of interested parties from the STRP and its products.

Limited outreach to wetland managers – while there are over 2000 Ramsar sites and an even larger number of wetland managers, this group is not well engaged in the STRP.

Breadth of workplan versus resources – the workplan of the STRP is overly ambitious, and yet funding and human resources are extremely limited.

Representation on the STRP – The STRP does not adequately represent the full constituency of the Ramsar Convention. While it is praised for being apolitical, at the same time it may be too remote from its core constituency.

Addressing these challenges

There is a clear and identified need for scientific and technical guidance for implementation of the Ramsar Convention.

Redefining the niche and structure of the STRP - The STRP currently functions like a global technical working group of wetlands experts, with tangential links to the Ramsar Convention. There is an opportunity to establish more direct links between the guidance needs of the target audiences and the work undertaken by the STRP.

Strengthen a regional approach grounded in partnerships as an avenue to expand STRP's regional and local relevance and reach - In line with COP11, Resolution XI.18 para.24 which "*requests the STRP and Secretariat to identify opportunities and mechanisms for holding intersessional regional or subregional meetings of STRP National Focal Points and other wetland experts in order to strengthen regional and*

subregional scientific networks..." , a more regional approach would have the benefit of not only ensuring regional relevance and language, but also of tapping into other resources. Such an approach would require a shift from a centralised structure to a more regional and network-based one. At regional (and national) levels STRP could establish relevant partnerships that can help to ensure that: a) the work is complementary to theirs, b) other bodies can take on some of the locally-relevant research (and fund it in collaboration with Ramsar/STRP), c) the guidance is developed in the local language(s), d) the guidance is disseminated locally, and local and regional capacities are strengthened.

Categories of guidance and its presentation **-** Four categories of guidance can be highlighted: 1. reviewing draft scientific and technical materials for approval by the Parties, 2. guidance that is for Parties to better implement the requirements of the Convention, 3. maintaining sight of bigger picture and emerging issues, and 4. guidance that can support wetland managers in their day-to-day management of Ramsar wetlands. Each category of guidance should be pitched differently, even if it stems from one same source. Indeed, the same scientific and technical guidance can be "translated" into different content (notably, using different media) for different audiences. For example, case studies can be an effective and powerful medium to demonstrate key issues which can be of interest to both a policy and a practitioner audience.

Redefining STRP membership and engagement **-** The current membership of the STRP is composed of scientists. However, the voice of key Ramsar stakeholders such as wetland managers, is not effectively represented on the STRP.

Workplan and funding **-** The STRP is constrained by the fact that its members are volunteers, and the workplan is an extremely long and unrealistic "wishlist" of elements with no funding attached. A more realistic workplan should be designed which would only contain elements that have funding committed and/or real names of leaders (or groups of leaders) next to it. Only should new funding or partners come on board would any items in the "wishlist" be submitted as additional items to the workplan on an inter-sessional basis.

Expanding the role of the Secretariat **-** The Ramsar Secretariat should be given the mandate and resources to play a more important linking and facilitating role with respect to scientific and technical guidance. In particular it can help to reach out to key audiences, re-develop work produced by the STRP for target audiences, disseminating this work and build capacity (related to the application of the tools). It can also help to maintain momentum, particularly in between meetings.

Monitoring **-** Improved monitoring would help to both better understand the value of guidance produced and to ensure that it is indeed being used, applied and addresses real needs.

Report 2: Executive Summary

Review of the Roles of Ramsar Bodies and Processes Providing Scientific support and Delivery

At Ramsar's 2012 Conference of the Parties (COP), Resolution XI.16 was adopted to undertake "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention." The review is made up of five components and five reports, of which this is the second.

This report specifically focuses on reviewing the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders.

The report includes three sections: 1. Reviewing the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies and processes; 2. A summary of findings from the interviews conducted with representatives of Ramsar bodies and processes; and 3. Key messages and lessons learnt.

A summary of key findings and key messages is provided below.

Key Findings

Views on uptake of Ramsar Guidance

- More technical guidance is needed
- Wetland site managers and other target audiences need to be accessed
- Guidance should be delivered in several languages
- Guidance should be clear and concise
- Much guidance is already available, and needs to be disseminated
- Some key issues and themes were identified as needing further guidance development

Views on Roles for Providing Science and Technical Guidance

- Several suggestions were made on strengthening the roles of various bodies, including the Standing Committee and the Secretariat, to ensure the needs of Parties are captured in the guidance developed
- Resources and capacity needs were highlighted several times by interviewees, with concerns that the STRP and Secretariat operate on very limited budgets, affecting guidance development, translation and dissemination
- Prioritization of tasks for the modus operandi is needed
- Several opportunities were identified to improve provisioning of guidance, including forming more partnerships, and establishing national wetlands committees

Key Messages and Lessons Learnt

Guidance Provisioning

Accessibility and language

- Guidance should be as clear and concise as possible – scientific jargon and unnecessary length should be avoided in order to make key messages clear.
- Guidance should be provided in the minimum of English, French and Spanish. Partnerships with other organizations experienced with outreach to the target audience should be explored for guidance development, dissemination and translation.

Outreach to target groups and tailoring guidance to suit them

- A database for target audience contacts should be developed and updated – for example, NFPs, CEPA NFPs can partner with organizations that have access to wetland site managers in a particular region. This contact information should be retained in the database.
- A variety of different guidance types should be utilized for efficiency and effectiveness – for example, wetland demonstration projects are invaluable for practical, hands-on training.

Make use of existing guidance

- Guidance developed by other organizations is already available on multiple issues and themes relevant to Ramsar, and for various sites and regions around the world. Before undertaking development of guidance on a particular issue, stocktaking should be done to assess whether guidance already exists, and if it does, in what ways it is possible to adapt it and deliver it to stakeholders.
- A database with existing guidance could also be developed, working with CEPA NFPs and relevant organizations, to supplement the information available, for example at the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) 'Tools for Parties – Relevant Publications' site (which currently has a Google search tool): http://ramsar.wetlands.org/ToolsforParties/RelevantPublications/tabid/749/Default.aspx

Structure, Bodies and Processes

Prioritize Tasks and Streamline Implementation of Modus Operandi

- A realistic list of tasks needs to be delineated for the work plan for each triennium. A professional facilitator could assist in fairly and objectively guiding the STRP through a prioritization process.
- The process of implementing the modus operandi should be streamlined so that there is sufficient time for delivering outputs. This can be achieved, for example, by setting clear timelines for implementing the workplan (a professional facilitator could also assist with this).

Ensure Relevancy of Guidance Through Strengthening Working Relationships

- STRP Members, senior regional advisers and CEPA NFPs should form a closer relationship to ensure the needs of the Parties are responded to and met
- The Secretariat should work more closely with the STRP chair to ensure practical guidance is developed

Partnerships, synergies and collaboration:

- The STRP should connect and work in close collaboration with the scientific bodies of the other Conventions (e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity) to establish a list of needs that are still there.
- Partnerships will also enable Ramsar to provide relevant guidance in a variety of ways, such as demonstration projects and workshops, to target audiences.

Report 3: Executive Summary

Review of the scientific guidance and tools in other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and lessons learnt for Ramsar

At Ramsar's 2012 Conference of the Parties (COP), Resolution XI.16 was adopted to undertake "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention." The review is made up of five components and five reports, of which this is the third.

This report specifically focuses on: *"Reviewing the scientific guidance and tools of other MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar."* It was conducted via a literature search and 10 interviews with experts in Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) identified by the Ramsar Secretariat. The aim of this piece of work was to better understand the different dimensions of scientific and technical guidance across a range of MEAs and other similar programmes so as to extract lessons and best practices for Ramsar.

Findings

Scientific and technical guidance is relevant to all multilateral environmental conventions, although its extent and importance differs. In some cases it is a central element to the work of a convention, such as the assessment reports written by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which are key to informing negotiations as well as the programme of work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In other cases, scientific and technical guidance takes a somewhat less central role, but is a useful means of supporting Parties to better achieve the legal requirements under a convention, as in for example, case studies being used to demonstrate practical approaches to implement the UNECE Water Convention. In some cases guidance is made up of a concrete product (such as the IPCC's assessment reports or the CBD's Technical Series), in other cases, such as the World Heritage Convention's advisory missions, it takes the form of expert advice or input.

Membership to the scientific bodies of different MEAs varies. In some cases, each Party has a member (e.g.: UNFCCC's SBSTA), while in other cases, such as the Animals and Plants committees of CITES, a given number of seats are allocated and members are elected for their regional and technical representation. Important issues related to membership are the size of the bodies (with larger scientific bodies appearing to function less well than smaller ones), and the political/apolitical nature of these scientific bodies (with political agendas frequently perceived to interfere with the science).

The scientific and technical bodies reviewed fulfil many different roles. Some of the key roles are: providing scientific advice to Contracting Parties; encouraging and promoting collaboration with other scientific bodies; reviewing, monitoring and evaluating progress towards application of requirements under the convention; developing and improving methodologies; supporting transfer of technology , including capacity building; and identifying innovations, new and emerging issues.

Most of the conventions reviewed do not make a particular distinction between the terms "scientific and technical" guidance with the term embracing a range of practical means of supporting the conventions and their ultimate goals.

In most conventions reviewed guidance needs are driven by the requirements of the convention. Parties are generally the ones defining specific needs via their COPs. Equally, in almost all cases, the primary audience for scientific and technical guidance is policy-makers (Parties to the Convention).

Guidance products include: technical documents (intended to provide up-to-date and accurate information on selected topics, e.g the CBD Technical series); guidelines (intended to provide concrete guidance on ways and approaches to achieve specific objectives (e.g. CBD "Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development " or the IAC's "Guidelines for Preparing Sea Turtle Action Plans for IAC Party Countries"); global assessments (global and periodic overviews of the state of the environment e.g. the IPCC Assessments, or the CBD's "Global Biodiversity Outlook"); case studies (providing real life examples written to make an issue more tangible); handbooks or manuals (reference guides serving as a resource, more generally at the level of the convention, e.g. the CBD Handbook or the CMS manuals); resolutions (motions or decisions that are formally adopted by Parties); scientific publications (in depth scientific documents written on a specific topic, e.g. on conservation measures or priorities for a given species); and fact sheets (intended to provide a brief overview of a given topic, e.g. the SPREP's factsheet on "climate change and ecosystem based adaptation").

Communicating scientific and technical guidance is an important step in the provision of guidance. In most cases, scientific meetings are conducted in at least the three major UN languages (English, French and Spanish). The technical content and style of documents are also important dimensions to communicating guidance. For example in the UNCCD the recently established Science-Policy Interface was specifically tasked with facilitating the "translation" from scientific documents into policy-oriented recommendations.

The role of the Secretariat of these MEAs varies from in depth involvement to more administrative and organizational involvement. In the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife protocol for example, the Secretariat manages the budgets and the programme of the scientific and technical advisory committee (STAC). In the World Heritage Convention, the Secretariat is one of the key pillars providing scientific expertise to Parties.

Implications of findings for Ramsar

Based on what works well and what works less well in other MEAs, nine lessons have been proposed for Ramsar to consider.

Lesson learnt 1: Maintaining scientific integrity – Scientific integrity is important for the sake of credibility, and for the ability of the group to advance on scientific and technical issues without being detracted and delayed by political agendas. Members should have no conflict of interest and most products should be peer reviewed. Ramsar's STRP has been praised for its apolitical nature and its scientific credentials, something which should be preserved.

Lesson learnt 2: A lean scientific body - A review by the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) of different MEAs' scientific bodies highlighted the diversity in group sizes and how large groups tend to be more inefficient. This was also highlighted by both the UNCCD for its CST and the UNFCCC for its SBSTA which are too large. Instead, in UNCCD's recently established science-policy interface, membership is limited to 20 (plus three observers). A "reasonable size" would imply representation that is not Party-based but either based on themes or on regions, or both.

Lesson learnt 3: One or more scientific bodies may be needed - Many of the reviewed MEAs rely on more than one body for guidance. Arguments in favour of having more than one body, are that it helps to better focus the roles of each body.

Lesson learnt 4: Membership should be carefully defined - At least two of the conventions reviewed (IAC and CMS) have different forms of memberships: members that are designated by Parties and members that are selected by consensus by the COP for their specific expertise. Thus, a mix of regional representation and thematic representation can be achieved, as well as a more "neutral" membership.

Lesson learnt 5: Capitalise on partnerships and external expertise - Alternative ways of securing expertise can be achieved via partnerships with relevant regional or local bodies. Ramsar's STRP is already engaging with international partners, but may need to consider regional and even national partners in some cases.

Lesson learnt 6: The Secretariat has important functions related to scientific guidance - The roles of the Secretariat in the provision of scientific guidance is important, notably in "translating" scientific work into practical guidance to the intended audience(s), facilitating the development of scientific and technical guidance, capacity building, listening and reaching out to its audiences (servicing role) which it can then filter back to the scientific body.

Lesson learnt 7: Guidance should be practical and relevant to the audience - It is important firstly to clearly identify in advance audiences for the guidance in question, and secondly to ensure that the guidance is indeed practical and relevant to the different audiences so that it will be used.

Lesson learnt 8: Follow up on guidance is important - Producing the guidance is one step; however, ensuring that it is used, learning lessons related to its use and uptake, and adapting it if necessary, are all important long term applications of the scientific guidance.

Lesson learnt 9: Allocate realistic human and financial resources - Shortfalls in resources are an issue in the provision of scientific and technical guidance across all MEAs. In some cases, such as the advisory function of IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM to the World Heritage Convention, a budget is attached which facilitates the provision of guidance. In most cases, the scientific staff work on a voluntary basis and much work remains un- or under-funded.

Report 4: Executive Summary

Best Practices and Lessons Learnt on the Provisioning of Scientific and Technical Guidance: Perspectives from International Organizations and NGOs

At Ramsar's 2012 Conference of the Parties (COP), Resolution XI.16 was adopted to undertake "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention." The review is made up of five components and five reports, of which this is the fourth.

This report specifically focuses on reviewing the scientific guidance and tools of relevant global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar.

There are two main objectives to this report:

1) Review means through which global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOs provide scientific and technical advice, and identify common themes, useful products, and distribution channels, through literature reviews and interviews with representatives of relevant global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOs; and
2) Summarize lessons learnt and best practices on the provisioning of scientific and technical advice for the Ramsar Convention.

A summary of lessons learnt (addressing objective 2), based on interview results and the literature review, are presented below.

Key Lessons Learnt

Planning for Guidance

- A needs assessment defines whether guidance is needed and what kind, and the target group analysis ensures that the most efficient way to provide guidance is identified. This enables the guidance to be `marketed' to the appropriate target groups. Strategies for communications and guidance development are already identified, for example, on the `Wetland CEPA Methods' webpage (http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-activities-cepa-programme-wetland-cepa-methodologies/main/ramsar/1-63-69%5E20257_4000_0__) but implementation of these best practices already identified could be strengthened.

Accessing Target Groups for Guidance

- Interviewees identified several organizations with access to target stakeholders and experience in communicating with them. Ramsar should form or strengthen partnerships with them to enhance delivery and uptake of guidance.
- The majority of representatives of Ramsar bodies and processes, international and regional MEAs, and IGOs, IOPs and NGOs that were interviewed in the analyses for Components 1-4

called for Ramsar guidance to be provided in different languages. This not only serves to improve outreach to target groups, but also ensures inclusivity of expertise around the world. The development of guidance with partner organizations can sometimes facilitate the provisioning of guidance in different languages through cost-sharing.

- The majority of interviewees felt that the language used in guidance materials is too complex and filled with jargon, exacerbating the problem of not having guidance available in different languages. Additionally, the guidance provided should be as concise as possible.

Diversify

- A wide suite of innovative guidance and capacity-building tools are being utilized by IOPs, IGOs, IFIs, NGOs, and other processes. Ramsar should diversify its guidance modalities, and should select them based on the content of the guidance and target audience, with the caveat that the latest innovations may not be applicable to certain groups –e.g. web-based tools are not effective in areas where access to the Internet is limited.

Strategize

- A logical framework approach is a tool that enables the development of indicators and measures of failure or success, and can help monitor and evaluate the efficacy of guidance. Some CEPA initiatives already make use of a logical framework approach, and this can be strengthened across all guidance initiatives

Evaluating Efficacy

- Stakeholder groups should be involved in evaluation of guidance, which will not only enable practical advice on improving the guidance for intended users, but can also encourage feedback on best ways to implement recommended actions in the guidance.

Maintaining Legitimacy and Scientific Integrity

The science produced and the expertise of the STRP members are generally perceived as strengths of the Convention, and that science should underpin technical guidance. However, efforts are needed to ensure that guidance provided can be of practical use to stakeholders.

ANNEX 2: List of all Interviewees, Reports 1 – 4

National Focal Points		
1.	Pugazhendhi Murugaiyan	Seychelles
2.	Habib Abid	Tunisia
3.	Walter Regueiro	Uruguay
4.	Gordana Beltram	Slovenia
5.	Nirawan Pipitsombat	Thailand
Ramsar Site Managers		
6.	Sebastián Di Martino	Argentina
7.	Katsumi Ushiyama	Japan
8.	Linda Friar	USA
9.	Mazeika Sullivan	USA
Ramsar Administrative Authority		
10.	Nancy Céspedes	Chile
11.	José Mateo Feliz	Dominican Republic
STRP Focal Point		
12.	Gloria Santana	Dominican Republic
13.	Karen Jenderedijan	Armenia
Ramsar Convention Bodies and Processes		
14.	Christopher Briggs	Ramsar Secretariat
15.	María Rivera	Ramsar Secretariat
16.	Llewellyn Young	Ramsar Secretariat
17.	Paul Ouédraogo	Ramsar Secretariat
18.	Tobias Salathé	Ramsar Secretariat
19.	Sandra Hails	Ramsar Secretariat
20,	Royal C. Gardner	STRP Chairperson
21.	Heather MacKay	Former STRP Chairperson
22.	Rebecca D'Cruz	Former STRP Vice-Chairperson
23.	David Pritchard	STRP Invited Expert
24.	Delmar Blasco	MEDWET – Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative
Secretariats - Multilateral Environmental Agreements		
25.	Nicholas Bonvoisin	UNECE - Transboundary Waters
26.	Veronica Cáceres	Interamerican-Convention for the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles Convention
27.	Victor Castillo	UN Convention to Combat Desertification

28.	David Coates	Convention on Biological Diversity
29.	David Morgan	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
30.	Mechtild Rossler	World Heritage Convention
31.	Alessandra Vanzella-Khouri	Cartagena Convention
32.	Easter Galuvao	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
33.	Florin Vladu	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
34.	Bert Lenten	Convention on Migratory Species
35.	Marco Barbieri	Convention on Migratory Species
Inter-governmental Organizations and Processes		
36.	Han Qunli	UNESCO-Man and the Biosphere Programme
37.	Anne van Dam	UNESCO – Institute for Hydrological Education
38.	Matthias Halwart	Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN
39.	Giacomo Terruggi	World Meteorological Organization
40.	His Excellency, Engr. Sanusi Imran ABDULLAHI	Lake Chad Basin Commission
41.	Ivan Zawadsky	ICPDR-International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
42.	Ania Grobiki	Global Water Partnership
International Organizations		
43.	Julia Marton-Lefèvre	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
44.	Mark Smith	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
45.	Vicky Jones	BirdLife International
46.	Peter McCormick	International Water Management Institute
47.	Denis Landenbergue	World Wide Fund for Nature
48.	Debbie Pain	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
49.	Ian Harrison	Conservation International
50.	John Matthews	Conservation International
51.	Carmen Revenga	The Nature Conservancy
52.	Boze Hancock	The Nature Conservancy

ANNEX 3: Topics identified by interviewees for further guidance

Component 1: Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, their utility, use, application and conversion into practical tools

Survey Question 3: How would you describe in a few words your needs in terms of scientific and/or technical guidance?

Specific scientific guidance on:

- Management of salt-water wetlands, certification, identification of keystone species, establishment of a platform for dialogue
- Surveying, monitoring and evaluation of wetlands, including mapping
- Climate change and wetlands
- Valuation of wetland goods and services
- Study of illegal biodiversity exploitation in and around Ramsar sites
- Habitat management priorities and shifts in habitat use by species (due to climate change, anthropogenic, or otherwise).
- Wetland ecosystem interaction,
- Identifying best water management regimes.
- Arguments for protection and wise use of wetlands.
- Monitoring of wetlands,
- Methodologies for carbon capture.
- Methodologies for strategic environmental impact assessments
- Methodologies to determine release of GMOs
- Value addition to wetland products,
- Balancing wetland conservation and development especially extractive industries and urbanisation

Specific and concrete guidance and training on:

- Implementation of management plans
- Management of wetlands in mining areas
- Simple methodology to monitor Ramsar sites
- Reporting on Ramsar management and informing the development of monitoring, reporting and planning activities.
- Training on the management of protected areas/Ramsar sites.
- Training for site managers, local communities and monitoring tools
- Building capacity for wetland management eg. wetlands valuation techniques.
- Means of delimiting wetlands at the country level
- Tested, practical solutions to conservation problems and needs
- Focus on regional initiatives
- Reviews and syntheses of best practice guidance in wetland policy and management
- Cases of good practice in wetland management
- more inventories in terms of wetlands as systems and also inventories of what is in them.

Specific political, legal and/or technical guidance on:

- Elaborating a national plan for wetlands
- Viability and impacts of some infrastructure in and around wetlands
- awareness and perception of people including decision makers towards wetlands
- information on wise use of wetlands, legal framework for conservation of wetlands,
- more fora to interact and share science.

Component 2: Review of the roles of Ramsar bodies and processes providing scientific support and delivery

Key issues and themes for guidance development:

Interviewees were asked to identify themes or issues for which more guidance is needed. The following were mentioned:

- Transboundary wetland management
- Aquaculture
- Ramsar Site Designation and Management
    - Understanding impediments to designation of Ramsar sites
    - Clear guidance on management of Ramsar sites
- Climate Change
    - Wetlands in a climate change scenario - policy brief or position paper on climate change has been a difficult theme as some Parties have been conservative in their views.
- Value of wetlands and ecosystem services, and making the case to governments for effective laws and policy to combat the loss of wetlands
- Restoration
    - Guidance is needed in developing countries for restoration of wetlands, and building capacity for developing expertise
- Water management - `Sustainable water for all`
    - Water is becoming a scarce resource. There should be a focus on the hydrological roles of wetlands in the water cycle.
- Other emerging issues including macro changes to ecosystems, such as population impacts, collapse of pollination systems, connectivity and coherence of protected areas

Note: Some interviewees felt that the full range of issues is already being captured in available guidance, but the main challenge is reaching out to those who need the guidance.

Several respondents noted that there is a mismatch between topics that are seen as priorities by Parties and by the STRP. As can be seen from the survey results in Component 1 to this overall analysis, there are indeed some differences in topics for guidance identified above by Ramsar body representatives, and those identified by Parties and wetland site managers, although the topics in common include restoration, valuation and management of Ramsar Sites.

ANNEX 4: Comparison of key issues raised in three previous reviews

Review	Objective & scope	Sample size	Categories of recipients	Main conclusions
USFWS 2006	Determine if the Ramsar resolutions, guidelines and recommendations are used and, if they are, how useful they are considered to be. Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia	136 respondents out of sample of 150	focal points and/or administrative authorities of the Ramsar Convention, managers of Ramsar sites, decision-makers, and officers from municipal entities, researchers, professors, and members of National Wetlands Committees, non-governmental organizations and inter-governmental organizations, among others	1. all countries where the questionnaire was applied know about the existence of the Ramsar Convention Resolutions, Recommendations and Guidelines. 2. tools generated by the Contracting Parties, such as guidelines and resolutions, are more or less used, mainly regarding issues of formulating management plans, rational use, policies and education 3. clear need to widen the diffusion of the Convention Resolutions, Recommendations and Guidelines
Bucher and Curto, 2008	evaluation of the use of Ramsar resolutions, guidelines, and recommendations in Southern South America (Argentina, Bolivia, and Uruguay),	~100?	General public and local communities in Ramsar sites; Education and academic; Production (agriculture, mining, tourism); and Government agencies	1. Knowledge and awareness about the Ramsar convention in Southern South America is limited. 2. Use and implementation of Ramsar resolutions, guidelines, and recommendations remain limited 3. The main factors constraining implementation of Ramsar's guidelines include: a) insufficient knowledge and awareness by general public, stakeholders, and local authorities and b) weak motivation/interest from government agencies, which is further complicated by a significant degree of institutional fragmentation at several scales. 4. There is evidence that stakeholders in Ramsar sites are interested and willing to work for the conservation and sustainable management of the sites.
Van Boven, 2008(?)	Evaluation of the guidance the Ramsar Convention has been providing to Contracting Parties (CPs) and other partners Global	236 respondents out of sample size of 735	Administrative Authority National Focal Points, Wetland Site Managers, National Ramsar or Wetland Committee members, STRP National Focal Points, CEPA National Focal Points, Ramsar's IOPs and other NGO representatives	1. a majority (66%) of respondents use Ramsar guidance. 2. the majority of Wetland Site Managers do NOT use Ramsar guidance 3. a small group of NFPs were unaware of the existence of the guidance 4.While practitioners seem to favour the Handbooks, STRP-NFP and NRC seem to use the Resolutions and Recommendations more frequently. 5. Suggested improvements to COP Resolutions / Recommendations were: - language should be tailored more to practitioners, not just policy makers (29%) - language is too complex - it should be simpler (16%) - range of topics covered is too broad and diffuse (15%)

Review	Objective & scope	Sample size	Categories of recipients	Main conclusions
				6. Of the guidance users, 87% use the 2nd Handbook series. 7. With only slight differences per Handbook, most people obtain their copies through the website (55-65%). The 2nd most important source is the CD-Rom. 8. The best-known Handbooks are: HB1 (Wise use of wetlands), HB 8 (Managing wetlands) and HB 2 (National wetland policies). While the least known Handbooks were: HB14 (Peatlands), HB12 (Water allocation and management) and HB 3 (Laws and Institutions) and HB 9 (International cooperation). 9. The most useful Handbooks are: HB 1 on Wise Use and HB 8 on Managing Wetlands (15%). While the least useful Handbooks were HB 9 on International cooperation, HB 14 on Peatlands, HB 12 on Water allocation and management and HB 3 on Laws and Institutions.

ANNEX 5: Consultancy Workplan

"Support to Ramsar Convention's Review Committee on Ensuring Efficient Delivery of Scientific and Technical Advice and Support to the Convention (Resolution XI.16)"

Five major components:

1. Reviewing existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, its utility, use, application, conversion into practical tools etc. The aim being to determine how user-friendly, and demand-driven this guidance is.
2. Reviewing the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders. The aim being to determine how Ramsar's bodies fulfil their roles as concerns scientific support to stakeholders.
3. Reviewing the scientific guidance and tools of other MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar.
4. Reviewing the scientific guidance and tools of relevant non-MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar.
5. Writing up a final report that draws on the above 4 sources of information to compile major findings, lessons and recommendations for the way forward to improve the way scientific guidance is used, applied and converted into tool, and how Ramsar bodies and processes that provide scientific support and delivery function.

Six final outputs:

1. report summarising usefulness and relevance of Ramsar guidance and processes to identify, articulate, prioritise scientific and technical needs (and how they are turned into tools and how relevant they are to end users) (SM) – approx.: 15-20p. + annexes (with survey results) – by **mid-June**
2. report summarising the roles of relevant bodies and processes of the Convention providing scientific support and delivery to stakeholders (VL) – approx.: 15-20p. + annexes (with survey results) – by **mid-June**
3. Report on the results of the surveys of MEAs and others, identifying common themes, useful products, distribution channels.. (SM) approx.: 20p. + annexes – by **early July**
4. Report on the results of the surveys from non-MEAs and lit review (VL) 20p. + annexes - by **early July**
5. Overarching report that draws on the above 4 sources of information to compile major findings, lessons and recommendations for the way forward to improve the way scientific guidance is used, applied and converted into tool, and how Ramsar bodies and processes that provide scientific support and delivery function (SM) – approx. 10-15 p. - by **end of July**
6. Finalised overarching report that incorporates feedback from Review Committee highlighting areas of convergence and concerns (SM & VL) – by **20 Sept.**

All reports will have an executive summary.

