

FINAL REPORT

SOS PARTNERSHIP EVALUATION

AUGUST 2014

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1. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

- **Organisations:**

AZE	Alliance for Zero Extinction
CEPF	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
CITES	Convention on Illegal Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CMP	Conservation Measures Partnership
FFEM	Fond Français pour l'Environnement Mondial
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KFW	German Development Bank
SSC	Species Survival Commission
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
ZSL	Zoological Society of London

- **Save Our Species specific:**

CFP	Call For Proposals
GEO	Global Environment Objective
PDO	Project Development Objective
RAG	Rapid Action Grant
SOS	Save Our Species
TSG	Threatened Species Grant

- **Other:**

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Evaluation objectives

The purpose of the Save Our Species (SOS) Partnership evaluation, 2014, is to strengthen SOS as a grant making mechanism and as a means of delivering outcomes and impacts for threatened species conservation. Commissioned by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the evaluation is mainly for use by the IUCN, SOS management and its major donors. The evaluation objectives are to (1) assess the extent to which SOS is relevant and appropriate to the grantees and species conservation; (2) Assess the different kinds of conservation actions SOS tends to support and the extent to which grantees are able to report conservation impacts and outcomes and; (3) Generate lessons learned to date on the implementation of SOS, covering management and governance of SOS.

2.2 Partnership description

Launched in October 2010, The SOS Partnership is a species conservation fund and grant-making-mechanism which aims to improve the conservation status of globally threatened species, their critical habitats and the people depending on them. The Partnership was founded by the World Bank, the GEF (Global Environment Facility) and IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

The first phase of SOS is running over a five year period (2010-15) and was particularly designed to direct private sector resources towards conservation levels, with the Partnership considered as well-positioned and credible to do so. It was envisaged that SOS would leverage much-needed additional funding for species conservation, especially from the private sector (and some other sources e.g. public sector), and target many threatened species. The aim was for SOS to raise its expected costs of US\$20million during its first phase, half of which was pledged by the World Bank and GEF, with the remaining US\$10million to be raised by the SOS Secretariat. Due to less than expected funds from the World Bank and less than expected success with corporate fundraising, the actual total funds for this period equated to US\$12.8million: 64% of the original aim. The SOS Secretariat raised US\$4million within this total, and in addition secured a EUR 20 million pledge from KFW, the German development Bank, for the funding of an Integrated Tiger and Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP) within IUCN. While strictly speaking not falling under SOS, funding for this new initiative is one of its direct fundraising successes and the programme will be based on the same structure and principles directing SOS.

The fundraising strategy has progressed and from 2014, the strategy for SOS has re-visited its short and long-term objectives and has more conservative targets. The strategy maintains a private sector focus with the targeting of organisations that can use SOS as a mechanism to achieve environment related goals, or provide sponsorship through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)/philanthropy. There is also more emphasis on the inclusion of other sources such as foundations and public sector donations.

The SOS Partnership is governed by a Donor Council, supported by a Technical Advisory Group and managed by a small Secretariat (3.5 people). The Partnership's main objectives are: (1) to support the establishment of a viable funding mechanism for the conservation of globally threatened species and their habitats supported by private sector contributions and administered by a competent

organisation with global reach and: (2) to improve the conservation status of globally threatened species or populations and their habitats.

Threatened Species Grant (TSG) project proposals are accepted following a call for proposals, based on a set of strategic directions for each call. These strategic directions are identified in consultation with IUCN Global Species Programme and Species Survival Commission (SSC), and guided by species action plans (existing or required) and information from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. There are also proposals which can be accepted outside of the strategic directions which are emergency projects; those which qualify are called 'Rapid Action Grants' (RAG). Proposals received are reviewed (externally and by the Technical Advisory Committee), scored and ranked (projects are also reviewed in terms of financial risk in line with donor requirements) and submitted to the SOS Donor Council for funding approval). Projects also go through an improvement process to strengthen weaker elements. Successful projects are allocated their grant and the project is monitored throughout its progress, with reporting on project impact and performance, and lessons learned generated. There are also limited site visits and all projects keep in contact with the SOS Secretariat.

A portfolio analysis compiled by the SOS Secretariat reveals that in 2014, there are 82 projects in the SOS portfolio (84 approved, 2 cancelled). The majority are grants of less than \$100, 000 and are working on Critically Endangered and Endangered species as categorised by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Most projects supported are in Asia (mostly South East Asia) and Africa (most sub-Saharan Africa) although projects in Asia were allocated a higher amount of the total funds. More than half of the projects and allocated funds focused or are focusing on mammals.

2.3 Methodology

This evaluation was based largely on three main information sources: (1) a Grantees survey (2) projects within the SOS portfolio (15 completed projects, and 20 on-going projects), and (3) direct interviews with people involved with Partnership governance and management. Information from project documents was extracted and compiled in excel spreadsheets for review, with the mostly qualitative information generated from Grantees' feedback and interviews, summarised and quantified where appropriate.

2.4 Key findings and recommendations

A summary of the findings from can be found in Table 1. The full details and the results from which these findings are drawn are in pages 25-44 of this document. The full and explained versions of each listed recommendation in Table 2 can be found on page 47.

Table 1: SOS Evaluation Findings (1-25)

(1) SOS is considered to be relevant and of good value to the vast majority of respondents.
(2) The grant attainment procedures are straightforward and meet grantees' expectations.
(3) Reporting is more than expected or 'too much'.
(4) There are indications that the request for communications may be over-demanding.
(5) SOS procedures can help to generate lessons learned
(6) Support and communications from SOS staff is well received by Grantees.
(7) The SOS experience differs from other grant-making mechanisms in two ways: (a) reporting is too bureaucratic and onerous (b) impacts (e.g. for species status) are too difficult to report.
(8) The majority of projects are smaller components of a long-term programme, either currently or as part of future plans.
(9) SOS Grants can help to leverage further project support, either financial, non-financial or both.
(10) Conservation objectives are facilitated by the award of an SOS grant
(11) From light and informal feedback, projects are reporting conservation outcomes.
(12) There is an indication that achieving outcomes within the Conservation Action categories of 'Law and policy' and 'Livelihood and economics' may be the most challenging.
(13) SOS projects are achieving outcomes for the conservation of threatened species, with more than half of planned results and objectives achieved or exceeded by completed projects.
(14) Projects are achieving unexpected impacts, with the most common cited as 'improved relationships with stakeholders'.
(15) RAG and TSG projects are both achieving conservation objectives, with the majority reporting good progress or objectives being achieved
(16): The majority of projects are, at a minimum, progressing towards a positive impact for species status.
(17): Projects are unlikely to report Red List status change for their focus species within the time frame of SOS' monitoring.
(18): Over half of projects are progressing towards a positive impact for critical habitats, or better (stabilising/improving).
(19): The majority of projects are achieving threat reduction for their species, and where applicable, positive impacts or threat reduction for critical habitat are also being achieved.
(20) At least some element of conservation facilitation has been improved by all completed projects. 'Conservation strategy' appears to be the most commonly achieved conservation facilitation category.
(21): The majority (>60%) of Conservation Action results and objectives in on-going projects are being achieved or exceeded.
(22) The most cited project-specific lessons learned are: good communications, education and outreach, involvement and understanding of roles within stakeholders, and maintaining project flexibility (to new information or ways of working).
(23) Reporting lessons learned is a useful process, with the majority of lessons reported being positive, and providing the opportunity to share learnings with future projects.
(24) Governance arrangements are strong and well-regarded, if not overcomplicated in some respects e.g. structure, review, reporting.
(25) Donor support did not meet expectations in awarding funds which were budgeted for or in facilitating further support through their experience and networks.

Table 1: SOS Evaluation Findings continued (26-37)

(26) There are many constructive suggestions highlighting good potential for the improvement and future expansion of SOS (e.g. avoid conflicts of interest, build capacity in non-English speaking regions, reduce bureaucracy, identify new strategic directions and include underrepresented regions and species, improve links with other conservation initiatives).
(27) The Secretariat is capable but capacity is too low to effectively manage the current portfolio size, the bureaucratic and manual procedures and processes, and the pressure of finding additional funds.
(28) A full-time director and fundraising professional would benefit the Partnership.
(29) The model to seek funding primarily from private sector is flawed, although the global economic downturn has exacerbated the issue.
(30) The use and level of engagement with reporting is low in contrast to the grantees' feedback on the amount of effort and time they put into reporting.
(31) From a governance and management perspective, the most important parts of grantees' reports would be: concise information on impacts, progress against objectives (e.g. tabulated data), and lessons learned.
(32) Communication pieces are challenging to obtain (especially from larger organisations) but are important for the profile of SOS and the individual projects.
(33) The SOS Partnership is not set up or delivered within a time frame appropriate for measuring conservation impact, but does deliver return on investment through delivery of measureable outcomes in the short-term. It is important this understanding underlies SOS Partnership donor support.
(34) Conservation impacts are potentially measurable over a long time-scale and will likely result from collective inputs, of which SOS will be part.
(35) Maintaining good relations (e.g. with project stakeholders) is in itself impactful but difficult to measure.
(36) There are three main aspects to improve: increase and secure the funding base, adapt procedures and reduce bureaucracy in both SOS governance and grants management, and expand Secretariat capacity.
(37) Scaling-up the SOS Partnership is desirable and appropriate based on the niche it fills, matched by the capability and scientific backing of its situation within the IUCN and its network.

*Table 1: Summary of findings of SOS Phase one evaluation, full results are found on pages 25-44***Table 2: Summary of recommendations**

Recommendations	Related to finding(s)
R1: The main SOS donors should continue their support	1, 2, 5, 6, 9-11, 13-16, 18-22, 2-26, 36, 37
R2: Increase the SOS governance and management capacity	1,6, 10, 11, 13-16, 18-22, 24, 26-28, 36,37
R3: Build on the fund raising experiences of SOS Phase One	9-11, 13-16, 18-22, 25, 29
R4: Reduce Bureaucracy	3, 4, 7, 11, 24, 36
R5: Aim for the achievement of objectives and outcomes combined with longer-term monitoring	7, 8, 11, 13-22, 33, 34
R6: Consider supporting longer-term programmes to increase the potential impact of SOS	1, 8, 10-14, 17, 18-22, 33-35, 37
R7: Ensure better use of reports	5, 23, 30, 31
R8: Consider different ways of generating communications stories	4, 32

Table 2: Summary of recommendations related to list of findings. For full recommendations and their explanation refer to page 47 in this report.

3. INTRODUCTION

Founded by the World Bank, the GEF (Global Environment Facility) and IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), SOS – Save Our Species was launched in October 2010 as a direct response to the global challenge of stopping biodiversity loss. The SOS Operational Manual (May 2013 version) and Project Appraisal Document (March 2011) provide information that outlines what the SOS Partnership aspired to do.

As described in these documents, the SOS Partnership aims to improve the conservation status of globally threatened species, their critical habitats, and the people depending on them. SOS was initiated with the intention to be a long-term global Partnership. The first phase of SOS consists of a five year period (2010 to 2015), co-funded by the World Bank (original pledge of US\$5million through the Development Grant Facility, actual funds equated to US\$3.9million), and the Global Environment Facility /GEF) (US\$4.9 million), plus additional private sector sources (an expected US\$10 million). The World Bank is a major funder of biodiversity conservation both through lending to client countries and as an Implementing Agency of the GEF.

The justification for the creation of SOS is that it complements the Bank's long-term and ongoing conservation efforts, none of which have been designed specifically to reverse the extinction of globally threatened species. The World Bank was also expected to have the necessary convening power and authority to undertake the policy dialogue necessary to engage the private sector to leverage additional sustainable financing.

