

Report from the CEPA Oversight Panel

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i) note the progress made by the CEPA Panel on its work plan;
- ii) endorse the CEPA guidance for wetland managers (annexed to this report) for circulation to wetland managers and training centres through the Convention's National Focal Points;
- iii) endorse the proposal to review, consolidate and update the Resolutions VII.8 and VIII.36 guidance in order to bring updated participatory management guidelines as a Draft Resolution to COP12;
- iv) request the CEPA Panel and Secretariat to add an operative paragraph to the Draft Resolution for COP11 on "Regional Initiatives" (DOC. SC43-15) concerning CEPA and capacity-building advice and support to Ramsar Regional Centres; and
- v) concerning composition of the CEPA Panel, approve the proposal that, should one of the CEPA National Focal Points leave during the first half of the triennium for which she/he is elected, the Secretariat will select a replacement Panel member based on the nominations received for the triennium.

Introduction

1. The Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Oversight Panel has met once during the present triennium, on 1-2 May 2010 immediately following Standing Committee (SC)41 in Kobuleti, Georgia. A full report of that meeting and all other Panel reports have been posted on the Convention's website (www.ramsar.org/CEPA-Panel/). Between its meetings the Panel continues to work by e-mail.
2. This report notes delivery of the work plan since SC42 and the further delivery likely by the end of this triennium.

Progress in implementing the work plan for the CEPA Panel 2009-2012 since SC42

Task: Continue work with the Advisory Board on Capacity Building for the Ramsar Convention on identifying priorities for capacity building for wetland management.

3. As reported at SC42, the completion of the Capacity Building Framework targeted primarily at the Ramsar National Focal Points was delayed during 2010. At the time of preparing this report the indications are that the final draft of the Framework will be completed before SC43. The Advisory Board will oversee the review of the draft by the Board members, the Ramsar Senior Regional Advisors and other Secretariat staff, and the CEPA Oversight Panel, and will release the final product for distribution to the Ramsar constituency and beyond, including as an Information Paper for the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP11).

Task: *Advise the Convention on the development of some general guidance on CEPA for site managers that could be easily incorporated into site manager training programmes.*

4. The Panel has completed this task and the proposed guidance is available in Annex 1 of this report. This material will be made available to the Ramsar Regional Centres and to the Convention's Administrative Authority National Focal Points and the CEPA and STRP NFPs for use and adaptation as appropriate in any relevant training programmes. It is anticipated that this advice will be also incorporated into the next (5th edition) of the Ramsar Wise Use Handbooks, following COP11.

Task: *Review the two Convention Resolutions relevant to participation, Resolutions VII.8 and VIII.36, and advise the Convention on whether there is value in consolidating their contents into one Resolution.*

5. Resolution VII.8, *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands*, adopted in 1999, was intended to show the benefits gained from involving local and indigenous communities in wetland management. Those Guidelines used the lessons learned from case studies to emphasize the need for the participation of the local and indigenous community and provided a broad list of criteria than can lead to successful establishment of local and indigenous people's involvement. Resolution VIII.36, *Participatory Environmental Management*, adopted in 2002, outlined some complementary tools to assist in establishing participatory processes. There was significant overlap in these two resolutions given that Resolution VIII.36 did not directly follow on from VII.8 but emerged independently. Since 1999 the topic of local participation in wetland management has been given a great deal of attention and these more recent experiences could usefully be incorporated in an updated version of these Resolutions. It should also be noted that Resolutions X.8, *The Convention's Programme on communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) 2009-2015*, adopted in Changwon, incorporates participation as a significant component of the programme.
6. The Panel proposes to develop a process, working with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the Secretariat, to review, consolidate and update the guidance adopted by Resolutions VII.8 and VIII.36 and to bring new or revised participatory management guidelines as a Draft Resolution to COP12.

