

IUCN External Review 2015

Executive Summary



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Acronyms

CEC	Commission on Education and Communication
CEESP	Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy
CEM	Commission on Ecosystem Management
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FASU	Framework of Action for Strengthening the Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IBAT	Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
KBA	Key Biodiversity Areas
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRGF	Natural Resources Governance Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RBM	Results-Based Management

Executive Summary

Created in 1948, IUCN is one of the world's oldest and largest global environmental

Comparative Advantages of IUCN

A comparative approach. In an effort to bring to light IUCN's comparative strengths and shortcomings as a membership-based, convenor organisation in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, IUCN was compared to a host of organisations.

The centrality of knowledge production. The comparison of IUCN with four other global convenor organisations (Brookings Institution, Aspen Institute, Demos, and the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research) suggests that the knowledge produced by or residing in such organisations (in the form of experts) is their key asset; scientific research or analytical capability is the lever for influencing policy and making an impact. IUCN similarly produces, acquires and deploys knowledge. However, IUCN's knowledge production role is disproportionate to the policy-influencing role conferred upon it as a major convenor. Of significance, IUCN is not tailoring knowledge for end-users effectively enough.

Strategising its work with the private sector. The comparison of IUCN with six other global conservation organisations (The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, World Resources Institute, Wetlands International, and the United Nations Environment Programme) highlights IUCN's strength as a convenor, including with the private sector. Four of the comparator organisations have taken on the private sector as a partner, client and sometimes donor in achieving conservation and sustainability goals. While IUCN is positioned differently because of its membership mix, how IUCN wishes to influence the private sector persists as an important strategic question.

Challenges facing organisations with member associations. The Review also compared IUCN to two other (anonymous) deve

products along these multiple outcome pathways. The External Review considered the sampled knowledge products along six outcome pathways and found that:

- 1) Policy: Flagship Knowledge Products influence and inform global, regional and national policy processes and mechanisms in effective ways, but awareness of such outcomes across the Union varies significantly by knowledge product. In the surveys, the RLTS was perceived by Secretariat, Commission Members and Institutional Members to have had a positive impact on global and national policies. Perceptions of the impact of Protected Planet were significantly lower, and a very high percentage of survey respondents did not know.
- 2)

the Business Model. It is important for information about Commissions, their activities and varying outputs, to be more visible across the Union and beyond.

Effectiveness of Commissions

Across the Union, views are mixed concerning the overall effectiveness of Commissions within IUCN. Perspectives vary concerning what the Commissions should be doing, and how different components of the IUCN system are contributing to effectively leveraging the Commissions. Overall, it is difficult for many people within the Union to assess the effectiveness of the Commissions. This is partially due to the fact that IUCN Commissions are inconsistent in their use of available reporting structures, such that the results of the work of all of the Commissions and their contributions to the IUCN programme are inconsistently captured and reported. This is a key area of concern at IUCN.

On the size of Commissions. Throughout the External Review period, the issue of Commission size was frequently raised. The External Review Team has concluded that while there is no single, ideal size for Commissions (given that each Commission is unique, their contributions to IUCN are different and diverse, and their activities ebb and flow over time), there are merits to Commissions with a larger general Membership and with Steering Committees comprising top experts in their field.

Some Commissions are relatively ineffective at communicating with other parts of IUCN and even with their own Members. This has implications for building relationships, knowledge and information exchange, and for transparency within and outside Commissions. In addition, the process of invitation/application and appointment of new Commission Members is considered unclear and lacking transparency.

Commissions operate in a hierarchical manner

between the Commissions and the Secretariat. The new Programme cycle provides an opportunity for Commissions to articulate and communicate their work within an inter-sessional plan, along with annual plans and reports, which describe the links to the 2017-2020 IUCN Programme. A range of tools are currently available, some of which may require adapting to the needs of Commissions and all of which may require Secretariat support to at least some Commissions.