The design of the SOS Partnership was set up to attract additional resources, in particular from the private sector. In the documentation, SOS is described as well-positioned and credible for high return-on-investment to engage international corporations, foundations and governments at the highest level, especially companies with animals or plants in their logos. The design of SOS also included a strategy to promote cross-learning and replication to build on lessons learned. It aspired to strengthen collaborations among countries, local governments, NGOs, bilaterals and the private sector, to support national and regional commitments under international conventions, and to support national biodiversity strategy and action plans.

Although it was recognised that there are various global grant Partnerships targeted to species conservation, currently only a small proportion of the species on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ are receiving conservation attention. It was planned that SOS would leverage much-needed additional funding for species conservation, especially from the private sector, and target many threatened species.

SOS was designed to align with and complement other global conservation initiatives, including the Mohamed bin Zayed Conservation Fund (initiated at the same time as SOS), the CBD Program of Work on Protected Areas and GEF-funded initiatives (2010 Biodiversity Indicator Partnership, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund and the UNEP-GEF Communities of Conservation project with the Alliance for Zero Extinction). SOS was designed based on learning about structures, targets, and processes from existing species conservation grant Partnerships, in particular the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF).

As a coalition, SOS was designed to support on-the-ground field conservation projects globally, through a species conservation fund. IUCN administers and executes¹ the fund as a project on behalf of the SOS partners through a Secretariat with a composition, institutional framework, functions and resources satisfactory to the Bank. Managed through this Secretariat, three calls for proposals have been issued, projects have been reviewed and selected, and grants have been allocated to successful applicants. Each Call for Proposals was aligned to the Strategic Directions identified by the Technical Advisory Group in consultation with IUCN's Global Species Partnership and Species Survival Commission (SSC), and guided by species action plans (existing or required) and information from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. SOS therefore has been designed to efficiently and effectively respond to the need for targeted conservation funding through development of strategic investment plans for threatened species, groups of species and their habitats. It is also able to provide rapid action funding for specific grants not limited by the SOS Strategic Directions, which can be mobilised quickly when required. SOS aspires to base its decisions on sound scientific knowledge derived through a consultative and participatory process.

3.1 SOS Evaluation 2014

Commissioned by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and mainly for use by the IUCN and SOS management, the World Bank, the GEF and other SOS partners, the purpose of this evaluation is to strengthen SOS as a grant making mechanism and as a means of delivering outcomes and impacts for species conservation.

Evaluation Objectives:

1. Assess the extent to which SOS is relevant and appropriate to the grantees and species conservation
2. Assess the extent of different kinds of conservation actions SOS tends to support and the extent to which grantees are able to report conservation impacts and outcomes
3. Generate lessons learned to date on the implementation of SOS, covering management and governance of SOS.

The evaluation uses mixed methods including a review of Partnership and project portfolio documents, a grantees survey and a semi-structured interview with SOS governance and management stakeholders.

¹ At the level of its own grants management, the SOS Partnership is an implementer and its grantees are the executors of the projects.

4. SOS PARTNERSHIP PROFILE

4.1 SOS Phase One: 2010–2015

4.1.1 Partnership structure

Currently SOS is governed by the Donor Council with a maximum of eight members who meet biannually. The Council's function is to provide guidance, leadership and oversight; it is the ultimate decision body. It was originally planned that private sector representation on the Donor Council would require a funding commitment of \$1.5million. The original Donor Council chaired by the GEF consisted of the GEF Secretariat, the World Bank, IUCN, Nokia and a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO): World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). As of 2013 the two-year tenure for the representative NGO, WWF, has expired and the Donor Council welcomed three new members in 2014, representing the Convention on Illegal Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Nokia's commitment came to an end in 2013.

The SOS Working Group, now called the Technical Advisory Group in line with its function, consists of 11 members including donor representatives and meets twice a year. The original representative of WWF has been replaced in 2014 by the new ZSL representative.

The SOS Secretariat is the permanent team which manages the SOS Partnership. It is positioned within IUCN and has 3 full time staff, with the SOS Director an additional 0.5 full time, in charge of promotion, operations, monitoring and reporting.

Further information on SOS governance can be found in the SOS Operational Manual which also contains the Terms of References of the SOS Donor Council, SOS Working Group and for each of the 4 positions within the SOS Secretariat. Any additional changes to the governance decided by the SOS Donor Council or proposed by the SOS Working Group are also detailed in the internal meeting reports from the relevant Donor Council or Working Group (now called the Technical Advisory Group) meetings.

4.1.2 SOS Partnership Design

The following information outlines the SOS objectives, key indicators, the four components which are interlinked, and planned outcomes with their individual indicators. The original versions are listed here (updates will be highlighted in the next section).

- **Project Development Objective (PDO):** to support the establishment of a viable funding mechanism for the conservation of globally threatened species and their habitats supported by private sector contributions and administered by a competent organisation with global reach.
- **Global Environment Objective (GEO):** to improve the conservation status of globally threatened species or populations and their habitats.
- **Key indicators (PDO, GEO):**
 1. Improved protection and/or management of at least 60 threatened species or populations and their habitats;
 2. At least 3 new species profiles to guide SOS investments are developed and under implementation;
 3. At least an additional ten million United States Dollars (US\$10,000,000) secured from the private sector for conservation action targeted to threatened species during the 5-year period of the project (subject to IUCN's Operational Guidelines for Private Sector Engagement (Version 2.0) effective as of February 2009).

- **Project components** (four interlinked components):
 1. A threatened species grant Partnership that will provide funding for threatened species projects and a rapid action fund to address conservation situations in need of immediate attention;
 2. Species action strategies and monitoring to inform conservation investments;
 3. Mobilising innovative financing, in particular through private sector engagement and communication to raise the profile of species conservation;
 4. Partnership execution and management.

- **Outcome 1: Stabilise and improve the status of multiple threatened species**
 - I. At least 20 projects that demonstrate conservation progress for threatened species or populations and their habitats as measured by a species specific tracking tool developed by IUCN and described in the operational manual.
 - II. At least 40 small grants that catalyse early action on the conservation of threatened species or populations and their habitats as measured by a species specific tracking tool developed by IUCN and described in the operational manual.

- **Outcome 2: Improving our knowledge of species status and our ability to take effective action**
 - I. Development of new profiles for 3 priority species groups to guide investments
 - II. Red List updated for targeted species.
 - III. Status of and project impact on SOS target species effectively monitored

- **Outcome 3: Secure significant resources for species conservation from the private sector using financing mechanisms and awareness campaigns**
 - I. At least 10 new private sector contributors subject to IUCN's Operational Guidelines for Private Sector Engagement (Version 2.0) effective as of February 2009
 - II. Effective communication and marketing program implemented
 - III. Visitors to Web site and newsletter subscribers increase by at least 70% over 5 year period

- **Outcome 4: Partnership managed effectively and transparently.**
 - I. SOS strategies and annual action and investment plans developed, approved, and guide grant-making
 - II. Overall program, including all activities and financial management, effectively monitored and in compliance with SOS Operational Manual
 - III. Program-wide replication strategy developed and implemented to disseminate best practice for species conservation
 - IV. SOS website documents program, projects, and species in a timely and effective fashion
 - V. Publications produced and disseminated on SOS experiences, lessons learned and specific themes
 - VI. 100% of final project reports compiled by grant recipients available online
 - VII. 5 annual reports and 10 biannual reports produced

4.1.3 SOS Partnership Design updates

Since the beginnings of the Partnership there have been minimal changes to the Partnership Design, however two elements have been cancelled:

Key Indicator 2: "At least 3 new species profiles to guide SOS investments are developed and under implementation"

Outcome 2, Indicator 1: "Development of new profiles for 3 priority species groups to guide investments".

It was decided in the fourth Donor Council meeting (2012) that SOS should not invest time and resources in such work, as a number of regional and taxonomic analyses already exist.

To date, according to information provided by the SOS Secretariat, SOS is said to be exceeding outcome 1 (i), with more than 20 projects supported, which have been selected to achieve conservation progress for threatened species. However, the target of 40 'early-action' (Rapid Action Grants) for indicator (ii) has not been met as most proposals submitted do not meet the 'urgency' criteria. For outcome 2, the indicators here are described as being on track, with the status of the SOS targeted species being regularly updated on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species through the two annual updates. For outcome 2, indicator (iii), SOS monitors the status of projects through reports and requests for grantees to submit species monitoring information. In terms of communication (outcome 3), SOS has been implementing a communications Partnership which is progressively reaching a wider audience but has not mobilised significant resources to date. Fundraising efforts however have had some positive success (e.g. NOKIA, Fondation Segré, Fondation Crédit Agricole, public donations) and KfW (German Development Bank) chose IUCN to implement a large tiger grant-making mechanism (the Integrated Tiger and Habitat Conservation Partnership) modelled on SOS. Finally, for outcome 4, almost all indicators are said to be being achieved, however, there are delays due to limitations in Secretariat capacity.

4.1.4 Fundraising strategy

The original fundraising strategy (2009) for SOS was primarily concerned with leveraging funds from the private sector to benefit species conservation projects. The intention was also to raise funds for less charismatic species identified by experts as being in need of conservation, in recognition that members of the private sector would be motivated by particular highly charismatic species. SOS would also look to engage; foundations, governments and the general public.

This strategy was to be prospect driven and rely on research and analysis of a spectrum of companies which would be categorized by: their logos and branding (presence of species), evidence of interest in biodiversity, evidence of interest in environmental issues. It was felt that SOS would be well positioned to engage the private sector through philanthropy and sponsorship. SOS would have one fundraising and communications specialist with the aim of soliciting support with a face-to-face approach, and a continued high level of communication to retain credibility.

To succeed with this strategy, initially a pool of prospects would be identified and a dedicated IUCN team established to deliver stakeholder consultations, communications and marketing. Following this would be work to secure feedback and ultimately involvement in SOS. Support through a number of 'Donor Levels' would be available: Leaders (min US\$500,000pa), Champion (min US\$250,000 pa), Supporter (min US\$100,000pa) and Friend (<\$100, 000pa). 'Leaders' would be encouraged and recruited from the private sector; this would involve the most significant financial contribution, public endorsement of SOS and representation at events and a seat on the Donor Council.

The aim was for SOS to raise its planned budget of US\$20million in its first 5-year phase. The actual total funds achieved equated to US\$12.8million, this is 64% of what was expected (Table 3). However, this does not include IUCN’s in-kind contributions, or the EUR 20 million raised from KfW for a specific SOS-style tiger programme. Private Sector Funding accounted for a total of US\$1.8million. The rest was leveraged from Bilateral donors (FFEM), Foundations (Fondation Segré) and individuals or the general public.

Table 3: Fund raising targets and funds achieved			
SOS Phase 1 (2010-2015)			SOS Phase 2 (2016-2020)
Fundraising target/costs expected <i>US\$ million</i>	Funds raised <i>US\$ million</i>	Funding source	Fundraising target/costs expected <i>US\$ million</i>
20	4.9	GEF	7.2
	*3.9	World Bank	
	1.3	FFEM	
	2.662	Other	
	12.762		

Table 3: Fundraising targets/expected costs and actual funds raised for SOS phase one.

GEF: Global Environment Facility, FFEM: Fond Français pour l'Environnement Mondial, Other: NOKIA, Fondation Segré, Fondation Crédit Agricole, bequest, public donations

**US\$5 million was pledged and expected from the World Bank, US\$3.9 million was received*

As of 2014 SOS has a new fundraising strategy with an immediate objective to secure a minimum of US\$2.5 million primarily through corporate sponsorship to fund one call for proposals (CFP4). There is a longer-term objective to triple this annual income to US\$7.5million by 2020. Fundraising activities would be spearheaded by communications teams and media partners, transforming the current SOS profile. At the time of this report, SOS is working to leverage additional funding from new and existing sources. An application for a second phase of SOS is planned for submission to the GEF.