Phases (as per Ramsar Res.)	Activities	**Timing**
Phase I Task 1 (REVIEW CTTEE)		March
Component 1		
Phase I task 2	Review application and utility of Ramsar guidance and processes to identify, articulate, prioritise scientific and technical needs (and how they are turned into tools)	May/ June
	• Identify/collect data on guidance and processes • Interview 12 key Ramsar stakeholders • Design online Survey (Survey Monkey) • Distribute survey • Analyse survey results	By 10 May End of May
	Output 1: Compile report summarizing Ramsar guidance and processes to identify, articulate prioritize scientific and technical needs (and how they are turned into tools)	Mid-June
Component 2		
Phase I task 3	Review the roles of Ramsar bodies with respect to responding to scientific and technical needs of stakeholders	May
	• Review and analyse documentation • Design interview questions • Conduct 12 interviews • Analyse responses	
	Output 2: Compile report summarising Ramsar bodies' roles and support in terms of responding to the scientific and technical needs of stakeholders.	Mid-June
Component 3		
Phase I task 4	Review means and processes used by other MEAs' scientific bodies to support implementation	May-June
	• Identify with Ramsar which MEAs to consider • Design interview guide • Conduct 12 interviews • Analyse responses	
Phase 2 task 1	Output 3: Compile a report on the results of the surveys of MEAs and others, identifying common themes, useful products, distribution channels.. Writing up report with best practices and recommendations	End June/ early July
Component 4		
Phase I task 5	Review means through which other (non-MEAs) bodies provide scientific and technical advice	May-June
	• Identify with Ramsar which non-MEA bodies to consider • Design interview guide	

Phases (as per Ramsar Res.)	Activities	**Timing**
	• Conduct 12 interviews • Analyse responses	
Phase 2 task 1	Output 4 Compile and synthesize info collected in surveys from non- MEAs and lit review Writing up report with best practices and recommendations	End June/ early July
Component 5		
	Output 5 Overall report that reviews findings and recommendations Writing up report drawing on the above 4 reports to highlight main findings, lessons and recommendations	End of July
Phase 2 task 2 (REVIEW CTTEE)		Week 1 Sept.
Phase 2 task 3	Output 6 Revising the final overall report to incorporate feedback from Review Committee • Analyzing feedback • Compiling final report	By 20 Sept

Component 1: Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, their utility, use, application and conversion into practical tools

Stephanie Mansourian

3 October 2014

Réserve Intégrale du Lac Tonga (Algeria), Ramsar Site. Photo: © S. Mansourian

Table of Contents

Acronyms list

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
COP	Conference of the Parties
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GMO	Genetically-modified Organism
MAB	Man and Biosphere
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
NFP	National Focal Point
STRP	Scientific Technical and Review Panel
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas

Executive summary

At Ramsar's 2012 Conference of the Parties (COP), Resolution XI.16 was adopted to undertake "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention." The review is made up of five components and five reports, of which this is the first.

This report specifically focuses on "*reviewing the application and utility of Ramsar guidance and the full range of processes by which scientific and technical Convention implementation needs are identified, articulated, prioritized, and converted into tools and guidance for the range of implementation stakeholders, and the extent to which the tools and guidance are disseminated to, and taken up by, identified stakeholders*". It is based on the analysis of 15 interviews, 45 survey responses and a desk top review of key documents.

Findings

Audiences **–** Ramsar's audience can be divided into four major categories, each requiring different guidance: 1. policy makers require guidance on turning Convention requirements into policy, reporting back on Convention requirements, policy implementation and strategic decision-making, 2. practitioners and wetland managers require concrete guidance on how best to manage wetland sites, 3. scientists require more in depth and rigorous studies on key and emerging issues related to wetlands, and 4. wetland users require information on the values of wetlands, general background information on wetlands etc.

Process to define guidance **–** Guidance needs are defined by Parties via the COP.

Communicating needs for guidance **-** Needs for guidance are communicated to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) in part by the Ramsar Secretariat (whose Senior Regional Advisers collect requests from their respective regions), and in part by Parties.

Awareness and use of guidance **-** A significant proportion of respondents (both interviewees and survey respondents) were either not aware of Ramsar scientific and technical guidance, or either rarely or never used it.

Disseminating guidance **-** Published guidance is essentially disseminated via the website, webinars and workshops.

Responsiveness of guidance to needs **-** The majority of survey respondents (66%) felt that existing guidance addressed their needs while, in contrast, interviewees generally felt that the guidance that exists is too general.

Effectiveness of the content and format of guidance **-** The largest share (36%) of survey respondents used handbooks, then resolutions (25%), technical reports (21%) and briefing notes (12%).

Scientific versus technical guidance **–** Interviewees and survey respondents did not distinguish between scientific and technical guidance. A significant majority (68%) of survey respondents reported that they felt that the guidance was neither too scientific nor too technical.

Modus Operandi **-** A majority (53%) of survey respondents reported that they were familiar with the STRP *modus operandi*.

Challenges

Although Ramsar's scientific and technical guidance, and particularly the work of the STRP and its value, are widely recognized, a number of key challenges were identified through the research phase. These are:

Disconnects – there are visible disconnects at different levels: a) between the practical needs of wetland managers and policy-makers and the scientific and technical products emerging from the STRP and Ramsar, b) between STRP National Focal Points and both wetland managers at one end and the STRP at the other. In terms of communicating guidance needs from the "ground-up", there is no obvious mechanism to collect nationally-relevant (and/or regionally-relevant) requests for scientific and technical guidance related to wetlands and refer them back to the STRP. Equally, the dissemination of STRP products to target audiences is not as effective as it could be.

Audiences – Ramsar is faced with a diverse audience when it comes to scientific and technical guidance and this has not been sufficiently reflected in its processes and products.

Language – the technical nature of the language used in STRP guidance as well as the fact that English is the predominant language, have excluded a large number of interested parties from the STRP and its products.

Limited outreach to wetland managers – while there are over 2000 Ramsar sites and an even larger number of wetland managers, this group is not well engaged in the STRP.

Breadth of workplan versus resources – the workplan of the STRP is overly ambitious, and yet funding and human resources are extremely limited.

Representation on the STRP – The STRP does not adequately represent the full constituency of the Ramsar Convention. While it is praised for being apolitical, at the same time it may be too remote from its core constituency.

Addressing these challenges

There is a clear and identified need for scientific and technical guidance for implementation of the Ramsar Convention.

Redefining the niche and structure of the STRP **-** The STRP currently functions like a global technical working group of wetlands experts, with tangential links to the Ramsar Convention. There is an opportunity to establish more direct links between the guidance needs of the target audiences and the work undertaken by the STRP.

Strengthen a regional approach grounded in partnerships as an avenue to expand STRP's regional and local relevance and reach **-** In line with COP11, Resolution XI.18 para.24 which "*requests the STRP and Secretariat to identify opportunities and mechanisms for holding intersessional regional or subregional meetings of STRP National Focal Points and other wetland experts in order to strengthen regional and subregional scientific networks...*" , a more regional approach would have the benefit of not only ensuring regional relevance and language, but also of tapping into other resources. Such an approach would require a shift from a centralised structure to a more regional and network-based one. At regional (and national) levels STRP could establish relevant partnerships that can help to ensure that: a) the work is complementary to theirs, b) other bodies can take on some of the locally-relevant research (and fund it in collaboration with Ramsar/STRP), c) the guidance is developed in the

local language(s), d) the guidance is disseminated locally, and local and regional capacities are strengthened.

Categories of guidance and its presentation **-** Four categories of guidance can be highlighted: 1. reviewing draft scientific and technical materials for approval by the Parties, 2. guidance that is for Parties to better implement the requirements of the Convention, 3. maintaining sight of bigger picture and emerging issues, and 4. guidance that can support wetland managers in their day-to-day management of Ramsar wetlands. Each category of guidance should be pitched differently, even if it stems from one same source. Indeed, the same scientific and technical guidance can be "translated" into different content (notably, using different media) for different audiences. For example, case studies can be an effective and powerful medium to demonstrate key issues which can be of interest to both a policy and a practitioner audience.

Redefining STRP membership and engagement **-** The current membership of the STRP is composed of scientists. However, the voice of key Ramsar stakeholders such as wetland managers, is not effectively represented on the STRP.

Workplan and funding **-** The STRP is constrained by the fact that its members are volunteers, and the workplan is an extremely long and unrealistic "wishlist" of elements with no funding attached. A more realistic workplan should be designed which would only contain elements that have funding committed and/or real names of leaders (or groups of leaders) next to it. Only should new funding or partners come on board would any items in the "wishlist" be submitted as additional items to the workplan on an inter-sessional basis.

Expanding the role of the Secretariat **-** The Ramsar Secretariat should be given the mandate and resources to play a more important linking and facilitating role with respect to scientific and technical guidance. In particular it can help to reach out to key audiences, re-develop work produced by the STRP for target audiences, disseminating this work and build capacity (related to the application of the tools). It can also help to maintain momentum, particularly in between meetings.

Monitoring **-** Improved monitoring would help to both better understand the value of guidance produced and to ensure that it is indeed being used, applied and addresses real needs.

1. Introduction

The core mission of the Ramsar Convention (1971) is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world". Contracting Parties commit to three key issues which are: 1. Wise use of wetlands, 2. Listing (and effective management) of wetlands of international importance and 3. International cooperation (particularly as concerns transboundary wetlands).

Over the years, Ramsar has grown rapidly from 35 Parties and 300 Wetlands of International Importance ("Ramsar Sites") in 1984, to 77 Parties and 610 Ramsar Sites in 1993, and 168 Contracting Parties and 2,187 Ramsar Sites today.

Since its third Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting, Ramsar has formalised scientific and technical guidance first via a working group on wise use (at COP 3) then a working group on advising on the formulation and implementation of the Convention's wise use concept, and on elaborating criteria and guidelines for identification of wetlands of international importance (at COP 4), and finally by setting up a subsidiary body: the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) at COP 5 in 1993.

Rapid growth of the Convention has inevitably impacted on the roles of different bodies to the Convention, and notably on the scientific and technical function.

Background

In July 2012, Ramsar Contracting Parties adopted Resolution XI.16 to "ensure efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention" in which Contracting Parties approved "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention", the findings of which would be reported to the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12) in June 2015. The review was commissioned and undertaken in collaboration with the Review Committee set up at the 46th Standing Committee Meeting (Decision SC46-14).

Methodology

Two independent consultants, Stephanie Mansourian and Veronica Lo, were contracted during the period of May-July 2014 to undertake this review, with input from the Secretariat and the Review Committee.

The methodology utilised consisted of: a) desk top reviews, b) interviews (a total of 52 stakeholders – see Annex 2), and c) an online questionnaire (conducted through Survey Monkey, see Annex 1) which was completed by 45 Ramsar stakeholders. Interviews were held in English, French and Spanish, and the questionnaire was also available in all three languages.

The review was divided into five components, as listed below. These components are separate reports with each consultant taking the lead on a component.

1. Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, its utility, use, application, conversion into practical tools etc;

2. Review of the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders;
3. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar;
4. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of relevant non-MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar; and
5. Final report drawing on the above analyses, that summarises major findings, lessons and recommendations for: 1.) Improving the way scientific guidance is developed, applied and converted into tools; and 2.) Improving scientific support and delivery by Ramsar bodies and processes.

This report deals with component 1, namely: *"reviewing the application and utility of Ramsar guidance and the full range of processes by which scientific and technical Convention implementation needs are identified, articulated, prioritized, and converted into tools and guidance for the range of implementation stakeholders, and the extent to which the tools and guidance are disseminated to, and taken up by, identified stakeholders."*

In 2006, 2007 and 2008 other reviews of Ramsar's scientific and technical guidance were produced, which this review also considered in the background and literature review phase (see Box 1).

Box 1: Comparison with previous reviews

Three previous reviews of Ramsar scientific and technical guidance were also considered when undertaking this review. These were:

- USFWS (2006). "Analysis Concerning The Use Of Resolutions, Recommendations And Guidelines Emanating From The Ramsar Convention ";
- Bucher, E.H. and E. Curto (2008). "Assessment Of The Use Of Ramsar Conventions, Guidelines, And Recommendations In Argentina, Bolivia, And Uruguay ";
- van Boven, G. (2008?). "An Evaluation of the Use & Utility of Ramsar Guidance. A report to Ramsar Scientific & Technical Review Panel and Ramsar Secretariat".

The focus, scope, objective and methods for each review were slightly different rendering direct comparison difficult.

However, some similarities and differences can be mentioned:

- The first two reviews focused on specific countries and audiences, whilst the last one was global like the current one. The list of survey recipients was however, limited in the current review with, in particular, significantly less wetland site managers receiving the survey for lack of complete contact details within the Secretariat. However, in contrast, the current review undertook a significant number of interviews (54 in total).
- The use of Ramsar guidance by wetland site managers has been generally limited.
- Van Boven queried in much greater detail the value of individual guidance, which this review did not set out to do.
- Van Boven also found, as has this review, that handbooks appear to be the most frequently used guidance, particularly by practitioners.
- Then, as now, the language of guidance – both the fact that it is too technical, and the fact that it is essentially in English – is a problem.

This component of the review was undertaken via interviews and an online survey (Monkey Survey).

The online survey was made available over a 17 day period (from 21 May to 6 June) and sent to 657 people. Both the survey and the interviews covered: 1. Value in addressing needs; 2. Utility/user-friendliness/relevance of tools; 3. Appropriateness of methods/approaches; 4. Gaps; 5. The *modus operandi* of the STRP (see Annex 1 for the detailed survey questions and responses).

In total there were 45 useable responses (32 useable responses to the English survey, five useable responses to the Spanish survey and eight useable responses to the French survey). Several responses were not useable because of incompleteness. Even in useable responses, not all respondents answered all questions. There are several possible reasons for the low response rate, including: 1. lack of time, 2. that the survey was not relevant to survey recipients; 3. Too many other surveys and demands placed on them at the same time, 4. Lack of reminders, 5. Relatively limited time to complete the survey.

Twenty-eight (28) people were invited for interviews for this component of the overall review. Some declined, others did not reply. As a result, a total of 15 people were interviewed (one responded in writing – see Annex 2 for a list of interviewees).

Survey respondents and interviewees were categorised according to their relationship with Ramsar as per Table 1.

Table 1: Interviewees and survey respondents

	Interviewees	Survey Respondents	% of total[1]
Ramsar National focal point	5	20	**41%**
Site manager	4	7	**18%**
Administrative authority	2	9	**18%**
STRP national focal point	2	11	**22%**
Other	2		**3%**
Total	14	47	

[1] note that some respondents considered themselves as falling under two categories – e,g, both National Focal Point and site manager – reason for which the total % adds up to more than 100%.

2. Key findings

This section highlights key findings emerging from both the survey and interviews, while Section 3 provides an analysis of these findings. Findings under this section reflect the essence and the majority of opinions emerging from the research phase. A more comprehensive overview of the survey results can be found in Annex 1.

2.1. Who is the guidance for?

Resolution XI.16 identifies the following audiences for Ramsar scientific and technical guidance:

- managers of individual wetland sites
- managers of networks of wetlands such as on migratory waterbird flyways;
- wetland policy makers
- those responsible for regulating use of and impacts on wetlands;
- policy-makers in other sectors such as water, agriculture, health, urban development, and energy;
- stakeholders and local communities who may depend upon wetlands and wetland ecosystem services;
- educators and researchers;
- private sector organizations;

These stakeholders can be re-grouped into four main categories as follows:

1. **Scientists** – including scientists from other institutions, those from other MEAs, researchers and educators;
2. **Policy-makers** – including from the environment and water sectors, but also other related sectors;
3. **Practitioners** – in particular wetland managers, but also others from related fields such as protected area managers;
4. **Users of wetlands** – including communities and the private sector.

Different audiences require different guidance, in terms of content, level of detail, presentation, focus etc. While users of wetlands may need more general background information on wetlands, the other three groups each require a distinct set of guidance. Party representatives, who are policy and decision-makers, may need some technical guidance related to turning Convention requirements into policy, reporting back on Convention requirements, policy implementation and strategic decision-making. On the other hand, practitioners and wetland managers may require concrete guidance on how best to manage wetland sites. At the same time, the STRP scientists also target other scientists (yet a very different audience) who might be more interested in a rigorous study of a specific issue related to wetlands.

The research phase highlighted this dichotomy: on the one hand, for some respondents, it was felt that guidance should be directed more at wetland managers, while on the other hand, others felt that it should be directed more at policy-makers. Some interviewees suggested that

generic guidance could/should then be turned into different products to address specific audiences (although recognising resource constraints with such an approach).

It is to be highlighted that whilst there are other potential audiences for Ramsar scientific and technical guidance, such as policy makers in other sectors (e.g. agriculture or water), educators and private sector organisations, (as highlighted in Resolution XI.16) these were not specifically included in this review.

2.2. How is the scientific and technical guidance defined?

Process to define guidance

According to Resolution IX.11 STRP guidance is defined based in part on priorities identified by the Conference of the Parties (COP) and in part by the STRP itself which identifies new and emerging issues (and which it communicates to the Parties via a "technical briefing note" for approval). In addition, the STRP provides guidance to the COP by reviewing draft resolutions related to scientific and technical issues that are put forward by Parties, and at the request of the Secretariat, and provides advice to the Secretariat.

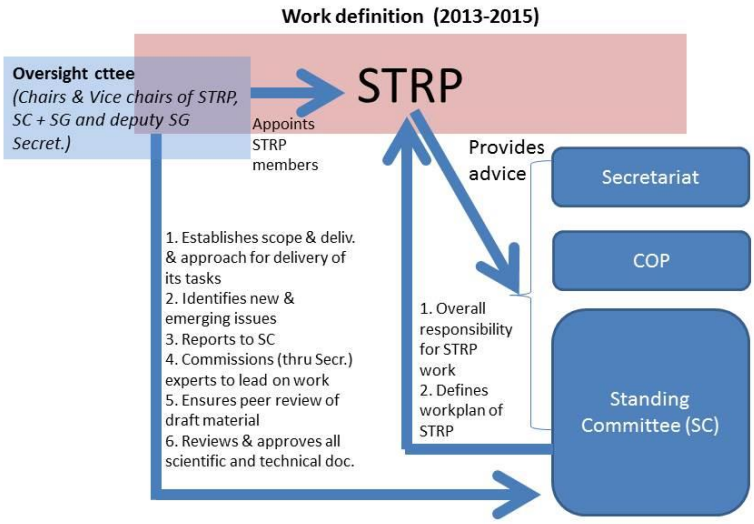


Figure 1: Defining STRP work

Since 2003, the work defined under the STRP is divided into thematic working groups.

A workplan is approved by the Standing Committee every triennium. The 2013-2015 workplan contains over 60 tasks and sub-tasks, categorized by broad themes and undertaken by different thematic working groups. In practice, and in order to reduce conflicts of interest, the STRP members generally do not implement the activities themselves, but rather commission and then review them. In some cases when STRP members undertake the work themselves, those involved do not take part in the review process.

Priorities within the STRP workplan are approved by the COP. Initially, the thematic working groups make suggestions on their priorities, and then report back to the plenary STRP their top actions which are then transposed into the overall STRP priorities. There are nine "highest priority tasks" in the 2013-2015 workplan.

Findings emerging essentially from interviews, confirm that the workplan is unrealistic and inordinately long (while resources are minimal). This emerges essentially from the fact that the workplan is designed to respond to the priorities set by the COP resolution on STRP's work for the coming triennium. As a result, elements of the workplan keep slipping and being postponed to the next triennium, which is a general cause for frustration (and at times, a certain amount of cynicism).

In practice, the STRP workplan for 2013-2015 amounts to an estimated CHF 1,915,000 of which only CHF 150,000 were secured at the time the workplan was adopted (see Resolution XI.17).

Communicating needs for guidance

Policy-makers communicate their guidance needs via the COP which approves the STRP workplan. However, the process for other audiences to communicate guidance is less clear. Indeed, the research phase highlighted a difference of views on the extent to which needs of target groups were effectively communicated and incorporated. Some interviewees reported that they had no opportunity to channel their needs for guidance up to the STRP. Others felt that their needs were well communicated via COP and Standing Committee to the STRP.

In some cases the limited interaction with the STRP NFPs was raised as being a stumbling block for national level stakeholders (and in particular wetland managers) to ensure that their needs were channelled back up to the STRP. In practice, it would seem that much of the workplan to carry out scientific and technical guidance over the triennium is actually developed by the STRP with the COP generally signing off.

2.3. To what extent is the scientific and technical guidance used?

Awareness and use of guidance

In practice, a significant proportion of survey respondents were either not aware of STRP guidance (24%) or either never or rarely used it (50%). From some of the interviews, it also appears that there is a general lack of awareness about the types of guidance tools provided by STRP.

Seventy-one percent (71%) of wetland managers reported that they were not aware of the guidance and therefore did not use it at all. Nevertheless, this figure needs to be taken with caution given the low numbers involved (a total of 7 wetland managers having responded to the survey).

Many interviewees reported that they made use of their national research centres to obtain locally-relevant guidance (also in their own language) which signified that they did not feel the need to use STRP guidance.

Disseminating guidance

Published guidance is essentially disseminated via the website, webinars and workshops. The STRP National Focal Points also have a role to play in distributing guidance locally, although in practice that does not seem to happen much according to this research.

In general, the main gaps with respect to the uptake of guidance were a lack of information and awareness about the existence of the guidance, the language used and the general complexity of the guidance. The key issue raised with respect to dissemination of guidance was language. It was an issue in terms of the actual language of the guidance (English, with only some guidance being translated into Spanish and French), but also in terms of the complexity of the language utilized. Many respondents felt that the language in some of the guidance was unnecessarily complex which excluded non-technical readers. Importantly, it also had an impact on the ability of Parties to have the guidance easily translated.

Responsiveness of guidance to needs

The majority of survey respondents (66%) felt that existing guidance addressed their needs. This figure was lower for just wetland managers, 57% of whom felt that the guidance responded to their needs. According to one survey respondent: *"The STRP is a critical component of the Ramsar Convention. It is important for the STRP to keep an eye on emerging, global issues relating to wetland management".*

In contrast, generally interviewees (with whom it was possible to delve a little deeper) felt that the guidance that exists is too general. In this respect, the diverse issues associated with different wetland types and different regions were raised repeatedly by interviewees. There were calls for more site-specific guidance.

Both survey respondents and interviewees were asked to outline what were their key needs in terms of scientific and technical guidance. Some of the resulting responses were extremely specific and "scientific" such as for example, managing genetically-modified organisms in and around wetlands. Other examples of specific needs that were expressed were:

1. Valuation of wetland ecosystems
2. Wetlands and extractive industries
3. Minimum requirements for Ramsar site monitoring
4. Wetlands and urbanisation
5. Techniques for wetland restoration
6. Application of 'wise use' principles to wetland management
7. Management of peatlands

A more comprehensive list of perceived gaps can be found in Annex 1 (questions 3 and 17).

Other needs expressed were more technical or practical and related to the management of wetlands or means of implementing the convention. Capacity needs were raised, in particular training for wetland managers in, for instance, monitoring tools.

In most cases, respondents and interviewees called for practical guidance that they could apply either for decision-making or for directly managing wetlands.

2.4. How effective are the content and format of guidance?

Current guidance tends to be provided and disseminated via written documents: handbooks, technical reports, technical briefing notes and resolutions. Guidance to Parties is indirectly

provided by the STRP through its role as reviewer of scientific and technical draft materials that are submitted to Parties, and in raising new and emerging issues.

The majority (36%) of survey respondents used handbooks over other guidance documents. This was followed by resolutions (25%), technical reports (21%) and briefing notes (12%). Interviewees also listed both handbooks and resolutions as the top two tools used. One respondent commented that *"only about 20% of resolutions are relevant to our work".*

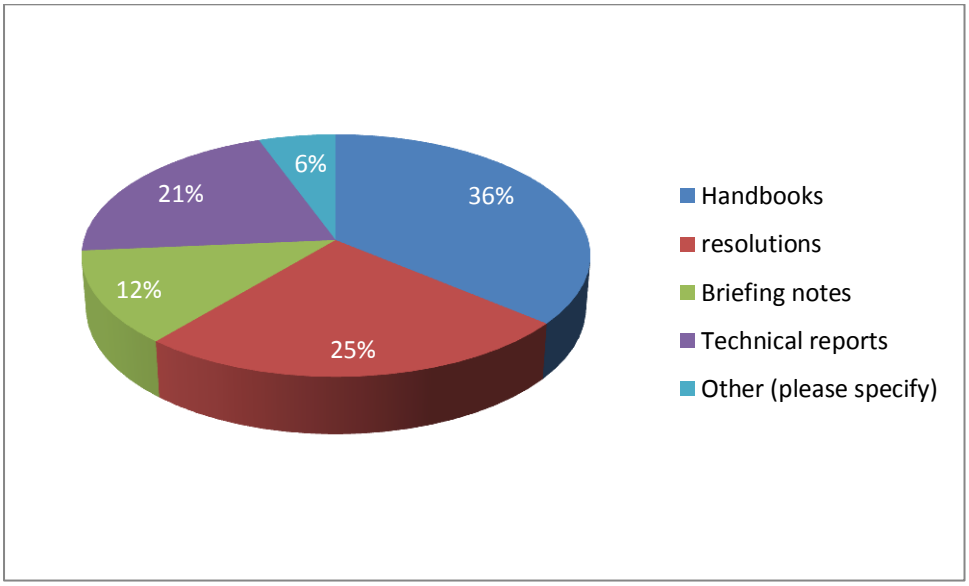


Figure 2: Guidance products

For many interviewees, it was clear that while handbooks were useful, they provided a general framework which then required a significant amount of adapting to local (or national or regional) reality. Thus, in general while handbooks were considered useful, they were also criticized as being too general and rarely directly applicable without significant adaptation.

There were calls for more site-specific expert advice and guidance. In particular, there was a call for more case studies as a means of bringing to life some of the guidance and making it more practical. One interviewee highlighted that there was a need to "modernise" the guidance produced and the overall STRP process.

The relevance of a "signature product" such as the "State of the World's Wetlands" which is currently being scoped under the 2013-2015 workplan, was raised as being something on which the STRP could focus more of its attention.

Scientific versus technical guidance

The distinction between scientific and technical guidance was generally quite blurred. Some interviewees saw scientific and technical as two sides of the same coin: with the scientific guidance being key to informing technical guidance and policy. Importantly, policy was mentioned frequently as the ultimate aim of this guidance. This probably reflects the fact that the majority of respondents were policy-makers.

A significant majority (68%) of survey respondents reported that they felt that the guidance was neither too scientific nor too technical. The majority (54%) reported using both scientific and technical, while a third (33%) of survey respondents reported using neither.[2]

For many interviewees, the guidance needed to be rooted in science but then more applicable to policy-making and strategic decision-making.

Modus Operandi

An insignificant majority (53%) of survey respondents reported that they were familiar with the STRP *modus operandi*.

Those that were familiar listed a number of strengths and weaknesses of the current *modus operandi*, but also more generally of the way the STRP operates.

As concerns the strengths of the current *modus operandi*, the following was mentioned:

- It brings together experts from different fields and regions and ensures representation from across different Ramsar regions;
- The fact that there is both scientific and technical information available;
- Sharing of best practices;
- Effective; collaborative; brings together wide range of expertise;
- Addresses the main technical aspects of the Ramsar Convention;
- Open access platform;
- Basic model works well as shown by the wide acknowledgement of the quality of STRP outputs at CoP11.

The following weaknesses of the current *modus operandi* were raised:

- Too heavy and far removed from the reality in the field;
- There is no information provided on when an STRP NFP is not performing is recommended task;
- Too large a work plan for each triennium;
- Not known very well;
- Language of communication with decision makers;
- Not easy to access and find information;
- Pragmatic Conservation/ Education;
- "Over-technical" at times;
- Inadequate financing;
- Limited capacity;
- Inadequate regional representation;
- STRP should focus on key projects - and make sure they are achieved on time;
- Need to refine the tasks of the STRP and increase the involvement of the National STRP Focal Points.

