

# SDC EXTERNAL REVIEW OF IUCN 2019

## Evaluation Management Response

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### Management Response Narrative

May 2020

#### Background:

This External Review was commissioned by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) as part of the contractual terms of the three-year Framework Agreement signed between IUCN and SDC in December 2017.

The objective of the review was to **evaluate the development relevancy of IUCN's programme** and its contribution to sustainable development at global and national levels as well as to provide insights on how SDC can contribute, with the help of its core contribution, in further strengthening IUCN's strategic orientation and systemic approach towards the three pillars (environmental, social, economic) of Sustainable Development.

The results of the review are intended to inform SDC's decision for further core funding beyond 2020 and inform SDC's positioning towards IUCN as a donor and strategic partner. The Terms of Reference were prepared by SDC, with input from IUCN. Jordan, Senegal and Myanmar were identified by SDC as priority countries for the case studies.

IUCN's Management Response, presented here, addresses the five recommendations put forward by the reviewers relating to IUCN's Theory of Change, in country political-economy analysis, influencing, potential establishment of a Societal Transformational Group and building an evaluation culture. For each topic, the tabular format outlines key actions, expected completion date, status and responsibility, which will be used to track progress in implementing the recommendations of this Review.

#### IUCN's response:

**IUCN welcomes SDC's review and its recommendations** as the basis for a strengthened dialogue and continued engagement with SDC.

We welcome the recognition of IUCN's global leadership in developing approaches for nature conservation where people are fundamental as well as its potential (embedded in its current work) to contribute to societal transformation.

IUCN's Mission is to "**Influence, encourage and assist societies to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable**". The review notes that 'staff and members require a change in perspective indicating that it is not enough to focus on nature conservation'.

IUCN's Mission and programme clearly acknowledge the intrinsic relationship between people and nature. This is further acknowledged in IUCN's 2021-2024 Programme where People and how nature's contribution to people is shared and distributed from the local to the global level and how humanity, women and men, young and old, poor and rich, are enabled to take informed, equitable and sustainable decisions. IUCN's values and approach also emphasise the need for a just

transition as the world moves to transform its economies and societies to address our urgent planetary challenges.

The selection of the country programmes for the evaluation were predicated primarily on answering the “development relevancy” of IUCN’s work and its contribution to Sustainable Development. The review states that SDC views sustainable development as “*the transformation of society – as a profound change in the way a society functions – offering economic opportunities to people and being socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and gender and climate change responsive*”..

At SDC’s suggestion, IUCN’s work in Myanmar, where IUCN has only very recently established an operational presence, and Jordan, where the portfolio is relatively restricted in scope and size, as well as Senegal, were reviewed. The review acknowledges that IUCN has an extensive geographical and thematical reach and that this review cannot possibly do justice to all its work.

As an international Membership organisation, that brings together sovereign States, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations and indigenous peoples’ organizations, IUCN must balance the multiple perspectives and positions of different actors. As a Union, IUCN is asked to lead under the guidance of its membership, to influence and push for a just world that conserves and values nature through the implementation of its quadrennial Programme (approved by its Members).

The evaluation has tended to focus on transformative change as a local, community-driven set of actions. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the ‘scoring’ of work in the country case studies where community driven actions are seen to be more transformative, but with less attention paid to the impact of these actions beyond the projects themselves, or to the sustainability of these interventions.

Furthermore, a large part of IUCN’s work involves partnership development, policy influencing and dialogue through convening stakeholders. This makes a direct causal link to “transformative change” processes harder to clearly attribute to IUCN’s action. However, links to both sustainability and development are clearer, when IUCN’s facilitative work – even in the role of convenor and technical advisor - is the driver behind improved natural resource governance.

When assessing IUCN’s approach to nature conservation and sustainable development, the review describes IUCN’s governance entry point as contributing directly only to environmental results (which then indirectly underpin some social development results, to the extent that these rely on natural resources/nature based solutions).

IUCN’s Natural Resource Governance Framework explicitly contributes directly to both environmental (conservation, resilience) and social (human rights, social equity) outcomes. It does this by integrating both social and environmental concerns and outcomes in the framework and analytical approach. Equally, the report does not appear to take into account the substantive body of internal policy guidance (IUCN Resolutions) that requires IUCN to adhere to a “rights-based approach” and specific manifestations of such an approach such as “free, prior and informed consent” – all of which have substantial implications beyond the immediacy of delivering environmental outcomes.

The review makes a number of relevant recommendations that IUCN will work on implementing over the next two years with the support of SDC. IUCN welcomes a strengthened dialogue with SDC moving forward as it embarks on its 2021-2024 Programme.