For the immediate future, strategic funding targets (long-term) include bi/multi – lateral organisations interested in SOS as a mechanism to achieve Aichi Target 12 (“By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained”) and progressive companies (e.g. with marketing and CSR) relations and budgets) who could sponsor SOS (through the aforementioned Donor Levels). Other targets are described as new foundations, corporate foundations and lotteries, or high net-worth individuals. In addition, general public donations would be encouraged. The aim is to achieve 80% of the 2020 income goal by targeting bi/multi-lateral organisations and progressive companies, with the remaining 20% sourced from the opportunistic targets.

4.1.5 Project selection process

Following a public ‘Call For Proposals’ (CFP), Threatened Species Grant (TSG) applications are submitted on line. Applicants can apply for between USD\$ 25,001-800,000 USD for a 1 or 2-year TSG project, it is clarified however that there is a limited budget for each call with larger grants (> US\$

200,000) limited in number, and that the majority of the grants awarded are expected to be between US\$ 50,000 and US\$ 150,000. Once applications are received, proposals are initially screened for eligibility by the Secretariat. Once eligible projects are selected, they are reviewed by experts identified through the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC). Following a call, full proposals are reviewed for their technical merit, priority of proposed actions, feasibility, and ability of applicant to carry out the project. Reviewers evaluate each proposal and fill in a review form, scoring their quality against six criteria on a scale of 1-5. Each proposal therefore receives a score ranging from 6 to 30. Final ranking is carried out based on the rankings and comments of specialist reviewers, where using a spreadsheet, the average scores for each proposal based on their reviews is determined and proposals placed in rank order. The process then continues with a review of the proposals and their scores and ranking by the SOS Working Group.

After examining all proposals and their reviews, the SOS Working Group recommends a selection of projects for funding to the SOS Donor Council. Rapid Action Grants (RAG) have a different review process, with proposals submitted at any time. The funds available are also limited (maximum USD\$25,000). These projects are not restricted by Strategic Direction and proposal, review and subsequent decision should take no more than 30 days. All projects are however required to meet strict –social and environmental safeguards and SOS Eligibility requirements.

Prior to the first call for proposals, during the Donor Council's third meeting in 2011 it was suggested that, in light of a concern about the pace of the Partnership and a need to distribute funds more quickly to new grantees, the revision process for received grants applications should be shortened. As a result, the procedure is now a single stage process in which the applicants submit a full project proposal (proposal, budget, logical framework) and additional documents. Otherwise, the process has remained the same as described in the original SOS Operational Manual (version 2011), apart from minor adjustment in working practices as part of adaptive management over the first phase. For example, the SOS Working Group (now Technical Advisory Group) now ranks proposals within each Strategic Direction (from CFP3 onwards) to assist with the comparison of projects within their area of focus. Also, for proposals for which it is clear funding would not be granted (e.g. poor fit with Partnership aims), the Secretariat can in future make the decision not send them on for further review. This will make future reviewing more time efficient and avoid requesting expert review on projects which are known to be unsuitable.

4.1.6 Procedures for selected projects

Once proposals have been selected and the grant (TSG/RAG) accepted by the applicant, a final technical review is carried out by the Secretariat. At this point a dialogue with the applicants is established: there may be requests from SOS for applications to be modified according to comments and suggestions made by reviewers and members of the SOS Working Group. A grant agreement is then prepared for legal review and internal sign-off to ensure compliance with IUCN requirements, as well as SOS restrictions, policies, and procedures. Once the final justification documents are approved and a contract signed by the SOS Director (and there is no objections from the World Bank), each grant is awarded and paid in tranches as long as requirements continue to be met.

Once active, all SOS supported projects are required to track results and are evaluated, which includes monitoring procedures that are consistent with the GEF and World Bank. SOS grants are managed by monitoring the grantee's technical and financial performance, tracking progress and completion for deliverables, reviewing payment requests, discussing grant issues with the grantee and local partners, conducting site visits when needed, and ensuring adequate follow up to any issues that arise. All grantees are required to submit interim and final technical reports, and financial reporting as detailed in their grant agreement. Projects deemed as high risk (e.g. with low

capacity for financial management) are expected to provide more frequent financial reports. Independent audits may also be a requirement.

At project completion, all grantees will be required to submit a final Technical and Financial Report. As projects close, final reporting requirements are met and any unused funds are returned to SOS and made available for other grants. For all projects, SOS Secretariat staff members are available to answer questions about reporting and project specifics as well as to discuss biodiversity conservation challenges throughout project progression.

The SOS Secretariat is responsible for monitoring supported projects; this is conducted at three levels: (1) SOS Partnership, (2) species status and critical habitat, and (3) individual project. The information generated by the SOS procedures and provided by the grantees enables the Secretariat to monitor individual projects and the portfolio. Lessons are also documented with the aim to disseminate and replicate lessons learned and good practice. It is planned that results will lead to adaptive management and also feed into analysis and documentation of lessons learned and best practices within and across regions and taxa.

4.1.7 Strategic directions and grants to-date

This evaluation falls in mid-2014, 3.5 years since the launch of SOS. There have been three Calls For Proposals (CFPs) based on different Strategic Directions for each call. There have been 744 grant applications, with a total of 84 approved (11%) since the start of the SOS Partnership (table 4). The portfolio now contains 82 projects, since two projects in CFP3 have been cancelled. In total, the SOS Partnership has granted US\$8,723,875 to the conservation Partnerships which have been selected.

Table 4: Overview of SOS project selection figures							
Grant Type	Call (CFP)	Strategic direction (SD)	Grant applications	Eligibility	Recommended	Approved	By SD
Threatened Species Grants (TSG)	1 (2011)	Threatened Asian Mammals	341	266 (78%)	23 (8.6%)	23	9
		Threatened African Mammals					5
		Critically Endangered Birds					5
		Threatened Amphibians					4
	2 (2012)	Threatened Tropical Asian Vertebrates	131	92 (70%)	25 (27%)	25	16
		Threatened Cycads					3
		Threatened Freshwater African Animals					1
		Small Marine Mammals					5
	3 (2013)	Threatened West and Central African Vertebrates	121	82 (67%)	32 (39%)	30*	16
		Threatened Sharks and Rays					7
		Threatened Conifers					3
		Threatened Cycads					2
Rapid Action Grants (RAG)	2011 to 2014		151	figure not available	N/A	6	N/A

Table 4: Outline of applications, received eligible proposals, and recommended and approved projects for Threatened Species Grants (TSGs) and Rapid Action Grants (RAGs), and number of projects approved for each Strategic Direction (SD). * Two projects are the result of merging 2 proposals for the same sites (4 proposals turned into 2 projects). Two additional projects were later cancelled due to funding constraints thus reducing the number of projects funded to 28 (although 30 were approved).

5. Method of review

This evaluation was based largely on three main information sources:

- The perspective of SOS Grantees was gained through a **survey**. The response to the requested grantees survey was good (64%). The quantitative and qualitative results from this survey were reviewed and analysed, with responses grouped and coded.
- A thorough but light (statistical) **analysis of projects** within the SOS portfolio (15 completed projects, and 20 on-going projects selected to represent all seven types of Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP) Conservation Actions² used by the Secretariat to evaluate project outcomes). Project documents were reviewed and information compiled in spread sheets for descriptive analysis.
- **Direct interviews** with people involved with Partnership governance and management, with the qualitative information provided also reviewed and analysed. In addition, the reviewer had access to supporting information from SOS Partnership documents, existing portfolio data, the SOS website, notes from SOS meetings, and direct access to support within IUCN.

5.1 Grantees survey

Responses from the survey of grantees would provide the information to meet objective one of this evaluation: **(1) To assess the extent to which SOS is relevant and appropriate to the grantees and species conservation**. The questions also relate to and may provide supporting information for objectives two and three.

A short survey was sent out via email to 70 SOS grant recipients, 47 (64%) responded. The survey collected both quantitative data, as well as allowing for more open qualitative responses, descriptions and feedback. The survey questions are outlined in Annex 1a. The survey was designed to record valuable feedback from grant beneficiaries and to assess how relevant and appropriate SOS is as a conservation grant making mechanism. The survey also provided the opportunity for grantees to feed information, suggestions and advice into the next phase of the SOS Partnership. Analysis of the responses includes calculating descriptive figures from the closed responses (tick box answers), and a review of the open comments and descriptions with coding where possible. Description of project outcomes were categorised/ described against CMP Conservation Actions.

5.2 SOS project portfolio analysis

The desk analysis of documents from completed and on-going SOS projects would provide the information to meet objective two of this evaluation: **(2) To assess the extent of different kinds of conservation actions SOS tends to support and the extent to which grantees are able to report conservation impacts and outcomes**. Information would also be compiled to assess the lessons learned as reported by projects, which also supports the attainment of objective three.

² The Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP) classification of 'Conservation Actions' are used by the SOS Secretariat to categorise projects and their areas of work. There are seven Conservation Actions: (1) Land and water protection, (2) Land and water management, (3) Species management, (4) Education and awareness, (5) Law and policy, (6) Livelihoods and economics, (7) Monitoring.

5.2.1 'Completed projects'

The 15 completed projects represent projects which, at the time of this evaluation, had submitted final reports. There was therefore a full set of reports for each project (initial proposal, logical framework, technical report(s) and final report). The number of reports available varied with the length and type of project. There were two Rapid Action Grant (RAG) projects within the sample, for which there was one technical report in addition to their final reports (RAGs are for shorter projects).

Data were collected from every report for each project. Firstly, project deliverables/results (from here on called 'results') and components/objectives (from here on called 'objectives') were identified in each project's original logical framework, and collated in an excel spread sheet. Technical reporting information was reviewed in the final reports and compared to the original planned results and objectives. Information was categorised to indicate how well projects were achieving what they set out to do, as well as indicate how well the reporting system was able to capture such information (categories: 'no mention', 'not achieved', 'partly achieved', 'achieved' and 'exceeded').

Secondly, 'lessons learned' were collated from all project reports for each project. Lessons reported were grouped and categorised and the 'type' of lessons identified. Lessons were also marked as either positive (having a good impact of the project e.g. new partnerships) or negative (e.g. limiting factors which had a negative impact on the project or a reported difficulty or complaint which did not benefit the project). The reported lessons would also have potential to provide useful information or generate new questions for existing and future conservation projects.

Thirdly, information from the specific SOS questions in each report (specific 'Species Conservation Impacts', found in section 3 of the final technical report) was categorised in a spread sheet. The five conservation impact headings for which data was collated for this evaluation were: (1) species/population conservation, (2) Red List status change, (3) critical habitat, (4) threat reduction (species and habitat), and (5) conservation facilitation ('Conservation facilitation' is a term used to identify outcomes which are enabling conservation e.g. for the future. Information is requested on the forms and reviewed here under specific facilitation themes: legislation, finance, wildlands/protected area and strategy e.g. species action plans).

Under the five conservation impact headings, data was recorded as a tally if a project reported against them specifically. This enabled simple descriptive quantitative analysis e.g. percentage of projects achieving improved species status, or the percentage of projects achieving good conservation facilitation overall. Data was tallied under specific headings, for example, change in species status (improved, stable, working for a positive impact, unknown or not applicable), Red List status (positive, negative, none, unknown) or critical habitats (improved, stable, working for a positive impact, unknown or not applicable). Threats to species and habitat were categorised as: 'stopped', 'reduced', 'stabilised', 'unknown/not applicable'. Finally, each conservation facilitation category was marked as 'poor', 'fair', 'good', 'very good' and an additional category of 'unknown/not applicable' was added.