[2] There are some inconsistencies in survey responses related to the numbers of respondents aware of the guidance, those making use of the guidance and those considering the guidance useful.

3: Analysis of findings

This section provides an analysis of the findings reviewed in the previous section.

Key Challenges identified

While the work of the STRP and its value is widely recognised, there are a number of challenges that have become apparent through this first component of the review. One figure emerging from the survey is particularly telling: ***while 60% of respondents felt that the guidance responded to their needs, 74% either never or rarely used it, or were simply not aware of it.*** Key challenges therefore, can be summarised as:

> ***Disconnects*** – there are visible disconnects at different levels: a) between the practical needs of wetland managers and policy-makers and the products emerging from the STRP, b) between STRP national focal points and both wetland managers at one end and the STRP at the other. There is no clear mechanism to collect nationally-relevant (and/or regionally-relevant) requests for scientific and technical guidance related to wetlands and to communicate these needs from the "ground-up" to refer them back to the STRP. Equally, the dissemination of STRP products to target audiences is not as effective as it could be.
>
> ***Audiences*** – Ramsar has a diverse audience and this has not been sufficiently reflected in its scientific and technical processes and products.
>
> ***Language*** – the technical nature of the language used in STRP guidance as well as the fact that English is the predominant language, have excluded a large number of interested parties from the STRP and its products.
>
> ***Limited outreach to wetland managers*** – while there are over 2000 Ramsar sites and an even larger number of wetland managers, this group is not well engaged in the STRP. For example, there is to date no comprehensive mailing list of these managers, and therefore, no means for the STRP to effectively reach this key stakeholder group.[3]
>
> ***Breadth of workplan versus resources*** – the workplan of the STRP is overly ambitious, and yet funding and human resources are extremely limited.
>
> ***Representation on the STRP*** – The STRP does not adequately represent the full constituency of the Ramsar Convention. While it is praised for being apolitical, at the same time it may be too remote from its core constituency.

Addressing these challenges

There is a clear and identified need for scientific and technical guidance for implementation of the Ramsar Convention. This role is currently essentially (but not exclusively) played by the STRP which has been praised for the quality of its work and its ability to remain apolitical. The broader challenges that remain relate to making sure that the products

[3] It is noteworthy that of the 28 interviewees shortlisted by the Ramsar Secretariat only seven were Ramsar site managers. Of the survey respondents, only 14% (7) were Ramsar site managers.

emerging from the STRP are relevant to their core constituencies, and are practical and useable. In order for this to happen the proposed options below imply some restructuring of the STRP.

Redefining the niche and structure of the STRP

"Hopefully this survey will help to re-prioritise the STRP agenda on themes that are really having an impact on countries and wetlands. I feel that the focus has been on an agenda with limited visibility and global application."[4]

It could be argued that the STRP currently functions like a global technical working group of wetlands experts, with tangential links to the Ramsar Convention. As a result, the STRP is probably overly ambitious in its work, as reflected by its huge workplan. The direct consequence is that as the workplan does not get achieved, there is less confidence in the ability of the STRP to deliver on its commitments. Furthermore, products, while relevant and technically-sound, do not appear to effectively reach their intended audiences.

There is an opportunity to streamline the STRP, and the provision of Ramsar guidance more generally, so that structures are more directly linked to key audiences. In practice this could mean making a clearer distinction between direct "convention-related" guidance addressing the needs of two key target audiences (i.e. policy-makers and wetland managers) and broader scientific "wetland-related" guidance focused on key and emerging issues, and targeting the wider scientific community.

Two separate groups or sub-groups could thus be formed, one being the more "inward-looking" body and the other, more "outward-looking". The latter could be purely scientific, while the former may need to better reflect its constituency and include both policy-makers and wetland managers.

Strengthen a regional approach grounded in partnerships as an avenue to expand STRP's regional and local relevance and reach

Currently, the STRP is sub-divided into thematic working groups. While these tackle important topics, there remains limited cross-fertilisation across the groups.

Since at the very least some issues are more likely to be common (and language as well) in a given region, a more regional approach to guidance may be warranted. This would have the benefit of not only tapping into other resources, but also ensuring regional relevance as well as language. It is further supported by the mention by several interviewees of the existence and value of their own in-country expertise via universities or research centres.

A more regional approach could be achieved through the establishment of specific sub-groups of the STRP that could also focus the guidance on regionally-relevant issues. These groups, grounded in the regions, could also reach out more effectively to regional and local partners.

Such an approach would require a shift from a centralised structure to a more regional and network-based one.

[4] Provided originally in Spanish: "*Ojala que sirva este encuesta para que la agenda del GECT sea priorizada en temas que realmente están impactando a los países y los humedales. Siento que se ha insistido en una agenda de poca visibilidad y aplicación global"*

Furthermore, this approach would be in line with COP11, Resolution XI.18 para.24 which "*requests the STRP and Secretariat to identify opportunities and mechanisms for holding intersessional regional or subregional meetings of STRP National Focal Points and other wetland experts in order to strengthen regional and subregional scientific networks...*"

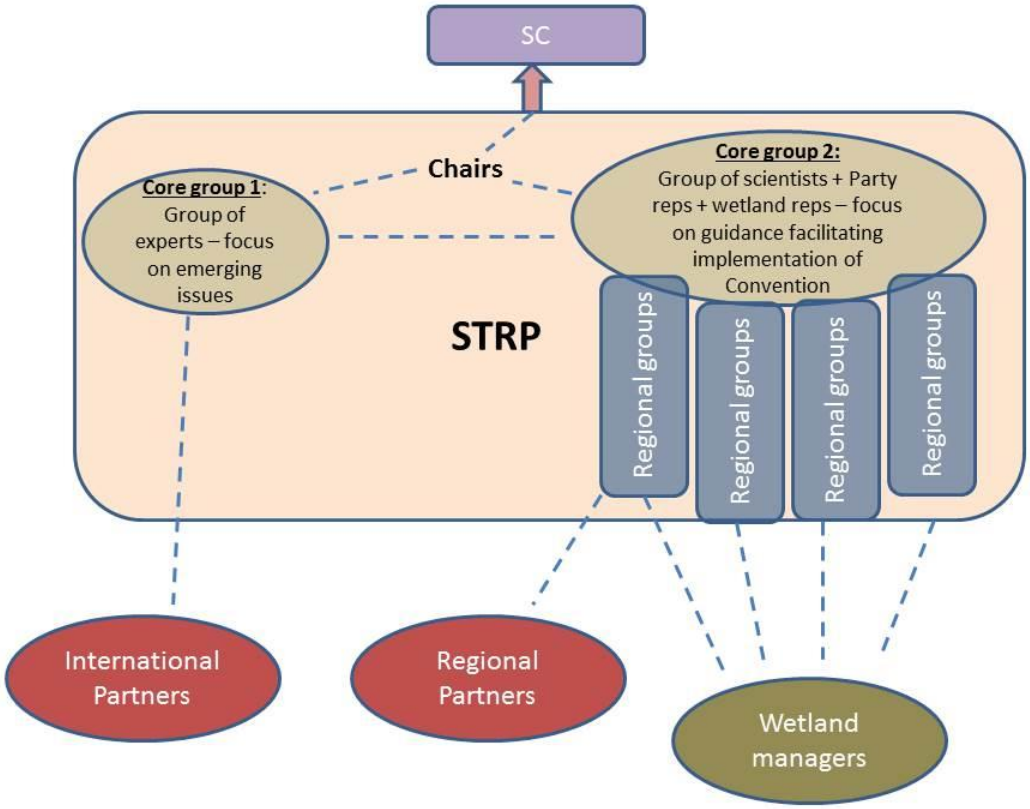


Figure 3: A regional approach with two sub-bodies to the STRP: one more inward-looking (Core group 2) and one more outward-looking (Core group 1). Parties and wetland managers would benefit from better representation in the regional groups under core group 2 while core group 1 would be the lead global, scientific body on wetlands. Outreach to different partners, at different levels, could also be better achieved.

There is a missed opportunity for the STRP to establish stronger ties with diverse regional and/or national research and implementation centres. At regional (and national) levels STRP could establish relevant partnerships that can help to ensure that: a) the work is complementary to theirs, b) other bodies can take on some of the locally-relevant research (and fund it in collaboration with Ramsar/STRP), c) the guidance is developed in the local language(s), d) the guidance is disseminated locally, and local and regional capacities are strengthened. Such an approach would be aligned with the STRP modus operandi for 2013-2015 which highlights the importance of "*Ensuring continuing national and regional applicability in the work of the STRP*".

While there are calls for more site-specific expert advice and guidance, this may be unrealistic given that there are over 2000 Ramsar sites. Nevertheless, on an opportunistic basis, more

site-based focus for specific guidance could be sought (which could be linked to advisory missions so as to be cost-effective for example).

Categories of guidance and its presentation

It may be useful to distinguish more clearly between four categories of guidance: 1. Reviewing draft scientific and technical materials for approval by the Parties, 2. Guidance that is for Parties to better implement the requirements of the Convention, 3. Maintaining sight of bigger picture and emerging issues, and 4. Guidance that can support wetland managers in their day-to-day management of Ramsar wetlands. A distinction can therefore, also be made as concerns the audience, with the first three types of guidance addressed to policy- and decision-makers and the last, to practitioners. While ultimately it can be argued that science underpins all of the work related to the Convention, as applied by any audience, in practice the type of guidance, its presentation, language and complexity will need to be adapted to different audiences.

In terms of presentation, the use of case studies can be an effective and powerful medium to demonstrate key issues which can be of interest to both audiences. More generally, the same scientific and technical guidance can be "translated" into different content (notably, using different media) for different audiences. Indeed the same core scientific product could theoretically, be turned into four different tools of use to decision-makers, other scientists, users of wetlands and wetland managers. While this requires funding and time, it is essential for the uptake of Ramsar scientific and technical products.

Options could include stricter guidelines concerning the way STRP writes and presents different documents with the audience in mind; or the documents being reviewed and/or edited by the Ramsar Secretariat and/or a communications expert.

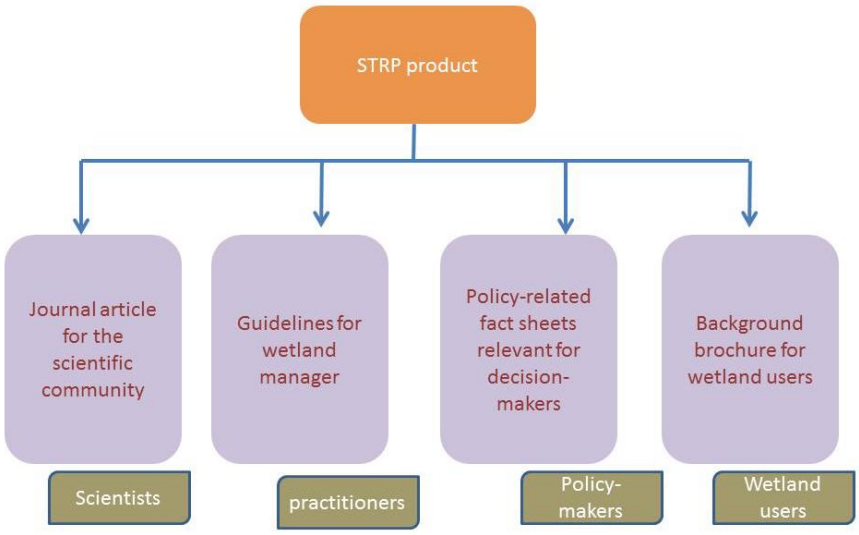


Figure 4: Same guidance for different audiences

Redefining STRP membership and engagement

The current membership of the STRP is composed of scientists acting in their own right. By virtue of having to be English-speakers (as per the *modus operandi* adopted by Res. IX. 11)

the breadth of membership is limited. While there is a requirement to have one person from each region, these are not empowered as "regional representatives".

The voice of Ramsar wetland managers in-country is not effectively represented on the STRP, despite them being a key stakeholder group and audience for the guidance. There is also a reported lack of engagement by STRP national focal points. One survey respondent for example, specifically highlighted the need to "*strengthen the capacity and role of national STRP Focal Points".* Some site managers do not know their STRP focal point and some Ramsar focal points have minimal professional exchange with the STRP focal point. As a result, guidance needs do not effectively reach the STRP and vice versa, guidance does not effectively reach a significant part of the intended audience. Membership should be broadened to ensure different disciplines and more effective regional and linguistic representation.

Under the proposed alternative model, regional sub-groups of the STRP could not only operate in the language of the region (or an acceptable common language) but also work on specific regional issues (which are more likely to be common and of relevance than global level issues).

Workplan and funding

The STRP is constrained by the fact that its members are volunteers, and the workplan is an extremely long and unrealistic "wishlist" of elements with no funding attached. As a result there is an implicit understanding that the workplan will never be achieved.

Alternatively, a more practical and accountable approach would be to have a recognised "wishlist" parked somewhere, but then a realistic workplan which would be approved by Parties. This workplan would only contain elements that have funding committed and real names of leaders (or groups of leaders) next to it. As such, there would be some accountability for effective completion of the workplan for a given period. Should new funding or partners come on board for elements in the "wishlist" these could also be submitted as additional elements to the workplan on an inter-sessional basis for example. Reducing the workload of the STRP would help to ensure that what remains in the workplan is actually tackled. Furthermore, elements submitted by Parties could be undertaken directly by STRP members without any conflict of interest.

Expanding the role of the Secretariat

Given the voluntary nature of STRP members, there is a need for a support body that can help to facilitate some of the delivery of the STRP's work. This role seems to be suited to the Ramsar Secretariat (should it have the resources to do so). It is already engaging with the STRP but could play a more active role in particular with respect to re-developing work produced by the STRP for target audiences, disseminating this work and in capacity building (related to the application of the tools). The Secretariat can also help to maintain momentum, particularly in between meetings.

Monitoring

As one survey respondent noted "*There must be more effective mechanisms to measure the performance/effectiveness of the guidelines and STRP products and services".* To date, it has been difficult to assess in detail the impact of given guidance. There is a need for feedback loops and means of measuring the impact of guidance that is produced in order to better understand its value and ensure that it is being used, applied and addresses real needs.

Monitoring may be perceived as a costly luxury, but in practice, by working with local partners, it may be a cost-saving venture to ensure that time and money spent in developing guidance in the first place, is well spent. Several options to monitor use of guidance can be envisaged, from full blown surveys of users to simple mechanisms that count for example, product downloads from the website.

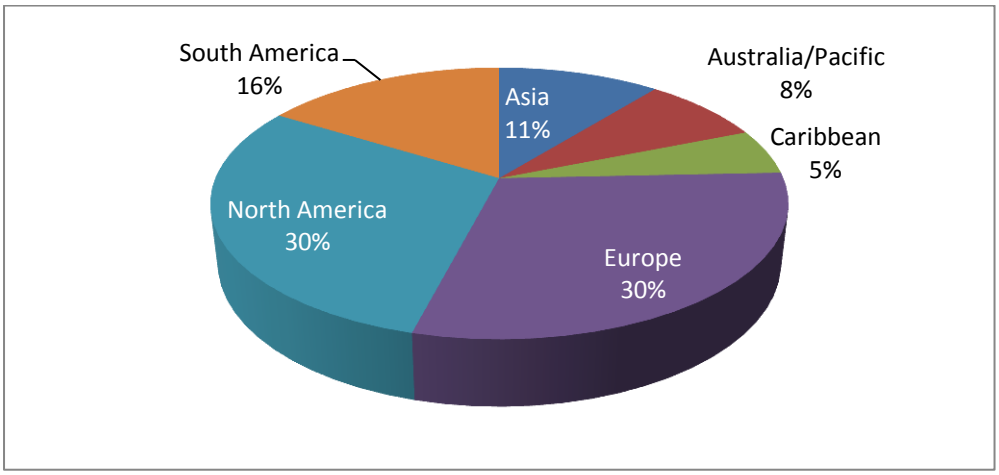
In conclusion, there is scope for improving the way Ramsar scientific and technical guidance is defined and reaches its audiences. Tackling this issue requires a number of changes in Ramsar structures and processes. These are further developed in Report 5 under this review.

Annex 1: Survey responses

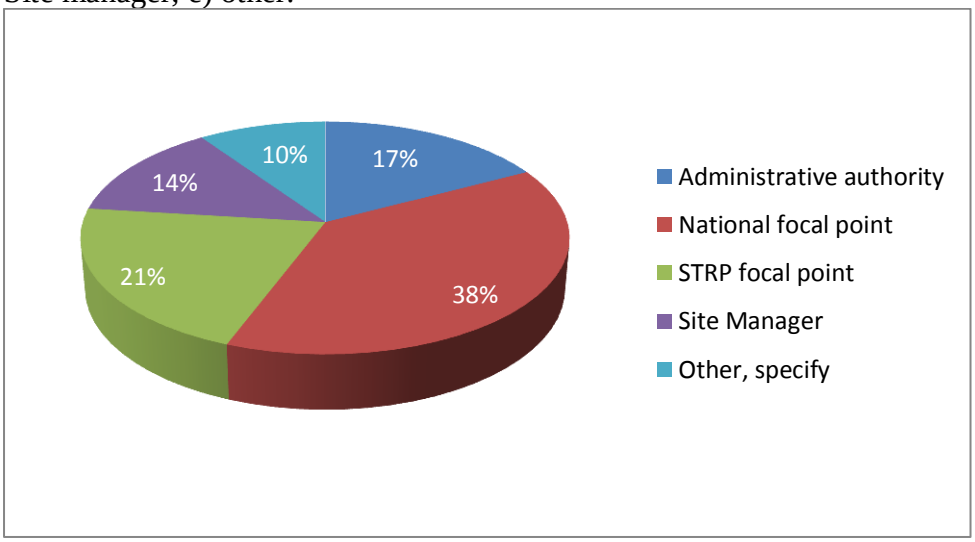
The online survey was sent to 657 e-mail addresses (although there were some duplications and some erroneous addresses) by the Ramsar Secretariat. In total 45 useable responses were received, although not all respondents answered all questions.

It is noteworthy that a total of 68 people started the survey, but of these only 45 went beyond inserting their names and contact details. This may indicate a number of things: 1. lack of time, 2. that the survey was not relevant to survey recipients; 3. Too many other surveys and demands placed on them at the same time, 4. Lack of reminders, 5. Relatively limited time to complete the survey.

Question 1: Please provide your name and contact details.
Sixty percent (60%) of respondents were either from Europe or North America, with the single largest response group being from the USA.



Question 2: Can you please select which of the following categories you would fall under? a) Administrative authority, b) National Focal Point, c) STRP Focal Point, d) Ramsar Site manager, e) other.



Question 3: How would you describe in a few words your needs in terms of scientific and/or technical guidance?

Specific scientific guidance on:

- Management of salt-water wetlands, certification, identification of keystone species, establishment of a platform for dialogue;
- Surveying, monitoring and evaluation of wetlands, including mapping;
- Climate change and wetlands;
- Valuation of wetland goods and services;
- Study of illegal biodiversity exploitation in and around Ramsar sites;
- Habitat management priorities and shifts in habitat use by species (due to climate change, anthropogenic, or otherwise) ;
- Wetland ecosystem interaction;
- Identifying best water management regimes;
- Arguments for protection and wise use of wetlands;
- Monitoring of wetlands;
- Methodologies for carbon capture;
- Methodologies for strategic environmental impact assessments;
- Methodologies to determine release of GMOs;
- Value addition to wetland products;
- Balancing wetland conservation and development especially extractive industries and urbanisation.

Specific and concrete guidance and training on:

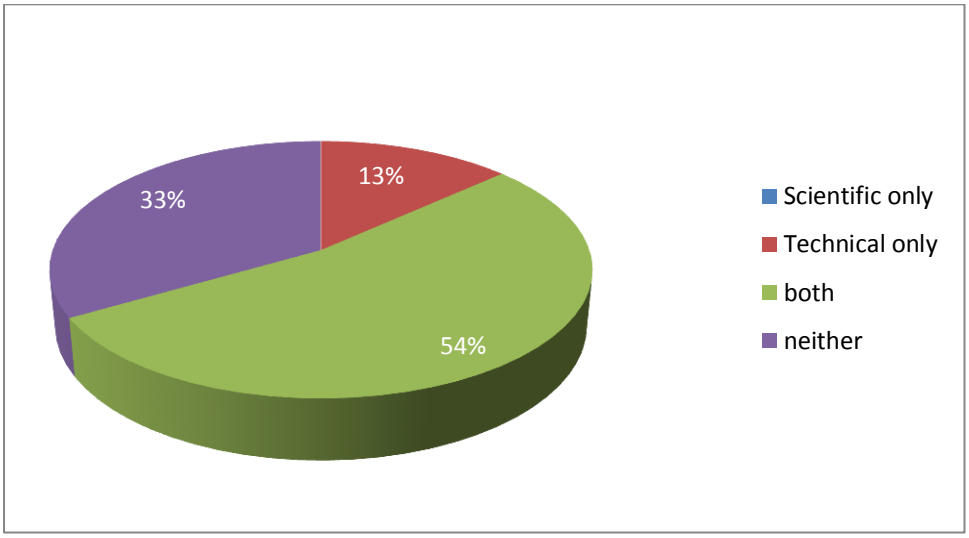
- Implementation of management plans;
- Management of wetlands in mining areas;
- Simple methodology to monitor Ramsar sites;
- Reporting on Ramsar management and informing the development of monitoring, reporting and planning activities;
- Training on the management of protected areas/Ramsar sites;
- Training for site managers, local communities and monitoring tools;
- Building capacity for wetland management eg. wetlands valuation techniques;
- Means of delimiting wetlands at the country level;
- Tested, practical solutions to conservation problems and needs;
- Focus on regional initiatives;
- Reviews and syntheses of best practice guidance in wetland policy and management;
- Cases of good practice in wetland management;
- More inventories in terms of wetlands as systems and also inventories of what is in them.

Specific political, legal and/or technical guidance on:

- Elaborating a national plan for wetlands;
- Viability and impacts of some infrastructure in and around wetlands;
- Awareness and perception of people including decision makers towards wetlands;
- Information on wise use of wetlands, legal framework for conservation of wetlands;
- More fora to interact and share science.

Question 4: Are you aware of Ramsar scientific and technical guidance?
A total of 34 (76%) respondents were aware of Ramsar scientific and technical guidance, while 11 respondents (24%) were not.

Question 5: Do you make use of both Ramsar scientific and technical guidance?
None of the respondents used only scientific data, while the majority (54% or 24 respondents) used both scientific and technical guidance. One-third (15) used neither.

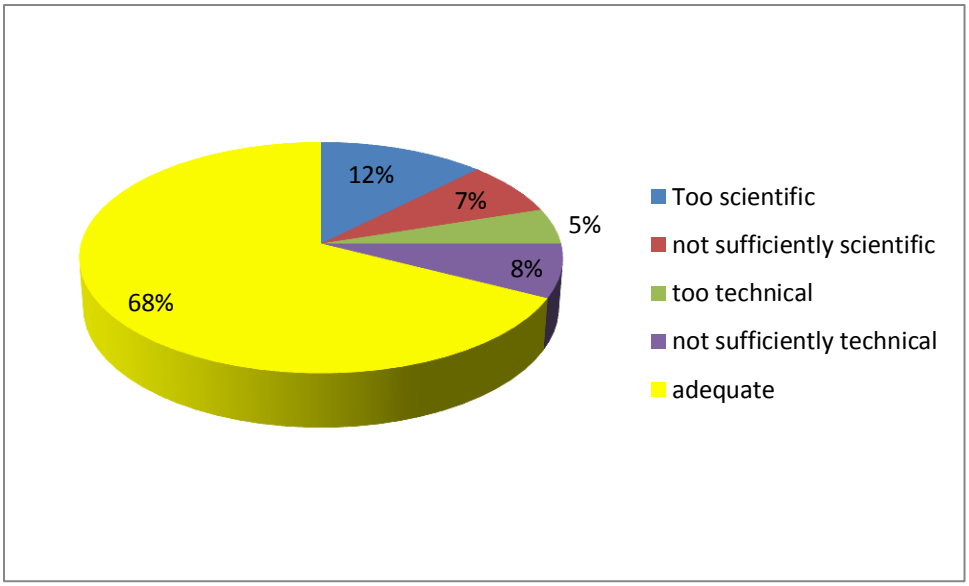


Question 6: Does existing scientific and technical guidance address your needs?
Two-thirds of respondents (30 respondents) felt that existing guidance addressed their needs.

Comments under this question included:

- Printed documentation is easier to read.
- Most of the publications are in English which is not useful to our countries.
- It gives a general overview of expected practices and standards that can be translated to be applied at a state level by our technical staff.
- Guidance needs to be focused on achieving the core components of the Ramsar Convention, e.g. better information on what is meant by the 'wise use' of wetlands, and how different countries are applying this in national legislation.
- Many site managers are not aware of both technical and scientific issues
- It addresses our needs providing general knowledge. Then, we must focus on specific issues and at this point we generally seek advice from local scientific organizations
- We have used this information to define and categorise wetlands.
- Scientific and technical guidance should be more direct and practical.

Question 7: Do you feel that the guidance available is generally too scientific or too technical for your needs?
The majority (68%) of respondents felt that the information was neither too scientific nor too technical, but was just right.



Question 8: Can you easily access and use this guidance?
The majority (73% or 33 respondents) reported that they could easily access the guidance.

Question 9: Are you familiar with examples of guidance (from other conventions or organisations) that you could suggest to improve the way Ramsar guidance is framed and delivered?

The majority (57%) of respondents were not aware of other examples of guidance. For those who were aware, proposed ways to improve Ramsar guidance were:

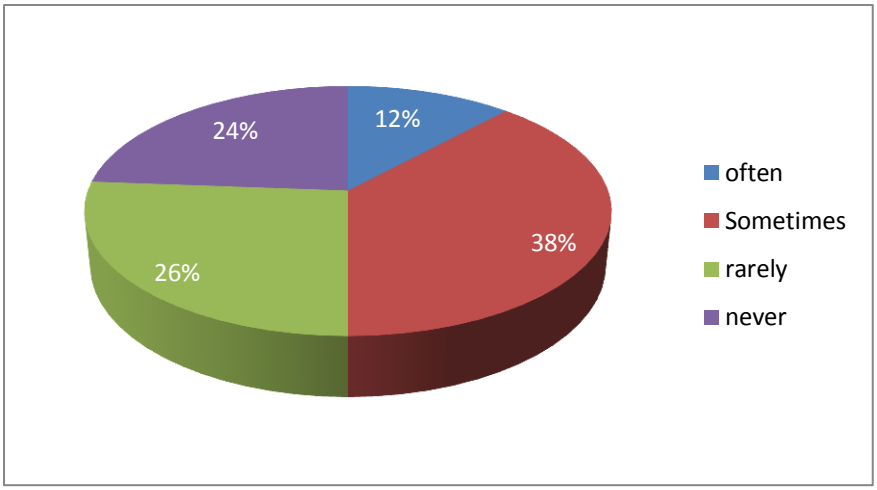
1. to organize some training and workshops,
2. a case study format would be most useful.

Examples of guidance from other conventions that were mentioned were those from the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) manuals and Man and Biosphere Reserves (MAB).

