

# Revising the Ramsar Information Sheet and the Strategic Framework

1<sup>st</sup> Workshop of the STRP African National Focal Points and  
other Wetland Experts in the region.

Johannesburg, South Africa, 30 November-2 December 2010

# Outline

1. What are the RIS and the Strategic Framework?
2. Why is this a priority for STRP and STRP-NFPs ?
3. What are the issues that require attention?
4. Overview of RIS restructuring and SF revision.
5. Process of development, decision-making and implementation.

# The Ramsar Information Sheet



- Describes a specific wetland:
  - Location and boundaries, criteria for designation as Ramsar site, wetland type and ecological character, threats.
- Submitted by Contracting Party when applying for Ramsar site designation, updated every 6 years.
- Party submits completed RIS (paper or electronic file), then Secretariat checks, uploads information to the Ramsar Sites Information Service.
- Information in the RIS has multiple uses:
  - Reporting to Convention on status of Ramsar sites (CP)
  - Baseline for assessing change in ecological character of the site, and appropriate response to change (CP, Convention)
  - Wetland inventory, status and trends in wetlands at regional and global level (Convention).

# Issues: Ramsar Information Sheet



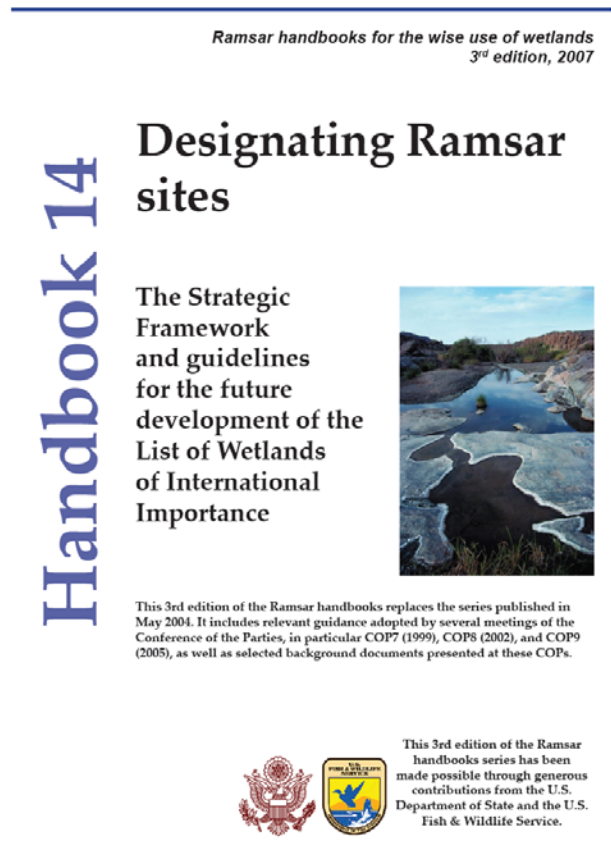
- First developed for and approved at CoP4 (1991), with revisions at subsequent CoPs
- Not well designed with respect to modern information systems
- Now poorly reflects Contracting Party & Convention information needs for Ramsar sites:
  - Site description at designation
  - Need to update descriptions subsequently and report change
  - Recently updated definition of ecological character



# The Strategic Framework



- Supports a systematic approach to identification and designation of sites for the Ramsar List
- Provides guidance on how to apply the various criteria for Ramsar site designation



# Issues: Strategic Framework



- First approved at CoP7 (1999) – provision of guidance on site selection and description
- Various aspects have been revised at subsequent CoPs
- High overlap with separate guidance on completion of RIS
- Poorly structured – information on same topic in several places in Ramsar documentation

# Why is this a priority task for STRP?



- RIS and Strategic Framework are central to the implementation of the Convention.
  - This is the first consolidation and major updating/revision of the RIS and SF.
- Revision will support the needs of Parties and the Convention for management and scientific information.
- Parties will need assistance from STRP for:
  - understanding the revised RIS and SF;
  - implementing the new RIS submission and updating procedures.

# Specific RIS issues (1)

## Problem

1. Not all CPs have the same levels of available information/capacity

## Solution

1. Ensure guidance and RIS are hierarchical:
  - a) key messages first; then
  - b) more detail for those CPs with more sophisticated national monitoring



# Specific RIS issues (2)

## Problem

2. Guidance on completing RIS exists in various different documents

## Solution

2. Consolidate all guidance within one document (revised Strategic Framework).  
Ensure clear cross-linkages between RIS ↔ SF

# Specific RIS issues (3)

## Problem

3. Current RIS provides a poor means of describing ecological character

## Solution

3. Reformat to fully integrate ecological character description within new RIS

# Specific RIS issues (4)

## Problem

4. Existing RIS largely text based – difficult to computerise

## Solution

4. Move to more ‘categorical’ data – **yes/no** or **presence/absence** type fields
- **simpler for Parties**
  - easier to input to database
  - easier database to database RIS submissions
  - Will help development of on-line RIS submission (eventually!)