Finally, the final technical reports for each project were reviewed for information described as 'unexpected impacts' which may not have been captured within other parts of the reports. These qualitative responses were collated and reviewed in a similar way to the lessons learned. Each impact was categorised as positive or negative, as before, and the unexpected impacts were also categorised and combined, to reveal the type of additional outcomes which were being reported.

5.2.2 'On-going Projects'

The on-going (incomplete) projects were sampled from a total of 54 Call For Proposal 1 (CFP1) and CFP2 projects (37% representative sample). CFP3 projects were excluded as the majority were yet to submit any reports at the time of the evaluation. The sample of 20 projects was purposeful and based on their categorisation within the seven Conservation Actions. Projects were selected to ensure a minimum 20% representation of each of these actions.

Information from the ongoing projects was collected in a similar way to the complete projects. However, only the latest report for each project was reviewed and information compared to the results and objectives detailed in each project's logical framework. This would also allow project performance at different stages of progression to be considered.

Progress against each result and objective in each project was tallied similarly to the complete projects but in slightly different headings to reflect the different stages of reporting (e.g. 'not achieved' was replaced with 'no progress yet', 'partly achieved' was replaced by 'some progress – ongoing', and an additional category of 'good progress – ongoing' preceded the existing categories of 'achieved' and 'exceeded'). Descriptive statistics could then be generated for the sample as a whole and broken down for each reporting stage. Information on lessons learned (latest reports) and responses to the key SOS questions (species status, Red List status, critical habitat, threats (species and habitat) and conservation facilitation) was collected and analysed as for the completed projects.

The ongoing projects had been selected based on their work within specific Conservation Actions, therefore data collected here could be re-organised and reviewed for each Action. To do this simply, the existing data (results and objectives marked as 'good progress – ongoing', 'achieved' and 'exceeded') was grouped together for every project. This collated data for project results and objectives which were achieving good progress or better, was arranged under the relevant Conservation Action headings in a spread sheet. Percentages were then calculated for each project within each Conservation Action. The mean percentage would provide an indication of how achievable the planned results appear to be within each Conservation Action category.

5.3 Governance and management interviews

Governance and management interviews would provide the information to meet objective three of this evaluation: **(3) To generate lessons learned to date on the implementation of SOS, covering management and governance of SOS.**

Personal telephone interviews were conducted with 12 interviewees involved with and/or having good knowledge of the SOS Partnership. The key informants included individuals from the Donor Council, Technical Advisory Group, SOS Secretariat, and senior IUCN and Species Survival Commission staff. A list of interviewees and the eight questions asked are outlined in Annex 1b.

The interview was informal and designed to encourage open conversation and generate concise feedback about any positive and negative aspects of the SOS governance and management during the Partnership's first phase. The interview responses were reviewed, grouped and coded for analysis, and any lessons learned to guide the future of SOS clarified. The information enabled triangulation within this review.

6 PROJECT PORTFOLIO DESCRIPTION

The description which follows here is based on information compiled by the SOS Secretariat and in response to a request within the latest, to-date, Technical Advisory Group meeting (January 2014), to include this overview of the project portfolio in this evaluation. A summary portfolio analysis is provided here with data presented: by grant size, applicant, Red List status, SOS Strategic Directions, geography and by taxa. All data were correct at 30 June 2014 however some minor changes may still depend on the finalisation of ongoing negotiations with 5 grantees awarded under the third Call for Proposals (CFP3).

6.1 Grant Size

Of all the grants awarded to projects in the SOS portfolio, the majority (63%) were under \$100,000, with 34% between US\$50-100,000 (band 2) and 29% under US\$50,000 (in band 1). Only 2% of grants were in the highest band of more than \$200,000 (Figure 1).

6.2 Applicants

Seven organisations received 47% of the grants: Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Fauna and Flora International (FFI), The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Fundacion CBD-Habitat, The International Rhino Foundation (IRF) and The Zoological Society of London (ZSL). Of these seven, WCS received 28% of the total funds allocated (Figure 2), and was awarded 17% of the total number of projects supported. The majority (62%) of projects supported were those run by other organisations (Figure 3).

6.3 Red List status of targeted species

Grants were allocated to projects aiming to benefit species categorised as threatened on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™, with 34% allocated to Critically Endangered species, 43% to Endangered species and 23% to Vulnerable species (Figure 4).

1. Grant Size

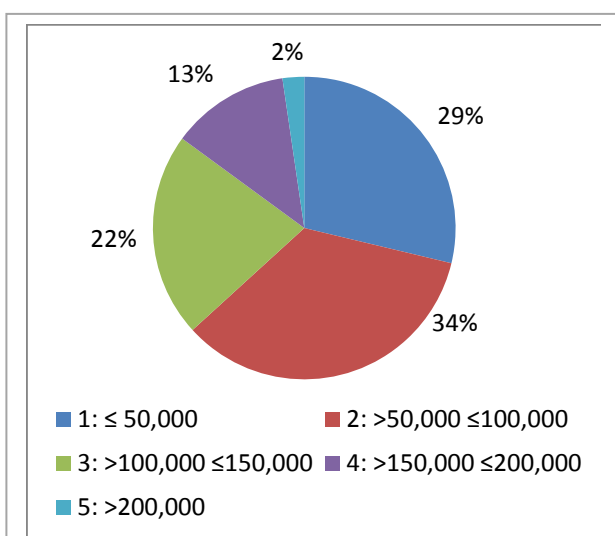


Figure 1: Size of grants awarded in SOS Portfolio, first phase 1

2. Applicant (funds)

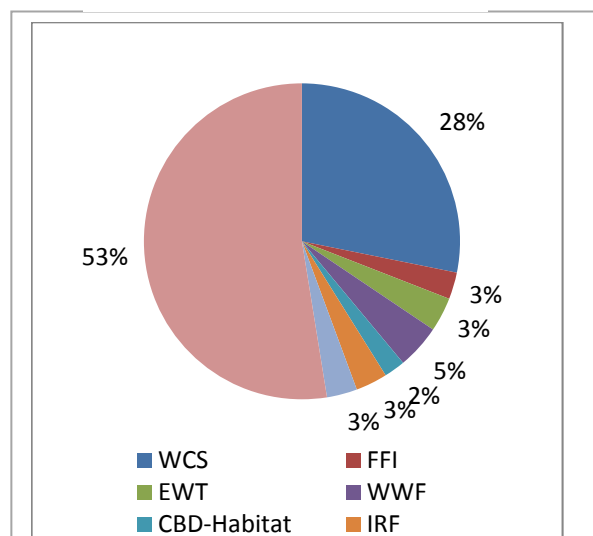


Figure 2: % of funds by organisation

3. Applicant (projects)

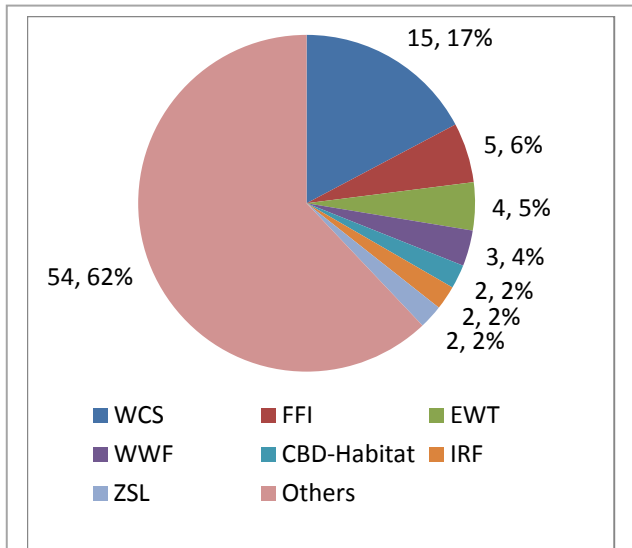


Figure 2: Figure 3: % of projects by organisation

4. Red List status

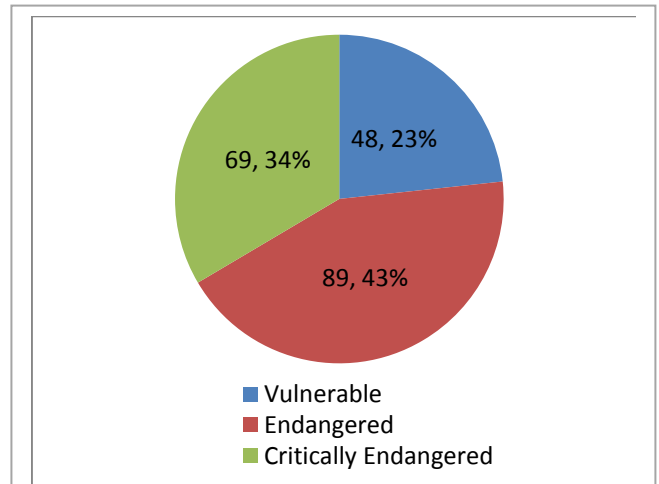


Figure 4: Number and % of target species by Red List status (VU, EN, CR)

6.4 Strategic Directions

Projects are selected based on their quality and merit; there is no set amount of funding for each strategic direction, although the Technical Advisory Group is beginning to rank selected projects within each strategic direction for ease of comparison. The portfolio analysis reveals that there are three strategic directions (categories) which stand out as receiving the most allocated funds (figure 5): Threatened Central and West Africa Vertebrates (21%), Threatened Tropical Asian Vertebrates (20%) and Threatened Asian Mammals (19%). The three categories which received the least funding were: Threatened Cycads (2%), Threatened Freshwater African Animals (2%) and Rapid Action Grants - RAGs (1%), which are 'small fund' (maximum USD\$25,000) projects. Reasons were described for the low percentages. The people working on Threatened Cycads are highly specialised and few which results in a limited number of project proposals, and far fewer plant-focused proposals received were far fewer than animal projects. For Threatened Freshwater African Animals, many proposals were not eligible as they were single species focused where the aim was to support assemblage species projects.

The remaining categories received between 4% and 8% of the total funds allocated (Critically Endangered Birds, Small Marine Mammals, Threatened African Mammals, Threatened Amphibians, Threatened Asian Mammals, Threatened Cycads and Conifers, Threatened Sharks and Rays).