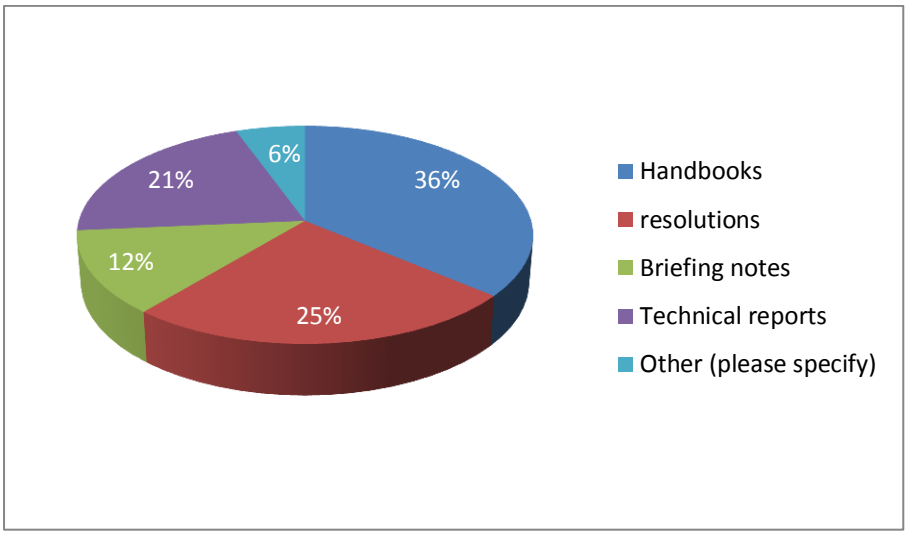
Another example mentioned was documents that are being developed to better understand the ecological importance of habitats and associated species under the European Habitats Directive 92/43/EC, with specific recommendation per habitat type. Something similar could be done per wetland type.

Question 10: Do you use the tools provided by the STRP (and/or Ramsar) to deliver scientific and technical guidance?

Only 12% of respondents (5 in total) reported that they used "often" the STRP guidance, while 38% (16 in total) reported that they used it from time to time and 26% (11) reported that they used it rarely.



Question 11: Which tool(s) do you use most frequently?
The most widely used tools were the handbooks (36%), followed by resolutions (25%) , technical reports (21%) and briefing notes (12%).



Question 12: How would you rate the tools that you use?
The majority (74%) of respondents felt that the quality of the guidance was "good", with 21% qualifying it as excellent and only 5% rating it as mediocre.

Question 13: Are the tools to deliver scientific and technical guidance to support you user-friendly?

For this question, 31% of respondents reported not to use the tools (which is higher than the 24% reported under question 10 above). Fifty-five percent (55%) reported that they were user-friendly, and 14% that they were not.

Question 14: Is the approach provided to deliver the guidance and tools (i.e. via the STRP website, STRP webinars, the Ramsar Convention website, through meetings or workshops etc.) adequate?

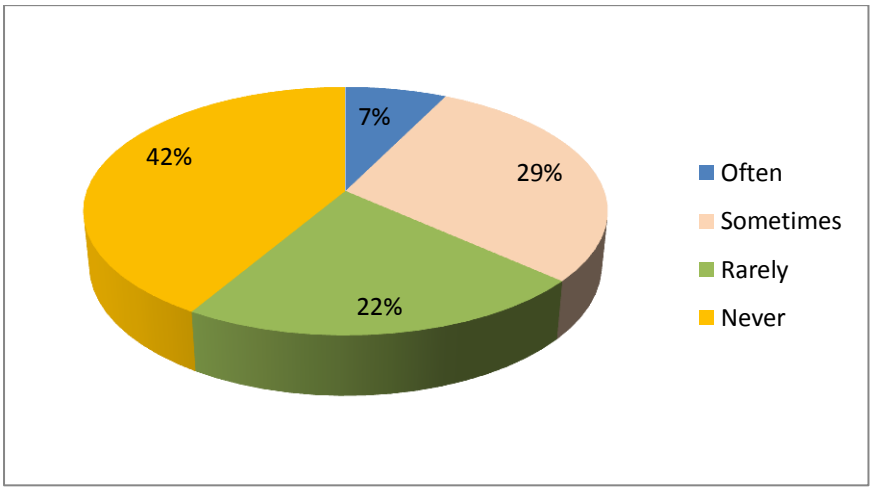
Fifty-six percent (56%) reported that the approach provided to deliver the guidance and tools was appropriate, while 34% did not have an opinion and 10% felt that it was not appropriate. Reasons reported were the complexity of the website, or the fact that they were not even aware of the existence of the guidance or that more active engagement of users of the tools was necessary, rather than a top-down approach. It was also suggested to involve Ramsar Regional Centres and National Focal Points.

Question 15: Are you familiar with the STRP Platform (STRP Portal and Workspace)?

A negligible majority (51%) were aware of the STRP platform.

Question 16: If you answered yes to Question 15, how often do you use the STRP Platform?

Of those respondents that were familiar with the STRP portal, the largest share (42%) never consulted it, 29% consulted it "sometimes", 22% "rarely" and only 7% consulted it "often".



Question 17: In your view, what are the three main gaps in terms of responding to your needs for scientific and technical support?

Gaps that were identified by respondents were primarily: more case studies, improved communications, translation of guidance, capacity building, funding, improved collaboration and a regional approach. The following specific gaps in terms of topics were highlighted:

1. Genetically-modified organisms in or near Ramsar sites;
2. Splitting guidance by wetland type;
3. Valuation of wetland ecosystems;
4. Climate change, wetlands as carbon sinks and GHG-exchange;
5. Wetlands and extractive industries;
6. Processes for development of national legislation;
7. Wetland ecosystem interactions, role of microorganism;
8. Minimum requirements for Ramsar site monitoring;
9. Wetlands and urbanisation;
10. Techniques on restoration of wetlands;
11. Application of 'wise use' principles to wetland management;

12. Bio-physical criteria to delimit wetlands;
13. Wetland and agriculture especially paddy rice growing;
14. Techniques on planning of eco-tourism;
15. Strategic environmental impact assessment;
16. Ecological land use planning and connectivity;
17. Identifying environmental limits for maintaining the ecological character of Ramsar sites;
18. Management of peatlands.

Question 18: Are you familiar with the STRP *modus operandi*?

An insignificant majority (53%) reported that they were familiar with the STRP *modus operandi*.

Question 19: What are the main strengths and weakness of the current *modus operandi* of the STRP?

As concerns the strengths of the current *modus operandi*, the following was mentioned:

- It brings together experts from different fields and regions and ensure representation from across different Ramsar regions;
- The fact that there is both scientific and technical information available;
- Sharing of best practices;
- Effective; collaborative; brings together wide range of expertise;
- addresses the main technical aspects of the Ramsar Convention;
- Open access platform;
- Basic model works well as shown by the wide acknowledgement of the quality of STRP outputs at CoP11.

The following weaknesses of the current *modus operandi* were raised:

- Too heavy and far removed from the reality in the field;
- There is no information provided on when an STRP NFP is not performing is recommended task;
- Too large a work plan for each triennium;
- Not known very well;
- Language of communication with decision makers;
- Not easy to access and find information;
- Pragmatic Conservation/ Education;
- "Over-technical" at times;
- Inadequate financing;
- Limited capacity;
- Inadequate regional representation;
- STRP should focus on key projects - and make sure they are achieved on time;
- Need to refine the tasks of the STRP and increase the involvement of the National STRP Focal Points.

Questions 20 and 21:

20. Do you have any suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the STRP ?

21. Please provide us with any final comments

- Improved communications;
- A lighter structure and process;
- More exchange of experiences;
- More intensive and frequent involvement of STRP contact persons in their work would improve practicality of the products;
- Frequent meeting among the STRP focal points at least at regional level;
- Greater involvement by actual practitioners with experience in participative processes and education;
- A more broad-based team may be worth trying;
- Lack of budget;
- Strengthen the capacity and role of national STRP Focal Points;
- It is important for the STRP to keep an eye on emerging, global issues relating to wetland management;
- Strengthen local structure that will facilitate the sharing of expertise;
- Economic valuation of wetlands must be reinforced to ensure that economic decisions do take care of science;
- Ramsar needs to address the requirements created by more participative decision making processes and even promote their adoption through guidance;
- There is no mechanism to assess the performance of the STRP in terms of on the ground results;
- The use of case studies could help in the dissemination of practical, actionable information as well as providing a handle on the on-the-ground performance of the convention itself;
- The STRP needs to be better facilitated to handle its mandate and help to deliver the technical aspects of the Ramsar Convention;
- Regional –level assistance (more decentralised);
- Research agenda more based in real needs of wetlands and countries (rather than global application).

Annex 2: Interviewees for component 1

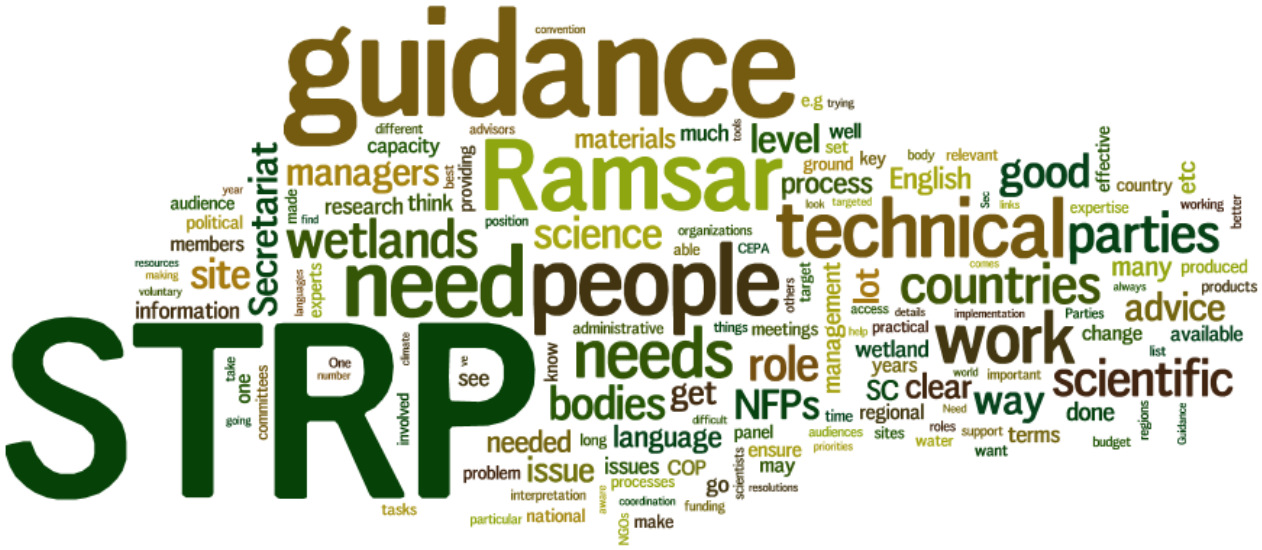
National Focal Points	
1. Pugazhendhi Murugaiyan	Seychelles
2. Habib Abid	Tunisia
3. Walter Regueiro	Uruguay
4. Gordana Beltram	Slovenia
5. Nirawan Pipitsombat	Thailand
Ramsar Site Managers	
6. Sebastián Di Martino	Argentina
7. Katsumi Ushiyama	Japan
8. Linda Friar	USA
9. Mazeika Sullivan	USA
Ramsar Administrative Authority	
10. Nancy Céspedes.	Chile
11. José Mateo Feliz[5]	Dominican Republic
STRP Focal point	
12. Gloria Santana	Dominican Republic
13. Karen Jenderedjian	Armenia
Other	
14. Heather MacKay	South Africa
15. Royal Gardner	USA

[5] While Mr Mateo started the interview, he then passed me to Ms Gloria Santana, the STRP focal point.

Component 2: Review of the roles of Ramsar Bodies and Processes Providing Scientific Support and Delivery

Veronica Lo

3 October 2014



Graphic word cloud generated from interview results

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Abbreviations

CEPA	Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness
CEPA NFP	CEPA National Focal Point
COP	Conference of the Contracting Parties
CP	Contracting Party
DR	Draft Resolution
IOP	International Organization Partner
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SC	Standing Committee
Secretariat	Ramsar Secretariat
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
STRP NFP	STRP National Focal Point
TOR	Terms of Reference
WSM	Wetland Site Manager

The term ‘interviewee’ and ‘respondent’ are used interchangeably to denote a person interviewed for this report.

The term `body’ or `bodies ’ refers to a range of participants involved in a process or activity, including inter-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations

Executive Summary

At Ramsar's 2012 Conference of the Parties (COP), Resolution XI.16 was adopted to undertake "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention." The review is made up of five components and five reports, of which this is the second.

This report specifically focuses on reviewing the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders.

The report includes three sections: 1. Reviewing the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies and processes; 2. A summary of findings from the interviews conducted with representatives of Ramsar bodies and processes; and 3. Key messages and lessons learnt.

A summary of key findings and key messages is provided below.

Key Findings

Views on uptake of Ramsar Guidance

- More technical guidance is needed
- Wetland site managers and other target audiences need to be accessed
- Guidance should be delivered in several languages
- Guidance should be clear and concise
- Much guidance is already available, and needs to be disseminated
- Some key issues and themes were identified as needing further guidance development

Views on Roles for Providing Science and Technical Guidance

- Several suggestions were made on strengthening the roles of various bodies, including the Standing Committee and the Secretariat, to ensure the needs of Parties are captured in the guidance developed
- Resources and capacity needs were highlighted several times by interviewees, with concerns that the STRP and Secretariat operate on very limited budgets, affecting guidance development, translation and dissemination
- Prioritization of tasks for the modus operandi is needed
- Several opportunities were identified to improve provisioning of guidance, including forming more partnerships, and establishing national wetlands committees

Key Messages and Lessons Learnt

Guidance Provisioning

Accessibility and language

- Guidance should be as clear and concise as possible – scientific jargon and unnecessary length should be avoided in order to make key messages clear.
- Guidance should be provided in the minimum of English, French and Spanish. Partnerships with other organizations experienced with outreach to the target audience should be explored for guidance development, dissemination and translation.

Outreach to target groups and tailoring guidance to suit them

- A database for target audience contacts should be developed and updated – for example, NFPs, CEPA NFPs can partner with organizations that have access to wetland site managers in a particular region. This contact information should be retained in the database.
- A variety of different guidance types should be utilized for efficiency and effectiveness – for example, wetland demonstration projects are invaluable for practical, hands-on training.

Make use of existing guidance

- Guidance developed by other organizations is already available on multiple issues and themes relevant to Ramsar, and for various sites and regions around the world. Before undertaking development of guidance on a particular issue, stocktaking should be done to assess whether guidance already exists, and if it does, in what ways it is possible to adapt it and deliver it to stakeholders.
- A database with existing guidance could also be developed, working with CEPA NFPs and relevant organizations, to supplement the information available, for example at the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) 'Tools for Parties – Relevant Publications' site (which currently has a Google search tool): http://ramsar.wetlands.org/ToolsforParties/RelevantPublications/tabid/749/Default.aspx

Structure, Bodies and Processes

Prioritize Tasks and Streamline Implementation of Modus Operandi

- A realistic list of tasks needs to be delineated for the work plan for each triennium. A professional facilitator could assist in fairly and objectively guiding the STRP through a prioritization process.
- The process of implementing the modus operandi should be streamlined so that there is sufficient time for delivering outputs. This can be achieved, for example, by setting clear timelines for implementing the workplan (a professional facilitator could also assist with this).

Ensure Relevancy of Guidance Through Strengthening Working Relationships

- STRP Members, senior regional advisers and CEPA NFPs should form a closer relationship to ensure the needs of the Parties are responded to and met
- The Secretariat should work more closely with the STRP chair to ensure practical guidance is developed

Partnerships, synergies and collaboration:

- The STRP should connect and work in close collaboration with the scientific bodies of the other Conventions (e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity) to establish a list of needs that are still there.
- Partnerships will also enable Ramsar to provide relevant guidance in a variety of ways, such as demonstration projects and workshops, to target audiences.

1. Introduction

The Ramsar Convention, signed in 1971 in Ramsar City, Iran, is an intergovernmental treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands in all geographic regions of the planet. The pillars of implementation are the wise use of all wetlands, designation and management of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites), and international cooperation. There are 168 contracting parties, and 2,188 Ramsar Sites.

The Ramsar Convention has four bodies: the Conference of Contracting Parties (COP), the Standing Committee (SC), the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the Secretariat, which are involved in a range processes and activities in implementing Ramsar's mission - the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.

Background

In Resolution XI.16, 'Ensuring efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention,' the Contracting Parties at Ramsar's 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP11, Bucharest, 2012) approved "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention", the findings of which would be reported to the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12). The review was commissioned and undertaken in collaboration with the Review Committee set up at the 46th Standing Committee Meeting (Decision SC46-14).

The review requested by the Contracting Parties at COP11 has been divided into five components, as listed below. These components are separate reports drafted by a team of two consultants, Stephanie Mansourian and Veronica Lo, each taking a lead on a specific component. The present report is Component II of this process: Reviewing the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders.

1. Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, its utility, use, application, conversion into practical tools, etc.`;
2. **Review of the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders;**
3. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of other MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar;
4. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of relevant global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOS to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar;

5. Final report drawing on the above analyses, that summarizes major findings, lessons and recommendations for: 1.) Improving the way scientific guidance is developed, applied and converted into tools; and 2.) Improving scientific support and delivery by Ramsar bodies and processes.

This report has three major sections: 1. Reviewing the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies and processes; 2. A summary of findings from the interviews conducted with representatives of Ramsar bodies and processes; and 3. Key messages and lessons learned.

Methodology

This analysis was performed by conducting a literature review of Ramsar guidance documents and other materials (see Annex I for a list of materials consulted). Through this review, we identified the types of guidance and descriptions of roles and responsibilities for the bodies and processes of the Convention, including the STRP, STRP NFPs, Standing Committee, STRP Oversight Committee, NFPs, CEPA Oversight Panel, Secretariat, Ramsar Advisory Missions, regional initiatives and international organizations. The focus of this review is on the roles and responsibilities of the Ramsar Convention's bodies as they pertain to the provisioning of science and technical guidance, and not their overall roles and responsibilities.

The analysis was supplemented with interviews with representatives of the above bodies, including the former STRP vice-chair and an invited expert. In total, 15 people were interviewed, (see Annex II for list of interviewees).

The full set of Interview questions are available in Annex III. A compilation of all responses was provided to the Secretariat.

This report is organized into three main parts: An overview of the roles of bodies and processes of the Ramsar Convention as they pertain to the provisioning of scientific and technical advice (Section 3), key findings from interviews (Section 4), and overall recommendations (Section 5).

2. Roles of Bodies and Processes of the Ramsar Convention

The following section is an overview of the roles of bodies and processes of the Ramsar Convention, as pertaining to the provisioning of scientific and technical guidance. The literature consulted includes the STRP modus operandi 2013-2015 (Res. XI.18), which outlines the primary roles and responsibilities of the STRP and its members. Further TORs for STRP members, invited experts, and observer organization representatives are referenced in Annex I. It is emphasized that the full set of roles and responsibilities for each body is not listed here; rather for the purposes of this report, the roles related to guidance provisioning have been extracted.

Ramsar Bodies

Conference of Contracting Parties (COP)

The Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) is the governance and policy-making body of the Convention. Government representatives from each of the Contracting Parties meet every three years to receive national reports on the preceding triennium, decide on the budget, implementation and priorities for the next triennium, and consider guidance for Parties for ongoing and emerging issues.

The programme of each meeting of the COP includes technical sessions which analyze ongoing and emerging issues of importance in the field of wetland conservation and wise use, including further interpretation and development of the key Convention concepts and guidance for the Parties on key areas of implementation.

The STRP's Work Plan for each triennium is built around the priority tasks determined by the Standing Committee, which are based upon requests from the Conference of the Parties by means of its Strategic Plan and COP Resolutions and Recommendations, and for 2013-2015 specifically in COP11 Resolution XI.17.

Standing Committee

The Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention was established (by Resolution 3.3, Regina, 1987) to oversee Convention affairs and to act as the intersessional executive body representing the COP between its triennial meetings. Members of the SC are contracting parties that are elected by each meeting of the COP, to serve for the triennium. 16 regional and two ex-officio members are chosen on a proportional basis according to the six Ramsar regions - Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, the Neotropics, and Oceania.

In addition to the Regional Representatives, the host countries of the most recent and the upcoming meetings of the COP are full members, and the host countries of the Ramsar Secretariat and Wetlands International, as well as the five International Partner Organizations themselves, serve as permanent observers.

The Standing Committee has overall responsibility for the work of the STRP. Since 1999 a set of guidelines (*modus operandi*) for the functioning of the STRP have been established and revised regularly. The *modus operandi* is described in more detail below.

The SC meets annually. Prior to each meeting of the COP, the SC is transformed into a Conference Committee for the duration of the COP.

Subsidiary bodies of the Standing Committee include various subgroups (on finance, COP11, and the Strategic Plan), a Management Working Group (MWG), and a Transition Committee of the MWG. Others are formed on ad-hoc basis as needed. Two other subsidiary bodies, the CEPA Oversight Panel and the STRP Oversight Committee, are described in more detail below.

CEPA Oversight Panel

The CEPA Oversight Panel is a subsidiary body of the Standing Committee. The main function of the CEPA Oversight Panel is to monitor and inform on CEPA issues within the Convention and the progress of implementation of the CEPA Programme as established by Resolution VIII.31, and to advise the Standing Committee and the Secretariat on the CEPA work priorities at the national and international level, including the CEPA priorities of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP). The Oversight Panel also clarifies the broad roles of the two government and non-governmental CEPA Focal Points nominated by each Party.

STRP Oversight Committee

The responsibilities of the STRP Oversight Committee are to:

I. Appoint the members, Chair and Vice Chair of the STRP;
II. Provide intersessional advice, guidance and support to the operations and work of the Panel;
III. Keep under review, and advise the Standing Committee on, the operations of the Panel under this revised modus operandi; and
IV. Provide advice to the Secretariat on expenditures under the STRP budget line

The oversight committee reports to the SC, and is chaired by the Chair of the SC. The oversight committee is composed of the Chair and Vice-chair of the SC, Chair and Vice-chair of the STRP, and the SG and Deputy SG *ex officio.*

STRP and STRP Members

The Scientific Technical and Review Panel (STRP) is a subsidiary body of the Ramsar Convention established in 1993 (Resolution 5.5, Kushiro, 1993) with the aim to provide scientific and technical guidance to the Conference of the Parties, the Standing Committee, and the Ramsar Secretariat. It was established in recognition of the importance of taking a practical scientific, evidence-based approach to improve understanding, promote and implement the wise use of wetlands.

The composition of the STRP (appointed by the STRP Oversight Committee and endorsed by the Standing Committee) for the 2013-2015 triennium consists of a Chair and 13 members (including the

Vice-Chair), six invited experts and representatives from the five International Organization Partners (IOPs) (BirdLife International, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), IUCN, Wetlands International, and WWF International). In addition, representatives of the subsidiary bodies of other Multilateral Environment Agreements, international organizations and non-governmental organizations and associations are invited to participate as observers during each triennium. STRP members are appointed for their expertise in their own right and not as representatives of any government or institution. One appointed member has CEPA expertise and another has socio-economic expertise. At least one member of the panel is appointed from each of the six Ramsar regions.

General Responsibilities

- Establish the scope, deliverables and approach to delivery for each task assigned to it by the Conference of the Parties, including through thematic scoping workshops, and in so doing ensure input from the network of STRP NFPs, Ramsar Regional Initiatives, and other relevant organizations;
- Commission, through the Secretariat and resources permitting, an expert or experts to lead preparation of the work identified;
- Ensure appropriate peer review of draft materials, including consideration of how best to present the material in order to ensure its effective communication and uptake;
- With the Secretariat, seek to identify opportunities and mechanisms for holding intersessional regional or subregional meetings of STRP NFPs, wetland managers and other wetland experts, including through the support of Ramsar Regional Centres;
- Review (including with STRP NFPs) and approve all scientific and technical materials prior to any transmittal of them to Parties, including to the Conference of the Parties, in line with the terms of Resolution VIII.45;
- Leverage their own networks of wetland experts nationally and internationally to contribute to the work of the Panel;
- The appointed CEPA member has the role of providing input to all stages of the Panel's work on each task, from scoping the needs of the identified users to the finalization of outputs, drawing inter alia on the Convention's CEPA networks and those of the Convention's IOPs.

Outputs

- Draft Resolutions (DRs) to COP on scientific and technical issues
- Guidelines on aspects of Convention implementation, annexed to COP DRs
- COP Information Papers supporting scientific and technical DRs
- Ramsar Technical Reports (detailed reviews and methodologies)
- Scientific and Technical Briefing Notes
- STRP Review Request note
- Other Outputs (web portal, STRP newsletter, databases, fact sheets, capacity-building tools)

The following table outlines the major responsibilities of STRP members or bodies, as related to provisioning of guidance. Further details for particular STRP members or bodies are outlined below the table.

Table 2: Responsibilities of STRP Members or Bodies as they pertain to scientific and technical guidance[1]

STRP Member or Body	Responsibilities
STRP Chairperson	• Lead the STRP's thematic work on strategic, emerging and ongoing issues and future priorities, and coordinate the Panel's advice to the next COP concerning high and emerging priorities for the Panel's work in the next triennium; • When needed, create a task group to deliver a specific top priority task in the STRP's Work Plan; • Represent the Convention's scientific and technical work externally by maintaining relationships with partner organizations and, resources permitting, by participating in scientific fora and other conferences;
STRP Vice-Chairperson	• Agree with the STRP Chair on the division of responsibilities regarding oversight of the work of any thematic Working Groups (WGs) or specific task groups established by the Panel; • Represent the Convention's scientific and technical work externally, through maintaining relationships with partner organizations and, resources permitting, by participating at scientific fora and other conferences;
STRP IOP Representatives	• Consult within their organizations, including with any relevant specialist groups and other networks, on the Work Plan of the STRP, ensuring that their views and expertise are available to the STRP; • Maintain and access their organization's regional and global wetland conservation and wise use expert networks; • identify and engage input to STRP WGs and task groups from relevant experts from their organization's staff and expert networks
STRP Invited Experts	• Advise the STRP on current thinking, latest scientific understanding, and outstanding issues in their areas of expertise relevant to wetlands; • When invited by the Panel, and resources permitting, be commissioned to lead the drafting and finalization of STRP products; • Contribute to intersessional work largely through electronic means, including the STRP web portal and work space

[1] Not all responsibilities are listed here, only those deemed relevant to the provisioning of guidance. A full range of responsibilities for various members, bodies and processes can be found within the literature listed in Annex I of this report.

STRP Observer Organizations	• identify to the Panel and its WGs any work relevant to top priority and other tasks already in existence or underway through their processes and initiatives; • Advise the STRP on current thinking, latest scientific understanding and outstanding issues in their areas of expertise relevant to wetlands; • when invited by the Panel, and resources permitting, be commissioned to lead the drafting of STRP products; • Participate in any scoping workshops or other intersessional workshops called by a WG or task group to which they are contributing; • Contribute to intersessional work largely through electronic means, including the STRP web portal and work space.

STRP NFPs

The main function of the STRP NFP in each country is to provide input and support to the implementation of the Work Plan of the STRP, as approved by the first full meeting of the Standing Committee that follows each COP.

- STRP NFPs should maintain regular contact and communication with the other Ramsar NFPs (Administrative Authority and the CEPA Focal Points) in their country and, as much as possible, with other STRP NFPs in their region.
- Consult with and seek input from other experts, expert bodies and wetland centres in his/her country. In this regard, the NFP should mobilize local capacity at the country level, e.g., through the establishment of a Ramsar/wetland scientific and technical committee.
- Use the opportunities of suitable national meetings, newsletters, e-mail, etc., to canvas the views of the expert community and, when feasible, to organize expert consultations on key issues in the STRP Work Plan.
- Provide information to the STRP on local or national initiatives that are relevant to the STRP's work.
- Have full access to the Web-based STRP workspace so that they may have input to all stages of the Panel's work, including the development of the scope of delivery of each priority task, the review of draft materials as they are prepared by the Working Groups and task forces, and contribution to the peer review of reports and other documents being considered for publication in the Ramsar Technical Report and Briefing Note series.

Administrative Authority NFPs

NFPs are appointed to coordinate national implementation and act as the daily contact point for the Convention for people within the country and the Ramsar Secretariat. NFPs coordinate the national implementation of the Convention, maintain communication with the STRP and CEPA National Focal Points and update them on national or international progress in the implementation of the Convention. NFPs also work with the national focal points for other water-related and biodiversity MEAs, to ensure effective and coherent implementation of all the conventions.