Efficiency of Commissions

It is not possible to assess the efficiency of Commissions with respect to returns on financial investment due to lack of planning and reporting systems and data. While there have been on-going efforts to put a value on volunteer contributions, these remain difficult to measure in terms of what to count and how to assign value and worth (e.g. specific functions, types of expertise, enhancing

	SSC	WCPA	CEM	WCEL	CEESP	CEC
One Programme Approach – Secretariat/RO	Overall untracked and under-exploited	Overall untracked and under-exploited	Overall untracked and under-exploited	Overall untracked and under-exploited	High	Overall untracked and under-exploited
One Programme Approach – Other Commissions	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	Moderate
One Programme Approach – Institutional Members	Unclear	Unclear	Unclear	Unclear	Moderate	Low
Membership Engagement	Very high	Very high	Low	Low	High	Low
Stakeholder Engagement	Very high	Very high	Moderate	Moderate	Very high	Moderate
Communication	Very high	Very high	Moderate	Virtually nonexistent	High	Moderate
Strategic Planning	Very high	Very high	High	Low	High	Moderate
Planning and Reporting	Very high	Very high	Moderate	Virtually nonexistent	High	Low
Efficiency	Inadequate financial reporting	Inadequate financial reporting	Inadequate financial reporting	Inadequate financial reporting	Inadequate financial reporting	Inadequate financial reporting
Fundraising	Very high	Very high	Moderate	Virtually nonexistent	High	Low

Concluding thoughts

There is considerable variation in the Commissions, their contributions to the Union, and how they are viewed by people associated with IUCN. Different ideas are in circulation about their role and functions, and the degree to which they should be aligned with the IUCN Programme (and even different ideas about what is meant by the 'IUCN Programme'). This review has concluded that the Commissions remain an important asset within IUCN because they serve a range of knowledge-based functions and are also an important vehicle for engagement, which has yet to be fully exploited by IUCN. With respect to the thematic focus of the six Commissions, all are still considered relevant to the work of IUCN but there

implementing mechanisms that facilitate constructive relationships and provide support for all Commissions to articulate, assess, enhance and communicate their work within the IUCN Programme Framework and as an integral part of the Union.

IUCN's diverse membership is a recognised strength for enacting its niche, notably supporting its role as a major convenor. Gains that

because they rely on restricted, project funding as their principal source of income. The tensions between focus and funding, coupled with enduring communication issues between Headquarters, Regional Offices, Institutional Members and Commissions, have fuelled a measure of mistrust rather than the cooperation needed for greater coherence and alignment.

Similar issues are visible in the relationships of Secretariat with Regional and National Committees. While the Committees play an important convening role, they tend to be loosely connected to the rest of the Union, with no direct lines of accountability. As such, the One Programme remains more an ideal than a culture being practiced.

IUCN is clearly aware of the need to update its membership strategy, to give due consideration to expanding the membership mix (e.g. with respect to Indigenous Peoples Organisations), and decide how best to establish a relationship with the private sector. Further, IUCN's capacity to leverage bigger change lies in its global reach. But a 'collective voice' through alliance-building and collaboration across its membership is not yet commensurate with IUCN's potential as a global convenor. While IUCN endeavours to add value to the efforts of Members, IUCN's membership is clearly an important revenue base, with state Members contributing the most.

IUCN's recent efforts to improve external communications, address branding issues, explore strategic partnerships, and reform its human resource policies demonstrate awareness of the challenges to be tackled. The human resource reforms and GEF accreditation are still too recent to ascertain results, while the Strategic Partnerships Unit has concerted to initiate the groundwork to

Recommendations

The External Review Team has compiled a series of Strategic and Operational recommendations

Strategic Recommendation 2 (Council, Senior Management, Business and Biodiversity Group, Members)
(Linked to findings 3-5)