5. Strategic Directions (funds)

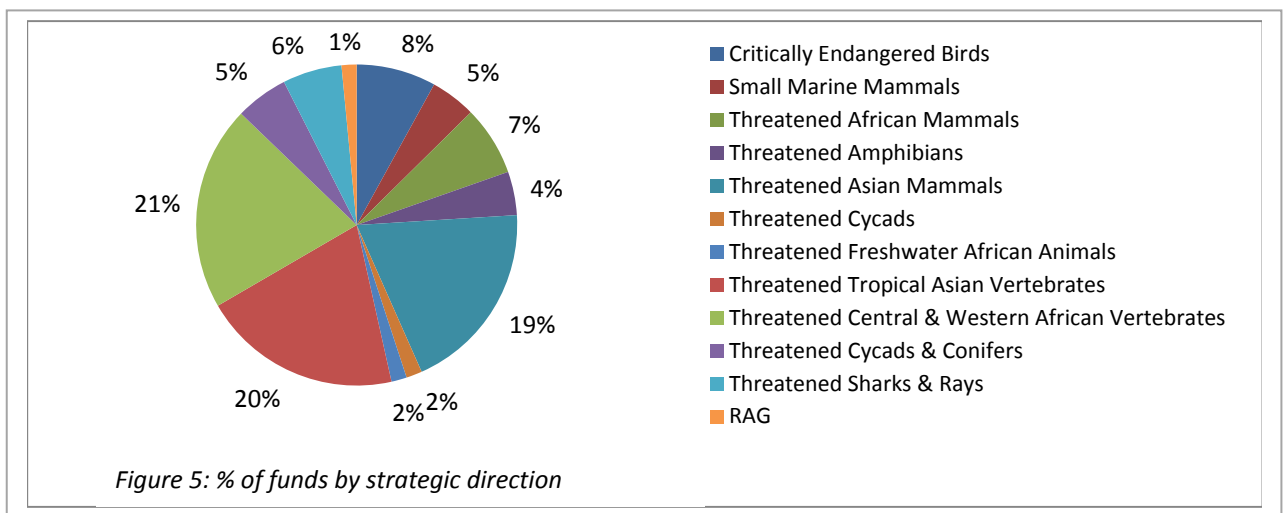
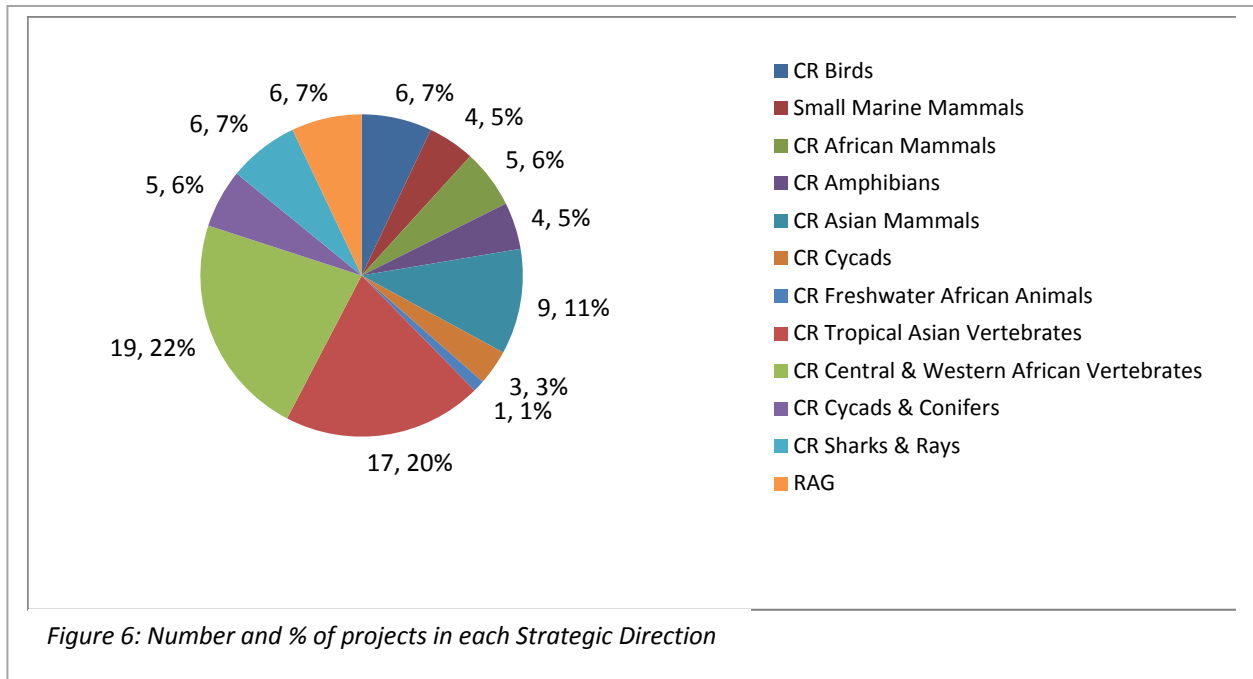


Figure 5: % of funds by strategic direction

There were two categories with the greatest number of projects supported: Threatened Western African Vertebrates (22%, 19 projects) and Tropical Asian Vertebrates (20%, 17 projects). Where the Threatened Asian Mammals category received 19% of the total funds, this represents 11% (9) of the total number of projects. Although the Rapid Action Grant category only represented 1% of the total funds allocated, these funds supported 7% of the total number of projects (figure 6).

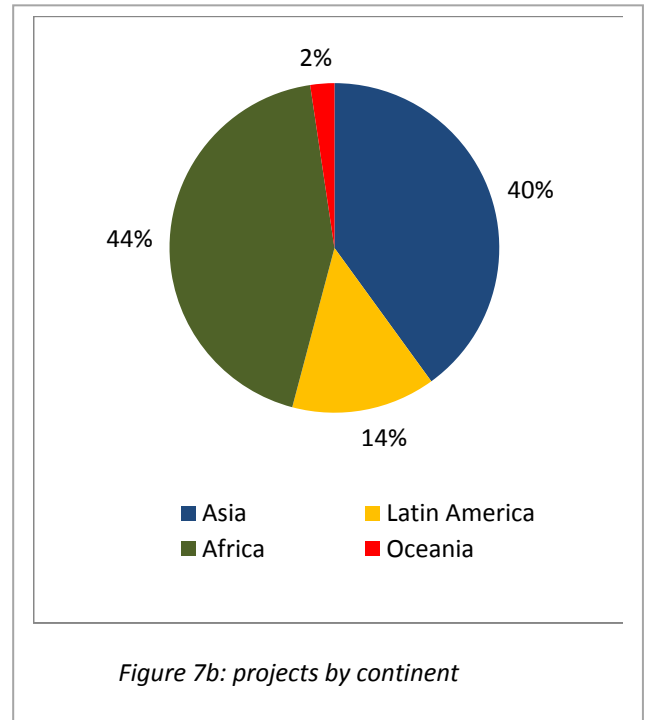
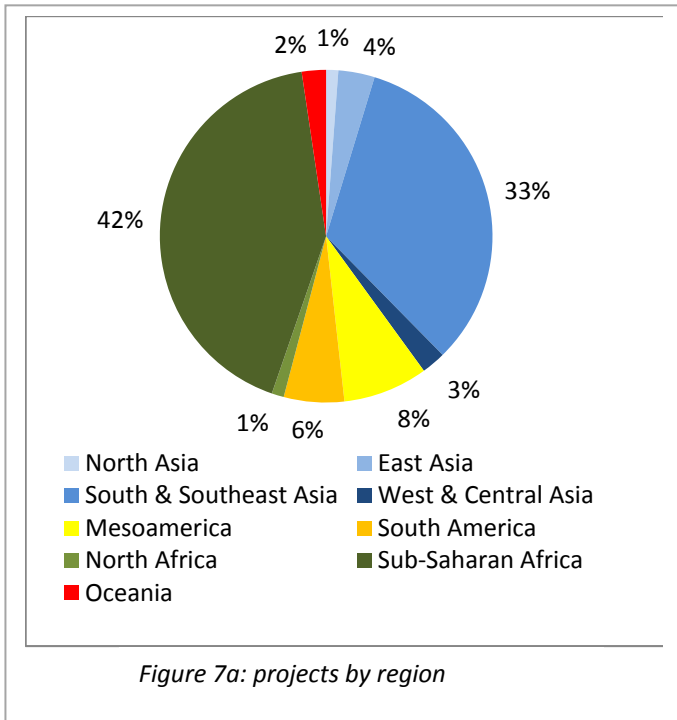
4. Strategic Directions (projects)



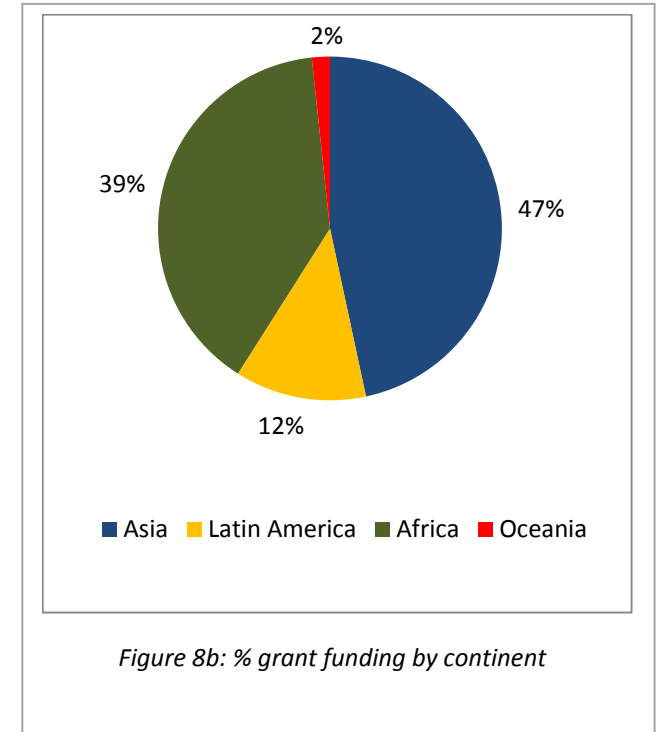
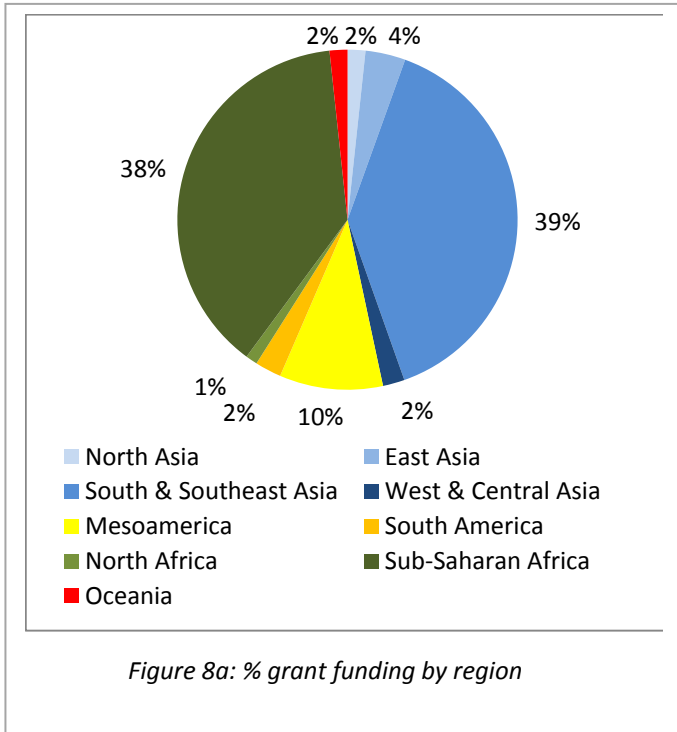
6.5 Geography

The majority of projects supported were in Africa (44%) in particular Sub-Saharan Africa (42% by region). Projects in Asia were almost equal with 40% of projects located on the Asian continent, in particular in South and Southeast Asia (33% by region). Latin American projects represented 14% of the total projects supported, and Oceania 2% (figures 7a and 7b). Although a greater number and percentage of total projects were supported in Africa, a greater amount of the total funds were allocated to Asia (47%), in particular South and Southeast Asia (39% by region). African projects were supported by 39% of the total funds, in particular Sub-Saharan Africa (38% by region). Projects based in Latin America and Oceania received a similar percentage of the total funds as for the number of projects supported; 12% and 2% respectively (figures 8a and 8b).

7. Geography (projects by region and continent)



8. Geography (grant funding by region and continent)



6.6 Taxa

In terms of taxa (figure 9), more than half of the total projects supported were focused on mammals (51%), followed by birds (14%) and plants (11%). Amphibian, Reptile and Shark and Ray projects made up less than 10% of the total projects respectively, with freshwater fish only represented by 1 project (1%). The majority of the total funds were also allocated to projects aiming to benefit mammals (59%). This is then followed by birds projects which received 13% of the total funds allocated. Sharks and Rays were represented by 9% of the total number of projects, and also received 9% of the total funds allocated. Plants, Reptiles and Amphibians received 7%, 6% and 4% of the allocated funds respectively, with Freshwater Fish (1 project) receiving 2% of the total funds (figure 10).