Task: *Review the Ramsar Regional Centre reports to clarify the role they play in delivering objectives under the CEPA programme.*

7. The CEPA Panel has reviewed the reports sent to the Secretariat by the Ramsar Regional Centres (RRC) as part of the Ramsar Regional Initiative reporting process. While the reports clearly show that the RRCs have significant potential for supporting interpretation and capacity building at a regional level for implementing the Convention, they are not detailed enough to make a more in-depth analysis of implementation of the Convention's CEPA Programme.
8. The CEPA Panel suggests that the Regional Centres have significant value as interpretation centres for delivery of Ramsar responsibilities that customise implementation for a particular region. The Panel also notes that capacity building for centre staff might be needed to help the RRCs optimize their potential for this role. The Panel has significant expertise in this area and would be interested in working with representatives of RRCs to identify capacity building needs for RRC staff. The CEPA

Panel recommends that an operative paragraph concerning these matters should be included in the COP11 DR on “Regional Initiatives” (DOC. SC43-15).

9. The Panel hopes to meet with the Centres during the Panel’s meeting at COP11 for discussions on how their role in implementing the CEPA Programme might be optimized, and further information will be provided by the Panel to the Standing Committee as necessary.
10. The representative of the Ramsar Regional Centres on the CEPA Panel noted that on the sidelines of SC41 an informal Ramsar Regional Centre Network was formed among the three centres present (Central and West Asia, East Asia, and CREHO) and that they would work to involve the RRC in Uganda. Since then the RRC in Uganda has joined the network, which has met again more recently. The network has agreed that they should aim to meet once a year and also maintain regular e-mail communication to share experiences and tools. The network members hope to meet next during COP11.

Management of the CEPA Panel membership

11. During this triennium it has become apparent that the Panel has no process for replacing members who step down during their term. This is a particular problem when any of the CEPA Focal Points leaves, since a nomination process by Parties has been formally established and requires a significant time commitment on the part of the Secretariat in seeking nominations. The Panel recommends that if one of the CEPA National Focal Points leaves during the first half of the triennium in which she or he is elected, the Secretariat should select a replacement based on the nominations received for the triennium without regard to the maintenance of a regional balance.

Annex 1

Task: *Advise the Convention on the development of some general guidance on CEPA for site managers that could be easily incorporated into site manager training programmes.*

Note to trainers: The brief guidance has been drawn up by the Ramsar Convention's CEPA Oversight Panel for use in training programmes for wetland site managers to introduce Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) tools that will assist in effective site management.

Using the guidance

What is a wetland site manager? The term 'site manager' is commonly used but rarely explained. In 2007 the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) developed a survey to investigate **how** and **by whom** Ramsar guidelines were being used. The people surveyed included, among several other groups, site managers. A specific question for these site managers revealed that that this group was not a homogenous cohort but a more disparate group, evenly split between those with *largely day-to-day site management responsibilities* and those with *oversight responsibilities for wetland site management and policy*. These results were consistent with the work carried out by CEPA Panel member Chris Prietto (the current CEPA representative on the STRP) during an STRP workshop in 2010.

Wetland site managers who have mostly site-based responsibilities and are thus directly connected to a wetland (although likely with some broader responsibilities beyond the wetland itself) would gain the most benefit from access to guidance across the full range of CEPA activities, from water quality to monitoring to community engagement to CEPA tools for interpreting and promoting their site. This brief text on CEPA for site managers is largely targeted at this group of site managers. It is intended primarily for use during site manager training programmes associated with some relevant hands-on exercises and should be customized as necessary to take account of local and regional differences that will require special CEPA interventions.

CEPA for wetland site managers

Brief guidance to assist site managers in using CEPA tools to assist in effective site management

What is CEPA?

Issues of communication, education, participation in management, and raising public awareness are regularly on the list of key strategies for the management of natural areas. Using CEPA effectively can build support for wetland conservation by facilitating increased awareness of wetland values. Unfortunately, though, not all wetland managers have the skills to develop complementary CEPA strategies and activities for their site plan.

There is a strong synergy between communication, education, awareness and participatory management, since directly involving people in a wetland builds awareness of its broad values. Indeed, understanding the importance of the participation of key stakeholders in wetland management and recognizing that participatory skills require more social skills than technical skills has led the Ramsar Convention to redefine the acronym “CEPA” in 2008, from ‘communication, education, and public awareness’ to **communication, education, participation and awareness**.

The brief paragraphs that follow will provide you with a) advice on encouraging effective participation in the management planning process, b) steps for identifying and building partnerships in the community, and c) a list of strategies that can be used for building CEPA into a wetland management plan.

