

## **SUMMARY FINDINGS**

### **A SELF ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR THE WATER AND NATURE INITIATIVE (WANI)**

**Assessment process undertaken by**

**The IUCN Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative for**

**The IUCN Water and Nature Initiative of the IUCN  
Wetlands and Water Programme**

**January 2004**

## Acronyms

HQ	IUCN- Headquarters
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
WANI	Water and Nature Initiative
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature, International

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## Introduction

This report presents a summary of the Findings of an Assessment of the Water and Nature Initiative (WANI). A final Assessment Report containing recommendations, complete data analysis and a list of stakeholders interviewed will be available following the discussions with the WANI Advisory Committee and IUCN Senior Management.

## Purpose of the Assessment

As part of their ongoing monitoring and oversight of the Water and Nature Initiative (WANI), the Head of the Wetlands and Water Resources, and the Coordinator, Water and Nature Initiative commissioned an assessment of the experience to date of IUCN managers in planning, funding and implementing WANI.

The purpose of the assessment is to provide feedback to WANI managers, the Director Global Programme and the WANI Advisory Committee so that they may make any necessary adjustments in a timely and informed manner, thus guiding the future development of WANI.

## Approach and Methodology

The assessment was undertaken by the IUCN Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative for the Water and Nature Initiative. Nancy MacPherson (Coordinator, M&E Initiative) provided oversight for the design of the methodology and the conduct of the process, Universal Management Group provided advice on the data collection instrument (interview guide) and Alex Moiseev (Consultant to the M&E Initiative) conducted the interviews, analyzed the data and prepared the final report. Significant logistical support in setting up interviews was provided by Megan Cartin (Water and Wetlands Office) and Marge Gaudard (M&E Office). The assessment process took place from May 20 through June 27, 2003.

A self assessment methodology using semi structured interviews was used to obtain responses from three major stakeholder groups at regional and global levels<sup>1</sup>:

1. IUCN staff responsible for managing WANI at regional and global levels (i.e. those with current signed commitments);
2. Senior programme staff (Regional Directors, Programme Coordinators and heads of thematic programmes) at a broader strategic level; and
3. Selected Commission members involved in WANI.

The stakeholder groups listed above total 41 managers. Of the 41, 34 agreed to be interviewed, and provided quantitative and qualitative responses on questions focused on the original concept and assumptions, strategic leadership, capacity, funding, operational support, engagement of partners, factors supporting and hindering WANI, suggestions for improvement and risk. The Interview Guide is included in Annex 1.

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<sup>1</sup> It was felt by the management of WANI that it was too early to include Implementing Partners in the self assessment since they are in the early stages of joining WANI. They will be included in future assessments once projects are fully operational. Likewise, donors will be included in a later review.



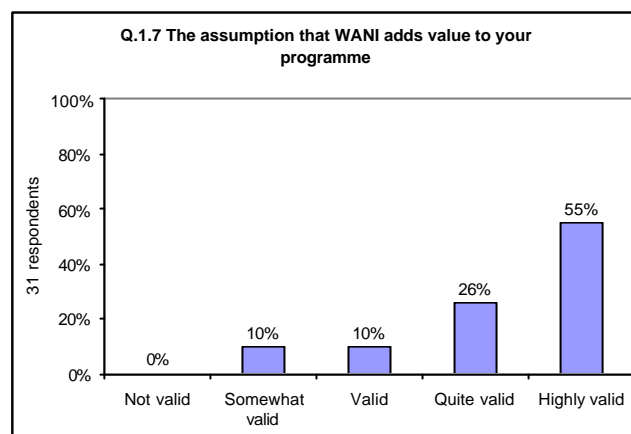
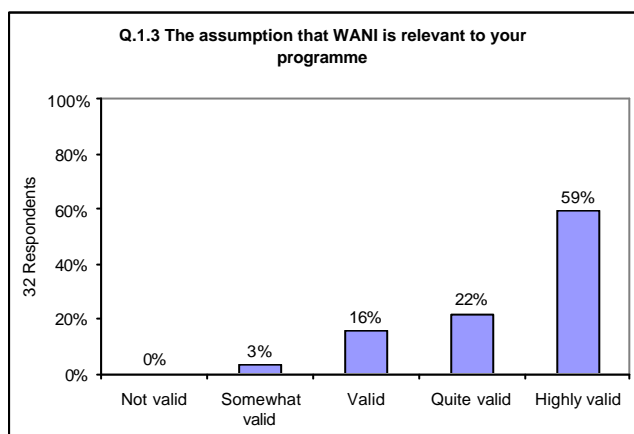
WANI is considered flexible by a large majority of respondents with one qualification. Some respondents noted that a high degree of flexibility has led to considerable complexity, both in terms of what is being done, and also how WANI is being funded. At least two respondents pointed out that WANI might be too flexible and one commented that “flexibility must be balanced with rigor.”