Taxa: (9) projects, (10) funds

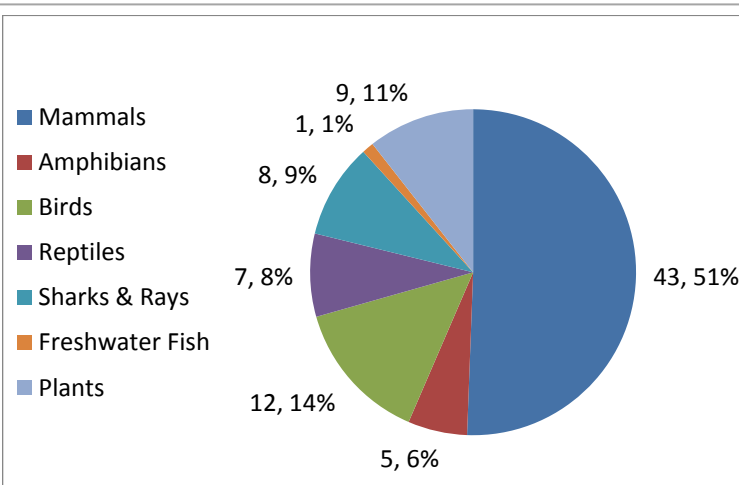


Figure 9: Number and percentage of projects by Taxa

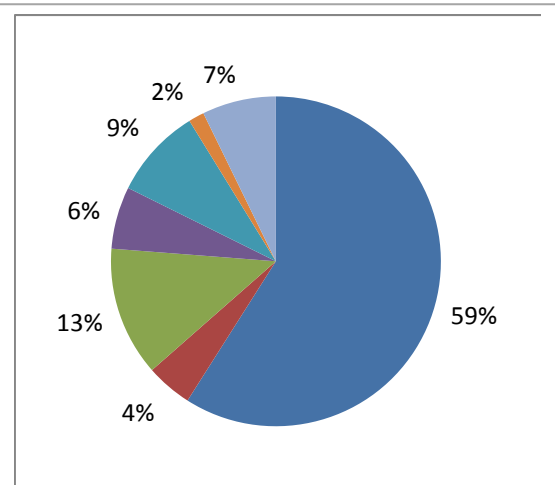


Figure 10: Percentage of funds by Taxa

7. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

7.1 The relevance and appropriateness of SOS: The Grantee Survey

Of all the grantees contacted with the survey, 64% responded (43 Grantees), completing the short and confidential questionnaire. The following sections group the responses from the nine questions and extra comments provided from the Grantees under relevant themes.

7.1.1 Regard, value and relevance of SOS (Questions 1 &2)

When asked how grantees regard SOS:

- 72% responded that SOS had 'significant value'
- 23% responded that SOS had 'good value'.

The open responses explain further what aspects of SOS grantees find valuable. The most frequently cited reason (16 respondents, 37%) was the unique niche that SOS fills in supporting species-specific conservation projects. Respondents also noted that this is offered by few other funders. The aspect of prestige and profile gained by being awarded an international grant was mentioned five times. Finally, when focusing on how respondents regard SOS, there were three respondents (7%) that noted dissatisfaction.

In terms of the relevance of SOS:

- 79% of respondents selected that SOS was 'highly relevant'

Despite high ratings for relevance (which may not be surprising), an important point related to the governance of SOS is that with the changing Strategic Directions, relevance to their organisation changes. Respondents also commented that SOS has relevance beyond species, by contributing to protected areas and the use of the ecosystem approach. A notable example of the relevance of SOS includes one grant representing 10% of the annual costs for the particular species conservation in its country.

Finding (1): SOS is considered to be relevant and of good value to the vast majority of respondents.

7.1.2 Grant attainment and reporting (Questions 3 & 4)

The focus of the survey moved into generating feedback from the grantees into SOS procedures for grant attainment and follow-up reporting. When asked to describe the procedure for attaining their grant:

- 72% of respondents selected that the difficulty was 'as expected'
- 54% of respondents described the process as 'straight-forward'
- 40% found it 'too time-consuming'.

Of those which provided further comment, one third described good experiences with the application procedure and just over one quarter cited some frustrations. Suggestions for improvement included: reduce complexity, reduce time needed before finalising a grant agreement/receiving funds, clarify policies on what expenses are allowable, and support technical challenges for local organizations lacking capacity (on scientific information requirements and data analysis). Some 16% expressed mild to strong frustrations around the process related to delays, changes to budget, bureaucracy, and challenges due to the capacity and staff time available within

small organisations. There was one example of a Rapid Action Grant (RAG) recipient who noted that the slow process could compromise the aims of such a grant.

When asked to describe the level of reporting following allocation of their grant:

- 42% responded that the reporting was 'as expected'
- 53% said the level of reporting was 'more than expected' or 'too much'

From the open responses, even among the respondents that felt that the reporting requirements were "as expected," several provided suggestions for improvement. The most salient feature of the responses was the high number of respondents who commented on the communications reporting aspect. There were respondents who found the very frequent communications reports that are requested to be useful. However 10 respondents (23%) noted the challenges created by such a demanding communication focus. This included the time that it took, the feeling that they were required to "force stories", as well as problems arising from being in the field, such as lack of access to Internet.

In terms of financial reporting, seven respondents (16%) noted that it was more detailed than for other grants received, but there was one comment which specifically said that the cash flow projection exercise was helpful. The divergence in views may arise from the difference in the size and capacity of the organisation, and from the level of financial reporting requested in line with SOS requirements.

Findings

(2): The grant attainment procedures are straightforward and meet grantees' expectations.

(3) Reporting is more than expected or 'too much'.

(4) There are indications that the request for communications may be over-demanding.

7.1.3 Lessons learned (Question 5)

This question aimed to ascertain if the SOS procedures had helped grantees consider or develop lessons for the supported project. Of all the responses:

- 54% said yes, SOS procedures had helped to generate lessons
- 33% said no, SOS procedures had not helped generate lessons

The responses within the open element of the question revealed that this question had been interpreted differently by different grantees. While 14 respondents (33%) specifically mentioned how the procedures helped them, others commented specifically about the types of lessons that they were learning. There were 14 respondents (33%) who made a comment about procedures, of which 13 were able to link procedures to lesson learning or the achievement of objectives. There was also a response which expressed extreme frustration with the reporting both in this question, and in others.

Finding (5): SOS procedures can help to generate lessons learned

7.1.4 Comparison to other grant processes (Question 6)

In order to ascertain if the experience with the SOS grant process had differed from other grant processes, grantees were asked to compare their experiences:

- 70% of respondents said that the SOS experience had differed from other grant procedures

There were two dominant themes in the open comments: reporting and the level of support from SOS Secretariat.

In general comments about reporting were negative, with points including that it takes too much time, is onerous and too bureaucratic. There were also specific comments such as reporting on stabilising or improving the conservation status of the target species in a short time-scale being difficult to do. There was also confusion reported in one instance of sub-grantees approached for financial reporting (confirmed as an exception to normal practise within SOS). It is noted that there were also some positive comments about the value of detailed reporting, such as the usefulness of the strong communication reporting.

Comments about level of support from SOS Secretariat were positive, with eight out of the 10 people who made a comment on this issue reviewing the Secretariat support in a favourable way. However, two comments demonstrated exceptions to this, seemingly related to time-efficiency. There was an additional point that the changing focus of SOS's priorities (e.g. Strategic Directions) is frustrating, as it restricts the possibility to establish a long-term relationship with the donor.

Findings:

(6): Support and communications from SOS staff is well received by Grantees.

(7): The SOS experience differs from other grant-making mechanisms in two ways: (a) reporting is too bureaucratic and onerous (b) impacts (e.g. for species status) are too difficult to report.

7.1.5 Type of project supported by the SOS Grant (Question 7)

Grantees were then asked to identify how the grant was used:

- A small component of a longer-term partnership: 44%
- Top-up funding for an ongoing project: 37%
- A stand-alone project: 16%

The details provided in the open responses help to explain how the respondents interpreted the different categories in the survey question. For example the 7% that selected "other" may have a project for which the SOS grant provides match funding, or allow the expansion of previously successful work in a new area to build a stronger foundation for engagement. Another respondent noted that all of their SOS projects are stand-alone or could be viewed as components of larger programs depending on how they are perceived. Two respondents noted that this grant was starting a long-term initiative and potentially allowing time to secure more funding.

Of the grantees that identified the grant as supporting a small component of a longer-term Partnership, two noted that it was not a small component and two others noted that this was funding a piece that other donors would not have funded.

Grantees also defined 'top-up funds' in several different ways, including: funding a specific objective or component of the project, core support for an ongoing project, support for an emergency within a project, or co-financing. All of these could possibly be viewed or categorised as "components of a larger programme." Of those respondents that described their grant as a stand-alone project one noted that it is a "stand-alone" component of a larger programme, and another that it was top-up funding and another that the grant was initiating work that would be stand-alone for now, but aimed to become a long-term project. In one case, the grant provided 50% of the funds needed for an emergency.

Finding (8): The majority of projects are smaller components of a long-term programme, either currently or as part of future plans.

7.1.6 Leveraging support (Question 8)

When asked if the SOS grant had helped its beneficiaries gain more support for their project:

- 72% said yes, the SOS grant had helped to secure more 'support'

Of those that said it had not helped them gain more support, some provided comments with most stating simply that it had 'not yet' helped to gain support but that such efforts were intended. It is notable that a comment was also made that the onerous SOS reporting requirements took time away from potentially being able to seek further resources. The majority of grantees comments pertained to financial support with varying levels of specificity about monetary values and commitments. The results suggest there is a strong perception that grants had been useful in leveraging additional funding, but at this stage the data set does not provide strong evidence to attribute leveraged funding to the SOS grant, other factors may be involved e.g. one project contributed to the development of the book from which the sales revenue will in part contribute to further conservation. In addition to gaining specific financial support, Grantees also commented that the grant help them get more support for their cause, species or project generally, but did not quantify this or give details.

Types of non-financial support mentioned included:

- the ability to be new partners, strengthen partnerships
- expand existing work to new regions
- raise awareness
- raise pledges from important stakeholders

Finding (9): SOS Grants can help to leverage further project support, either financial, non-financial or both.

7.1.7 Project outcomes (Question 9)

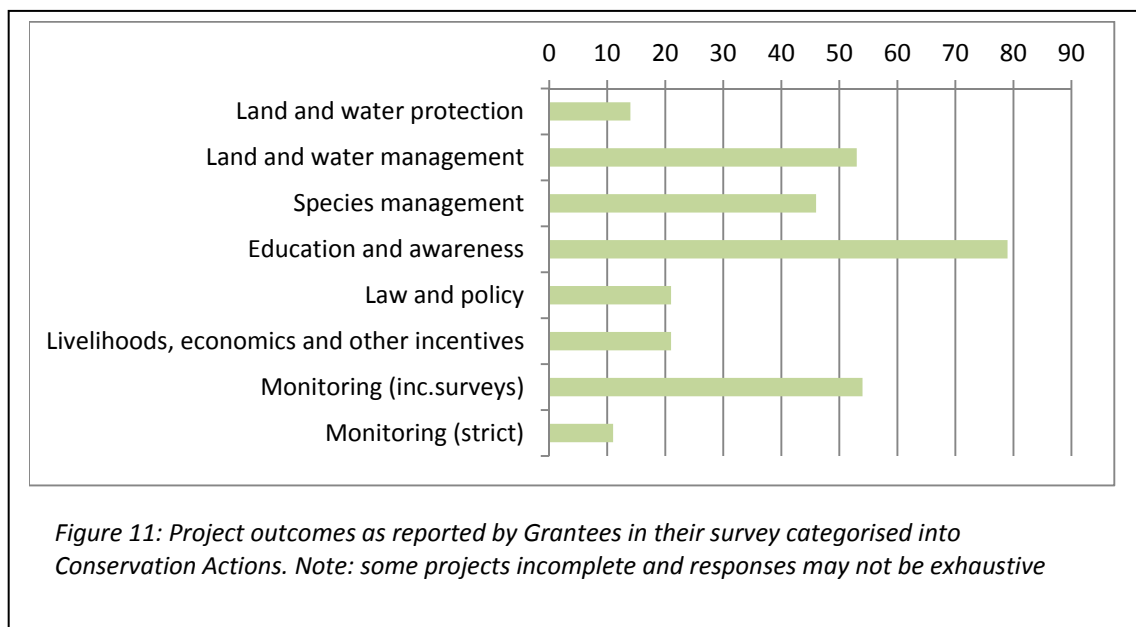
This question was designed for Grantees to feedback on achieved outcomes as a result of the SOS grant in an informal way by providing bullet points or summary information on outcomes. Grantees were asked firstly if the project for which the grant was allocated would have been able to achieve its objectives without it:

- 84% agreed they would not have been able to achieve their objectives without the SOS grant

Finding (10): Conservation objectives are facilitated by the award of an SOS grant.

