



Update on the Ramsar Culture Network - December 2013

Dear colleagues

Earlier this year, a network on culture and wetlands was established within the framework of the Ramsar Convention, as a more developed successor to the previous Working Group on this subject. In a period of six months, the new Ramsar Culture Network (RCN) has acquired 103 members from 51 countries, among which are three former Ramsar Secretaries General and numerous Ramsar Focal Points. You can find a list of members at the following link:

http://ramsarculture.org/RCN/Members_of_the_RCN.html

We are delighted that you are among them and we look forward to close cooperation. Some items of news and other materials can be found at the same website.

RCN programme 2013-2016

As a principal plan for future work, a three-year programme of activities has been prepared on 'Conservation of the natural and cultural heritage in wetlands: Global leadership for an integrated approach through the Ramsar Convention'. This was submitted in March 2013 to the MAVA Foundation for financial support.

The programme is structured under the following five objectives:

- A: Strengthened international policy
- B: Better documented values
- C: More widely shared and applied good practices
- D: Enhanced partnerships
- E: Effective coordination.

In June 2013, the MAVA selection committee provisionally indicated a willingness to provide 50% funding for this programme (approximately 370 000 EUR for three years), on condition that the remaining 50% is secured through a vigorous fundraising campaign. The final project proposal –drafted by the RCN Coordinators with the assistance of Med-INA– was submitted in November 2013. A decision is expected in early 2014.

As soon as the result is known, we shall brief RCN members on the objectives, results expected and activities included in the programme, as well as the process that will be followed for managing it. We shall also indicate how RCN members can participate in the implementation of the programme and assist in the major task we will face to raise the obligatory co-financing. Suggestions on this latter point are of course welcome at any time.

RCN website

It has always been clear that a dynamic website dedicated to culture and wetlands will be a key tool for information and communication among RCN members and for ensuring the

cohesion of the network. Ideally this would be hosted in the Ramsar Convention website, as in the past (www.ramsar.org/activities/culture and wetlands). The Ramsar website, however, is undergoing reconstruction and can not provide the requisite service for the RCN at present.

That is why, after discussions with the Ramsar Secretariat, we launched in September a separate website (www.ramsarculture.org). Please review it and contribute to it with pertinent information on culture and wetlands. Once the renewed Ramsar website becomes operational, we shall consider transferring the RCN website to it.

News from RCN members

Some of you have already informed us about interesting aspects of your own work related to culture and wetlands. We are pleased to share some examples below.

Maider Maraña:

Maider is the Coordinator for Programmes of the UNESCO Centre in the Basque Country (www.unescoetxea.org) in Spain, where there is wide experience of linking cultural and natural heritage values. She plans to promote the issue of wetlands and culture, and the role of the Ramsar Convention, to others within their own regions or in other contexts; to identify sources of support, including co-funding; to draw the Network's attention to other relevant initiatives, contribute to on-going and proposed projects, and exchange information on all the aforementioned matters on appropriate platforms.

Roy Laifunbam:

Roy is President of the Elders' Council of the Centre for Organisation Research & Education (CORE), located on the Loktak Lake in Manipur, India. He coordinates various cross-sectoral research projects on public health, environment, human rights and gender, and has participated in several international meetings to advocate ethnic minority rights. CORE, a founder member organisation of the Coalition on Environment and Natural Resources, works among other things for the protection of the wetland habitat of the Meitei people of Manipur, which is central to their existence, is sacred and has been under threat in recent decades.

Michèle Sato:

Michèle has worked closely with local communities around the Pantanal wetlands in Brazil, particularly at the interface of culture and nature; and she is an advocate for these communities' role in sustainable environmental management. She has investigated the importance of the protection of cultural heritage and considers that traditional knowledge and environmental education are key factors in successful approaches to conservation.

We invite you all to send us your own news, comments, questions and suggestions; and we look forward to being in contact again early in 2014: hopefully at the start of a significantly strengthened period of activity!

Warm regards

Thymio Papayannis and Dave Pritchard

For the Ramsar Culture Network
In cooperation with UNESCO

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