# Format of New RIS

**Part 1:** Administrative and locational details

**Part 2:** Why is the site internationally important?  
(Criteria for designation)

**Part 3:** What is the site like? (Ecological character description)

- a) Ecological components
- b) Ecological processes
- c) Ecosystem services

**Part 4:** How is the site managed? (Conservation and management)

- a) Land tenure and management ('about managers')
- b) Conservation threats and responses ('about management')

Ecosystem service	Examples	Tick if present at site
<b>Provisioning Services</b> – products obtained from the ecosystem such as food, fuel and fresh water		
Food for humans	Sustenance for humans (e.g. fish)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fresh water	Drinking water for humans and/or livestock	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Water for irrigated agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Water for industry	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wetland products	Timber	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Fuel wood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Peat	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Livestock fodder	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Reeds and fibre	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

# RIS revision: Key messages

Format of RIS may look more complicated but:

- Should be easier for Parties to complete
- Will provide (or can be drawn from) the same information as in management plans
- Will be easier to update forms
- Clearer guidance
- Easier to understand information needs

**VERY IMPORTANT:**

Not all Parties will have data to complete all aspects of the ecological character description.

- aim is to complete what is feasible at designation
- hopefully information availability will improve over time

# 'New Strategic Framework'

## More logically structured

- How to identify Ramsar sites
- Guidance on boundaries etc.
- How to describe sites
- Updating descriptions
- Understanding Secretariat processes
- Further sources of useful information

## ***Criterion X***

- What this criterion is seeking to achieve?
- How to interpret this criterion – what does it mean?
- What data and information is needed to apply this criterion?
- Potential ambiguities/pitfalls in applying this criterion
- Where to go for further help or information



# How does better information help?

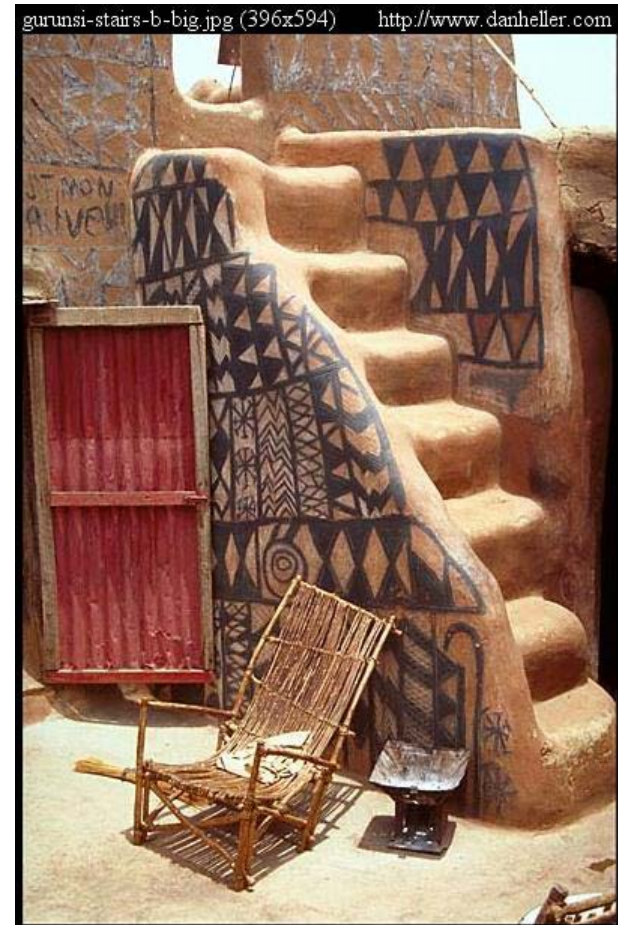


## Better data = more powerful uses

- Enhanced service to Ramsar database users, including those within Contracting Parties
- Better understanding and overview of Ramsar site networks
- Reporting to multiple conventions – synergies with other processes
- Better integration with data collected for management planning

# Revised RIS & SF: Next steps

1. Next draft circulated for comment to STRP & NFPs Dec/Jan 2010: volunteers please!
2. STRP 16 to discuss and finalise proposals (February 2011)
3. Standing Committee to recommend transmission to CoP (May 2011)
4. Consideration by Parties in Regional Meetings (2011 & 2012)
5. CoP 11 to consider for adoption (2012)
6. STRP will probably recommend phased implementation (2014?)



# Tasks for National Focal Points



1. Drafting of worked examples of new RIS to include in the new guidance?
2. Championing the new documentation and helping to explain it in the lead up to (and at) CoP11?
3. Commenting on future drafts and providing guidance and experience to STRP

# Message for the Parties:



Thank you.....