Just over half, 28 of 47 respondents, added a brief, bulleted description of their project’s outcomes. These responses were simply categorised into the seven Conservation Actions (figure 11). This provides an indication of categories in which outcomes are being achieved (most notably education, land and water management, monitoring when including surveys and species management). It may indicate categories for which outcomes are more difficult to achieve (e.g. land and water protection, law and policy, livelihoods and economics and strict monitoring). There is caution here as this was based on informal inputs from Grantees, some reporting on incomplete projects. Conservation Actions are revisited in the review of the project reports. What is noticeable however is that Grantees are reporting and achieving objectives and not merely reporting activities. There is however little reporting of impact (which may be expected), and the inability to report impacts was also predicted by the interviewees.

Figure 11: Reporting of Conservation Action outcomes from Grantees Survey



A high number of respondents reported types of outcomes which IUCN would typically categorise as enabling results, such as improved engagement, coordination or participation, including new partnerships, forums or alliances; or development of management plans or other inputs to planning conservation/land-use. In two cases respondents cited impact-level achievements of increased population and non-specified improved conservation status.

An important observation relevant to reporting is that light reporting, although non-exhaustive, can identify project outcomes, achievements or progress; this may be a useful consideration and tool for interim reports.

Findings

(11) From light and informal feedback, projects are reporting conservation outcomes.

(12) There is an indication that achieving outcomes within the Conservation Action categories of ‘Law and policy’ and ‘Livelihood and economics’ may be the most challenging.

7.1.8 Grantee comments

The final part of the Grantees survey was open and almost every respondent provided at least some additional feedback, even if this was merely to express gratitude (33%). The feedback also included some negative feedback, particularly about reporting, bureaucracy and overheads (representing 26% of all survey respondents). Positive comments included:

- Good availability, responsiveness and helpful advice from the Secretariat
- Good organisation and disbursement of funds
- Appreciation for work to raise the profile of the projects and for site visits where they occurred

Constructive criticism and suggestions included:

- Need for more administration staff, advice and communication
- Slow feedback on technical reporting and under-use of communication reports
- Offering a template for reporting
- Lack of continuity of SOS due to changing priorities (e.g. Strategic Direction changes)
- Difficulty in spending the last 10% of the budget without receiving the next tranche of funds
- Establishment of a grantees forum
- Allowing for the finance of vehicles and international salaries
- Urging caution on unrealistic expectations and impact in short time frames by small projects
- Hopes for a longer-term vision for future SOS funding

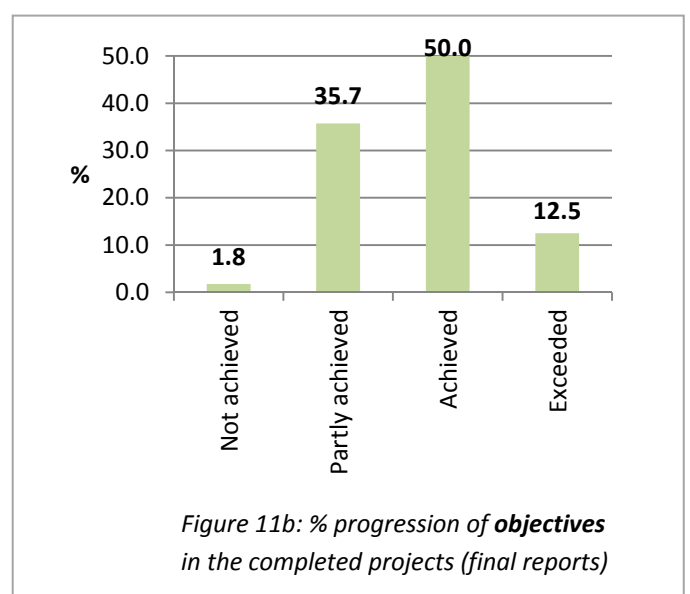
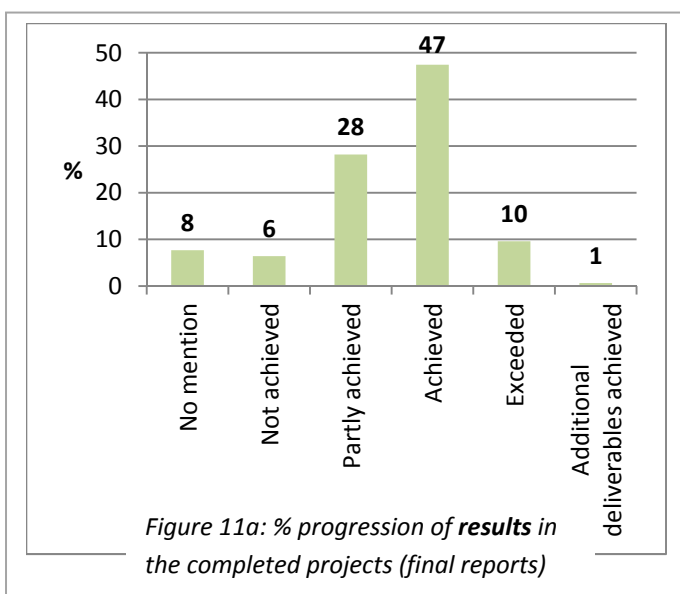
7.2 Conservation supported by SOS and the reporting of conservation outcomes and impacts

7.2.1 Completed and on-going projects: achieving ‘results’ and ‘objectives’

The final reports of the completed projects show achievement of 47% of all results, and 10% as exceeded. A further 28% were partly achieved (Figure 12a).

At the objectives level (results are grouped under objectives headings), half of all objectives could be graded as achieved, and 13% as exceeded. A further 36% were partly achieved. This suggests that the majority (98.2%) of objectives were at least on their way to being achieved. Just under 2% of objectives were recorded as not achieved (Figure 12b).

Figures 12a and 12b: Progression of results (a) and objectives (b)



All but four of the completed projects also reported ‘unexpected impacts’ in their final reports. Of these impacts, 58% were positive (e.g. appeared to help improve the project or had a positive outcome), and 42% were negative or inhibiting factors (e.g. either complaints or had an inhibiting effect on the project such as unshared information, lack of additional income, loss of capacity, unintended species impacts). The most frequent example, out of this small sample, of positive impacts which were unexpected was ‘strengthened or improved relations or links to communities, organisations, governments or councils’ (Table 5). The majority of negative impacts appear to be factors inhibiting the delivery of results.

For the results and objectives of all the on-going projects combined, most were showing ‘good progress’ with ongoing work (46.2% of all results and 60% of all objectives). Less than 10% of results or objectives were not mentioned or showing no progress as yet.

For the on-going projects, information was collected from each project’s latest report. The sample contains projects at all stages of reporting (1-4 with 4 being the final report). When considering achievements by the stage of reporting, as could be expected, there is an increase in the percentage of results (figure 13a) and objectives (Figure 13b) with good ongoing progress, and those being achieved or exceeded. By the final report, the percentage of results and objectives achieved exceeds any other category.

It may be obvious that projects will most likely achieve all or most of what they aim to achieve by the time of the final report, however, an additional factor may also be that projects take the time to do more thorough reporting at this stage. Supporting this is an observation from the review of project documents, where questions in the final report are rarely left blank; a common occurrence in earlier reports. This indicates, as may be expected, the final report is the most important to the grantee, and for assessing outcomes.

Table 5: Types of unexpected impact reported by completed projects (n=11)	
Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New species described New species range New or better than expected habitat discovered Positive changes to management e.g. Management plans, land-use Improved profile and increased capacity e.g. more volunteers/interest/activities/range New Partnership element e.g. more/new training Strengthened/improved relations/links e.g. community/organisations/government/councils Knowledge and awareness increased (e.g. in Partnership staff or community and stakeholders)
Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information lacking (e.g. expected but unshared) Lack of co-operation e.g. other sectors Lack of additional income Mistaken perception of project e.g. intentions and impacts Loss of capacity e.g. staff Unintended species impacts e.g. crop raiding increase, exposure to new risks Changes to external threats e.g. mining

Figure 13a
Results

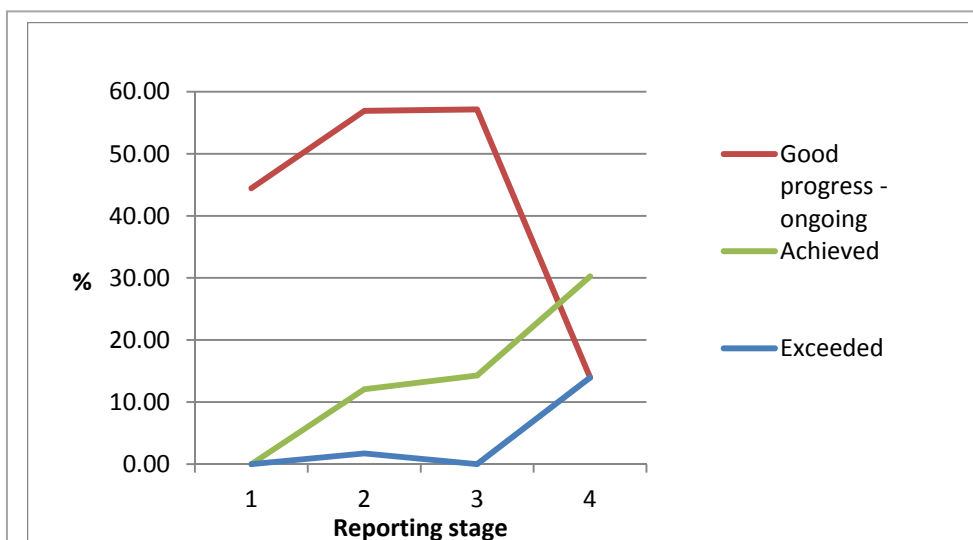


Figure 13b
Objectives

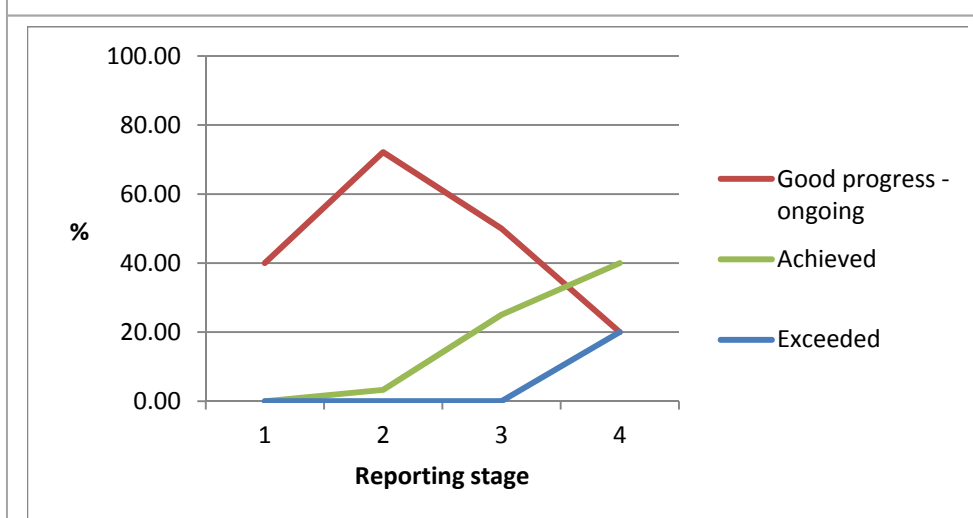


Figure 13: percentage of results (a) and objectives (b) making good progress, being achieved and being exceeded at each reporting stage (1-4, 4 being the final report)

The on-going projects included both types of grant projects: Rapid Action Grant (RAG) projects (n=3), and Threatened Species Grant (TSG) projects (n = 17). All three RAG projects in the sample had submitted a final report showing moderately good achievement levels: 38% of results and 44% of objectives achieved. More than 30% of both results and objectives were identified as achieving good progress and were ongoing, suggesting that more than 70% of the objectives were being met or on their way to being met.