Secretariat

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat is the executive group responsible for the day-to-day coordination of the Convention`s activities. It assists in convening and organizing the Conference of the Parties, the meetings of the Standing Committee and the STRP, and Ramsar regional meetings. Its role concerning scientific and technical guidance includes:

- Making known the decisions, Resolutions, and Recommendations of the COP and the Standing Committee;
- Providing secretariat functions for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and maintain the functionality of the Web-based STRP Support Service;
- Keeping the Contracting Parties, the Ramsar community, and the public informed of developments related to the Convention;
- Developing avenues of cooperation with other conventions, intergovernmental institutions, and national and international NGOs.

The Secretariat is composed of 22 staff, and one out-posted officer in Oceania.

Processes

Modus Operandi

The purpose of the modus operandi is to enable the STRP to deliver the best available scientific and technical advice to the Convention, in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

The workplan for the STRP is developed on a triennium basis and is defined by the Standing Committee, based upon requests from the Parties (via the Conference of the Parties).

The process involves:

1. The development of a draft work plan by the STRP in the form of a DR which is then submitted to the SC for review and adoption (components of the DR may be shared with Parties during pre-COP meetings)
2. The DR is reviewed and approved at the COP, at which point Parties may include requests for additional work.
3. At its first meeting after the COP, the STRP reviews the COP resolutions (the resolution on the STRP workplan and other scientific and technical resolutions), and on the basis of this, prepares its workplan for the current triennium (including budget allocation, depending on the funds available).
4. The STRP Chair reports to each subsequent SC meeting on progress with regards implementation of the workplan, and at that point, the SC can request changes e.g. in terms of prioritization of tasks.

Ramsar Advisory Missions

The Ramsar Advisory Missions are a technical assistance mechanism, with the main objective of providing assistance to developed and developing countries in solving the problems or threats to Ramsar Sites that make inclusion in the Montreux Record necessary.

BOX 1– Montreaux Record

The Montreux Record is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List.

Ramsar Advisory Missions were formally adopted by Recommendation 4.7 of the 1990 Conference of the Parties (formerly known as the Monitoring Procedure and the Management Guidance Procedure).

Contracting Parties issue a request for an advisory mission, TOR are established by the Secretariat, and two or more experts visit a Ramsar site and report on their findings and recommendations.

Regional Initiatives

Regional Initiatives under the Ramsar Convention are intended as operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in specific geographical regions, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern. Groups of Contracting Parties with a common geographical focus can apply for endorsement as "Regional Initiatives operating within the framework of the Ramsar Convention".

With regard to provisioning of guidance, regional initiatives can include specific activities in the fields of communication, education and participatory processes with relevant stakeholders. The operational guidelines for the current triennium (2013-2015) establish that[2]:

- The operation of a Regional Initiative should make optimal use of the Ramsar tools (frameworks, guidelines, guidance, methodologies, etc.) published in the Ramsar Handbooks, Technical Reports, and Briefing Notes series, and it should be based upon strong scientific and technical backing provided by relevant institutions which should be recognized as partners in the Initiative. The use of specific Ramsar guidance should be reported to the Secretariat.
- Regional Initiatives need to raise the visibility of the Ramsar Convention and the general awareness of Ramsar objectives. Specific activities in the fields of communication, education and participatory processes with relevant stakeholders should be included in their work plans. The outcomes of such activities should be communicated to the Secretariat for use by the Ramsar CEPA Oversight Panel.

[2] Paragaphs 23, 25, and 26 of the Reigonal Initiatives Operational Guidelines 2013- 2015

- Regional Initiatives need to support the further development of the STRP through cooperation with STRP national focal points in the region, STRP members and experts, and through synergies to be established at all possible levels of the activities undertaken by Regional Initiatives.

3. Key Findings From Interviews

Clear patterns emerged from the interviews conducted in terms of views of the uptake of guidance, and views on the roles of Ramsar bodies and processes in providing guidance. These key findings are presented below.

Views on Uptake of Ramsar Guidance

More technical guidance is needed:

There is no clear definition or delineation of scientific vs. technical guidance. While respondents agreed that technical guidance should be rooted in good science, the majority believe that more technical guidance targeted at the site level is needed. While there are six geographic regions of focus for the Ramsar Convention, it was noted that within each region there is great variability, thus different needs.

Wetland site managers and other target audiences need to be accessed:

As the Secretariat has no contacts for wetland managers (physical linkages such as phone or email contacts), they are not well-represented in the decision-making process. Names and contact details for the WSMs around the world are needed in order to conduct outreach.

Ramsar focal points may not always disseminate relevant technical materials to WSMs or NGOs as their time is limited and they do not necessarily have the expertise or appropriate role for this. There needs to be a smoother communication loop, where the site managers can communicate their needs to STRP NFPs, who in turn can communicate administrative NFPs and with the Secretariat. Additionally, while web-based guidance such as webinars, virtual courses and social media should be explored, WSMs may not have internet access and would still benefit from physical manuals and other paper publications.

Guidance should be delivered in several languages:

The majority of respondents mentioned the need to make guidance available in different languages, with the minimum being English, French and Spanish. This need was communicated several times throughout the interview in relation to other question (discussed in the next section of this report). In addition to translated handbooks, interpretation should be provided at meetings. Some interviewees placed the onus of interpretation and translation needs onto the Parties that need the service (i.e. Parties should fund translation and interpretation).

Guidance should be understandable:

The majority of respondents agreed that while having guidance translated into different languages is absolutely essential, it is also necessary to ensure that the guidance provided is easy to understand. Too often Parties ignore the guidance as the language is too complex – it contains a lot of technical terms, which is difficult as English is not a first or second language for the majority of Parties. Additionally, there is a tendency for guidance to contain too many details, where it should be focused on "some basic truths, and some numbers and facts". According to one respondent, "the details should be left to the academics", whereas Ramsar should develop and deliver the essential messages in a simple and efficient way.

Available guidance needs to be disseminated:

As previous reviews have demonstrated[3], there is low awareness that guidance is available. There should be a better mechanism to make WSMs and other stakeholders aware of the guidance that is already available. Much guidance has also been produced by NGOs and IGOs, and partnerships should be explored to disseminate this existing guidance to those working on the ground in wetland management. For example, there is much guidance on wetlands in the UK which could benefit WSMs in other regions.

Key issues and themes for guidance development:

Interviewees were asked to identify themes or issues for which more guidance is needed. The following were mentioned:

- Transboundary wetland management
- Aquaculture
- Ramsar Site Designation and Management
    - Understanding impediments to designation of Ramsar sites
    - Clear guidance on management of Ramsar sites
- Climate Change
    - Wetlands in a climate change scenario - policy brief oror position paper on climate change. This has been a difficult theme as some Parties have been conservative in their views.
- Value of wetlands and ecosystem services, and making the case to governments for effective laws and policy to combat the loss of wetlands
- Restoration
    - Guidance is needed in developing countries for restoration of wetlands, and building capacity for developing expertise
- Water management - `Sustainable water for all`
    - Water is becoming a scarce resource. There should be a focus on the hydrological roles of wetlands in the water cycle.

[3] See *Component 1: Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, their utility, use, application and conversion into practical tools* (Mansourian 2014), and *An Evaluation of the Use & Utility of Ramsar Guidance* (van Boven 2008)

- Other emerging issues including macro changes to ecosystems, such as population impacts, collapse of pollination systems, connectivity and coherence of protected areas

Some interviewees felt that the full range of issues is already being captured in available guidance, but the main challenge is reaching out to those who need the guidance.

Several respondents noted that there is a mismatch between topics that are seen as priorities by Parties and by the STRP. As can be seen from the survey results in Component 1 to this overall analysis, there are indeed some differences in topics for guidance identified above by the Ramsar body representatives interviewed for this report, and those identified by Parties and WSMs that were surveyed in the report for Component 1 of this review. The topics identified in common include restoration, valuation and management of Ramsar Sites.

Additionally, there are conflicting views on who is driving the priorities – some feel the agenda is driven by the latest demands from Parties, others feel the STRP is pursuing its own academic interests and not necessarily what is needed by Parties and WSMs. The prioritization of themes is further discussed in the next section of this report.

Interviewees highlighted some specific recommendations, as follows:

- A targeted email of links to Ramsar guidance would be beneficial for IOPs, NGOs and others to disseminate among their networks;
- Retaining the services of a professional facilitator to guide meetings, ensuring discussion is inclusive, meeting goals are met, next steps are outlined, and decisions are made objectively
- Demonstration projects should be explored. It is good to have tools and methodologies in place, but at the end of the day, WSMs learn from visiting a place where restoration is going on and producing results, and then bringing home the expertise

Views on Roles for Providing Science and Technical Guidance

Defining and coordinating roles for the provisioning of guidance:

The majority of interviewees believe that the roles and responsibilities of Ramsar bodies and processes, as related to delivering guidance, are clearly defined and differentiated. Interviewees pointed to the TORs that have been elaborated for each body, however mentioned that while clear, roles and responsibilities must be implemented.

More comments on defining roles for the provisioning of guidance were directed towards the STRP. It was suggested that more political input is needed in the approval of processes, to ensure that the work is aligned with priorities identified by parties, with the caveat that a balance must be struck for the extent of political input. Additionally, it was mentioned that the work of STRP has been too academic in nature. Instead, the STRP should be translating scientific guidance to technical guidance,

and approach existing science bodies to undertake academic research. The STRP also needs to work closely with countries to ensure that the guidance provided is relevant.

In terms of the Standing Committee, it was emphasized that their role includes oversight of the STRP, and that this role could be strengthened to ensure that the needs of Parties are captured in the guidance.

Regarding the role of the different NFPs in terms of delivery of guidance to target audiences, they should advise on the most effective methods of guidance and identify the key recipients. There is a perception of a disconnect between the role of STRP and the role of parties. STRP has viewed its role to provide advice to COP and SC, and up to individual parties to uptake and implement or adopt the advice as appropriate within their circumstances. NFPs could be involved in the process of producing STRP products, drawing on their expertise where appropriate.

Regarding the role of the Secretariat, it should ensure that the needs of the Parties are being met. Methods suggested by respondents included having stronger management at the Secretariat, working closely with the STRP chair to ensure practical, on-the-ground guidance is developed. Additionally, better coordination is needed between senior regional advisors, who have closer contacts to the NFPs, with the STRP.

Resource and capacity needs:

- It was mentioned several times that the STRP works voluntarily on a very limited budget, and that with a greater budget the STRP could be more effective in fulfilling its role.
- Respondents mentioned there could be better coordination with other institutions that are conducting related research, case studies, and demonstration projects, and dealing directly with wetland ecosystems, such as the UNESCO International Hydrological Programme.
- Regarding views on the STRP online support: While the principle of the online support system was to allow stakeholders to engage in the work with STRP, the STRP did not have the capacity and was not in a position to respond to all the requests.
- The Secretariat has also been seen as being stretched for resources, given the increasing number of parties and Ramsar sites. One interviewee suggested strengthening the regional teams, currently including one senior officer and assistant
- Respondents mentioned several times that more resources were required to deliver guidance in different languages

Modus operandi: Timing & Prioritization of tasks

Respondents were asked for views on the effectiveness of the modus operandi. Comments received were related to better prioritization of tasks, and setting timelines for activities so there would be sufficient time for producing deliverables.

On prioritization, respondents mentioned that there is a tendency to carry over unfinished priorities from the previous triennium, and the workplan has been viewed as a `wish list` that is continually added to, and difficult to fulfill and implement. Given the limited resources of the STRP, it was viewed that funding availability is a key determinant of which activities and projects are prioritized and completed.

It was viewed that timelines in implementing the modus operandi need to be more efficient. After the COP, there is a "cumbersome process" of inviting experts, observers, checking on availabilities, brainstorming, etc. Usually there are only a few months left after these processes to deliver results.

More than one respondent emphasized that having a realistic work load with reasonable resources to carry out tasks is key to successful development and delivery of guidance.

Operate in different languages to open doors for all experts:

The issue of language is not only about translating documents into different languages for site managers. In order to access the best experts in the world, the work of the STRP needs to be translated in French and Spanish as well. Operating in different languages opens doors for participation and representation for workshops and other activities. One interviewee mentioned that when there was a call for nominations for STRP members, no nominees came from a Spanish-speaking country. Thus, Ramsar has a limited presence in the Neotropics Region, as the expertise in that region is not being tapped, and as there is no communication with experts in the region once guidance is issued. Interviewees recognized, however, that part of the language issue is the lack of funding to cover translation and interpretation costs.

What are the opportunities?

- *Making audiences aware:* respondents again emphasized that efforts should be made to ensure that key audiences nationally are aware of relevant products already produced by Ramsar and know where to look for up-coming products.
- *Prioritization of tasks:* Refine the process of filtering through the needs identified for each region, and narrowing down to the absolute priority tasks.
- *Monitoring progress*: If a country or a group of countries requests STRP to work on a particular task, those countries can partner with STRP to monitor how STRP is progressing with that task
- *Partnerships, synergies and collaboration*: The STRP should connect and work in close collaboration with the scientific bodies of the other Conventions (e.g. water-related conventions such as UN Water, or the Rio Conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity) to establish a list of needs that are still there. If scientific body comes to a common list of needs, they can invite research institutions to do work in those fields.
- *Establishing effective, national wetlands committees*: Encouraging countries to establish well-represented national wetlands committees will enable Ramsar to work with bodies that are not necessarily within Ramsar administrative authority

Other comments:

- Several respondents wanted to emphasize that the STRP has been working on a voluntary basis, and have gone beyond what they need to do. While generally it is perceived that the work of the STRP has been too academic in nature, and that the guidance produced needs to provide more technical support, the science that has been produced has been quite strong. In contrast to the science advisory bodies of other MEAs, STRP members are selected based on their expertise.
- A more regular communication exchange between the Secretariat, the SC, COP and STRP was recommended. The STRP workspace was seen by one interviewee as being difficult to access because of the requirement of a password.

4. Key Messages and Lessons Learned

Guidance Provisioning

Accessibility and language

- Guidance should be as clear and concise as possible – scientific jargon and unnecessary length should be avoided in order to make key messages clear.
- Guidance should be provided in the minimum of English, French and Spanish. Partnerships with other organizations experienced with outreach to the target audience should be explored for guidance development, dissemination and translation.

Outreach to target groups and tailoring guidance to suit them

- A database for target audience contacts should be developed and updated – for example, NFPs, CEPA NFPs can partner with organizations that have access to wetland site managers in a particular region. This contact information should be retained in the database.
- A variety of different guidance types should be utilized for efficiency and effectiveness – for example, wetland demonstration projects are invaluable for practical, hands-on training.

Make use of existing guidance

- Guidance developed by other organizations is already available on multiple issues and themes relevant to Ramsar, and for various sites and regions around the world. Before undertaking development of guidance on a particular issue, stocktaking should be done to assess whether guidance already exists, and if it does in what ways it is possible to adapt it and deliver it to stakeholders.
- A database with existing guidance could also be developed, working with CEPA NFPs and relevant organizations, to supplement the information available, for example at the Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS) 'Tools for Parties – Relevant Publications' site (which currently has a Google search tool): http://ramsar.wetlands.org/ToolsforParties/RelevantPublications/tabid/749/Default.aspx

Structure, Bodies and Processes

Prioritize Tasks and Streamline Implementation of Modus Operandi

- A realistic list of tasks needs to be delineated for the work plan for each triennium. A professional facilitator could assist in fairly and objectively guiding the STRP through a prioritization process.

- The process of implementing the modus operandi should be streamlined so that there is sufficient time for delivering outputs. This can be achieved, for example, by setting clear timelines for implementing the workplan (a professional facilitator could also assist with this).

Ensure Relevancy of Guidance Through Strengthening Working Relationships

- STRP Members, senior regional advisors and CEPA NFPs should form a closer relationship to ensure the needs of the Parties are responded to and met – mechanism?
- The Secretariat should work more closely with the STRP chair to ensure practical guidance is developed

Partnerships, synergies and collaboration:

- The STRP should connect and work in close collaboration with the scientific bodies of the other Conventions (e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity) to establish a list of needs that are still there. If scientific body comes to a common list of needs, they can invite research institutions to do work in those fields.
- Partnerships will also enable Ramsar to provide relevant guidance in a variety of ways, such as demonstration projects and workshops, to target audiences.

ANNEX I: List of Resources Consulted

An Evaluation of the Use and Utility of Ramsar Guidance (van Bowen 2008): http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/strp/Use_utility_Ramsar_guidance_report.pdf

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat. Ramsar (Iran), 2 February 1971. UN Treaty Series No. 14583. As amended by the Paris Protocol, 3 December 1982, and Regina Amendments, 28 May 1987.

Delivering the Ramsar Convention in Your Country: National Focal Points and their Roles (2014) http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/about/about_NFP_2014_en.pdf

Operational Guidelines 2013-2015 for Regional Initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands (2013) http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/regional-initiatives/Operational-guidelines-2013-2015.pdf

Report of the STRP Chair to SC46 and draft Work Plan (2013-2015): http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/sc/46/sc46-doc16-strp.pdf

Report of the STRP Oversight Committee to SC46: http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/sc/46/sc46-doc15-oversight.pdf

Report of the STRP Chair to SC47: http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/sc/47/SC47-17-STRPChair.pdf

Report of the STRP Oversight Committee to SC47: http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/sc/47/SC47-16-STRPoversight.pdf .

Res. X.9, Appendix I: Terms of Reference for STRP NFPs (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/res/key_res_x_09_e.pdf)

Res. XI.5: Regional initiatives 2013-2015 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention: http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res05-e.pdf

Res. XI. 17, Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2013-2015: (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res17-e.pdf)

Res. XI. 16: Ensuring efficient delivery of scientific & technical advice and support to the Convention (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res16-e.pdf)

Res IX.18: Establishment of an Oversight Panel for the CEPA activities of the Convention (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/res/key_res_ix_18_e.pdf)

Res XI.19: Adjustments to the terms of Resolution VII.1 on the composition, roles, and responsibilities of the Standing Committee and regional categorization of countries under the Convention (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res19-e.pdf)

STRP Work plan (2013-2015): http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/strp/strp_2013-15/STRPWorkPlan2013-15.pdf

STRP *modus operandi* for 2013-2015 (Res. XI. 18) (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res18-e.pdf)

STRP *modus operandi* (2013-2015) (adjusted by Res. XI.18): guides the work of the STRP, setting out its composition, roles and responsibilities (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/strp/STRPmod-op-2013-2015.pdf)

Terms of reference for STRP members, experts and observers: drafted during STRP17 at the request of the STRP Chair (http://strp.ramsar.org/strp-publications/other-strp-documents/terms-of-reference-for-strp-members-invited-experts-and-observer-organisation-representatives)

Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, their utility, use, application and conversion into practical tools (Mansourian 2014)

ANNEX II: List of Interviewees

Interviewee Title	Organization
Chris Briggs Secretary General	Ramsar Secretariat
María Rivera Senior Regional Advisor for the Americas	Ramsar Secretariat
Lew Young Senior Regional Advisor for Asia-Oceania	Ramsar Secretariat
Paul Ouédraogo Senior Regional Advisor for Africa	Ramsar Secretariat
Tobias Salathé Senior Advisor for Europe	Ramsar Secretariat
Royal C. Gardner STRP Chairperson	Ramsar STRP
Sandra Hails CEPA Officer	Ramsar Secretariat
Rebecca D'Cruz Former STRP Vice-Chairperson	Ramsar Secretariat
Dave Pritchard STRP invited expert and Joint Coordinator of the RCN	Ramsar Culture Network (RCN)
Julia Marton-LeFevre, Director General Mark Smith, Director, Global Water Programme	IUCN
Delmar Blasco Coordinator	MEDWET
Vicky Jones Senior Flyways Officer	BirdLife International
Peter McCormick Deputy Director General (Research)	International Water Management Institute
Denis Landenbergue Wetlands Manager	WWF

ANNEX III: Interview Questions

Views on uptake of scientific guidance

1. Do you think that scientific (for policymakers and scientists) and technical advice (for workers, managers, WSM, etc.) is delivered to Ramsar clients in an effective way? Why?

2. How do you feel about the balance in providing science guidance (for policymakers and scientists) vs. technical guidance (for practitioners, managers, WSM, etc)

3. In your opinion, what are the most effective methods of disseminating scientific guidance? What about technical guidance? Why?

4. Do you see any Ramsar clients as needing more targeted material (NFPs, STRP NFPs, CEPA NFPs, IOPs, NGOs, WSM?)

5. Do you see any thematic work area or issue as needing particular attention (e.g. wetlands and health, wetlands and climate change, etc.)

6. How would you compare the different tools for disseminating Ramsar guidance – for example, handbooks, websites, resolutions?

7. Do you have any general comments on improving delivery of guidance?

Views on Roles for Providing Science and Technical Guidance

1. In your view, are the roles and responsibilities of Ramsar bodies and processes in delivering guidance clearly defined and differentiated? Please explain.

2. Do you feel that Ramsar bodies have the resources and capacity needed to effectively deliver scientific guidance and technical guidance? Please explain.

3. Do you feel there is adequate coordination among Ramsar bodies in providing guidance? Please explain.

4. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the STRP modus operandi 2013-2015 in terms of providing guidance?

5. What areas in providing scientific or technical guidance do you feel need improvement (either for the body the interviewee represents or other Ramsar bodies)

6. What opportunities are there for more efficiently and effectively providing science and technical guidance?

7. Do you have any general comments on the roles of Ramsar bodies and processes for providing guidance?

Component 3:
Review of the scientific guidance and tools in other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and lessons learnt for Ramsar

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Ciénaga de Zapata (Cuba), Photo: © PJ Stephenson

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Acronyms list

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
COP	Conference of the Parties
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
IAC	Interamerican-Convention for the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles
ICOMOS	International Council of Monuments and Sites
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife
SPI	Science Policy Interface
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
STAC	Scientific and Technical Committee
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
TORs	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change
WCR	Wider Caribbean region
WHC	World Heritage Convention

Executive Summary

At Ramsar's 2012 Conference of the Parties (COP), Resolution XI.16 was adopted to undertake "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention." The review is made up of five components and five reports, of which this is the third.

This report specifically focuses on: *"Reviewing the scientific guidance and tools of other MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar."* It was conducted via a literature search and 10 interviews with experts in Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) identified by the Ramsar Secretariat. The aim of this piece of work was to better understand the different dimensions of scientific and technical guidance across a range of MEAs and other similar programmes so as to extract lessons and best practices for Ramsar.

Findings

Scientific and technical guidance is relevant to all multilateral environmental conventions, although its extent and importance differs. In some cases it is a central element to the work of a convention, such as the assessment reports written by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which are key to informing negotiations as well as the programme of work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In other cases, scientific and technical guidance takes a somewhat less central role, but is a useful means of supporting Parties to better achieve the legal requirements under a convention, as in for example, case studies being used to demonstrate practical approaches to implement the UNECE Water Convention. In some cases guidance is made up of a concrete product (such as the IPCC's assessment reports or the CBD's Technical Series), in other cases, such as the World Heritage Convention's advisory missions, it takes the form of expert advice or input.

Membership to the scientific bodies of different MEAs varies. In some cases, each Party has a member (e.g.: UNFCCC's SBSTA), while in other cases, such as the Animals and Plants committees of CITES, a given number of seats are allocated and members are elected for their regional and technical representation. Important issues related to membership are the size of the bodies (with larger scientific bodies appearing to function less well than smaller ones), and the political/apolitical nature of these scientific bodies (with political agendas frequently perceived to interfere with the science).

The scientific and technical bodies reviewed fulfil many different roles. Some of the key roles are: providing scientific advice to Contracting Parties; encouraging and promoting collaboration with other scientific bodies; reviewing, monitoring and evaluating progress towards application of requirements under the convention; developing and improving methodologies; supporting transfer of technology , including capacity building; and identifying innovations, new and emerging issues.

Most of the conventions reviewed do not make a particular distinction between the terms "scientific and technical" guidance with the term embracing a range of practical means of supporting the conventions and their ultimate goals.

In most conventions reviewed guidance needs are driven by the requirements of the convention. Parties are generally the ones defining specific needs via their COPs. Equally, in almost all cases, the primary audience for scientific and technical guidance is policy-makers (Parties to the Convention).

Guidance products include: technical documents (intended to provide up-to-date and accurate information on selected topics, e.g the CBD Technical series); guidelines (intended to provide concrete guidance on ways and approaches to achieve specific objectives (e.g. CBD "Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development " or the IAC's "Guidelines for Preparing Sea Turtle Action Plans for IAC Party Countries"); global assessments (global and periodic overviews of the state of the environment e.g. the IPCC Assessments, or the CBD's "Global Biodiversity Outlook"); case studies (providing real life examples written to make an issue more tangible); handbooks or manuals (reference guides serving as a resource, more generally at the level of the convention, e.g. the CBD Handbook or the CMS manuals); resolutions (motions or decisions that are formally adopted by Parties); scientific publications (in depth scientific documents written on a specific topic, e.g. on conservation measures or priorities for a given species); and fact sheets (intended to provide a brief overview of a given topic, e.g. the SPREP's factsheet on "climate change and ecosystem based adaptation").

Communicating scientific and technical guidance is an important step in the provision of guidance. In most cases, scientific meetings are conducted in at least the three major UN languages (English, French and Spanish). The technical content and style of documents are also important dimensions to communicating guidance. For example in the UNCCD the recently established Science-Policy Interface was specifically tasked with facilitating the "translation" from scientific documents into policy-oriented recommendations.

The role of the Secretariat of these MEAs varies from in depth involvement to more administrative and organizational involvement. In the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife protocol for example, the Secretariat manages the budgets and the programme of the scientific and technical advisory committee (STAC). In the World Heritage Convention, the Secretariat is one of the key pillars providing scientific expertise to Parties.

Implications of findings for Ramsar

Based on what works well and what works less well in other MEAs, nine lessons have been proposed for Ramsar to consider.

Lesson learnt 1: Maintaining scientific integrity – Scientific integrity is important for the sake of credibility, and for the ability of the group to advance on scientific and technical issues without being detracted and delayed by political agendas. Members should have no conflict of interest and most products should be peer reviewed. Ramsar's STRP has been praised for its apolitical nature and its scientific credentials, something which should be preserved.

Lesson learnt 2: A lean scientific body - A review by the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) of different MEAs' scientific bodies highlighted the diversity in group sizes and how large groups tend to be more inefficient. This was also highlighted by both the UNCCD for its CST and the UNFCCC for its SBSTA which are too large. Instead, in UNCCD's recently established science-policy interface, membership is limited to 20 (plus three observers). A "reasonable size" would imply representation that is not Party-based but either based on themes or on regions, or both.

Lesson learnt 3: One or more scientific bodies may be needed - Many of the reviewed MEAs rely on more than one body for guidance. Arguments in favour of having more than one body, are that it helps to better focus the roles of each body.

Lesson learnt 4: Membership should be carefully defined - At least two of the conventions reviewed (IAC and CMS) have different forms of memberships: members that are designated by Parties and members that are selected by consensus by the COP for their specific expertise. Thus, a mix of regional representation and thematic representation can be achieved, as well as a more "neutral" membership.

Lesson learnt 5: Capitalise on partnerships and external expertise - Alternative ways of securing expertise can be achieved via partnerships with relevant regional or local bodies. Ramsar's STRP is already engaging with international partners, but may need to consider regional and even national partners in some cases.

Lesson learnt 6: The Secretariat has important functions related to scientific guidance - The roles of the Secretariat in the provision of scientific guidance is important, notably in "translating" scientific work into practical guidance to the intended audience(s), facilitating the development of scientific and technical guidance, capacity building, listening and reaching out to its audiences (servicing role) which it can then filter back to the scientific body.

Lesson learnt 7: Guidance should be practical and relevant to the audience - It is important firstly to clearly identify in advance audiences for the guidance in question, and secondly to ensure that the guidance is indeed practical and relevant to the different audiences so that it will be used.