**Finding 3. Respondents were supportive but less positive about the innovation and replicability aspects of WANI.**

A clear majority of respondents consider WANI to be innovative and replicable. These questions generated the most discussion. Respondents saw innovation in

**Finding 4. A large majority of respondents think that WANI is both relevant and adds value to their programme.**

While the majority of respondents who commented on this question rated WANI as both relevant and adding value to their programme, they also pointed out that IUCN arrived in the water sector without credentials or partners, and this has led to a lengthy process of establishing the necessary credentials and partnerships. A couple of respondents noted that WANI has worked best when it mirror regional programmes in terms of regional, programmatic or geographic priorities and where IUCN has a strong presence in the countries in which WANI wants to work.



## ***Strategic Leadership***

**Finding 5. Global leadership is seen as very or highly satisfactory by the majority of respondents, regional leadership less so.**

Overall, virtually everyone is at least satisfied with leadership at both the global and regional levels. Half of the responses indicated that strategic leadership at the regional level is very or highly satisfactory, while almost two-thirds indicated that strategic leadership at the global level is either very or highly satisfactory.

A few respondents noted that strategic leadership is still forming in the regions. In some cases, this is a function of lack of capacity and in others a function of regions catching up to the lead provided by the global level.

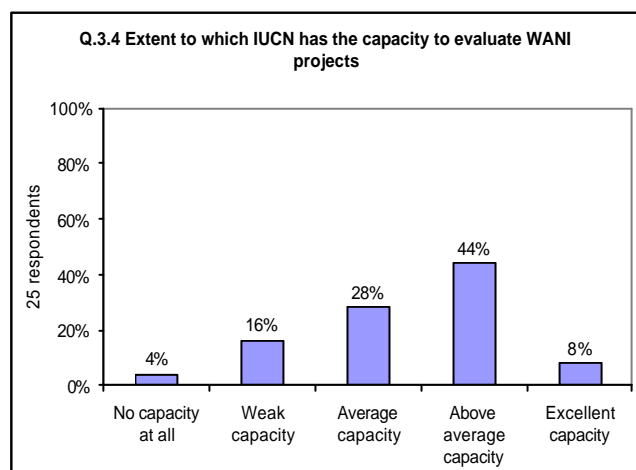
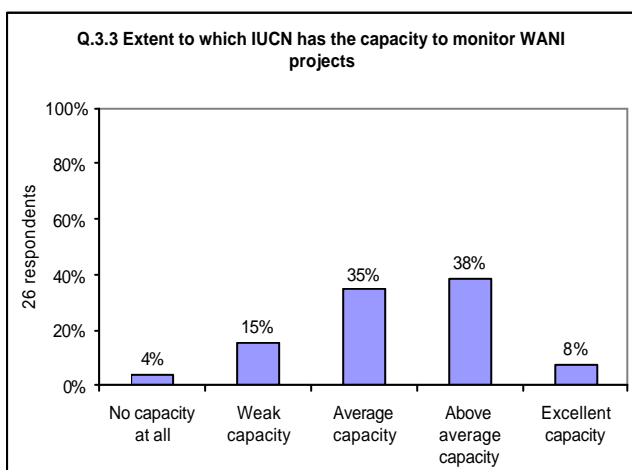
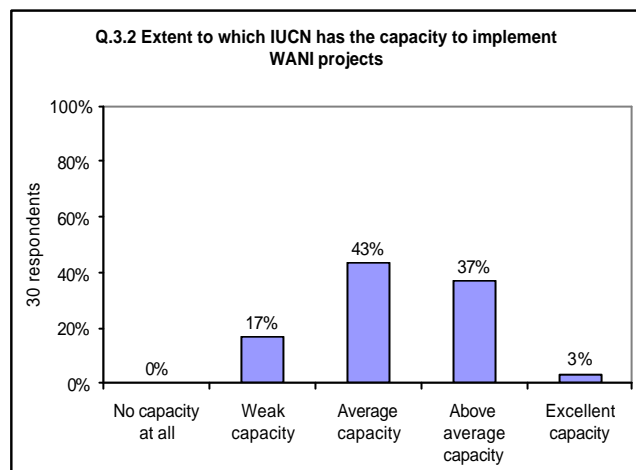
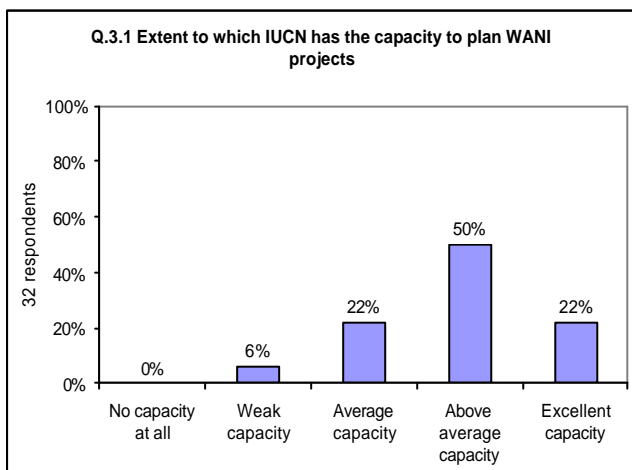
Many respondents commented on either regional *or* global strategic but not both, based on their experience. In a small number of cases, there was some confusion on the difference between strategic leadership and operational support.