Who needs to know about your wetland? Improving public awareness of wetland values as a management objective

Improving public awareness of wetland values should be a priority for all wetland managers. Communication and education processes will help to explain and to achieve management goals. Above all, it is important to identify the most critical aspects of the wetland that people need to understand to gain their support for those management objectives. CEPA strategies to increase public awareness and build support are briefly described below.

Once you have identified the information you wish to deliver, building and packaging the message is the next step. Simple messages can be used in a number of ways, forming the basis for fact sheets, brochures and signs in your wetland.

Providing opportunities for people to experience the wetlands directly can be beneficial and can provide valuable opportunities for awareness raising.

Building effective messages

Use positives, familiar points that are already agreed upon, e.g., *“Our wetland has supported the local community for centuries. Better management will guarantee its future.”*

Localise the message. A “message” may be used in many ways, as a theme for a brochure or a video, in presentations to local groups, or even through small products such as stickers and flyers. However, the message must be translated into the language and products that suit the target audience.

Invite the response. All messages have a purpose and should invite a response from the audience. Be clear about what you want from the audience. *E.g., you can help by...*

Encouraging direct involvement in management activities is also a very effective strategy for building understanding of wetland values as well as providing training in relevant management skills.

CEPA Strategies

Awareness messages

Using a series of simple messages is an effective CEPA strategy.

Using local communication tools

Using the local media facilities, whether this be newspapers, newsletters or word of mouth, can be effective in reaching a broad range of people. Websites can also reach some target groups.

Information products

Brochures, fact sheets and posters are examples of information products that can be developed. It is important to keep content simple and suitable for the target audience.

Meetings, fora and consultations

Smaller or larger gatherings with specifically targeted stakeholders can be very effective – especially when a higher level of involvement is intended or when the implications of the measures will be high for a specific stakeholder group. It can also be very useful to target higher-level decision makers, who might be more willing to attend a lunchtime meeting than to read a report or brochure.

Visitor access

Allowing people to visit the wetland can provide personal experiences that build understanding and support very effectively. Encouraging and providing support for visitors is an excellent way to develop tourism potential that can contribute to the resources needed for managing the site.

Interpreting the site for visitors

Interpreting the site for visitors through signage, visitor facilities, and dedicated guides will enhance their experience. Local communities often possess a rich repository of knowledge built up over time, and this can form the basis of locally-based interpretation for a wetland. Many sites and dedicated centres make effective use of both guides and volunteers in working with visitors.

Special events, community awareness days

Special events on suitable days such as the Convention's annual campaign, World Wetlands Day (2 February), can be useful in building awareness and involvement over time.

Community education initiatives and programmes

Where resources and expertise are available, education programmes are a valuable addition to the management of a site. Education programmes can be broad or specific to a particular audience, such as schools or local community centres.

Dedicated facilities

Many wetlands around the world benefit from dedicated facilities which assist and enhance visitor access. They can range from observation decks to bird hides to dedicated visitor's interpretation centres. The National Reports submitted by Contracting Parties for the Ramsar Convention's 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in 2002, indicated that over 400 wetland centres operate at or near Ramsar Sites, and for both the 2005 and 2008 meetings of the

COP it was reported that 35% of Contracting Parties had established wetland centres during the preceding three years. While this growing number of such infrastructure may vary in scope, dedicated facilities provide a strong focus for wetland-related activities and can contribute greatly to participatory management.

Participatory approaches to management planning

While the wetland manager bears the ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the management plan, building partnerships to develop the plan will help to ensure support for its implementation. Involving relevant stakeholders in the management planning process, particularly local communities and indigenous peoples, will be beneficial in a number of ways.

- A participatory approach to identifying the wetland's values will build commitment towards managing for those values in the long term.
- Relevant stakeholders can hold important knowledge about the site. Incorporating such knowledge from those directly related to the wetland facilitates a valuable exchange of intellectual resources and experience, combining traditional or historical knowledge with scientific expertise.
- Involving stakeholders in the planning process will, in the long term, assist in developing a shared vision for the wetland and in crafting measures for achieving desired outcomes.