Lesson learnt 8: Follow up on guidance is important - Producing the guidance is one step; however, ensuring that it is used, learning lessons related to its use and uptake, and adapting it if necessary, are all important long term applications of the scientific guidance.

Lesson learnt 9: Allocate realistic human and financial resources - Shortfalls in resources are an issue in the provision of scientific and technical guidance across all MEAs. In some cases, such as the advisory function of IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM to the World Heritage Convention, a budget is attached which facilitates the provision of guidance. In most cases, the scientific staff work on a voluntary basis and much work remains un- or under-funded.

1. Introduction

Most environmental conventions have some means of obtaining scientific and technical guidance. In some cases this guidance is directed at complying with specific commitments under the Convention, in other cases, guidance is in direct response to needs of Parties or alternatively, to provide background data to support negotiations. Guidance may be provided by a subsidiary body or commissioned out to a partner organisation. In some cases more than one body provides guidance, while in others, there is one single dedicated scientific body.

This report presents the review of 10 multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to understand how scientific and technical guidance is defined and provided, and to draw lessons which could be of use for Ramsar.

Background

In July 2012, Ramsar Contracting Parties adopted Resolution XI.16 to "ensure efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention" in which Contracting Parties approved "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention", the findings of which would be reported to the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12) in June 2015. The review was commissioned and undertaken in collaboration with the Review Committee set up at the 46th Standing Committee Meeting (Decision SC46-14).

Methodology

Two independent consultants, Stephanie Mansourian and Veronica Lo, were contracted during the period of May-July 2014 to undertake this review, with input from the Secretariat and the Review Committee.

The review was divided into five components, as listed below. These components are separate reports with each consultant taking the lead on a component.

1. Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, its utility, use, application, conversion into practical tools etc;
2. Review of the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders;
3. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar;
4. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of relevant non-MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar; and
5. Final report drawing on the above analyses, that summarises major findings, lessons and recommendations for: 1.) Improving the way scientific guidance is developed, applied and converted into tools; and 2.) Improving scientific support and delivery by Ramsar bodies and processes.

This report deals with component 3 of this process, namely: *"Reviewing the scientific guidance and tools of other MEAs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar."*

For this component of the review, the consultant conducted a literature search and invited approximately 24 experts from 13 Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) identified by the Ramsar Secretariat

for interviews. A total of 11 interviews with knowledgeable staff from 10 MEAs were conducted (see Annex 1 for the list of interviewees).

The aim of this piece of work was to better understand the different dimensions of scientific and technical guidance across a range of MEAs and other similar programmes with the intention of extracting relevant lessons and guidance that could support changes in Ramsar's process of defining, producing and distributing scientific and technical guidance.

> There are several elements to the provision of scientific and technical guidance: the guidance itself, the way it is defined and the bodies in place to help define and produce it, and the way it is written and distributed, among others. The next section (Section 2) reviews the key features of the scientific bodies that deliver the guidance, the types of guidance being delivered and elements that seem to work well and those that do not work so well.

Section 3 draws on lessons learnt which can assist the Ramsar Convention improve its own processes for scientific and technical guidance. Annex 1 provides a list of interviewees, while Annex 2 contains a short overview of key elements of scientific and technical guidance for the 10 MEAs reviewed.

2. Findings

Introduction

Scientific and technical guidance is relevant to all multilateral environmental conventions. In some cases it is a central element to the work of a convention, such as the assessment reports written by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which are key to informing negotiations as well as the programme of work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate change (UNFCCC). In other cases, scientific and technical guidance takes a somewhat less central role, but is a useful means of supporting Parties to better achieve the legal requirements under a convention. An example is the development of case studies as a useful means of demonstrating practical approaches in different countries to implement the UNECE Water Convention. "Guidance" might be a concrete product (such as the IPCC's assessment reports or the CBD's Technical Series) but it might also take the form of expert advice or input.

Scientific bodies

Practically all of the conventions explored in this report relied on at least one or more formal bodies for scientific and technical guidance (see Table 1). Exceptions were the UNECE Water Convention (which has two specific task forces but no formal scientific body) and the SPREP where the Secretariat works with partners to provide required scientific guidance to Parties.

Table 1: Conventions and their main source of scientific and technical guidance

Convention/programme	**Main source of scientific and technical guidance**
The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (**UNCCD**)	• Committee on Science and Technology (CST) • Science Policy Interface (SPI) Mechanism • Scientific Advisory Committee
The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (**CBD**)	• Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) • Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)
The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**)	• Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) • Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (**CITES**)	• Animals Committee • Plants Committee
The UNESCO World Heritage Convention **(WHC)**	• International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) • International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) • International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)
The Interamerican Convention for the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles **(IAC)**	• Scientific Committee • Consultative committee

The Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (**SPAW)** protocol to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region	• Scientific and Technical Committee (STAC)
The Convention on Migratory Species (**CMS)**	• Scientific council
The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (**UNECE**) Transboundary Water Convention	• ***Task forces and Secretariat*** • ***Regional Advisory Body***
The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (**SPREP**)	• ***Various partners and Secretariat***

The above table demonstrates two broad categories of bodies: 1. independent organisations such as IUCN and ICOMOS that provide guidance or deliver assessments, 2. subsidiary bodies to a convention, such as the SBSTTA for CBD.

Some of these bodies have a very specific remit, such as for example the IPCC which is composed of scientists from around the world who review and assess global scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to the understanding of climate change. Others have a broader remit which ranges from assessing data, to responding to Parties' specific needs and keeping an eye on emerging issues.

Box 1: Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

IPBES has recently been set up to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development. Although its objectives are most closely aligned with those of the CBD, it is in fact linked to and expected to collaborate with all MEAs. Key functions of IPBES are:

(a) responding to requests from governments, including those conveyed to it by MEAs related to biodiversity and ecosystem services;
(b) identifying and prioritizing key scientific information needed for policymakers;
(c) performing regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interlinkages;
(d) supporting policy formulation and implementation by identifying policy-relevant tools and methodologies;
(e) prioritizing key capacity-building needs to improve the science-policy interface at appropriate levels.

While the Platform is open to all UN State members (other relevant organisations or non-UN State members can participate as observers), a Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) was created which is made up of equal representation of five participants nominated by each of the five United Nations regions (although members are elected for their personal expertise and are not intended to represent any particular region). Their term is limited to three years (renewable once, with half of members expected to remain in order to allow for continuity). IPBES funding is secured via a core trust fund with Party contributions and income from other sources.

The MEP is tasked with carrying out the scientific and technical functions agreed by the Plenary. In addition, working groups or other structures might be established by the Plenary as and when needed to implement the Platform's work programme.

IPBES is expected to collaborate closely with other MEAs, and the Chair of the STRP has been invited to participate as an observer in the IPBES (Resolution XI.6 of 2012).

Lessons learnt from the first year of operation of the IPBES' MEP have already highlighted the need for better

representation in terms of both gender and scientific discipline (with limited social scientists, economists, and marine specialists on the panel and only six women out of 25 scientists). Another lesson highlighted the value of having two co-chairs, one from a developed country and one from a developing country (IPBES, 2014).

Membership

Membership to these different committees and bodies differs significantly.

In some cases, membership is entirely representative with each Party having at least one member (e.g.: UNFCCC's SBSTA). In other cases, such as the Animals and Plants committees of CITES, a given number of seats are allocated and members are elected for their regional representation. In CMS a distinction is made between core members that are appointed by the COP and Party-appointed members. Furthermore, subsidiary bodies to the convention may be composed of individuals representing their governments, or on the contrary, of individual experts acting in their own right. The size of these bodies therefore, also varies immensely. Groups that are too large, such as the CMS' scientific council (around 100 individuals), have faced a number of constraints (CMS, 2014). On the other hand, smaller groups such as CITES' Animals and Plants committees which consist of about a dozen experts, appear to be much more efficient.

Political or apolitical nature of bodies

The political involvement of scientific and technical bodies varies (see Table 3). In some cases members are directly nominated by governments (e.g. SBSTA members in UNFCCC) as government representatives and are not necessarily scientists. As a result, political agendas are high and may interfere with scientific and technical procedures. In other cases, members may be nominated by governments but act in their capacity as individual scientists.

Table 3: Political nature of scientific bodies

Apolitical	*e.g. the Animals and Plants Committees of **CITES** are not involved in the listing of species which is a highly political discussion. On the other hand, they provide advice related to specific dimensions of the conservation of species (e.g. on how to assess stocks).*
Mixed	*e.g. the **Inter-American Convention for the Conservation and protection of Sea Turtles** has two bodies: The Consultative committee of experts which includes a range of stakeholders, including public, private and civil society, and the Scientific committee which includes only scientists.*
Political	*e.g. **UNCCD's** Committee on Science and Technology is a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties and is open to government delegates.*

Ultimately, even in cases where the relevant scientific and technical bodies might be apolitical, the guidance has political repercussions. Indeed, such guidance is used to guide or influence political decisions. For example, the CBD's recent report on the "Description of Areas Meeting the Scientific Criteria for Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas" (SBSTTA, 2014) has implications for the creation of marine protected areas. In the context of conventions, it is inevitable for scientific and technical guidance to be in some way, directly or indirectly, linked to political processes which are at the core of the convention. Nevertheless, in some cases, the procedure for scientific and technical guidance may be more severely tainted by political influences, which not only affects the scientific rigour but also slows the process, as has been reproached by some of the CBD's SBSTTA.

Furthermore, as per generally followed rules in scientific work, peer reviewing is an important procedure which is applied in the work produced by some of the committees, but not all.

Conflict of interest may discredit the scientific process, and for example, the IPCC has a detailed "conflict of interest policy" (IPCC, 2011) to ensure that its panel members adhere to the strictest rules; all potential coordinating lead authors, lead authors or review editors are requested to complete a conflict of interest form. Equally IPBES states in its operating guidelines that the panel should "be scientifically independent and ensure credibility, relevance and legitimacy through peer review of its work and transparency in its decision -making processes." (IPBES, 2012).

Role of bodies

The scientific and technical bodies reviewed fulfil many different roles. Some of the key roles are listed below:

Providing scientific advice – all of the different scientific bodies reviewed are primarily entrusted with providing advice to the Contracting Parties. This may be advice on "complying with the requirements of the conventions based on best available scientific evidence" (e.g. the scientific committee of IAC); or advice "on all matters relevant to international trade in animal and plant species included in the Appendices, which may include proposals to amend the Appendices;" (CITES' Animals and Plants committees); or "Advice on how best to measure progress on strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of The Strategy" (UNCCD), or it may be very general, as in the World Heritage Convention which explicitly names the three bodies: ICOMOS, IUCN and ICCROM for their roles in an "advisory capacity".

Encouraging and promoting collaboration – In some cases, the scientific and technical bodies are expected to promote and encourage collaboration with other scientific bodies. For example the UNCCD's CST has an explicit role as "Liaison with the scientific community and cooperation with international organizations" and the CBD's SBSTTA is expected to "provide advice (..) on international cooperation in research and development.."

Reviewing, monitoring and evaluating progress – most of the bodies reviewed are tasked with assessing progress towards application of requirements under the convention. For example, UNCCD's Committee on Science and Technology (CST) reviews "progress made in the organization of international interdisciplinary scientific advice in the Convention process;" the IAC's Scientific Committee is meant to "periodically evaluate in collaboration with the Consultative Committee, the format of the Annual Report for the Parties".

Developing and improving methodologies **–** Scientific bodies are frequently tasked with developing or improving methodologies (what is sometimes referred to more as "technical guidance"). For example under the IAC convention, one task of the Scientific Committee is to "develop and improve methodologies related to the evaluation of environmental, socioeconomic and cultural impacts resulting from measures adopted". Under the UNFCCC, the SBSTA is also tasked with "methodological work in areas such as impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change."

Supporting technology transfer– Capacity building and technology transfer is another area of work frequently within the remit of scientific bodies. For example, in the IAC convention one responsibility of the Scientific Committee is to "support actions directed towards development, use, training and transfer of socially and ecologically sustainable technologies"; the CBD's SBSTTA also is meant to "advise on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies".

Identifying innovations, new and emerging issues - One important role of most scientific bodies is to keep an eye out for innovations or new issues or threats that might impact on the convention. For example the UNFCCC's SBSTA is intended to notably "Identify innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how and advise on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies" (Article 9 of the UNFCCC). Also for example, CBD's SBSTTA works to "Identify innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how".

Most of the conventions reviewed in this report do not make a particular distinction between the terms "scientific and technical" guidance. "Scientific and technical guidance" tends to be re-grouped as one item. The broad terminology "scientific and technical guidance" can be seen as embracing a range of practical means of supporting the conventions and their ultimate goals. In reality there may be a case to separate the two with "scientific guidance" being the background and basis for ensuring "technical" (e.g. policy-related, legal or managerial) guidance. In the UNFCCC for example, an implicit distinction is made by some between "methodological" guidance which supports the achievement of commitments under the convention, and "scientific information" which is useful background information which supports political decision-making (but is not essential in legal terms).

Box 2: The World Heritage Convention

The WHC has a unique setup when it comes to obtaining scientific and technical guidance. It relies on three pillars which it considers as key to sound scientific and technical input: 1. a decision-making body (the World Heritage Committee), 2. independent scientific bodies (IUCN, ICCROM and ICOMOS) and 3. relevant expertise within the Secretariat.

The World Heritage Committee is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, decides on the use of funds in the World Heritage Fund and allocates financial assistance upon requests from States Parties. It is composed of 21 of the Member States who are elected by the General Assembly for a six-year term (although most States Parties choose voluntarily to only be Members of the Committee for four years).

The three independent scientific bodies each have their own mandates and workplans but have agreements with UNESCO to support the WHC and are mentioned in the Convention text. Each of these organisations has its own membership, which in the case of IUCN is mixed - both governmental and non-governmental - in the case of ICCROM is inter-governmental and in the case of ICOMOS is purely non-governmental.

Funding is provided to the advisory bodies from the World Heritage Trust Fund.

Defining guidance needs

Guidance needs are driven by the requirements of the convention. In most conventions, guidance needs are defined by the Parties themselves via their COPs. In some cases, the TORs for the scientific body have very specific elements which are directly relevant to the convention. For example, the CITES' Animals and Plants committees both have in their TORs the need to "establish a list of those taxa included in Appendix II that are considered as being significantly affected by trade". In other cases, the roles are much broader and can be widely interpreted. For example, under the CBD, the roles of "providing advice" and "reviewing" remain very general.

Box 3: UNCCD
The UNCCD has been trying to re-define its format for addressing scientific and technical issues. To strengthen the scientific basis of the Convention, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided in 2007 that future sessions of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) should be organized in a scientific conference format, focusing on a specific theme (to be determined by the COP) relevant to the implementation of the Strategy (decision 13/COP.8). As a result the first theme of the conference in 2009 was "*Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management".* An assessment of the first scientific conference concluded, that while helpful to address scientific issues, this was not the best format for addressing the issues in the long term and ensuring continuity. Instead the evaluators suggested that what was needed was rather an independent mechanism such as the IPCC which would allow for broader participation of the scientific community and promote a "science culture" within the Convention in the long term (UNCCD, 2010).

Audience

In almost all cases, the primary audience for scientific and technical guidance is policy-makers (Parties to the Convention); the overall objective being to assist governments in implementing the convention. A secondary audience, depending on the type of guidance, is practitioners. In some cases the audience might also be Secretariat staff and other partners.

Guidance products

Type of guidance products

While guidance can consist of advice of experts, a number of different written tools can also be found across the different conventions. A selection of these categories of tools is listed here:

- **Technical documents –** intended to provide up -to-date and accurate information on selected topics, e.g the CBD Technical series;
- **Guidelines** – intended to provide concrete guidance on ways and approaches to achieve specific objectives (e.g. CBD "Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development" or the IAC's "Guidelines for Preparing Sea Turtle Action Plans for IAC Party Countries");
- **Global assessments** – these are global and periodic overviews of the state of the environment or of a given natural resource (e.g. the IPCC Assessments, or the CBD's "Global Biodiversity Outlook");

- **Case studies** – real life examples written to make an issue more tangible;
- **Handbooks or manuals** – these are reference guides serving as a resource, more generally at the level of the convention (e.g. the CBD Handbook or the CMS manuals);
- **Resolutions –** resolutions are motions or decisions that are formally adopted by Parties. In some cases, scientific bodies engage in drafting some relevant resolutions, such as for example the Animals and Plants committees of CITES which have in their TORs the drafting of "resolutions on scientific matters related to animals or plants" for consideration by Parties;
- **Scientific publications** – these are in depth scientific documents written on a specific topic, for example on conservation measures or priorities for a given species; and
- **Fact sheets** – these provide a brief overview of a given topic. For example the SPREP's factsheet on "climate change and ecosystem based adaptation".

Communicating scientific and technical guidance

One observer noted that "*Ramsar produces high quality science but is anybody listening?"* It is indeed one important step to produce scientifically and/or technically excellent information but if that information is not able to reach the intended audience for a variety of reasons (resources, language, length of documents) then its value is greatly reduced. In addition, different audiences will need to be reached via different communication tools. For example, in order to differentiate between its different audiences, UNCCD is considering the publication of policy-brief documents underpinned by scientific findings (for policy-makers) and a more technical-oriented series of publications (such as the Technical Series published by the CBD) for practitioners. This role of reaching out to the audience is not necessarily that of a scientific body, but rather that of communications staff or technical Secretariat staff.

In most cases, the languages of business for scientific meetings consisted of at least the three major UN languages (English, French and Spanish). For example, the SPAW's STAC uses English, French and Spanish, as do the CITES Animals and Plants committees. The CBD SBSTTA notes that "The proceedings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice will be carried out in the working languages of the Conference of the Parties."

In terms of the technical content and style of documents, some conventions expend resources specifically to support the "translation" of scientific language into more practical or policy-oriented language. For example in the UNCCD the recently established Science-Policy Interface was specifically tasked with facilitating the "translation" from scientific document into policy-oriented recommendations. Equally, the SPREP has been working on simplifying the CBD guidelines for the development of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to support its member countries in drawing up these strategies.

Role of Secretariats

The role of Secretariats in terms of scientific guidance differs significantly. In some cases, the secretariat supports the scientific body, by organising meetings for example. In other cases, it is more deeply involved in the management of funds for the scientific body and in contractual arrangements. In SPAW for example, the Secretariat manages the budget and the programme of the scientific and technical advisory committee (STAC). Yet in other cases, it is involved in producing some of the relevant scientific advice and/or documentation. In the World Heritage Convention, the Secretariat is one of the key pillars providing scientific expertise to Parties. The Secretariat is also best placed to liaise with a range of

stakeholders and fundamentally, in capacity building, which in the case of scientific guidance, signifies roll out of the guidance.

What works well..

Independence **–** The apolitical or independent nature of the bodies providing the guidance gives it additional weight. For example, in CITES the Plants and Animals committees do not provide guidance on politically-sensitive issues, such as the listing of species. The UNFCCC relies on the independent guidance of the IPCC. Equally, the World Heritage Convention counts on the external expertise of three other organisations which themselves have a mixed constituency (see Box 2). This independence can be achieved either through regional nominations, whereby experts are nominated in the name of a region rather than independent countries or by nominating experts in their capacity as individuals (as is currently the case with the STRP). Alternatively, it may be achieved by relying on an external body or organisation. Nevertheless, to successfully work with an external body, a tight memorandum of understanding (MoU) or agreement is required which outlines the linkages and relationship between the two organisations. For example, in 1996 an MoU was signed between UNESCO and IUCN which reflects the main elements of the advisory services provided by IUCN, including the relevant budget. The agreed workplan between the two organisations is regularly updated and is subject to available funding.

Legitimacy **–** the legitimacy of scientists that are part of the respective bodies is an important factor in ensuring that the guidance is given due consideration. Most MEAs require a *curriculum vitae* from the scientists in their advisory bodies and set minimum requirements. Nevertheless, some are more flexible than others.

Communications- Much of the scientific work is done intersessionally and as such effective means of communicating between key stakeholders are needed. This also signifies appointing clear leads and responsible members to follow up on communications in between meetings. For example there is significant intersessional work under the IAC, led by the Secretariat and the Chairs of the two committees. Intersessional work also maintains momentum, secures commitment, as well as ensuring that key stakeholders have sufficient time to review relevant documentation.

Format of guidance and follow up - The guidance should be short and easily communicable to diverse and nontechnical audiences. In contrast, the more complex the guidance (including its length), the less likely it will be used. For this reason, bodies such as the SPREP invest in turning the guidance into materials that can easily be communicated. In addition, follow up through workshops, dissemination of the guidance, networks for implementation etc. help ensure that the guidance will be used and applied. The UNECE identified the importance of following up through task forces and/or workshops once guidance has been developed to ensure that it is effectively used (including by providing training, if necessary). It sees this as a worthwhile use of resources to ensure the use of guidance and that it reaches the intended audiences.

Bringing in countries - Drawing on the experience of countries themselves helps to bring them into the process and secure buy in. For example, in SPREP when developing case studies, the Secretariat tends to do so with a country counterpart so as to engage them fully and develop better partnerships. It also builds on the country's real experience. More generally, bringing in countries in the development of guidance is also important to secure the long term uptake and use of the guidance.

Language **–**For effective dissemination in an international environment, documents should be translated at least into the three main UN languages. For this to be feasible, guidance documents should also be

relatively short (longer annexes may then be provided in only one language if required). For example, CITES has a page limit on its documents which forces them to be succinct.

Role of Secretariats - The role of Secretariats differs in importance across MEAs. However, there appears to be an important role for the Secretariat as "orchestrator" of the process of defining and delivering scientific and technical guidance. This includes a range of functions such as coordinating scientific meetings, facilitating communications at all levels (between scientists, between scientists and Parties, between scientists and practitioners.. etc.) and simplifying the presentation of guidance or adjusting it to the intended audience, to cite a few. For example, in the IAC the Secretariat reviews the workplan of the scientific committee and if something does not get done, it assesses the reasons for this and takes remedial action (e.g. re-prioritising, providing logistical support etc…).

Partnerships - Partnerships are an effective means by which scientific and technical guidance can be designed, disseminated and institutionalised. For example, the WHC relies on three strong partners to provide it with relevant advice. Equally, the SPREP secures much of the scientific guidance requested by its Parties via partnerships with appropriate institutions.

Observers – the role of observers was generally considered as important in terms of bringing an additional dimension to the debates. This is particularly the case when members of the scientific body were entirely made up of Party representatives.

Audience – the content of the scientific guidance needs to be targeted to the audience. This implies a clear understanding of who the guidance is intended for.

Adapt to local context – guidance has in many cases to be adjusted to the local context. For example, SPREP's members are all small countries with limited capacity, so part of SPREP's role is to facilitate their tasks notably by promoting joint reporting across the different MEAs.

Membership is key – the group is only as good as its members, and if members are not active, then the entire group suffers. It is important to have dedicated, active and knowledgeable participants. Working groups provide a means of ensuring that the right experts participate in the right groups. Equally, identifying a champion can serve to promote an issue (and even obtain additional funding for it..!).

.. and what works less well..

Political interference – political agendas frequently interfere with the scientific process. This is something that all conventions are grappling with, with some having found relatively good means of dealing with it (generally through smaller bodies that are not intended to directly represent Parties). In cases where political agendas have taken over, the value of scientific bodies has been greatly diminished.

Size of bodies – Larger groups function less effectively than smaller ones. In cases where there is a need for a larger representative group, there are always smaller working groups which end up being tasked with more concrete work. The CMS in its recent review highlighted the size of its scientific council as an impediment to its effectiveness. As such, a lesson that appears to emerge from the different conventions reviewed is that bodies with over 20-25 experts do not function as effectively as smaller ones.

Resources – the fact that most of the participants in these scientific bodies operate on a volunteer basis, and that funding is generally lacking, can limit their effectiveness. In such circumstances, the role of the Secretariat in facilitating and reducing work load and expenses can be extremely helpful as can partnerships.

3. Implications of findings for Ramsar

In this section the focus is on lessons learnt from the other reviewed conventions and how these can be applied to Ramsar.

Scientific bodies

Lesson learnt 1: Maintain scientific integrity

The apolitical nature of the scientific body is fundamental in terms of its credibility as well as the ability of the group to advance on scientific and technical issues without being detracted and delayed by political agendas. This also signifies ensuring that the group is cleared of any conflict of interest. Finally, it also signifies ensuring that for most products, a peer review process is necessary. Ramsar's STRP has been praised for its apolitical nature and its scientific credentials. This is something which should be preserved.

Lesson learnt 2: Ensure a lean scientific body

A review by CMS of different MEAs' scientific bodies highlighted the diversity in group sizes and how large groups tend to be more inefficient. This was also highlighted by both the UNCCD for its CST and the UNFCCC for its SBSTA which are too large. Instead in UNCCD's recently established science-policy interface, membership is limited to 20 (plus three observers). A "reasonable size" would imply representation that is not Party-based but either based on themes or on regions, or both. The current Animals committee for CITES for example is made up of 11 members (two from each of the following regions: Africa; Asia; Central, South America and the Caribbean; and Europe, one from Oceania, one from North America, and one expert in nomenclature issues), with 11 alternate members.

Lesson learnt 3: More than one scientific body may be needed

Many of the reviewed MEAs relied on more than one body for guidance. At times one was a subsidiary body while one was external (e.g. SBSTA and IPCC for the UNFCCC), at times both were subsidiary bodies (e.g. the scientific committee, and the consultative committee of experts to the IAC). In some cases one body provided more scientific guidance, while the other provided more technical guidance. There are arguments in favour of having more than one body, in particular as it helps to better focus the roles of these bodies.

Lesson learnt 4: Membership should be carefully defined

At least two of the conventions reviewed (IAC and CMS) have mixed memberships: members that are designated by Parties and members that are selected by consensus by the COP for their specific expertise. Thus, a mix of regional representation and thematic representation can be achieved, as well as a more "neutral" membership.

Lesson learnt 5: Capitalise on partnerships and external expertise

There are valid reasons to have a subsidiary body within a convention that caters specifically to the convention. However, increasingly, there are also opportunities to establish relevant partnerships and "outsource" some of the required scientific and technical guidance as is being done for example, by the WHC. This does however have clear financial repercussions. Alternative ways of engaging necessary expertise can also be achieved via partnerships with relevant regional or local bodies (as is the case in the

Pacific region for some of SPREP's work). Ramsar's STRP is already engaging with international partners, but may need to consider regional and even national partners in some cases.

Lesson learnt 6: The Secretariat has important functions related to scientific guidance

The Secretariat is a significant cog in the whole wheel of provision of scientific guidance. While a scientific and technical body may be needed to develop (or commission and review) scientific work, the "translation" of that work into practical guidance to the intended audience(s) may best be undertaken and/or managed by the Secretariat. For example, the IAC, the SPREP and the WHC highlighted the fundamental role of the Secretariat in facilitating the development of scientific and technical guidance, and in the provision of the guidance to the intended audience, including through outreach work and capacity building. Equally, the Secretariat can play a key role listening and reaching out to its audiences (servicing role) which it can then filter back to the scientific body.

Guidance: Content and dissemination

Lesson learnt 7: Guidance should be practical and relevant to the audience

It is important on the one hand to clearly identify in advance audiences for the guidance in question, and secondly to ensure that the guidance is indeed practical and relevant to the different audiences so that it will be used.

Guidance should be developed with the audience in mind. This implies considering both the level of language used and also the different languages used. In a global convention, guidance should be provided and delivered in at least three major UN languages. Furthermore, guidance should be kept sufficiently simple to be understood by a diversity of audiences worldwide. This may involve re-working the original material into something simpler that can be communicated widely.

Lesson learnt 8: Follow up on guidance is important

Producing the guidance is one step; however, ensuring that it is used, learning lessons related to its use and uptake and adapting it if necessary, are all important long term applications of the scientific guidance.

Resources

Lesson learnt 9: Allocate realistic human and financial resources

Shortfalls in resources are an issue in the provision of scientific and technical guidance across all MEAs. In some cases, such as the advisory function of IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM, a budget is attached which facilitates the provision of guidance. In most cases, the scientific staff work on a voluntary basis and much work remains un- or under-funded.