Respondents suggested two factors that support global level strategic leadership. The leadership shown at global level on policy work has helped place IUCN in the



monitoring finances and outputs, one respondent observed that WANI lacks even the basic capacity for monitoring. Two other respondents pointed out that information does not flow well from the regions to HQ and that WANI's model hinders monitoring and requires *at least* one full time project administrator at HQ.

On the learning side of monitoring and evaluation, respondents also spoke about other specific issues. One noted that WANI did not start with a baseline analysis, and as such, it will be difficult to analyze change. Another pointed out that it is not clear how ongoing WANI M&E efforts will contribute to WANI's learning objectives and in any case, the monitoring-learning framework is not yet in place. A third respondent suggested that it will be difficult to separate out WANI's contributions to change from other actors in the water sector. Overall, several respondents commented on the lack of capacity and space for reflection that should drive the M&E learning process.



## ***Funding***

**Finding 7. Fundraising at global level is seen as more satisfactory than at regional level. Overall, co-funding is adequate, but not so in some regions.**

WANI operates on a funding model that depends on a large core fund which must be matched by co-funding and parallel funding, as a condition of the use of core fund. The current WANI funding model necessitates strong fundraising capacity

One respondent noted that the co-funding model is becoming increasingly popular with donors and this model is supported by large and better suited NGOs such as WWF and Conservation International. This respondent suggested that this sort of model carries inherent risk for IUCN, as the emphasis on fundraising and financial administration can be self-defeating by absorbing the resources and time of senior managers which might be utilized in other ways.

associated with project administration through multiple reporting formats and deadlines.

Technical issues in operational support were raised far less often, however they are worth noting. Two respondents commented that the development of WANI projects requires technical support from a range of disciplines and regions and obtaining this support in a timely manner requires addressing.

noting that only half were able to respond to questions about IUCN's engagement with community partners, in management frameworks and policy work.

Comments by respondents revealed a key factor of success in engaging partners. In one region, strong Country Offices who already have relationships with key partners, helped WANI engage at the national level. In another region, the presence of National Membership Committees has filled a similar role. Conversely, in regions where IUCN does not have similar structures, partnerships have been slow to form.

Overall, many respondents assessed the engagement of partners as "too early to tell" or "taking a long time" because implementation is just starting.

### ***Factors Supporting the Initiation and Implementation of WANI***

#### **Finding 10. Factors supporting WANI.**

In this part of the self-assessment, respondents were asked to identify factors supporting the initiation and implementation of WANI. The largest number of respondents said that the availability of seed funding from the global WANI fund in the regions was a key factor. A somewhat smaller number identified the international attention to water issues through The Vision for Water and Nature as being important.

Other key factors supporting WANI include the commitment of staff and partners, the emergence of WANI from a strong IUCN Wetlands Programme and the good fit between what WANI is trying to do and the regional programme with which WANI is working.

A few respondents noted WANI's strong concept and approach, its flexibility and adaptability and clear focus on biodiversity as important factors.

### ***Factors Hindering the Initiation and Implementation of WANI***

#### **Finding 11. Factors hindering WANI.**

As part of the self-assessment, respondents were asked to comment upon factors that hindered the initiation and implementation of WANI. The responses compiled here tend to reflect and summarize issues raised in previous sections.

