Survey report on CEC members' needs and communication circumstances

Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA)

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QUICK READ SUMMARY

Main findings

- CEC has currently members in 14 Eastern and Southern Arican (ESA) countries. Representatives of seven countries took place in the survey. Just over 22% of members participated in the survey. Survey results are considered indicative and must be interpreted with some caution.
- Profiles of CEC members: CEC members represent a wide range of institutions and technical backgrounds. A reasonable gender balance is observed, although youth representatives (under the age of 35) are underrepresented. Certain countries have no CEC members or only a very limited number.
- Target and interaction groups: The CEC ESA membership engages with a wide diversity of target/interaction groups. Whereas in the past a strong focus was on "traditional" Environmental Education, membership and expertise have broadened to address broader learning and communication needs, in line with trends observed in other CEC regions.
- Communication interaction: Access to online information seems to be an important need for CEC members in ESA. However, limitations in accessibility of internet are highlighted as key weaknesses. Limited resources to actually download, print and distribute materials seem to be a key barrier to effective use of internet based resources.
- Very few respondents seem to be familiar with more modern applications of social media and communication. Partially this seems to bee due to a lack of exposure, however, another key issue remains the limited accessibility to the hardware. Although all respondents have access to internet and cell phones, the quality of connectivity, frequency of access and costs vary greatly between CEC members and countries.
- Members' expectations of CEC: Numerous ideas of what and how CEC can add value to the ongoing work of the experts and function as a network were proposed, especially serving as a provider of technical information.

Key recommendations

1. CEC regional

- Membership: Need to actively solicit members with CEC relevant expertise, in line with revolving CEC profile. Specifically identify CEC members in countries with no/little membership and target youth.
- Network: Review and improve network delivery to better meet CEC member key expectations; use survey results as planning foundation (see detailed proposals on page 9).

2. CEC global

- Network: Consider survey results in the further development and projects of the CEC Global, especially new networking approach. Design relevant and more specific follow-up surveys/ needs assessments..
- Communication means: Keep technical and technological barriers in mind, especially when CEC Global is devising strategies for improving its outreach and communication i.e. through a web-based communication platform. Needs of other target groups to be considered (constituency with whom the CEC members interface).

Background

In December 2009 the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) - Commission on Education and Communication (CEC) conducted a quick web survey among CEC worldwide, seeking input into planning and designing a new CEC website or web portal (see www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/cec?4483/CEC-website-survey-results for the result summary).

In the African regions it was found that some of the proposed website tools and technologies may be hard to navigate for our membership. We often are challenged by realities that prohibit long-time internet connectivity and downloading of larger files. It is often difficult to become a member of an online discussion group and overall connection to the global world of experts and practitioners may be harder to administer than generally believed. Further limited information was available from CEC members in Africa with regards to their own work constituency and needs and expectations with regard to their CEC membership.

A follow-up survey that had the following three main objectives was design and conducted in the Eastern and Southern African (ESA) and Western and Central African WCA) regions in late March to early April.

The main objectives included:

1. To gain in-depth understanding about the suitability of the planned webportal for communication and use by our CEC membership in these regions – and on possible alternatives.
2. To assess with which key stakeholder groups our CEC members primarily work in their countries and what type of support from CEC they would require to facilitate their work.
3. To understand what the memberships' expectations are on the CEC as a network organization – and how such expectations can be met.

This report is divided into four key sections:

- Profile of respondents
- Learning and communication community interactions: key target group and operation profiles of CEC members in ESA
- Communication media used by CEC members in ESA region: key constraints and opportunities
- Members' exoutat03 Tw 1078>Ŧj /TTECixoution

Profile of respondents

In ESA region a total of eleven (11) responses were received out of a membership of 49 CEC members, adding to a participation of 22.4 % of the membership. Not all questions were responded to by all survey participants.

Out of overall 14 countries that have CEC membership currently[1], members in seven (7) countries in the region, namely Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia (see Figure 1) submitted the online version of the questionnaire, with a majority of submissions made by South African CEC members. No responses on the to the survey request attached word file were received by mail or fax.