2. IUCN should revise its private sector engagement strategy to be both strategic and opportunistic.

Operational Recommendations

- 2.1 IUCN should develop an updated private sector engagement strategy dually aimed at those that explicitly position themselves as champions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and others that continue to have highly adverse biodiversity conservation and sustainable development impacts. (Business and Biodiversity Group, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – **Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2**
- 2.2 IUCN should leverage its involvement in ‘technical advisory panels’ to further engage with private sector actors and draw them into thematically appropriate, IUCN-facilitated convening and consensus-building processes. (Business and Biodiversity Group, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – **Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2**
- 2.3 IUCN should seek strategic opportunities to meet with industry representatives at high-level forums and within networks that convene private sector actors around global environmental challenges. (Business and Biodiversity Group, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – **Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1**

Knowledge Products and Knowledge Chains

Strategic Recommendation 3 (Council, Senior Management, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors)
(Linked to findings 7-11, 13-14)

3. IUCN must ensure and protect the quality, consistency and branding of *Flagship Knowledge Products* that mobilise IUCN standards.

Operational Recommendations

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Strategic Recommendation 5 (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members)
(Linked to findings 15-21)

- 5.9 IUCN should continue informing and further influencing research agendas by ensuring its work is accessible to the research community and also by building research-based alliances with academic, NGO, government and private sector entities. A thorough analysis of the use of Flagship and programme-based knowledge products in the peer review literature would be a necessary first step. (Global Programme Directors, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*
- 5.10 Intent on expanding the community of Flagship and programme-based knowledge product users, IUCN should strategically and selectively develop popular applications, diverse licensing agreements and partnerships to imagine, create and finance how to move this forward. (Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs, Members) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- 5.11 IUCN should ensure that Flagship and programme-based knowledge products are available in all of IUCN's three official languages. (Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs, Members) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*

Strategic Recommendation 6 (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members)
(Linked to findings 22-24)

6. IUCN should further pursue the coherence and effectiveness of its knowledge products governance and management structures and practices.

Operational Recommendations

- 6.1 IUCN's knowledge nomenclature should be finalised and publicised across the Union within a reasonable timeframe, so this updated understanding of concepts and terms may appropriately inform development of the knowledge components of IUCN's next quadrennial Programme. (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*
- 6.2 Horizontal integration of all Flagship Knowledge Products should continue, as has been prioritised by IUCN, ensuring complementarities between them. (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- 6.3 Vertical integration of knowledge products should be pursued in planned and coherent ways, building 'baskets of knowledge' through links that are intentionally made between products across the Union (as in the case of Protected Planet), through the creation of integrative knowledge tools (e.g. IBAT), and through monitoring and reporting mechanisms. (Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Programme Directors, Commissions, PM&E Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- 6.4 IUCN should develop a funding strategy that is built around its development of 'baskets of knowledge'. (Senior Management, Strategic Partnership Unit, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- 6.5 IUCN should ensure that development of the Natural Resources Governance Framework (and all new Flagship Knowledge Products) is provided with appropriate guidance, support and oversight. (Council, Senior Management, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*

IUCN Commissions

Strategic Recommendation 7 (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs)
(Linked to findings 25-26, 28, 29)

7. Serving multiple functions, the six existing Commissions should be maintained.

Operational Recommendations

- 7.1 Commissions should provide multiple forums and platforms for information sharing and strategic development among their Members and with other parts of IUCN. (Commissions, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- 7.2 Commissions should further integrate new issues and thematic areas as they arise, notably through joint initiatives involving more than one Commission. A review and

- 9.5 Commissions Chairs should be provided with appropriate orientation (training, advice and documentation) to support them in effectively performing their roles. The following documents and processes should be developed overall for Commissions: (1) a manual and training for Commission Chairs and Deputy Chairs, including guidance for establishing a Steering Committee; (2) a manual for Steering Committee Members, and ideally sub-groups and a handbook for new Commission Members (these can be based on