The most important factors hindering WANI were identified as lack of capacity and problems with co-funding. As discussed in previous sections, these two problems appear to be mutually reinforcing. Considerable capacity is required to undertake fundraising and administer co-funding arrangements, while co-funding is essential to the WANI model, particularly to reach implementation.

Other significant factors identified as hindering WANI include a perceived lack of communication and collaboration either between HQ and the regions or between WANI and other thematic programmes. In some cases, respondents noted WANI's

slow progress in reaching the implementation stage and this was supported by some observations that IUCN had to build credentials in the water arena before funds could be raised and partnerships arranged.

## ***Suggestions for Improvements***

### **Finding 12. Suggestions for improvement.**

In light of their responses, each interviewee was asked for suggestions to improve WANI.

The greatest number of respondents suggested that WANI should improve collaboration with a range of partners. These included other thematic programmes, between global and regional levels, with Commissions, between regions, with the International Conventions and specifically, with the Global Environment Facility.

A somewhat smaller, but still highly significant number of respondents suggested that WANI increase capacity. Specifically, some respondents think that WANI should increase capacity at HQ, in the regions and in monitoring and evaluation.

Aside from the two most important and widely held suggestions for improvement, individual responses suggested that WANI increase flexibility to address priorities, increase space for learning and increase communication outside of WANI with other stakeholders.

## ***Risk***

### **Finding 13. The greatest risk factors facing WANI include – potential failure to**

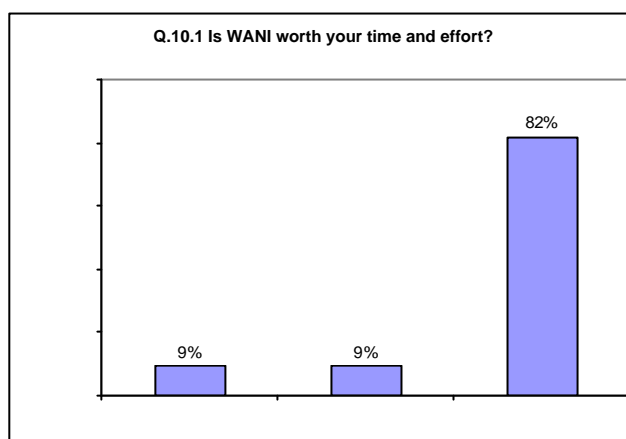
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Finally, risks to IUCN's image and reputation were most often identified by respondents as the need to show results on time to donors and partners. WANI is a large and ambitious programme, interacting with many donors and partners, and as such, there is risk if results are not produced.

## **Overall Assessment of WANI**

**Finding 14. An overwhelming majority (82 percent) indicate that WANI is worth their time and effort.**

Many respondents offered positive comments: calling WANI a "worthwhile approach," seeing "worthwhile learning opportunities," and suggesting that WANI is "worth the time of more people within IUCN." One respondent would "like to see more programmes operating as WANI – it would be worthwhile to learn why WANI is successful and share lessons."



There were some cautionary comments as well, particularly on the need to proceed with implementation urgently and the need to sort out how WANI will learn from its diverse experiences and share lessons with others.

Overall, respondents' assessment of WANI seems to reflect a high level of interest in and commitment to WANI.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendations WANI internal review**

The following recommendations are made in response to the outcomes of the WANI self-assessment.

#### **Recommendation 1.**

Maintain global leadership and strengthening of regional leadership through ensuring IUCN presence at critical regional water policy events, regular field project visits and continuous feedback to project staff.

**Recommendation 2.**

Strengthen IUCN's capacity to implement WANI projects through the hiring of staff, training, technical backstopping and coaching.

**Recommendation 3.**

Strengthen M&E implementation at project and initiative level (regional and global) through enhancing existing M&E support mechanism (e.g. simplified WANI forms, clear reporting time tables, clear MoUs) and M&E input from regional M&E staff.

**Recommendation 4.**

Develop a full WANI learning strategy defining mechanisms, products, services and outcomes and building on the expertise developing under the different WANI components. Also time should be created to allow staff to reflect and 'get into' learning.

**Recommendation 5.**

Further strengthen the WANI fund-raising drive, especially at regional levels through the development of proposals, approaching regional-based donor agencies and networking at key policy meetings with partners and donors.