More female CEC members responded to the survey (6) compared to male members (5), and the highest contribution came from females in the age group between 35-55 years of age (Figure 2).

Many of the survey respondents worked with National Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (5), followed by Universities (3) and Consultancies (2), some having multiple functions in one or more organizations (Figure 3). Only one (1) respondent respectively worked for Government or an international NGO.

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Learning and communication community interactions: key target group and operation profiles of CEC members in ESA

Table 1 depicts with what type of target and interaction groups the CEC members from the ESA region mainly interact in their environmental education, communication and learning work. It is interesting that most respondents (multiple answers were possible in terms of Options 1 to 6) are working with Technical Professionals (21), whilst University (17), Schools (17) and Policy Makers (11) followed closely. According to the sub-groupings the single most interacted with stakeholder group are students at University level. Amongst the Technical Professionals it is interesting that a majority of interactions are with Government personnel in this category.

Selections under the Options (1 to 6, “first option”, “second option” etc.) provided some more detailed ranking results. A relevant summary table is included in Annex 1.

Broad target group	Detailed sub -

Notable are the responses that have been provided to further explain and corroborate the choices, listed in the following table (Table 3), especially major constraints encountered with using or applying the respective tools and resources. Bottlenecks such as poor accessibility especially of internet infrastructure, prohibitively high costs for internet and printing infrastructure and consumables, but also cell phone use will be difficult to address, whilst capacity constraints in terms of lack of understanding and knowledge about certain tools could potentially be easier to overcome.

Support needs/tools	Constraints/opportunities (please elaborate)
Printed reference materials, e.g. books, publications, journals	

The cost of internet and cell phone subscription varies greatly within the ESA region. For internet the costs are

Members' expectations of CEC – globally and regionally and suggestions for operationalisation of network

In a nutshell the expectations for the global and regional CEC are that the Commission serve as a network and facilitate network activities. Creating access to information especially for use and application in a local context in lectures, workshops, training materials etc. was cited frequently. Fellow CEC members were seen to avail their expertise e.g. as trainers or mentors on specific issues. A specific role in providing cutting edge information on e-learning, finding appropriate model(s) for promoting it is envisaged. The full list of contributions is included in Box 1.

As a member of IUCN in the ESA region - what are your expectations from the global IUCN - CEC network?

- To establish contact with other IUCN members involved in similar activities
- To provide the network and links
- Appreciate current information on global conservation issues
- Provide technical information on environmental issues for lecturers, workshop, and seminars with students, teachers, etc.
- Training and exchange of information and experience from fellow CEC members
- Active interaction amongst regional members of CEC interactions with other IUCN institutions (Secretariat, members)
- Specialist views and inputs into IUCN work especially from country level.
- Training workshops and materials, provide internet connectivity
- To help find the appropriate model(s) to promote e-learning in the southern African prohibit

Ideas for how the specific regional interactions of the CEC could be improved to serve the various countries' needs mostly indicate that it would be extremely useful to have at least some face-to-face interaction for network members to get to know one another. It is recognized that the costs may be prohibitively high, but it is clear that workshops, meetings and personal interactions are rated to be of high value. Internet based communication and networking is identified as an option, however several remarks still draw to the fact that accessibility to adequate technology is a prohibiting factor. See Box 2 for the full list of contributions.

How can CEC -

During the first quarter of 2010, a dedicated list server for ESA CEC membership was established by the global CEC. A suite of correspondences such as bi-monthly updates from the Regional Vice Chair and

specific requests for inputs e.g. into the agenda for the CEC Steering Committee Meeting and the to be tabled ESA report were posted.

Only seven (7) respondents answered this question, and four (4) found it quite useful, whilst three (3) did not find it very useful or not useful at all.

Six respondents provided more detailed comments, from which it emerged that mostly CEC members did not quite understand yet how it would function or had not even seen it. The most substantiated contribution was:

" Good for sending out communications; not yet fully interactive; interface not user friendly and modern/professional enough".

Other general comments on how CEC ESA could be strengthened mostly echoed the previous responses