Responses to each of the five recommendations made in the evaluation are provided in the following table.

Recommendation	Management response	Intended Result	Actions planned (including timeframe)	Completed Actions (progress update)	Responsibility
<p><u>Recommendation 1:</u></p> <p><b>Develop its own clear concept on sustainable development and spell-out a Theory of Change on how to deliberately contribute to such sustainable development, including defining IUCN's boundary partners<sup>1</sup> and how IUCN can affect their perspective, rationale and behaviour</b></p> <p>---</p>	<p><b>IUCN disagrees</b> with the statement that IUCN must develop its own clear concept of sustainable development.</p> <p>Sustainable Development is already clearly defined. The SDGs are globally agreed targets that allow the world to track progress - they are much more than "mere signposts". IUCN is committed to supporting countries to deliver on the SDGs - the goals that they have collectively agreed on. IUCN believes that achieving the 17 SDGs will make a significant contribution to achieving a just world that values and conserves nature.</p> <p><b>IUCN agrees</b> and acknowledges the need to strengthen its Theory of Change (ToC). Initially developed as a communication tool for donors and partners, the ToC falls short as a management tool and does not capture the conceptual details of the work currently underway. The 2021-2024 Programme offers an opportunity to build a strong and robust theory of change.</p>	<p>Clear articulation of ToC. Greater ease of use and reference to the ToC in the implementation of the 2021-2024 Programme</p>	<p>Work with IUCN members to ensure ToC is discussed and integrated into approval of 2021-2024 Programme during General Assembly of Members (WCC Marseille in January 2021).</p>		<p>Executive Management Team &amp; Head of PM&amp;E</p>

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<sup>1</sup> The International Development Research Center in Ottawa, Canada, defines boundary partners as '*individuals, groups or organizations with whom a program interacts directly and with whom the program anticipates opportunities for influence*'. Source: Earl, Sarah, Fred Carden, and Terry Smutylo. 2001. Outcome Mapping. Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs. Ottawa: International Development Research Center

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<p><u>Recommendation 2:</u></p> <p><b>Undertake explicit political-economy analysis in its global and in-country engagements – with the same depth and rigor of its environmental and gender assessments – to uncover IUCN's potential and best strategy to affect societal transformations alongside its conservation work.</b></p>	<p><b>IUCN agrees</b> with this recommendation.</p> <p>IUCN has many examples of where political-economic analyses have been carried out as part of its engagements. Such analyses are increasingly a feature of IUCN's role as GEF Project Agency and GCF Accredited Entity, which require such analytics to underpin large-scale interventions.</p> <p>As the IUCN portfolio continues to grow, more countries become interested in becoming IUCN State Members and large interventions that are executed by Members and other partners become more common, <b>IUCN recognises the need to have more robust political-economic analytics underpinning its global</b>, regional and in-country interventions. This should be accompanied by a more systematic and consistent approach in relation to environmental analysis. A tool that can serve this purpose is the IUCN Natural Resource Governance Framework, which needs to be implemented more widely and systematically, with more effective mechanisms for integrating its analytical results into programmatic work.</p>	<p>Coherent IUCN programmatic approach across all of IUCN geographic areas of intervention.</p> <p>Increased attention to issues of social change (rights, equity, inclusion, economic alternatives) in its analysis and programmatic outcomes.</p> <p>Mainstreaming the analytical outputs of tools, such as IUCN Natural Resource Governance Framework (NRGF), into IUCN's programmatic work at the global, regional and country levels.</p>	<p>Detailed analytical studies carried out for large programme development (e.g. GCF/GEF) 2020-2024.</p> <p>Piloting and adoption of NGRF into ongoing programmes 2020-2024</p> <p>Development of country profiles 2020 -2022<sup>2</sup></p>		<p>Executive Management Team/ Head of PM&amp;E</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 3:</u></p> <p><b>Based on this Theory of Change and political-economy analysis to act more strategic, more</b></p>	<p><b>IUCN partially agrees</b> with this recommendation.</p> <p>Through its long standing presence on the ground, IUCN has built strong relations with</p>	<p>Increased engagement with different types of partners with power and interests to effect change, considering</p>	<p>Define strategic alliances (with state and non-state actors) prior to planned events, and global and</p>		<p>Executive Management Team</p>