**Recommendation 6.**



## **Annex 1: WANI Self Assessment Interview Guide - Questions**

### ***TAKING STOCK – A SELF ASSESSMENT OF WANI – THE IUCN WATER AND NATURE INITIATIVE***

#### **Introduction**

As part of their ongoing monitoring and oversight of the Water and Nature Initiative (WANI), the Head of the Wetlands and Water Resources, and the WANI Coordinator have initiated a self assessment process to take stock of experiences in implementing WANI to date.

The purpose of the self assessment process is to provide feedback to the WANI Advisory Committee meeting in July, 2003 so that any necessary adjustments can be made in a timely and informed manner, thus guiding the future development of WANI.

The self assessment will seek feedback from three stakeholder groups at regional and global levels:

1. At an operational level, from IUCN staff responsible for managing WANI at regional and global levels;
2. From senior programme staff (Regional Directors, Programme Coordinators and heads of thematic programmes) at a broader strategic level; and
3. From Commission members involved in WANI.

It was felt by the management of WANI that it was too early to include Implementing Partners in the self assessment since they are just coming on board. They will be included in future assessments once projects are fully operational. Likewise, donors will be included in a later review.

In order to obtain as candid and open feedback as possible, this self assessment process is being administered by the IUCN Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative. A member of the global M&E Team will contact stakeholders to set up an interview based on the attached questions.

Individual responses will be confidential and will be compiled by the M&E Initiative. No names will be misetative. A

## **Interview Guide**

### **Background information**

#### **Where WANI started .....**

The Water and Nature Initiative began in December 2000 with the acceptance of proposals presented by IUCN to DGIS. Initial discussions took place during 2001 and the WANI project agreement was officially signed with IUCN in early 2001. Since that time many donors and partners have joined the Initiative. The first Advisory Committee meeting for WANI took place in June 2001 which signaled the 'official'

The interviewer will ask you to respond to the following questions, using the scales indicated below. You may fill these out in advance and return them to the interviewer for use in the interview. Or you may use the interview guide to respond verbally to the questions by phone and the interviewer will record your answers and comments in each area. The advantage of the former is that it gives you more time to expand on your answers in the interview, thus providing a richer understanding of your perceptions and answers.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the request for an interview.

## Respondent information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Stakeholder group to which the respondent belongs:

1. IUCN senior programme staff at:

Regional level

Global level

2. IUCN WANI staff at:

Regional level

Global level

3. Commission

Commission member

## Questions

### *Original Concept and Assumptions*

Please rank the extent to which the original concept and assumptions behind WANI are still valid:

	Not valid	Somewhat valid	Valid	Quite valid	Highly valid
<b>The concept of using the ecosystem approach in the management of water resources</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>The assumptions of empowerment, wise governance, economically sound management, knowledge and accessible information as essential requirements.</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>The assumption that WANI is relevance to your programme.</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>The assumption that WANI is innovative.</b>	0	0	0	0	



**Capacity**

Please rank the extent to which IUCN has the capacity to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate WANI projects:

	No capacity at all	Weak capacity	Average capacity	Above average capacity	Excellent capacity
Capacity to <u>plan</u> WANI projects	0	0	0	0	0
Capacity to <u>implement</u> WANI projects (staff, manage, oversee, including the provision of technical assistance)	0	0	0	0	0
Capacity to <u>monitor</u> WANI projects	0	0	0	0	0
Capacity to <u>evaluate</u> WANI projects	0	0	0	0	0

Comments:

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**Funding**

Please rank the adequacy of fund raising for WANI at regional and global levels.

	Not at all satisfactory	Not very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
Regional level	0	0	0	0	0
Global level	0	0	0	0	0
Adequacy of co-funding or parallel funding	0	0	0	0	0

Comments

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***Operational Support***

Please rank the adequacy of the operational support from the IUCN Secretariat for WANI – i.e. administration, financial tracking, MOUs, staffing.

	Not at all satisfactory	Not very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
<b>Regional level</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Global level</b>	0	0	0	0	0

**Comments**

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***Engagement of Partners***

Please rank the effectiveness of IUCN's efforts to engage partners in WANI at national and community level and in management frameworks and policies.

	Not effective	Somewhat effective	Effective	Very effective	Highly effective
<b>Engagement at national level</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Engagement at community level</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Engagement in management frameworks</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Engagement in policies</b>	0	0	0	0	0

**Comments**

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***What has worked, what has not***

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*What has not*

What factors have hindered the initiation and implementation of WANI.

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*Suggestions for improvements*

What would you change, adapt, modify, cancel, do more, do less? (e.g.