These lessons have been used in Report 5 under this review to provide Ramsar with specific recommendations.

Annex 1: Interviewee list

1. Marco Barbieri - Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

2. Nicholas Bonvoisin - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Transboundary Waters

3. Veronica Cáceres - Interamerican-Convention for the Conservation and Protection of Sea Turtles Convention (IAC)

4. Victor Castillo - United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

5. David Coates – United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

6. Easter Galuvao – Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

7. Bert Lenten – Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

8. David Morgan – Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

9. Mechtild Rossler - World Heritage Convention (WHC)

10. Alessandra Vanzella-Khouri - Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention)

11. Florin Vladu - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Annex 2: Background Information on Surveyed Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)

1. Cartagena Convention

Overview

The Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) is a regional agreement to protect and develop the wider Caribbean's marine environment (including the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea and parts of the Atlantic Ocean). It was adopted in 1983 and entered into force on 11 October 1986 and has been ratified by 25 countries.

It also has three protocols: the Protocol Concerning Co-operation in Combating Oil Spills in the Wider Caribbean Region, the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) in the Wider Caribbean Region and the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities.

The Secretariat, based in Jamaica, has three main programmes:

1. Assessment and Management of Environment Pollution (AMEP)
2. Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW)
3. The Communication, Education, Training and Awareness (CETA) programme

Many activities are implemented through partnerships, in collaboration and/or coordination with a number of national, regional and sub-regional institutions and initiatives.

Scientific and technical body

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) was set up to provide guidance to Parties under the SPAW Protocol. It tries to meet every year. Parties nominate experts to the STAC and also invite regional organizations, NGOs and international organizations. They operate on a biannual workplan and budget which is approved by Parties at their COP.

The STAC has its own budget (70% from extraordinary contributions and the rest from a trust fund). The Secretariat manages the programme of the STAC and its budget. The group is very active and most of the work is achieved inter-sessionally.

In 2001 a review was undertaken of the STAC which highlighted the need for the following improvements:

- redefinition of the scope and structure of the STAC to make it a permanent body,
- completion of needed guidelines to support the implementation of the SPAW protocol,
- improving cooperation with other bodies/conventions (such as Ramsar, CBD, CITES...),
- improving participation,
- ensuring better uptake of SPAW products,
- development of sustainable financing arrangements.

Regional Activity Networks also provide scientific and technical input. These are networks of technical institutions and individuals (including e.g. governmental, intergovernmental, non-governmental, academics and scientists) that provide input, peer review and expertise related to a specific scientific or technical issue with the aim to increase the level and depth of cooperation and sharing of expertise in the region.

Scientific and technical guidance

Examples of guidance produced include developing guidelines and formats for presenting exemptions on use of threatened species, and reporting on their implementation, to the Contracting Parties; standardizing data collection on ship strikes and creating a regional repository; training on marine mammal entanglement response in the wider Caribbean region (WCR) and establishment of a region-wide network; developing standard guidelines and criteria for Index Site monitoring at sea turtle foraging grounds in the WCR; case studies on existing marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Bahamas, with the incorporation of terrestrial biodiversity, with recommendations for adaptive management.

Additional priorities in terms of scientific and technical guidance include increasing knowledge on marine mammal critical habitat areas, support for transboundary management and development of marine spatial planning scenarios for marine mammal corridors.

There is no distinction between scientific and technical guidance.

Main audience for the guidance

The main audience is governments, but also the Secretariat and managers. Guidance is essentially to apply the requirements of the convention and its protocols.

2. Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC)

Overview

The Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), which entered into force in 2001, provides the legal framework for countries in the Americas to protect, conserve and allow for the recovery of the populations of sea turtles and their habitats, on the basis of the best available data and taking into consideration the environmental, socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the Parties. It currently has 15 Contracting Parties, in addition to one country awaiting national ratification.

Scientific and technical bodies

The Convention has two advisory bodies: 1. a scientific committee, and 2. a consultative committee of experts.

The scientific committee provides scientific advice to the Conference of the Parties to comply with the objectives of the Convention. It is made up of one scientist designated by each Party (who can be accompanied by up to three advisers), in addition to specialists nominated by consensus among the States to ensure that all relevant fields of knowledge are represented. The term for committee members is two years.

The "Consultative Committee of Experts" is made up of one representative from each Party, plus a total of nine members representing the NGOs (3), scientists (3), and the private sector (3). The purpose of this committee is to advise and guide the Conference of the Parties (COP) in their efforts to comply with the requirements of the Convention. It reviews the recommendations of the Scientific Committee, as well as drafting, if appropriate, resolutions for the Conference of Parties to consider at their meetings.

Scientific and technical guidance

Guidance expected from the scientific committee includes: evaluating the status of sea turtle populations and their habitats; recommending modifications to the format and content of the Annual Report of the Parties; supporting the Secretariat in creating and maintaining an up-to-date directory of scientists and/or experts in fields related to the Convention; analyzing the scientific research, projects and initiatives conducted by Parties or other relevant organizations or entities, and making recommendations on how to improve those actions to achieve the objective of the Convention; contributing to the development of bilateral, regional and multilateral management plans; developing and improving methodologies for the evaluation of environmental, socioeconomic and cultural impacts resulting from the measures adopted within the framework of the Convention.

Guidance is generally kept short and simple. In the annual report Parties need to show how they have complied on four technical resolutions. The consultative committee analyses these reports and as a result may make recommendations on the need for specific guidance to support Parties. This recommendation goes to the scientific committee which is then charged with developing the guidance. Countries may also go directly to the Secretariat asking for specific guidance. The Scientific Committee prioritises tasks.

They do not distinguish between scientific and technical guidance. Ultimately all guidance is applied to political decision-making.

Main audience for the guidance

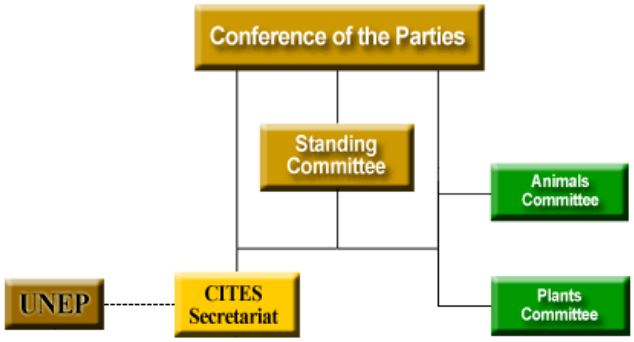
The main audience for the guidance is the Parties to the convention.

3. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Overview

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) entered into force on 1 July 1975 and is aimed at ensuring that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Today, it has 180 Parties.

Scientific and technical bodies



Source: CITES website

CITES has two scientific committees of experts that were established at its 6th COP (Ottawa, 1987 – Res. 6.1) to "fill gaps in biological and other specialized knowledge regarding species of animals and plants that are (or might become) subject to CITES trade controls". Members of the Animals and Plants Committees act in their individual capacity. They are elected at meetings of the COP and are drawn from the six major geographical regions (two members from each of Africa, Asia, Europe, Central and South America and the Caribbean, one from North America, and one from Oceania) as well as having one specialist on nomenclature on each of the two committees, taking the current membership to eleven. In addition, Parties may be represented as observers and the Chairman may invite any additional person or organization as an observer.

These committees provide technical support to decision-making about species.

The role of the CITES Secretariat is important in supporting the committees, preparing their meetings, acting as secretary at the meetings and preparing the summary records.

Scientific and technical guidance

The two committees are expected to provide scientific advice and guidance to other CITES bodies on all matters relevant to international trade in animal and plant species; deal with nomenclatural issues; assist the Secretariat and cooperate with it on the implementation of its programme of work; develop regional directories of experts; establish a list of those taxa included in Appendix II that are considered as being significantly affected by trade; assess information on those species for which there is evidence of a change in the volume of trade or for which specific information is available to indicate the necessity for review; undertake a periodic review of animal or plant species included in the CITES Appendices; advise

range States requesting assistance on management techniques and procedures; draft resolutions on scientific matters related to animals or plants, for consideration by the Conference of the Parties.

Main audience for the guidance

The guidance is targeted at Parties to the Convention to support them in implementing the Convention.

4. The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

Overview

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) was established in 1993 through an official agreement which currently has 19 Parties (14 Pacific island countries and 5 countries with direct interests in the region).

The purposes of SPREP are "to promote co-operation in the South Pacific Region and to provide assistance in order to protect and improve the environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations".

Since 1995 SPREP has also been functioning as Secretariat of three regional conventions:

1. Convention on Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific (1976) also called Apia Convention (suspended);
2. Convention on the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment in the South Pacific Region (1986) also known as Noumea Convention or SPREP Convention;
3. Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (1995) known as Waigani Convention.

While none of these Conventions have specific scientific bodies, the role of the SPREP Secretariat is key. In particular it:

- ensures the effective functioning of the COP and its subsidiary bodies;
- provides administrative, logistical, process management and procedural support to the COP;
- reports on administrative and budgetary matters;
- communicates relevant information received from one Party to other Parties;
- arranges support for party implementation of COP decisions.

Scientific and technical guidance

Article 7 of the Agreement outlines notably, the following roles for the SPREP Secretariat: to carry out research and studies as required to implement the SPREP Action Plan; to advise and assist Members on the implementation of activities carried out under the SPREP Action Plan; to gather and disseminate relevant information for Members and other interested Governments and organisations; to promote the development and training of personnel of Members and to promote public awareness and education, including publication of materials; to assist Member in the acquisition, interpretation and evaluation of scientific and technical data and information.

Member countries request specific assistance and the Secretariat responds. It may develop the guidance itself or work with partners. An example of guidance is the development of simple guidelines based on those of the CBD to support countries in revising their national biodiversity action plans (NBSAPs). Guidance takes the form of fact sheets, brochures, information exchange and guidance notes.

Main audience for the guidance

The main audience for the guidance is both policy-makers and practitioners.

5. World Heritage Convention

Overview

In 1972 the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (WHC) came into force. Under the WHC Parties pledge to identifying potential valuable natural or cultural sites, protecting and preserving them as well as their national heritage. As of September 2012, the WHC had 191 State Parties. "States Parties are also expected to protect the World Heritage values of the properties inscribed and are encouraged to report periodically on their condition."

Scientific and technical bodies

Scientific guidance rests on three pillars: 1. the Secretariat, 2. the World Heritage Committee and 3. three advisory bodies.

The World Heritage Committee meets once a year, and consists of representatives from 21 of the States Parties to the Convention elected by their General Assembly. This body is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, defines the use of the World Heritage Fund and allocates financial assistance upon requests from States Parties. While State Parties nominate properties for listing under the Convention, the Committee has the final say on whether a property is inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The Committee also examines reports on the state of conservation of inscribed properties and asks State Parties to take action when properties are not being properly managed. It relies on three organisations for its scientific advice:

> **IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature) has a mixed constituency (both non-governmental members and governmental member). It provides the World Heritage Committee with technical evaluations of natural heritage properties and, through its worldwide network of specialists, it also reports on the state of conservation of listed properties.
>
> **ICOMOS** (the International Council on Monuments and Sites) is a non-governmental organisation which provides the World Heritage Committee with evaluations of cultural and mixed properties proposed for listing on the World Heritage List.

ICCROM (the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) is an intergovernmental body which provides expert advice on how to conserve listed properties, as well as training in restoration techniques.

Scientific and technical guidance

The three advisory bodies receive funding from the World Heritage Trust Fund and are expected to:

"advise on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the field of their expertise; assist the Secretariat, in the preparation of the Committee's documentation, the agenda of its meetings and the implementation of the Committee's decisions; assist with the development and implementation of the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List, the Global Training Strategy, Periodic Reporting, and the strengthening of the effective use of the World Heritage Fund; monitor the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and review requests for International Assistance; in the case of ICOMOS and IUCN evaluate properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List and present evaluation reports to the Committee; and attend meetings of the World Heritage Committee and the Bureau in an advisory capacity."

Operational guidelines and resource manuals provide specific guidance. The former are useful before the nomination of world heritage sites, and the latter relate to how to prepare for nomination, how to prepare management plans etc.

"Reactive monitoring" is undertaken through missions that involve the Secretariat plus relevant representatives from one or two of the scientific bodies. An in depth report is produced and provided to the Party in question and then goes to the World Heritage Committee.

Periodic reporting functions on a 6-year cycle whereby State Parties complete a national report on how they are implementing the convention and reporting on each site.

There is no distinction between scientific and technical guidance. Guidance is scientifically-based but considered technical when it is applied.

Guidance is also developed further to general debates on specific topics at the World Heritage committee. At times as well, the Secretariat identifies issues and develops necessary guidance.

Main audience for the guidance

The main audience for the guidance is State Parties. During missions, the main audience is the Party in question and relevant site managers. Frequently though, the interested audience may be much broader.

6. United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)

Overview

The Water Convention entered into force in 1996 and has 40 Parties in the UNECE region. It aims to strengthen transboundary water cooperation and promote the ecologically-sound management and protection of transboundary surface waters and groundwater. The Convention also promotes integrated water resources management, and in particular the basin approach.

Specifically, the Water Convention requires Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact, use transboundary waters in a reasonable and equitable way and ensure their sustainable management. In cases of joint water bodies, Parties are expected to cooperate by entering into specific agreements and establishing joint management bodies.

In 2003, the Water Convention was amended to become a global legal framework by allowing accession by countries outside the UNECE region. The amendment entered into force in 2013.

Scientific and technical bodies

The Water Convention does not have a scientific body.

The Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment are the two main subsidiary bodies established by the Meeting of the Parties.

Two task forces exist: the Task Force on Water and Climate and the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus.

The Task Force on Water and Climate is responsible for activities and guidance related to adaptation to climate change, including flood and drought management. In 2007-2009, for example it produced guidance on water and adaptation to climate change to support governments.

The Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus is responsible for the preparation of the thematic assessment on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins. It focuses notably on improving cross- sectoral integration and coherence to better manage transboundary waters.

In 2003 Parties requested the establishment of a legal board to deal with legal questions related to the work under the Convention. This Board produced a "Guide to Implementing the Convention" together with the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources.

A UNECE Regional Adviser on Environment provides policy advice to the Convention, notably helping Parties to comply with the provisions of the Convention.

Scientific and technical guidance

Guidance is essentially legal in nature and relates to implementing the modalities of the convention. Some technical guidance exists as well and this includes a "toolbox" which is very popular and reviews several case studies.

There is little scientific guidance, but rather guidance of a technical nature as the convention is more policy-focused. Guidance consists essentially of guidelines, case studies and good practices.

The compliance committee looks at national reports and assesses gaps in guidance that would help Parties improve in their compliance with the Convention.

Main audience for the guidance

The main audience for the guidance is authorities at national and/or municipal level.

7. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Overview

One of the three Rio Conventions, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was established in 1994 as a legally-binding document to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification. It has 195 Parties.

Scientific and technical ***bodies***

The COP has two subsidiary bodies: The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC).

The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) which provides the COP with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought was established at the start of UNCCD as a platform for scientific collaboration. It is assigned various advisory functions, data and information functions, research and review functions, functions related to technology, and evaluation functions (15/COP.1). It is meant to be multidisciplinary, open to the participation of all Parties, and composed of government representatives competent in the relevant fields of expertise. It also maintains a roster of experts. It makes recommendations to the COP on ways and means to facilitate and strengthen networking at the local, national and other levels.

Calls have been made for changes to the CST and since 2007 the format of meetings has evolved to one of a "scientific conference". As a result of an evaluation of the first conference, it was agreed in 2007 to establish a "scientific advisory committee" to guide the substantive preparation of each subsequent conference. The committee is composed of a maximum of 12 experts with experience in economic assessment of land degradation, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. The composition of the membership is expected to ensure a balance of gender, regions and expertise.

Also, at the last COP, Parties agreed to set up a "science policy interface" (SCI) group which is a mechanism to collect science and use it for policy-making (decision 23/COP.11). It will be reviewed in 2017.

There is also the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) which was established at COP 5 in 2001 and is a standing subsidiary body to assist in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention.

Scientific and technical guidance

The CST focuses on scientific guidance, and in particular on monitoring the state of land degradation. It also concentrates on means of measuring and assessing progress, knowledge management and best practices. The CST synthesizes scientific evidence to allow COP to make more informed decisions. It may also identify emerging issues that could impact on the implementation of the convention.

In the more recent "scientific conference" formats, the Parties at COP determine the subject for the conference. Guidelines for reporting on progress are also important. Through the scientific conferences a "technical" series of documents was produced.

Main audience for the guidance

Politicians are the main audience for the guidance.

8. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

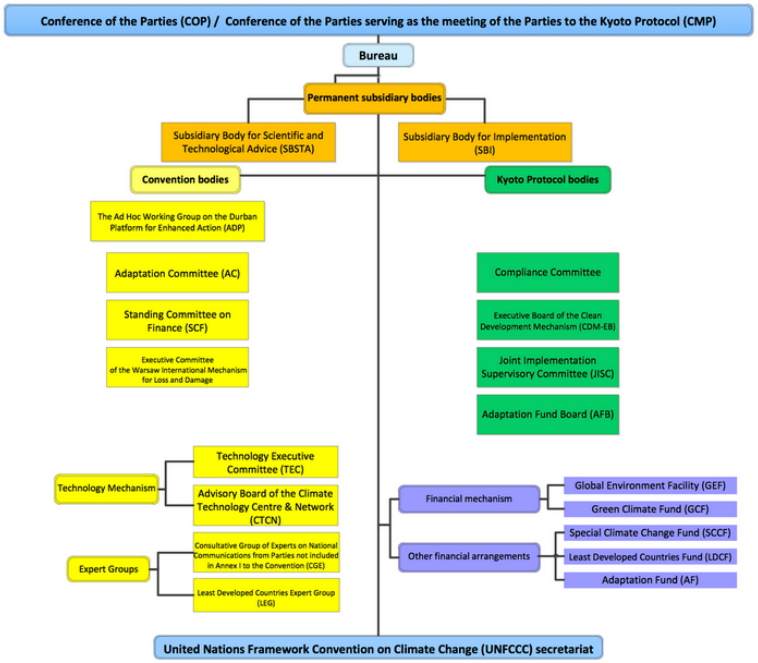
Overview

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) emerged out of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit as an international treaty to limit average global temperature increases and the resulting climate change, and to cope with whatever resulting impacts. By 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was adopted as a further measure to strengthen the global response to climate change. It is a legally binding Protocol tying developed countries to emission reduction targets.

There are now 195 Parties to the Convention and 192 Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

Scientific and technical body

The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) is one of two permanent subsidiary bodies to the Convention which supports the work of the COP by providing guidance on scientific and technological matters. The SBSTA meets twice a year.



Source: UNFCCC website

The IPCC is an independent panel but its work is fundamental to the UNFCCC and as such, the two collaborate closely.

Scientific and technical guidance

Specific areas of work for the SBSTA include promoting the development and transfer of environmentally-friendly technologies, and conducting technical work to improve the guidelines for

preparing national communications and emissions inventories. The SBSTA also carries out methodological work in specific areas, such as impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change; emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; promoting the development and transfer of environmentally-sound technologies; and conducting technical work to improve the guidelines for preparing and reviewing greenhouse gas emission inventories from Annex I Parties.

The SBSTA also plays an important role acting as a conduit between the scientific information provided by the IPCC and other expert sources and the policy-oriented needs of the COP. It works in close collaboration with the IPCC.

Main audience for the guidance

The main audience for the guidance is ultimately policy-makers.

9. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Overview

The third Rio Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), entered into force in 1993. It has three main objectives: 1. The conservation of biological diversity; 2. The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity and 3. The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Today the CBD counts 194 Parties.

Scientific and technical body

The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) is a subsidiary body of the CBD aimed at providing the Conference of the Parties (COP) with timely advice relating to the implementation of the Convention.

It is a multidisciplinary body open to participation by all Parties and is made up of government representatives with relevant expertise.

Its detailed work is set out in a *modus operandi* (annex III of decision VIII/10).

SBSTTA has met 16 times to date and produced a total of 176 recommendations to the Conference of the Parties.

Specific *ad hoc* technical expert groups on priority issues on the programme of work may also be set up, as required, for a limited duration, to provide scientific and technical advice and assessments.

Scientific and technical guidance

The specific functions of the SBSTTA are to:

(a) Provide scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity;

(b) Prepare scientific and technical assessments of the effects of types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention;

(c) Identify innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and advise on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies;

(d) Identify new and emerging issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;

(e) Provide advice on scientific programmes and international cooperation in research and development related to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;

(f) Respond to scientific, technical, technological and methodological questions from the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies.

Focal points are nominated to the SBSTTA by Parties which are intended to act as liaison with the Secretariat on behalf of their Parties with regard to scientific, technical and technological matters related to the Convention. This includes developing linkages, and facilitating information exchange, between the SBSTTA and relevant regional and national agencies and experts; responding to requests for input from the Conference of the Parties and the Secretariat related to scientific, technical and technological issues; communicating and collaborating with focal points for the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice in other countries to improve the effectiveness of the Subsidiary Body and to facilitate implementation of the Convention; collaborating with other national-level focal points for the Convention on Biological Diversity and focal points from other biodiversity-related conventions to facilitate implementation of the Convention at the national level.

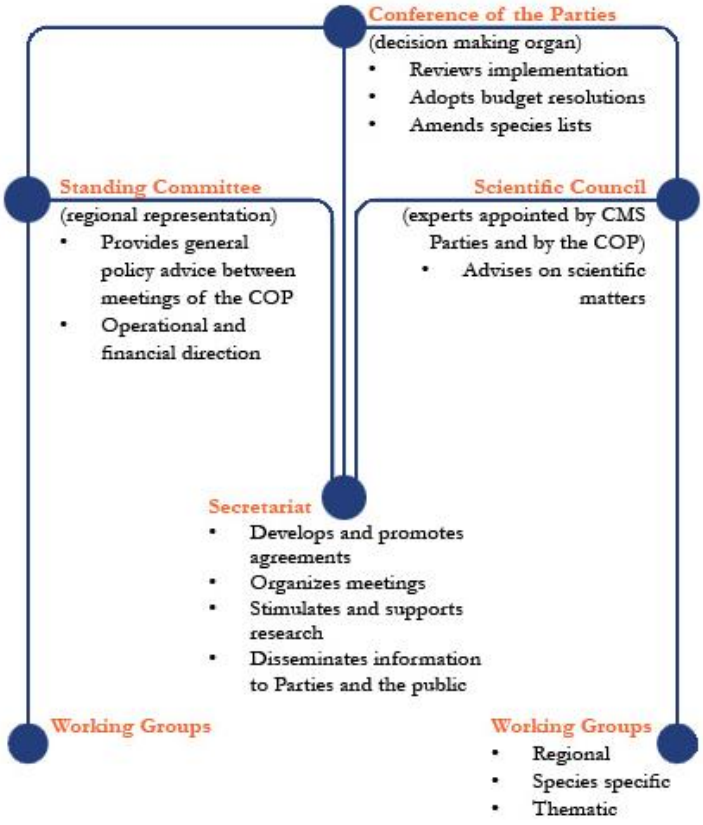
Main audience

The main audience for SBSTTA guidance is the policy makers from contracting Parties.

10. Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

Overview

The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats. To date there are 120 Parties to the Convention.



Source: CMS website

Scientific and technical body

The main scientific body of the CMS is the Scientific Council, one of two subsidiary bodies to the COP. It is intended to provide advice on scientific matters. "The Council makes recommendations to the Conference of the Parties on such issues as research on migratory species, specific conservation and management measures, the inclusion of migratory species in the Appendices and designation of species for Concerted or Cooperative Actions under the Convention."

Each Party is entitled to appoint a qualified expert as a member of the Scientific Council and as a result there are currently close to 100 members. The COP may also appoint additional experts to cover relevant

fields of expertise. The Secretariat convenes meetings of the Council and while there is no set frequency for these meetings, they usually meet once before the Conference of the Parties and once intersessionally.

The Secretariat also plays a role notably in supporting and supervising research and conservation projects.

Scientific and technical guidance

Functions of the Scientific Council are set out in Article VIII to the Convention as:

> a) providing scientific advice to the Conference of the Parties, to the Secretariat, and, to any body set up under the Convention or to any Party;
> b) recommending research and the co-ordination of research on migratory species, evaluating the results of such research and reporting to the Conference of the Parties;
> c) making recommendations to the Conference of the Parties as to the migratory species to be included in Appendices I and II;
> d) making recommendations to the Conference of the Parties as to specific conservation and management measures to be included in agreements on migratory species; and
> e) recommending to the Conference of the Parties solutions to problems relating to the scientific aspects of the implementation of the Convention.

Main audience

The main audience for the guidance is the Parties to the Convention.

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Component 4:
Best Practices and Lessons Learned on the Provisioning of Scientific and Technical Guidance: Perspectives from International Organizations and NGOs

Veronica Lo

3 October 2014

Graphic word cloud generated by interview results

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Acronyms and Terms

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPA	Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness
CEPA NFP	CEPA National Focal Point
COP	Conference of the Contracting Parties
CP	Contracting Party
DR	Draft Resolution
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
GWP	Global Water Partnership
ICPDR	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IHE	UNESCO Institute for Water Education
IHP	UNESCO International Hydrological Programme
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organization
IOP	International Organization Partner
IUCN	IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature
MAB	UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NBA	Niger Basin Authority
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SC	Standing Committee
Secretariat	Ramsar Secretariat
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
STRP NFP	STRP National Focal Point
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP MCEB	UNEP Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Branch
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WLI	Wetland Link International
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WSM	Wetland Site Manager
WWT	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

The term ‘interviewee’ and ‘respondent’ are used interchangeably to denote a person interviewed for this report.

The term `body’ or ‘bodies’ refers to a range of participants involved in a process or activity, including inter-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations

Executive Summary

At Ramsar's 2012 Conference of the Parties (COP), Resolution XI.16 was adopted to undertake "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention." The review is made up of five components and five reports, of which this is the fourth.

This report specifically focuses on reviewing the scientific guidance and tools of relevant global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOs to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar.

There are two main objectives to this report:

1) Review means through which global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOs provide scientific and technical advice, and identify common themes, useful products, and distribution channels, through literature reviews and interviews with representatives of relevant global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOs; and
2) Summarize lessons learnt and best practices on the provisioning of scientific and technical advice for the Ramsar Convention.

A summary of lessons learnt (addressing objective 2), based on interview results and the literature review, are presented below.

Key Lessons Learnt

Planning for Guidance

- A needs assessment defines whether guidance is needed and what kind, and the target group analysis ensures that the most efficient way to provide guidance is identified. This enables the guidance to be `marketed' to the appropriate target groups. Strategies for communications and guidance development are already identified, for example, on the `Wetland CEPA Methods' webpage (http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-activities-cepa-programme-wetland-cepa-methodologies/main/ramsar/1-63-69%5E20257_4000_0__) but implementation of these best practices already identified could be strengthened.

Accessing Target Groups for Guidance

- Interviewees identified several organizations with access to target stakeholders and experience in communicating with them. Ramsar should form or strengthen partnerships with them to enhance delivery and uptake of guidance.
- The majority of representatives of Ramsar bodies and processes, international and regional MEAs, and IGOs, IOPs and NGOs that were interviewed in the analyses for Components 1-4 called for Ramsar guidance to be provided in different languages. This not only serves to improve outreach to target groups, but also ensures inclusivity of expertise around the world. The development of guidance with partner organizations can sometimes facilitate the provisioning of guidance in different languages through cost-sharing.

- The majority of interviewees felt that the language used in guidance materials is too complex and filled with jargon, exacerbating the problem of not having guidance available in different languages. Additionally, the guidance provided should be as concise as possible.

Diversify

- A wide suite of innovative guidance and capacity-building tools are being utilized by IOPs, IGOs, IFIs, NGOs, and other processes. Ramsar should diversify its guidance modalities, and should select them based on the content of the guidance and target audience, with the caveat that the latest innovations may not be applicable to certain groups –e.g. web-based tools are not effective in areas where access to the Internet is limited.