Ensuring stakeholder involvement

Building trust among stakeholders

Identifying and informing stakeholders of the management planning process is the first step. A 'stakeholder' is any individual, group or community living within the influence of the site, or likely to influence the management of the site, especially those dependent on the site for their livelihood (*Managing Wetlands*, Ramsar Handbook 18, 4th ed.). This can include wetland neighbours, indigenous communities, historical users, and special interest groups such as birdwatchers for whom the site has special significance. Local and historical knowledge of the wetland can contribute significantly to the development of management strategies, especially when combined with the best available science.

The management planning team should use comprehensive communication to actively seek participation in the planning process. It is also important to consider how people in the local community obtain information. What are the sources and methods of communication to which they have easy access? What methods do they prefer? Are there local leaders who will have strong credibility as messengers?

It is important for managers to be aware of factors that could affect the possible participation or non-participation of stakeholders, and this knowledge will influence the approach a manager may take to seek participation. For instance, stakeholders may perceive that the aim of the planning process conflicts with their interests. CEPA processes can be instrumental in increasing understanding of the planning process, as well as increasing people's willingness to participate.

Building awareness among the stakeholder groups most relevant to the management objective

Once the management objectives have been determined, CEPA strategies should target those subgroups who are most critical to achieving the objectives. Stakeholders may benefit from awareness-building and education to fully appreciate the values of the wetland, allowing them to participate meaningfully in the planning process.

For instance, if the management objective is about securing water for the wetland, the target group may be local irrigators. If the management objective is about invasive species, the target group may be wetland neighbours.

Finding out what stakeholders know and what they don't know is an important step, as it is more effective to build on what people already know. Information gained through consultation for the management planning process can help in clarifying the knowledge and appreciation that people hold about the wetland. Answering such questions will help decide what additional information and learning must be offered and how they should be delivered to build support for the management objectives.

Gaining support through incentives

Involving local communities should include an incentives approach. If local stakeholders are to be effectively involved, they will need to understand how their involvement will deliver benefits to them. More importantly, those benefits must be attractive. A management plan must aim to identify management objectives which will deliver benefits not only to the wetlands directly but also to the local community.

Here again, education may be effective in making clear the links between stakeholder interests and the ecosystem values of the wetlands. A local stakeholder may not care if biodiversity values fall unless it affects his/her own values or interests. A CEPA approach could focus in the first instance on the values and interests of the stakeholder and build understanding of how these interests relate to the wetlands. Through the planning process the links could be made more explicit and appropriate.

Participatory skills (Ramsar Handbook No. 7, 4th ed.) includes extensive guidance and case studies on the use of incentives. The examples describe incentives related to the maintenance of sustainable livelihoods, including activities such as:

- maintaining the spiritual and cultural values associated with a wetland;
- ensuring more equitable access to wetland resources;
- increasing local capacity and empowerment;
- reducing conflicts among stakeholders; and
- maintaining ecosystem functions (e.g., flood control, improved water quality, etc.).

Building capacity for continuing involvement

Stakeholders who wish to become actively involved in the implementation of the management plan may need training in other areas such as organizational, facilitation, and negotiation skills, keeping of records and financial accounts, and basic administrative operations. Engaging local stakeholders in site monitoring and process evaluation makes a valuable and substantive contribution to achieving participatory conservation objectives. This will require training, however, to provide stakeholders with the necessary tools and skills. To ensure continuity and

financial stability, it may be useful to explore cooperative or legal arrangements covered by a written agreement.

Where to find further information:

Ramsar Handbook 6, Wetland CEPA: The Convention's Programme on communication, education, participation, and public awareness (CEPA) 2009-2015.

www.ramsar.org/pdf/lib/hbk4-06.pdf

Ramsar Handbook 7, Participatory skills: Establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands.

<http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/lib/hbk4-07.pdf>

A Guide to Participatory Action Planning and Techniques for Facilitating Groups.

www.ramsar.org/pdf/outreach_actionplanning_guide.pdf

Assessment of World Wetlands Day. www.ramsar.org/pdf/wwd/wwd_assessment_2009.pdf

CEPA Toolkit. Produced primarily for the Convention on Biological Diversity, this toolkit is equally relevant wetland site managers. www.cbd.int/cepa/toolkit/2008/cepa/index.htm