

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 2008¹, 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

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| 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 |

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| | 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. |

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| 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 |

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| | 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: | <p>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”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

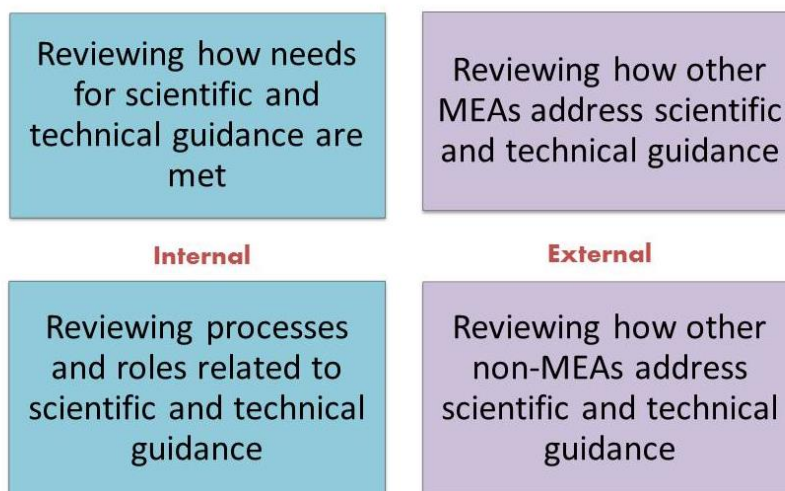


Figure 1: Four pillars of the review

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:

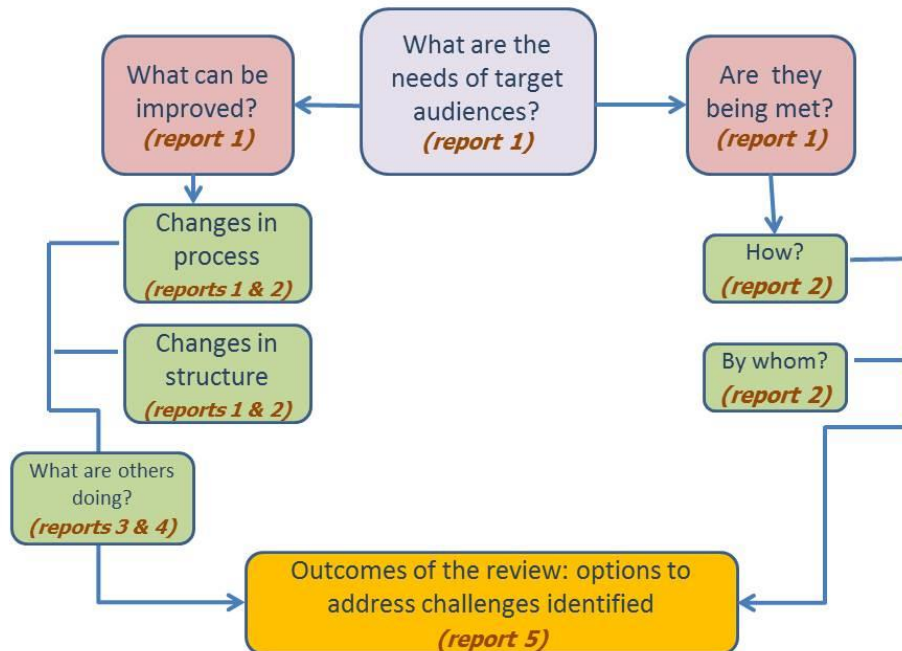


Figure 2: Framework for the Review

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.

Guidance Process

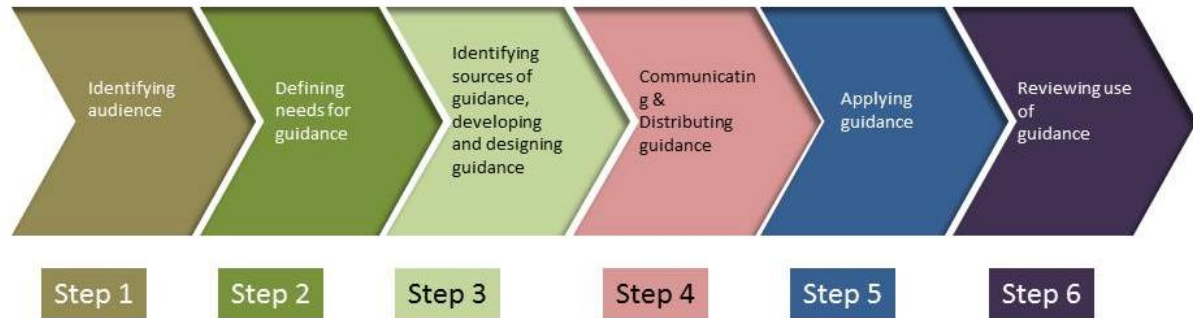


Figure 3: Ramsar scientific guidance process

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).