- 13.6 IUCN should compile an accurate description of how Commissions operate and make this available in the Commissions section of the IUCN website. Commissions and Secretariat should provide links to this information in key documents where Commissions are mentioned. (Global Communications Unit, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, ~~Understand~~*

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- 15.4 IUCN should seek out a non-DAC donor for programme restricted funding in the next quadrennial period, accounting for the rising development, humanitarian and South-South cooperation funding coming from China, India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and South Africa in particular. (Council, Senior Management team, Strategic Partnership Unit, Framework Partners) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 3*
- 15.5 IUCN should actively target and build relationships with foundations as potential donors for programme restricted funding into the forthcoming quadrennial period. (Senior Management Team, Strategic Partnerships Unit, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 3*
- 15.6 IUCN should solidify its position as a conservation and sustainability financial resource manager and grantmaker, through its involvement with GEF. It should subsequently consider expanding its role and capacities in this respect, towards eventually seeking project agency status with the Green Climate Fund and others. (Senior Management Team, Strategic Partnership Unit, GEF Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- 15.7 IUCN should develop a strategy for reaching out to high net worth individuals. (Council, Senior Management team, Strategic Partnerships Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- 15.8 IUCN should continue seeking project-based funding (including funding that is aligned with its Global Thematic Programmes), while desisting from pursuing project funding that is likely to put it in competition with its own Members. (Strategic Partnership Unit, Global Program Directors, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*
- 15.9 Secretariat and Commissions should align and design their fundraising strategies so that they avoid overlaps, take advantage of their respective strengths, are properly supported, report on their activities, and continue to enact the One Programme approach to the benefit of both. (Senior Management Team, Strategic Partnerships Unit, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*
- 15.10 IUCN should develop a stronger client orientation across all of its work. It should consider doing so by selling knowledge packages and services based on existing Flagship and programme-based knowledge products, selling capacity-building services, and in other innovative ways to be developed. It should also consider developing strategic partnerships with public institutions and private sector actors for these purposes. (Senior Management Team, Global Programme Directors, Commission Chairs, IBAT Staff) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*

Strategic Recommendation 16 (Senior Management Team, PM&E Unit)
(Linked to findings 55-57)

16. IUCN should continue revising its M&E system, in line with both the strategic-orientation and learning prerogative of Results-Based Management (RBM) approach to Monitoring and Evaluation.

Operational Recommendations

- 16.1 IUCN should continue taking steps to link its strategic and programmatic M&E approaches, so that it can more clearly articulate both its activities and its contributions to biodiversity and sustainability outcomes. (PM&E Unit, Global Programme Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*

The Top 10 Recommendations

Exhibit 1.1 Top 10 Recommendations

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Evaluation Areas	Strategic		Operational		
	Recommendation	Target Audience	Recommendation	Target Audience	Priority Level
IUCN Role and Niche	1. IUCN should more explicitly bill itself as a trusted convener, a platform uniquely able to create opportunities for bridging the perspectives of multi-sectoral and multi-level stakeholders who engage with the scientifically-informed knowledge it co-creates, for the purposes of influencing biodiversity conservation and sustainable development policy and practice.	Council, Senior Management	1.1 IUCN should build its brand to further reflect its convener role more explicitly. It should thus revise its niche statement accordingly.	Senior Management, Global Communications Unit	Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2
Knowledge Products and Knowledge Chains	3. IUCN must ensure and protect the quality, consistency and branding of <i>Flagship Knowledge Products</i> that mobilise IUCN standards.	Council, Senior Management, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors	3.1 IUCN should prioritise, leve.eq183.02 1W29 11.76 rpe		

Evaluation Areas	Strategic		Operational		
	Recommendation	Target Audience	Recommendation	Target Audience	Priority Level
	5. IUCN should be strategic and intentional about mobilising its Flagship and programme-based knowledge products along clearly articulated and monitored outcome pathways.				

Evaluation
Areas