<sup>2</sup> Already contemplated in the Operational Management Plan 2021-2024

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<p><b>political (without engaging in politics) by influencing and working with those partners with the power and interests to affect change</b></p>	<p>influential boundary partners in a number of countries. This is also the case at the global level. However, IUCN recognises that a more systematic and strategic approach to how it engages with these partners is needed. Jointly, Recommendations 1 and 2 should support a more strategic engagement and influence.</p> <p>IUCN also recognizes the importance of engaging with more diverse groups of partners who can be allies in promoting changes to dominant values and economic models. However, <b>IUCN does not agree</b> with the notion that its interventions are not political enough, and fall short in generating change at the national level. Within countries, such change processes tend to require time, often spanning more than one government period, or single project period. Effective influencing can also entail upscaling from successful experiences at the local level, whereby local authorities, private agents and community leaders become themselves advocates for driving change at the national level. IUCN has numerous examples of contributions to global policy agenda as well as law and policy reforms at country level that benefit millions of people. This would have been more evident, had the project sample been more appropriate.</p>	<p>national, regional and global scales.</p>	<p>regional activities with an influencing agenda (using the Global Policy calendar as a basis for planning).</p> <p>Ensure appropriate tools and guidance is given to global and regional units on driving policy changes at the national and global levels.</p>		
<p><u>Recommendation 4:</u></p>	<p><b>IUCN agrees</b> with the need to build stronger multidisciplinary teams. Many of the skills highlighted already exist in IUCN and within its</p>	<p>Integrated delivery across the Union</p>	<p>Greater senior management</p>		<p>Director General</p>

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<p><b>Establish a Societal Transformation Group – on par with the Nature-Based Solutions and Biodiversity Groups – staffed with anthropologists, economists, political scientists, system thinkers, agronomists, foresters, advocacy and communication specialists, etc., to identify, develop and implement approaches to societal transformations which change the current dominant values and economic models and – through advocacy and communication campaigns, and targeted (demonstration) projects, and in line with its own mission statement – help instigate the transformation of today's unsustainable social-environmental-economic systems.</b>  <b>(Others suggested names: Sustainable Development and Innovation Group, Behavioural Change Group, Nudging Group, etc.)</b></p>	<p>Commissions (16,000 members). Mechanisms have been put in place (job families, matrix management, etc.) which need to be strengthened to ensure that staff with this mix of skills and training are able to work together across programs and regions..</p> <p><b>IUCN disagrees</b> with the recommendation to create a new structure (eg. Societal Transformational Group) - however, the establishment of an Innovation working group could be explored moving forward</p>		<p>accountability to ensure that skills/profiles that already exists in IUCN are assembled to ensure multidisciplinary teams for integrated delivery IUCN (continuous 2020-2024)</p> <p>Explore the potential for establishing an Innovation working group.</p>		
<p><u>Recommendation 5:</u></p> <p><b>Develop a rigorous evaluation practice and, in support, establish an independent</b></p>	<p><b>IUCN disagrees</b> with the need to establish an independent evaluation group reporting to the Council.</p>	<p>Increasing programmatic effectiveness by mainstreaming M&amp;E and learning.</p>	<p>Conduct an M&amp;E systems 'audit' and identify gaps (2020-2021).</p>		<p>DG/Head of PM&amp;E</p>

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<p><b>evaluation group reporting directly to the IUCN Council. This can be small group of evaluation managers which commission and manage external evaluations or a larger group of evaluation experts which undertake the evaluations themselves (To prevent a potential conflict of interest, these evaluation experts must be term-limited without the possibility to transfer to other parts of the IUCN Secretariat. The staff of the Evaluation Office of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs are limited to a 7-year term)</b></p>	<p>A Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Unit already exists reporting to the Director General. The Director General, as the chief executive of the IUCN Secretariat, is responsible for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme of IUCN, as established by the World Congress and the Council (IUCN Statutes Articles 78/79). The Director General is subject to the authority of the Council.</p> <p><b>IUCN agrees</b> on need to strengthen and enhance its evaluation culture and acknowledges that further investments are required over the course of 2020 to 2022 to achieve a more comprehensive and robust implementation of IUCN's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and improve internal understanding, practices and standards in relation to M&amp;E, reporting and learning. This could entail using approaches such as the NRGF to generate information on transformative approaches that can be monitored over time through such evaluations.</p>	<p>Ensuring inclusiveness, transparency and accountability in programme delivery</p>	<p>Support the implementation of monitoring, evaluation and learning cycles across the organisation (2020-2024)</p> <p>Reconstituting the M&amp;E unit by filling the vacant positions. 2020-2021</p> <p>Increasing investment for M&amp;E (need to track the M&amp;E annual budgets) 2020-2024</p>		