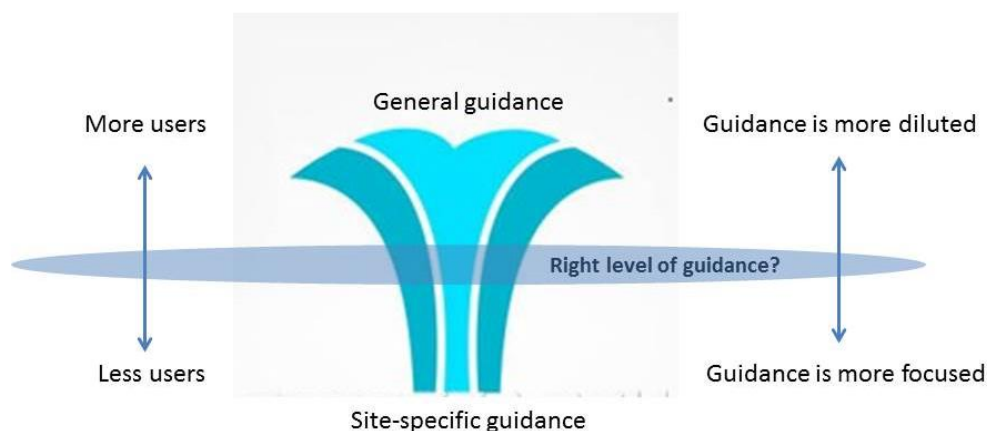


Figure 4: Targeting the right level of scientific and technical guidance

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).

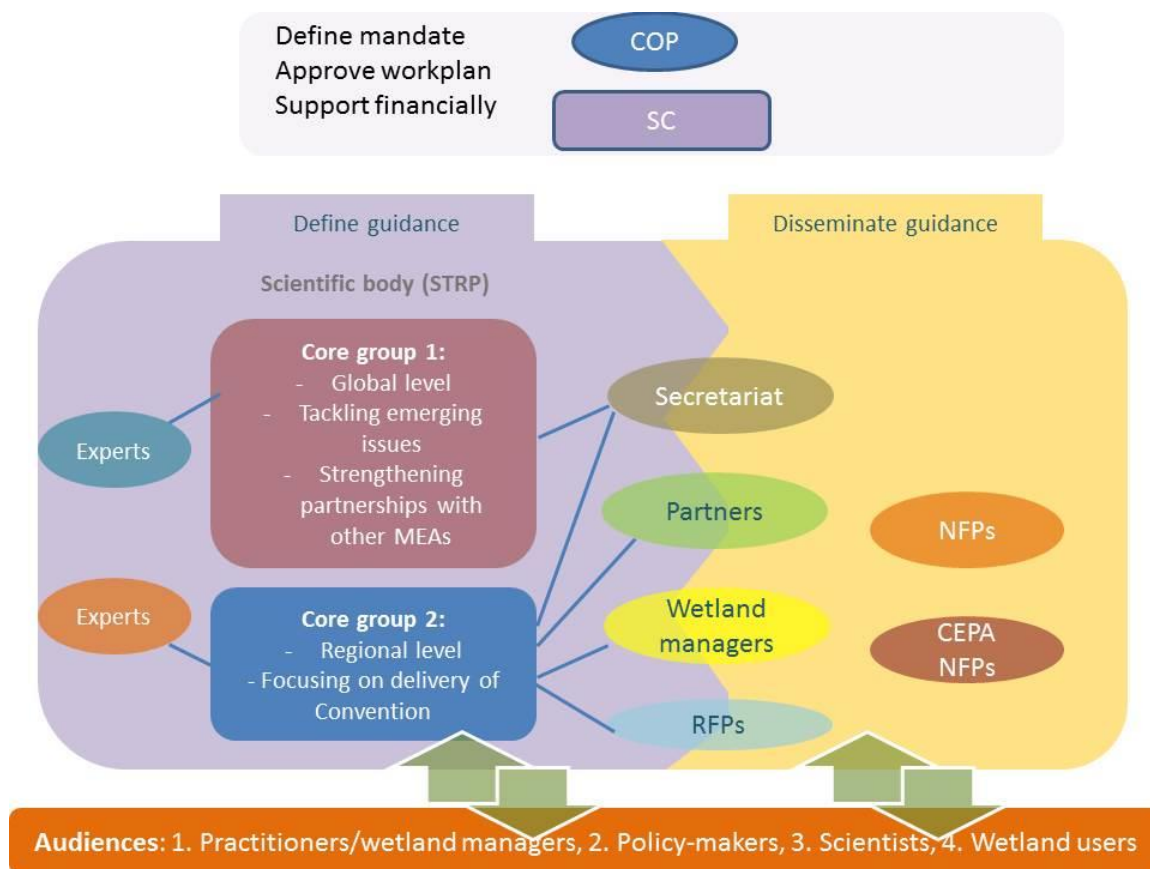


Figure 5: Possible structure for defining and delivering scientific and technical guidance within Ramsar

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

| | | <i>Key responsibilities</i> |
|--------------------|---------------------|---|
| 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-Khoury | 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 |
|--------|-------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---|
| | | | | <p>6. Of the guidance users, 87% use the 2nd Handbook series.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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.</p> |

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 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |
| | <u>Output 1:</u> 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 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and analyse documentation • Design interview questions • Conduct 12 interviews • Analyse responses | |
| | <u>Output 2:</u> 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 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify with Ramsar which MEAs to consider • Design interview guide • Conduct 12 interviews • Analyse responses | |
| Phase 2 task 1 | <u>Output 3:</u> 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 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify with Ramsar which non-MEA bodies to consider • Design interview guide | |

| Phases (as per Ramsar Res.) | Activities | Timing |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing feedback Compiling final report | By 20 Sept |