

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
19th Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)
2 to 6 November 2015, Gland, Switzerland

DOC. STRP19-5

**Summary of Recommendations relating to the development of guidance and to target audiences
from the Resolution XI.16 Review on Scientific and Technical Guidance**

Note by the Secretariat

The following recommendations have been summarized from the [Review](#) of Ramsar scientific and technical guidance conducted pursuant to Resolution XI.6, *Ensure efficient delivery of scientific and technical advice and guidance to the Convention*.

Target audiences and the process for developing guidance materials

1. Two target audience categories have been identified for the materials to be developed by the STRP for the 2016-2018 triennium (subject to future review) (Resolution XII.5 para 54):
 - i) Policy-makers, including those from the environment and water sectors and other related sectors such as energy, health and sanitation, agriculture, infrastructure; and
 - ii) Practitioners and in particular wetland managers and stakeholders, but also others from related fields, such as protected area managers and staff of wetland education centres.

General relevant recommendations on target audiences from the review

2. 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. Ramsar needs to conduct a target group analysis prior to the development of guidance.
3. Ramsar should undertake a needs assessment – in terms of guidance topics required by the target audience.
4. Regionalization 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.

Specific recommendations for policy makers

5. Policy makers require guidance on turning Convention requirements into policy, reporting back on Convention requirements, policy implementation and strategic decision-making.

Specific recommendations for practitioners

6. 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.

7. Practitioners and wetland managers require concrete guidance on how best to manage wetland sites.

The STRP will produce the following types of guidance (Resolution XII.5 para 55):

- i) Scientific guidance, which provides the basis for technical guidance for policy makers and practitioners.
 - ii) Science-based technical guidance, which responds to specific methodological needs of policy-makers and practitioners with each receiving a different type of technical guidance.
8. The main audience for the scientific guidance will be practitioners. The STRP guidance will draw on published peer-reviewed research and other scientific sources to help advance implementation of the Convention (Resolution XII.5 para 56).
 9. Technical guidance will be the main focus for STRP products. All STRP guidance will be science based (Resolution XII.5 para 57).
 10. The main audience for the technical guidance will be policy-makers and practitioners, while users of wetlands may also benefit from it. It will be delivered through formats including handbooks, manuals, fact sheets, webinars and videos with support of the Secretariat's CEPA programme (Resolution XII.5 para 58).

General recommendations on types of guidance from the review

11. To better tailor guidance to the audience's needs, Ramsar could consider (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 audiences, (b) designing guidance from the start that responds to the specific needs of each target audience.
12. 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.
13. General guidance may need to be massaged into more specific types of guidance.
14. 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. In terms of presentation, the use of case studies can be an effective and powerful medium to demonstrate key issues which can be of interest to both audiences.
15. Content, format and design of guidance need to be given due consideration to effectively reach the intended audience.
16. 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.

17. Options could include stricter guidelines concerning the way STRP writes and presents different documents with the audience in mind; or the documents being reviewed and/or edited by the Ramsar Secretariat and/or a communications expert.
18. Since at the very least some issues are more likely to be common (and language as well) in a given region, a more regional approach to guidance may be warranted. This would have the benefit of not only tapping into other resources, but also ensuring regional relevance as well as language.
19. Guidance should be as clear and concise as possible – scientific jargon and unnecessary length should be avoided in order to make key messages clear. Documents should be shortened and simplified thereby making them easier to understand and translate.
20. 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.
21. 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.

Specific Recommendations on types of guidance from the review

- i) Scientific guidance, which provides the basis for technical guidance for policy makers and practitioners.
- ii) Science-based technical guidance, which responds to specific methodological needs of policy-makers and practitioners with each receiving a different type of technical guidance.
22. “Scientific guidance” is based on original research and helps to advance knowledge in the field.
23. 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.
24. 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. 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.
25. “Technical guidance” is methodological in nature, such as handbooks, manuals or fact sheets, aimed at practitioners (wetland managers), policy-makers and users of wetlands.

26. 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.
27. In particular, the topics, design and approach for delivery of the guidance may differ. 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.