Strategize

- A logical framework approach is a tool that enables the development of indicators and measures of failure or success, and can help monitor and evaluate the efficacy of guidance. Some CEPA initiatives already make use of a logical framework approach, and this can be strengthened across all guidance initiatives

Evaluating Efficacy

- Stakeholder groups should be involved in evaluation of guidance, which will not only enable practical advice on improving the guidance for intended users, but can also encourage feedback on best ways to implement recommended actions in the guidance.

Maintaining Legitimacy and Scientific Integrity

The science produced and the expertise of the STRP members are generally perceived as strengths of the Convention, and that science should underpin technical guidance. However, efforts are needed to ensure that guidance provided can be of practical use to stakeholders.

Introduction and Background

In Resolution XI.16, 'Ensuring efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and support to the Convention,' the Contracting Parties at Ramsar's 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP11, Bucharest, 2012) approved "a review of the delivery, uptake and implementation of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention", the findings of which would be reported to the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP12). The review was commissioned and undertaken in collaboration with the Review Committee set up at the 46th Standing Committee Meeting (Decision SC46-14).

The review requested by the Contracting Parties at COP11 has been divided into five components, as listed below. These components are separate reports drafted by a team of two consultants, Stephanie Mansourian and Veronica Lo, each taking a lead on a specific component.

I. Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, its utility, use, application, conversion into practical tools etc.
II. Review of the roles of relevant Ramsar bodies which provide scientific support and delivery to stakeholders.
III. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar.
IV. Review of the scientific guidance and tools of relevant global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOS to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar.
V. Major findings, lessons and recommendations for the way forward to improve the way scientific guidance is used, applied and converted into tool, and how Ramsar bodies and processes that provide scientific support and delivery function.

This report encompasses Component IV of this process, `Reviewing the scientific guidance and tools of relevant global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOS to identify useful lessons and best practices that could be emulated by Ramsar'. It is complementary to Component III which is a similar analysis, but focused on international and regional MEAs.

There are two main objectives of this report, each of which are covered in separate sections:

1. Review means through which global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOS provide scientific and technical advice, and identify common themes, useful products, and distribution channels, through literature reviews and interviews with representatives of relevant global and regional intergovernmental organizations and NGOs; and
2. Provide recommendations and best practices on the provisioning of scientific and technical advice for the Ramsar Convention.

Methodology

This analysis was performed by conducting a review of relevant Ramsar documents, guidance materials produced by IOPs, IGOs and NGOs, and other literature (see Annex I for a list of materials consulted). Additionally, interviews were conducted with representatives of relevant organizations identified by the Ramsar Secretariat. In total, 11 people were interviewed, out of 18 invited. Table 1 lists representatives of various organizations interviewed. Annex II provides the interview questions, and Annex III a compilation of responses pertaining to specific people for the Ramsar Secretariat to conduct follow-up.

Organizations where representatives were not interviewed include, *inter alia*, the World Bank, World Health Organization, UNEP, Inter-American Development Bank, the Niger Basin Authority, and Lake Chad Basin Commission. Nonetheless, efforts were made to include these organizations in the analysis through reviews of their guidance materials and relevant literature, to ensure representativeness and balance of findings from IOPs, IGOs, local and international NGOs, and other bodies and processes.

Table 1: List of Interviewees

Representative	Organization
Global and Regional Inter-govenmental organizations and processes	
Director, Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences	UNESCO – Man and the Biosphere Programme
Senior Aquatic Officer	FAO
Associated Programme on Flood Management (APFM) and Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) Project Officer, Climate and Water Department, WMO	World Meteorological Organization
Executive Secretary	Global Water Partnership
Executive Secretary	ICPDR-International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
Non-governmental Organizations	
Director of Conservation	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
Center for Environment and Peace	Conservation International
Director, Freshwater Climate Change	Conservation International
Anne van Dam Associate Professor of Environmental Systems Analysis	UNESCO – Institute for Hydrological Education (IHE)
Fisheries Strategy Lead, Global Marine Team	The Nature Conservancy
Marine Restoration Scientist	The Nature Conservancy

1. Means of Providing Guidance and Best Practices: Literature Review and Interview Results

A) Key tools and approaches for the provisioning of scientific and technical guidance

Scientific *vs*. technical guidance and target audiences

The majority of interviewees did not make a formal distinction between scientific and technical guidance, and generally thought the two are linked, with science being the basis for guidance. It appeared that the distinction is not relevant or an issue for many organizations, and one respondent noted that assessing the balance between the provisioning of science and technical guidance is "neither possible nor useful" for their organization.

UNESCO-IHE identified science guidance as being the primary guidance output, given their focus on education, training and building knowledge networks for improving water management practices. GWP additionally hosts a guidance toolbox, www.gwptoolbox.org, also featuring teaching tools at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Most other organizations viewed themselves as providing either a combination of both science and technical guidance, or being focused on technical guidance that is based on science.

It follows that in most cases, separate target audiences for scientific and technical guidance were not identified by interviewees. Instead, a wide range of audiences for the provisioning of guidance was mentioned, including contracting parties, managers, high-level decision makers, land owners, the general public, technical staff, and local communities. Table 2 outlines some examples of the types of guidance provided by the organizations researched (sometimes in partnership with Ramsar and other organizations) and their target audiences. The guidance includes traditional printed materials such as brochures and technical reports, advisory services, and web-based capacity-building tools such as help desks, videos and education toolboxes.

Table 2: Examples of Guidance Provided

Guidance Type	Example	Description	Target Audience
E-learning platfoms	E-learning platform on integrated flood management (WMO-World Bank)	Web resource with tutorials, knowledge base library, and virtual trainer http://daad.wb.tu-harburg.de/	Managers, decision-makers, practitioners
Education toolbox	Global Water Partnership Toolbox for Integrated Watershed Management (GWP)	Guidelines, case studies, library of references, materials available in six languages www.gwptoolbox.org	Water experts, decision-makers, practitioners, academic institutions, general public
Curricula	Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for Schools - (WWT)	Provides a range of water and wetland related learning opportunities including hands-on activities http://sudsforschools.wwt.org.uk/the-project/	Primary and secondary school students and teachers, local communities
Education Centre	Wetland Link International (coordinated by WWT)	Global network of wetland education centres http://wli.wwt.org.uk/about-wli/	Open membership, education centre targeted at wetland visitors
Online Help Desk	WMO-GWP Help Desk for integrated flood management	Provides guidance on flood management policy, strategy, and institutional development http://www.apfm.info/?page_id=1253	Government agencies, river basin organizations, development agencies, practitioners, managers, communities, NGOs, academic institutions
Online Forum	National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBSAP) Forum (CBD, UNDP and UNEP)	Online forum that provides support for action and implementation on NBSAPs through 2020 (http://nbsapforum.net/)	Government agencies, managers, practitioners, NGOs
Advisory Services	CI Advisory groups	Provisioning of input to implementation of national targets, global wetlands observing system, and global water adaptation programme http://www.conservation.org/projects/Pages/Center-for-Environment-and-Peace.aspx	Decision-makers, practitioners
Demonstration Project	Wings Over Wetlands Demonstration Project in Senegal and the Gambia, Saloum-Niumi Complex (Multiple partners including IOPs, IGOs, and local implementing partners)	Supporting development of a transboundary management plan and environmental education and awareness among local communities http://wow.wetlands.org/HANDSon/SenegalTheGambia/tabid/132/language/en-US/Default.aspx	Managers, decision-makers, practitioners, NGOs, development agencies, river basin organizations, local communities
Workshop	Regional workshop on the impacts of climate change on fishing communities in Lake Chad (Lake Help Desk for integrated flood	2011 workshop on Lake Chad climate change impacts and vulnerability, and recommendations for action www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3037e/i3037e.pdf	Decision-makers, practitioners, academia, general public

Guidance Type	Example	Description	Target Audience
	management Chad Basin Commission and FAO)		
Action Plan	Le Plan d'Action de Développement Durable du Bassin du Niger (Niger Basin Authority)	Strategic document that defines and guides the process of integrated and shared development in member countries of the NBA http://www.abn.ne/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=72%3Aetude-de-formulation-du-plan-daction-de-developpement-durable-padd-dans-le-bassin-du-niger&catid=14%3Aetudes-majeures&Itemid=10&lang=en	Decision-makers, policymakers, practitioners from member countries of the NBA
Database	Danube River Basin Water Quality Database (ICPDR)	The TransNational Monitoring Network (TNMN) provides data on surface water quality available to the public, and publishes it in annual TNMN yearbooks http://www.icpdr.org/wq-db/	Practioners, managers
Atlas, Yearbook	Kenya Wetlands Atlas (Government of Kenya, Danish International Development Agency, UNEP)	Details Kenya's wetlands and the specific pressures facing them http://na.unep.net/atlas/datlas/sites/default/files/Kenya_Wetlands.pdf	Decision-makers, managers, practitioners, general public
Videos	UNESCO MAB Live webcasts & video interviews	Interviews with UNESCO experts and international personalities http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/multimedia/news-videos/video-interviews/	Decision-makers, managers, practitioners, general public
Magazines	UPDATE: IHE Magazine	Features institutional information on water education, research and capacity development activities undertaken by IHE, alumni and partners. http://www.unesco-ihe.org/sites/default/files/update2014_interactive.pdf	Decision-makers, managers, practitioners, general public
Information Brochures	Hydrology for the Environment, Life and Policy (HELP) (IHP)	Provides general information about the HELP initiative for integrated catchment management http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002145/214516E.pdf	Decision-makers, managers, practitioners
Manuals	Wetland Disease Manual (Ramsar, WWT)	Comprehensive guidance on wetland diseases http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/lib/rtr7-disease.pdf	Managers, practitioners
Technical Papers	Healthy wetlands, healthy people: A review of wetlands and human health interactions (WHO)	Provides advice on wetland conservation and human health and well-being http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/2012/review_of_wetlands/en/	Wetland managers and decision-makers

B) Organizational Elements and Bodies for Guidance Provisioning

This section outlines the main operational elements, or bodies, by which scientific and technical guidance is provided among the range of IOPs, IGOs and NGOs studied. Interview respondents were also asked to provide a brief outline of operational elements. In some cases, for large IOPs, IGOs and NGOs, information from a relevant programme or process is provided, rather than the organization as a whole.

IGOs and IOPs often have formal scientific or advisory bodies, whereas the NGOs rely more on partnerships for expertise outside of their organizations. An exception is UNDP, which acts on the guidance provided by IGOs or specialized agencies in order to provide policy advice and associated technical assistance. Thus, one representative described UNDP as a client for guidance rather than a purveyor of it.[1]

One representative identified a troubling trend of funding cutbacks to science divisions in NGOs, resulting in "seriously undermining" the ability of an organization to fulfill its mandate with a strong science basis.

Table 3 lists the main operational elements or bodies identified for a range of organizations that play a role in the provisioning of guidance.

Table 3: Main Operational Elements or Bodies through which Guidance is Provided

Organization	Elements or Body	Role or Function
		IGOS, IOPs
UNEP	• Office of the Chief Scientist • Science Focal Points from UNEP`s various divisions	• Office guided by the UNEP Science Strategy, with an aim to strengthen the interface between global environmental science and policy, and strengthen science base of UNEP's activities • Office cooperates with UNEP's Divisions and Science Focal Points • Answers to the Executive and Deputy Executive Directors of UNEP
FAO[2] Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (FI)	• 2 Divisions and 6 branches • 5 regional offices • Various statutory bodies, including an advisory committee on fisheries research	• FI assists member countries and fishery bodies in gathering information in conformity with international standards • Advisory committee provides advice on the programme of work on fisheries research, including conservation and management, with members selected on the basis of expertise
World Bank Development Economics Unit	• Development Economics Vice Presidency (DEC) • Chief Economist	• DEC provides leadership and analytical services – the research and data arm of the World Bank, which includes development research, development prospects, and development data
WMO	20 partner organizations	Each partner has different fields of expertise, and ranges from national hydro services to semi-private companies
UN-Habitat	• Governing Council	• The CPR reviews work programme and budget, and prepares

[1] E-mail communication with a representative of UNDP, June 2014
[2] FAO is currently preparing a new organizational chart that will be published soon

Organization	Elements or Body	Role or Function
	• Secretariat • Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) • Working Groups	draft decisions and resolutions. It is assisted by working group meetings on various topics.
MAB	• 120 National Committees • Site Management Authorities • Secretariat	• Provide advisory services, including evaluation of biosphere sites, preparations for site nominations • Support provided by site management authorities and the Secretariat
NGOs, Other Processes		
GWP	• Technical Committee • 85 country water partnerships • 13 Regional water partnerships • Global Secretariat	• The Technical committee provides academic knowledge, including peer-reviewed material, and provides advice at regional and country levels including background papers, policy briefs, handbooks, etc. • Regional and country water partnerships implement activities. They are autonomous, each with their own governance structure and secretariat
TNC	• Science Council • Board of Directors	• Board membership includes several prominent scientists • Science Council includes Board scientists and external experts
CI	• Advisory groups • Moore Center for Science and Oceans	• Advisory groups provide advice to stakeholders on science that needs to be done, the kinds of data that need to be pulled together, and the kinds of tools that can help stakeholders. • Centre for Science and Oceans does analyses and develops partnerships
WWT	In-house experts	Roles are defined according to each project. No specific way to provide guidance, the appropriate experts are assigned to projects, and if needed will reach out to get additional expertise needed, and occasionally employ consultants
ICPDR	• 7 permanent expert groups • 1 ad-hoc expert group • Ad-hoc task groups • Secretariat	Expert groups are panels of specialists comprised of ICPDR contracting parties and observers, including governments, NGOs or other agencies. Each has its own TOR and mandates, and meet 2 or 3 times a year. Task groups may be established as needed.
NBA	• Comité Technique des Experts • Secretariat	The technical expert committee is composed of representatives of the member states of the Niger Basin Authority.
Lake Chad Basin Commission	• Technical experts committee • Secretariat	
UNESCO IHE Doctoral programme	External experts	External experts serve as guest lecturers for parts of the PhD programme, and additionally serve as external examiners
UNESCO IHP	National Committees	National committees are run under the authority of national governments, and are encouraged to be multi-stakeholder, including scientists and water managers.

C) Evaluating Success of Guidance

A large range of evaluation techniques are utilised by the organizations included in this analysis.

When asked about whether there was any evaluation of the guidance provided, most IGOs described formal in-depth evaluation processes. Indeed, some IFIs and IGOs have external evaluation offices, such as the World Bank`s Independent Evaluation Group, which performs project-level evaluations, analytical work, project documentation, surveys of staff and stakeholders, and impact evaluations.

NGOs were more prone to using inexpensive, relatively quick metrics such as statistics on document downloads, website visits, and workshop participants. It was noted by several representatives of NGOs that there is low capacity to perform or commission comprehensive evaluations, and thus quick and inexpensive indicators are preferred.

An innovative way to evaluate a particular guidance product is through asking a sub-set of the intended target audience - for example, WWT mentioned that the Ramsar Wetland Disease Manual had been reviewed by stakeholders before publishing, which enabled the manual to have greater impact.

Timelines for performing evaluations ranged from several years, to brief self-reporting every three months.

Methods of evaluation included the following:

- Evaluation by external consultants, such as commissioning questionnaires on effectiveness of guidance or evaluation by external funding agencies;
- Internal oversight service, with regional or global evaluations like the Madrid Action Plan adopted by members for every 5 years (MAB);
- Internal evaluations, such as internal councils to discuss;
- Internal performance reporting, such as via an organization’s intranet
- Evaluation indices;
- Observations, such as a drastic reduction in mortality rates due to flooding after implementation of WMO Nepal pilot projects on flood management;
- Number of policies or programmes created ;
- Number of downloads of publications;
- Number of workshop participants; and
- Number of website visits.

D) Best Practices: Perspectives from Interviewees

i) Development and Delivery of Guidance: Perspectives from Interviewees

What works well:

- Working with local partners, NGOs, community-based organizations, universities or research institutes in other countries, and any potential stakeholders in river basins or in coastal zones;
- Improving layout and presentation on the guidance materials. One interviewee noted that after such improvements were made, one of their guidance pieces was featured on PreventionWeb.net and had wide circulation;
- Advocating for a multidisciplinary approach to flood management, as environmental, legal, socioeconomic aspects of flood management are underestimated; and
- Involving stakeholders early on and all the way through the process, and doing a needs assessment.

What works less well:

- For capacity-building activities, a major limitation identified was following up with workshop participants, because they leave the office, their terms are not renewed, etc.;
- UN processes were described as `heavy'. As such, many valuable points and ideas don`t come across effectively. For example, scientists must submit documents in English or French, which is difficult if neither is their first language;
- We need more human and financial resources, to maintain an updated overall agenda that is appealing and fresh to member states and that addresses the real concerns of the countries; and
- In terms of scientific research, theoretical research doesn`t work unless it can be translated into something practical and can be applied in the real world.

ii) Organizational Structure and Bodies: Perspectives from Interviewees

What works well:

- One representative presented a `wish list' for their organization, which includes a complete pool of experts representing economic, social, technical, and environmental aspects, in addition to a dedicated communications officer;
- Convening the role of boundary organizations that help bridge gaps between disciplines or different types of institutions or different regions, and help coalesce and connect perspectives; and

- Clarifying conservation objectives and tasks for various ecosystems, including islands, mountains, etc.
- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes, either for developing programs or implementing on the ground
- Commissioning case studies and specific targeted pieces of work
- For GWP, the global technical committee has experts that are paid for their time, and agree to make their time available for 30 days a year. Some of the institutions have some voluntary contributions, and others provide in-kind support.

What works less well:

- The role of science is changing. Even when there is funding for science and scientists, in some organizations the role of science is not viewed as important; and
- Having a standing committee that has to meet once a year. GWP tries to work on a more flexible programmatic arrangement and call on expertise when required.

iii) Targeted Advice for Ramsar from Interviewees

Interviewees were asked to identify specific lessons to share with Ramsar regarding scientific and technical guidance. The following is a compilation of responses. Additional contacts and specific references for the Ramsar Secretariat are included in Annex III of this report.

Marketing and Promoting

- Ramsar should provide practical guidance on ecosystem services and their quantification for conserving wetlands, which would be good way to promote and market the concept of conserving wetlands;
- Ramsar should focus efforts on translating its sound and reputable science into something that can be understand and applied on the ground; and
- Communicating to WSMs is a common challenge. The term `world heritage' is appealing. However, `Ramsar sites', `wetlands' and `biospheres' are harder to understand.

Accessibility and Language

- Science generated in the academic community is very far removed from the local level or policy level. Science requires a significant translation before it can be understood. In the words of one interviewee commenting on a science-policy conference recently attended, `many scientists wouldn`t know a policy maker or wetland site manager if one sat on top of them';
- Guidance needs to be relevant to end users –think carefully about content, language and accessibility and how it`s provided, whether it`s online, or hard copy.;
- Guidance materials should be backed up by Skype workshops and practical training;
- General guidelines and documents should be simple. People need to be convinced by evidence, not abstract concepts; and

- There should be a stronger flow of information from CEPA NFPs.

Partnerships

- Strengthen regional centres in a more effective way. Many organizations are keen to develop training, and there is huge demand in Africa. We should work together more and have more unified efforts (UNESCP-IHE);
- Build a stronger connection with real actors on the ground and enable local bottom-up initiatives. Mobilize public support and partnerships;
- Better coordination between UNESCO and Ramsar: explore on the operational side how to support each other, and better unite expertise and knowledge, develop joint programme projects, demonstration projects, etc;
- More of a bridge is needed between the science and the people on the ground – Ramsar can work with the International Water Management Institute to take products produced and translate them into products that can be used;
- A practical way forward would be for NFPs to become part of the Global Water Partnership. It`s a valuable group of people with good political contacts, who seek to influence water policy; and
- Reach out to the private sector, e.g. the World Business Council on Sustainable Development.

Targeted Training

- Look for more opportunities to provide targeted training to different audiences such as wetland managers. Provide training of trainers in different parts of the world
- UNESCO IHE has a large doctoral research program, with 140 students doing research. It would be interesting to link research activities to wetland projects (UNESCP IHE).

Other Comments

- Evaluate effectiveness and impact of guidance, such as through stakeholder assessments. The Ramsar Wetland Disease Manual was highlighted as an example of successful stakeholder assessment.
- Ramsar runs the risk of being dominated by American and European interests as capacity in Africa, Latin America, and Asia is weak;
- The quality of Ramsar guidance is good, but the impact depends to a large extent on the activities of parties. Many countries do not live up to their commitment to Ramsar, or do not pay contributions. The national reports show that parties do not do what they promise to do when it comes to managing Ramsar sites;
- The Ramsar Convention is relatively conservative, but conservation as a field is rapidly evolving and there is a new generation of organizations that are web-savvy.
- Have a strong voice in the Rio+20 process and sustainable development goals; and

- Make information on Ramsar sites accessible to the public – for example, a database on Ramsar sites and status.

2. Lessons Learned for Delivering Guidance

This section provides some key recommendations for the provisioning of guidance, based on interview results and an analysis of relevant literature (Annex I).

Planning for Guidance

- A needs assessment defines whether guidance is needed and what kind, and the target group analysis ensures that the most efficient way to provide guidance is identified. This enables the guidance to be `marketed' to the appropriate target groups. Strategies for communications and guidance development are already identified, for example, on the `Wetland CEPA Methods' webpage (http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-activities-cepa-programme-wetland-cepa-methodologies/main/ramsar/1-63-69%5E20257_4000_0__) but implementation of these best practices already identified could be strengthened.

Accessing Target Groups for Guidance

- Interviewees identified several organizations with access to target stakeholders and experience in communicating with them. Ramsar should form or strengthen partnerships with them to enhance delivery and uptake of guidance.
- The majority of representatives of Ramsar bodies and processes, international and regional MEAs, and IGOs, IOPs and NGOs that were interviewed in the analyses for Components I, II, III and IV called for Ramsar guidance to be provided in different languages. This not only serves to improve outreach to target groups, but also ensures inclusivity of expertise around the world. The development of guidance with partner organizations can sometimes facilitate the provisioning of guidance in different languages through cost-sharing.
- The majority of interviewees felt that the language used in guidance materials is too complex and filled with jargon, exacerbating the problem of not having guidance available in different languages. Additionally, the guidance provided should be as concise as possible. This is true not only for guidance, but should also be practiced where possible when producing other documents and products of the Ramsar Secretariat. When asked for views on the STRP Modus Operandi in the report for Component II, for example, several respondents commented that the length of the document was an obstacle to thoroughly reading it.

Diversify

- As demonstrated by Table 2, a wide suite of innovative guidance and capacity-building tools are being utilized by IOPs, IGOs, IFIs, NGOs, and other processes. Ramsar should diversify its guidance modalities, and should select them based on the content of the guidance and target

audience, with the caveat that the latest innovations may not be applicable to certain groups – e.g. web-based tools are not effective in areas where access to the Internet is limited.

Strategize

- A logical framework approach is a tool that enables the development of indicators and measures of failure or success, and can help monitor and evaluate the efficacy of guidance. Some CEPA initiatives already make use of a logical framework approach, and this can be strengthened across all guidance initiatives

Evaluating Efficacy

- Stakeholder groups should be involved in evaluation of guidance, which will not only enable practical advice on improving the guidance for intended users, but can also encourage feedback on best ways to implement recommended actions in the guidance.

Maintaining Legitimacy and Scientific Integrity

- The science produced and the expertise of the STRP members are generally perceived as strengths of the Convention, and that science should underpin technical guidance. However, efforts are needed to ensure that guidance provided can be of practical use to stakeholders.

These lessons have been used in Report 5 under this review to provide Ramsar with specific recommendations.

Annex I: List of Resources Consulted

CEPA Toolkit for NBSAP Coordinators (SCBD and IUCN, 2007) (http://www.cepatoolkit.org/html/resources/40/401D521E-2A0A-47BB-85F6-BBDC158B4B58/Section%203%20final%200904.pdf)

An Evaluation of the Use and Utility of Ramsar Guidance (van Bowen 2008) (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/strp/Use_utility_Ramsar_guidance_report.pdf)

A Guide to Participatory Action Planning and Techniques for Facilitating Groups (Ramsar Convention, 2008) (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/outreach_actionplanning_guide.pdf)

National strategy for Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) in support of wetland conservation in Hungary (the Authority for Nature Conservation of the Ministry of Environment) (http://www.ramsar.org/doc/outreach_actionplan_hungary.doc)

Ramsar Handbooks for the Wise Use of Wetlands No. 6: Wetland CEPA: the Convention's Programme on communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) 2003-2008 (2nd Edition, 2004). (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/lib/hbk4-06.pdf)

Res. XI. 16: Ensuring efficient delivery of scientific & technical advice and support to the Convention (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/cop11/res/cop11-res16-e.pdf)

Res IX.18: Establishment of an Oversight Panel for the CEPA activities of the Convention (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/res/key_res_ix_18_e.pdf)

Review of existing Ramsar scientific and technical guidance and processes, their utility, use, application and conversion into practical tools (Mansourian 2014).

The Role of Communication, Chapter 18 (IUCN publication on NBSAPs in Asia) (http://www.cepatoolkit.org/html/resources/81/812EDCD8-B6D1-4B2D-A45C-EFC8F9B9F89E/The%20role%20of%20communications%20chapter.pdf)

Annex II: Interview Questions

Interview Questions: Review of Best Practices on Provisioning of Science and Technical Guidance

On content:

1. Please briefly outline the key elements (tools, approaches, experts, bodies..) of the scientific and technical guidance in your organisation/convention?
2. Who is the target audience for scientific guidance? And technical guidance?
3. How do you assess how useful this guidance is for practical application? How well does it respond to the needs of the intended audience? How is it linked to actual needs?
4. What works well? What works less well?
5. Has there been any formal evaluation of this? (any that you can share?)
6. How do you make the distinction between scientific and technical guidance? Is this distinction an issue in your organisation/convention? Can you assess roughly the balance of scientific vs. technical guidance?

On operations

1. Could you outline the main operational elements (bodies..) by which scientific and technical guidance is provided in your organisation/convention? Are the roles of these bodies clearly defined in providing guidance?
2. can you please comment on the decision making process for determining themes, topics or issues for inclusion in guidance
3. What works well? What works less well? Any constraints?

Lessons and best practices

1. Do you have any specific lessons to share with Ramsar as concerns scientific and technical guidance? (either related to content or operations or other..?)
2. Can you point us to any specific document or person that could provide useful insight into best practice related to scientific and technical guidance?

Annex III: Additional Resources for Ramsar

The following contacts and resources were identified by interviewees as being helpful for following-up on guidance recommendations:

- WMO: Giacomo Teruggi, or AFPM regarding flood management or outreach
- WWT: Dr. Debbie Pain or Dr. Ruth Cromie
- ICPDR: Joint Danube Survey (JDS), TNMN and the processes that lead to the development of management plans, in particular the Danube River Basin Analysis (DRBMP) and Flood Risk Maps (DRB FRMP). For JDS, see danubesurvey.org, which also identifies all scientists involved at the last JDS in 2013; further reading on DRBMP can be found on www. icpdr.org.
- An interesting case for scientific work could also be the development of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for the Danube River Basin, which was based on a thorough meta-study of climate change scenarios and research. Another, although less extensive project activity with external assistance would be the development of a technical guidance paper for the development of fish migration aids (see icpdr.org)
- CI:
    - Mark Smith, who leads work on floodplains and water in the US, would be able to provide a field perspective for TNC: mpsmith@TNC.ORG
    - Lisa Shipley is the deputy director for thefreshwater program and would be able to provide a perspective from a global program: lshipley@TNC.ORG
    - Jeff Opperman leads work on hydropower and may also have a different perspective .jopperman@TNC.ORG
    - Reef Resilience Network: Petra MacGowan pmacgowan@TNC.ORG
    - Marine learning networks: Amanda Wrona <awrona@TNC.ORG>
- GWP would like to formalize partnership with Ramsar in terms of an MOU to further work on water security and ecosystems. GWP contacts:

  On best practices:
  Danka Thalmeinerova , *Senior Knowledge Management Officer*
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