

Evaluation Abstract

Title, author and date of the evaluation report:

Internal Review of the Asia Regional Forest Programme, prepared by Alex Moiseev, June 2005

Name of project, programme or organizational unit:

Regional Forest Programme (RFP)

Objectives of the project, programme or mandate of the organizational unit:

The 2001-2004 objectives of the RFP were:

1. Forest ecosystems, habitats and species are conserved and restored;
2. Natural Resources are used and managed on an equitable and sustainable basis within and among nations, communities and gender groups;
3. A dynamic, effective, sustainable organization that is efficiently managed to pursue IUCN's mission in the region.

IUCN area of specialisation: Forest Conservation

Geographical area: Asia Region

Project or programme duration, length of existence of organisational unit: 1997 – to date

Overall budget of the project, programme or organizational unit: Not specified

Donor(s): DGIS through the IUCN Forest Programme

Objectives of the evaluation:

To generate in-depth dialogue about the past and future of the RFP unit by exploring its mandate and delivery

Type of evaluation: Programme

Period covered by the evaluation: 2001 – 2004

Commissioned by: RFP Coordinator

Audience: RFP Coordinator, IUCN-ARO Senior Management, Head of the Global Forest Conservation Programme

Evaluation team: Internal

Methodology used:

The Review comprised of a document review (publications, meeting reports, project proposals, programme descriptions, etc), structured and semi-structured interviews with 27 RFP stakeholders across Asia Region and from IUCN-HQ (IUCN managers, Country Office Staff, members and Partners), and two mini-workshops to discuss findings and possible recommendations.

Questions of the evaluation:

Mandate – past: Is the fundamental purpose of the unit clear? How was it established? To whom is the RFP work content relevant? What are its driving forces in terms of programmatic priorities?

Mandate – future: Is there a need to modify the mandate or programmatic priorities of the unit? Who are the main constituencies or drivers to be taken into consideration in the future? What did the RFP deliver (outputs and activities)? How effective has the RFP been in achieving its programmatic results? How well is its work integrated with the other IUCN components? How are relationships with working partners managed? How well respected or credible is the work of the RFP within and outside IUCN? How efficient is RFP delivery?

Delivery: Are there any adjustments needed to RFP delivery of products, results and processes? To the programmatic aspects of the fund-raising strategy? To the linkages with other IUCN components? To handling partner relationships? How programmatically viable looks the RFP over the next 3-5 years?

A comprehensive list of the review questions is available in Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix, including sub-questions and data sources.

Findings:

- Overall the RFP is a well-regarded programme that is undertaking relevant work and producing useful products and services. The main challenges are related to its: (1) capacity to deliver, (2) intelligence gathering on donor priorities; and (3) developing a clear Intersessional Plan for 2005-2008.
- *Mandate.* The RFP can potentially receive its mandate from three different sources: the Asia Ecosystems and Livelihoods Group (ELG), the Global Forest Conservation Programme and the Country Offices of Asia Region.
- *Products/Services.* With very few exceptions, stakeholders find the products and services of the RFP to be highly relevant to audiences that IUCN is trying to reach, of high quality and credibility.
- *Partnerships and Integration.* The experience of integration with Country Offices, the Global Forest Conservation Programme, other Regional Thematic Programmes (RTP) and the ELG has been very mixed. The common factors that support effective partnerships and integration include resources, trust, and shared priorities, while the factors that work against partnerships and integration include time, capacity and communication. The RFP seems most integrated into the Global Forest Team.
- The RFP has not adequately, in all cases, communicated its intent and priorities with regard to partnerships and integration.
- *Delivery.* The RFP has delivered well on the issues on which it is able to engage in the locations where it is working, however, the RFP does not work in all parts of Asia Region nor on all issues evenly.
- *Financial Model.* Apart from the core funding grant from the Global Forest Conservation Programme, the RFP has been unsuccessful until recently in securing additional funds. The causes include: a downturn in investment in forest conservation globally, various reorientations among donors, lack of donor intelligence on donor tendencies and interests, incomplete fundraising proposals, a lack of time and space to engage in fundraising activities and a lack of meaningful integration with other elements of ARO, particularly the other RTPs.

Recommendations:

The following are among the key recommendations of the Review:

- Develop, in collaboration with Forest Focal Points and Country Offices, a vision for a regionalized forest team, supported by a set of roles and responsibilities that formalizes the Forest Focal Points as an advisory body to the Regional Forest Programme.
- As a priority demonstration, secure resources for one regionalized project (3 to 5 year term) that could support forest officers in a select number of countries and link local/country level experiences with a regional policy priority.
- Undertake an institutional or stakeholder analysis of members and partners in Asia Region.

- Over the intersessional period, and in collaboration with ELG, undertake a pilot exercise to track the use and impact of selected RFP products.
- RFP must communicate its programmatic intentions and strategic directions much more clearly to Country Offices and RTPs. In addition, the ELG should undertake a review of integration issues.
- Strengthen fundraising by gathering and maintaining a database of donor intelligence, undertaking joint programming and engaging donors earlier in the proposal.
- Maintain, and preferably, expand the current capacity of the RFP. To deliver a programme similar in scope to the 2001-2004 programme, capacity should be increased to support communications, interactions/integration with other elements of ARO (other ELGs and COs), reporting, implementation and some aspects of fundraising. Ideally, an investment should be made to support a forest officer in one or more Country Offices, reporting directly to the RFP, rather than the Country Office.
- Pursue the Global Forest Conservation Programme's and Ecosystems and Livelihoods Group's offer to understanding joint fundraising with the RFP.

Lessons Learned: N/A

Language of the evaluation: English

Available from: IUCN Global Monitoring & Evaluation Initiative, Gland, Switzerland; IUCN Asia Regional Office (ARO)