For the TSG projects (n=17), 47% of deliverables and objectives and 63% of objectives were evidenced as having good progress with ongoing work to achieve them. The TSG projects reviewed spanned every stage of reporting (1-4). For the two projects within the 17 TSG projects which were at reporting stage 4, 27% of results were achieved and 20% exceeded. This result could be negatively skewed however as a large number of specific deliverables for one project were not mentioned specifically in the final report. Looking at the higher level, 33% of objectives were achieved and 50% were exceeded.

Findings:

(13) SOS projects are achieving outcomes for the conservation of threatened species, with more than half of planned results and objectives achieved or exceeded by completed projects.

(14) Projects are achieving unexpected impacts, with the most common cited as 'improved relationships with stakeholders'.

(15) RAG and TSG projects are both achieving conservation objectives, with the majority reporting good progress or objectives being achieved

7.2.2 SOS targeted questions – 'species conservation impacts'

The SOS targeted questions reviewed here are a set of questions within section three of the reports (interim and final), which aim to generate information to evidence 'Species Conservation Impact'. The questions and responses reviewed here are based on: species status (section 3.1 in the reports), Red List status (3.2), Critical habitat (3.3), Threats (species and habitat) (3.4) and conservation facilitation (3.5). A summary of the percentages calculated for both complete and on-going projects, based on their responses to these questions, is provided in Table 6.

For species status, it is notable that when combining percentages of both complete and on-going projects, 60% of projects are reporting a stabilisation in their focus species status, and 30% an improvement. Overall, more than 80% of projects are as a minimum progressing towards a positive impact for species status.

Finding (16): The majority of projects are, at a minimum, progressing towards a positive impact for species status.

Over half of on-going projects and the majority of complete projects reported that there would be no expected change in Red List status for their focus species. This could mostly be due to the fact that these projects are short term, and that Red List assessments are relatively infrequent. Individual projects may also focus only on a small component of a larger population or species range, which was stated in a number of reports. The remaining 45% of on-going projects either did not approach the question or stated that this outcome was unknown.

Finding (17): Projects are unlikely to report Red List status change for their focus species within the time frame of SOS' monitoring.

Over a half of projects responded that they were progressing towards achieving a positive impact for critical habitat, with around one-third of complete projects reporting an improved, or stable, critical habitat status. For a number of projects (20% complete, 40% on-going), critical habitat status was either unknown or not-applicable.

Finding (18): Over half of projects are progressing towards a positive impact for critical habitats, or better (stabilising/improving).

In terms of threats to species, the majority of projects (87% completed, 60% on-going) reported that threats had been reduced. For threats to critical habitat, almost half of complete projects reported a reduction in threat and a third of on-going projects reported they were working towards a positive impact. A number of projects did report that critical habitat threats were either unknown or not-applicable (33% complete, 55% on-going). It may not be surprising that the percentage of projects achieving positive impacts and threat reduction for species is higher than for critical habitat, as the grant-mechanism is designed to be species focused.

Finding (19): The majority of projects are achieving threat reduction for their species, and where applicable, positive impacts or threat reduction for critical habitat are also being achieved.

Conservation facilitation can be described as ‘enabling conservation action’ and as summarised in Table 4, 20% of complete projects (based on information in their final reports) were graded as having 'clearly improved' the facilitation of conservation, and 60% were marked as having 'improved some elements'. There were 20% of projects which appeared to have not achieved, or reported, conservation facilitation outcomes. This is also shown in figure 14.

Figure 14: Conservation Facilitation – completed projects

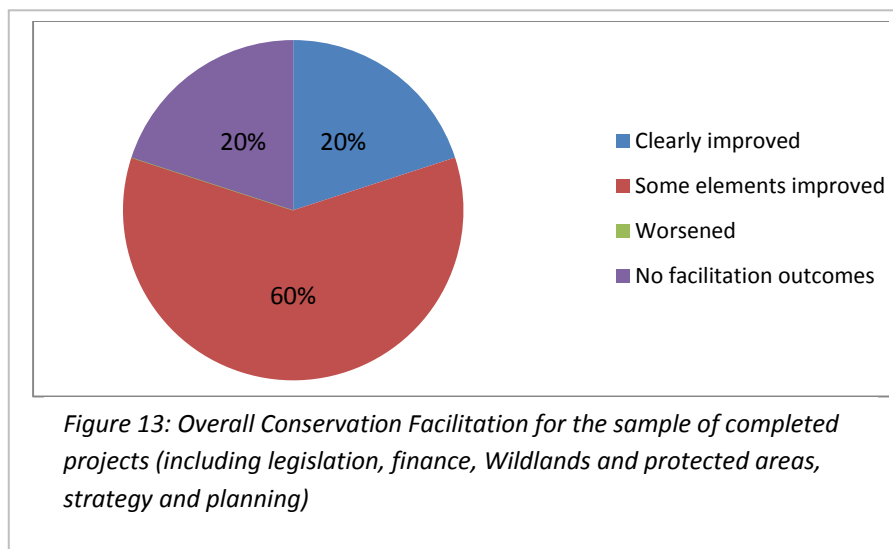


Table 6: Summary of SOS 'Species Conservation Impact' responses from completed and on-going projects			
Category	Response	Completed Projects %	On-going projects %
Species Status			
	Contributing to improved status	20	10
	Stabilisation in status	40	20
	Progress towards positive impact	20	35
	Unknown/not-applicable	20	35
Red List Status			
	No expected change	73	55
	Unknown/not-applicable	27	45
Critical Habitat			
	Improved	27	10
	stable	27	0
	Progress towards positive impact	27	50
	Unknown/not-applicable	20	40
Threats			
	Threats to focal species reduced	87	60
	Progress towards positive impact for species	7	25
	Threats to critical habitat reduced	47	15
	Threats to critical habitat stabilised	13	0
	Progress towards positive impact for critical habitat	7	30
	Unknown/not-applicable (critical habitat)	33	55
Conservation facilitation			
Overall (complete projects)	Improved conservation facilitation	20	N/A
	Improved some elements	60	N/A
	Achieved no facilitation outcomes	20	N/A
Legislative	Poor	7	0
	Fair	27	20
	Good	20	25
	Very good	0	5
	Unknown/not-applicable	47	50
Financial	Poor	0	15
	Fair	40	20
	Good	27	25
	Unknown/not-applicable	27	40
Wildlands/PA	Fair	20	15
	Good	0	10
	Very good	7	0
	Unknown/not-applicable	73	75
Conservation Strategies	Poor	0	10
	Fair	20	25
	Good	33	30
	Very good	13	5
	Unknown/not-applicable	33	30

Table 6: Project responses to Species Conservation Impact questions: % of complete and on-going projects reporting against species status (section 3.1 in the reports), Red List status (3.2), critical habitat (3.3), threats (species and habitat) (3.4) and conservation facilitation (3.5).

When looking at each conservation facilitation category separately it can be seen that projects appeared to perform better in some categories than others.

- **Legislative facilitation:** The majority of projects reported legislative facilitation to be unknown or not applicable, though 20-27% of projects reported fair or good outcomes.
- **Financial facilitation:** Between 20-40% of all projects reported financial facilitation to be good or fair.
- **Wildlands/protected area facilitation:** Over 70% of both complete and on-going projects reported that the facilitation of wildlands protection or protected areas was unknown or not applicable.
- **Conservation strategy facilitation:** Over half of complete and on-going projects reported the facilitation of conservation strategies e.g. management or action plans to be fair or good.

It should be noted that the ‘conservation facilitation’ section of the SOS reporting forms was difficult to analyse as, in the absence of tick boxes, respondents rarely used the wording requested in the question to identify if facilitation had been ‘poor’, ‘fair’ ‘good’ and so on. This meant in some cases, the classification of responses was more subjective. Never-the-less the analysis has revealed useful findings:

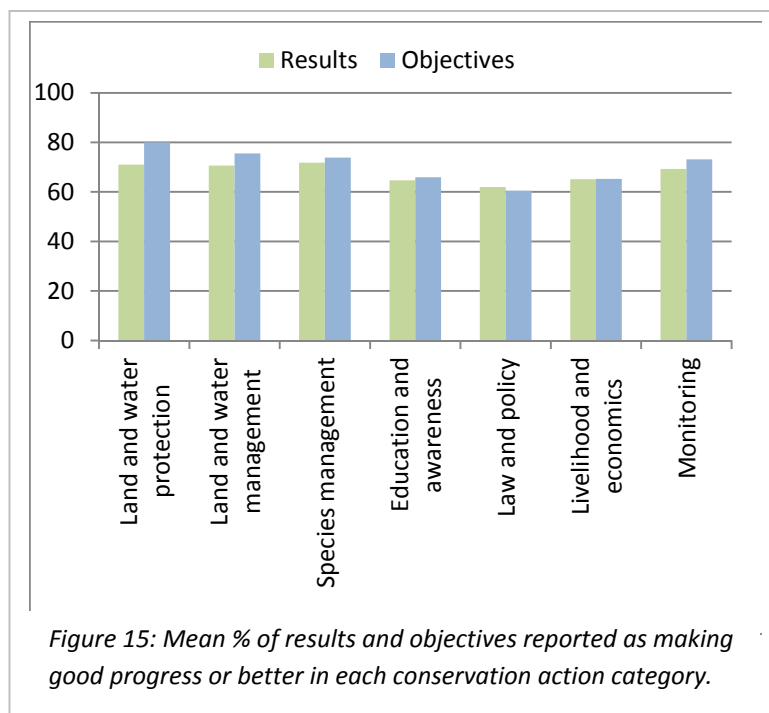
Findings:

(20) At least some element of conservation facilitation has been improved by all completed projects. ‘Conservation strategy’ appears to be the most commonly achieved conservation facilitation category.

7.2.3 Conservation Actions

Only the on-going projects are considered here as these 20 were selected to represent the seven CMP Conservation Actions used for portfolio analysis by the SOS Secretariat. Here there is an indication that more than 60% of results and objectives (figure 15) are achieving good progress or better for all seven Conservation Action categories

Figure 15: Conservation Actions: results and objectives



For the categories of Land and Water Protection and Monitoring, on average almost 80% of objectives are progressing well or being achieved. The analysis indicates that it may be more challenging to achieve 'Law and policy' than other categories in the short-term. This data set does include projects at every level of reporting so there should be some caution in interpretation, but the light analysis provides a snapshot of how well projects may be able to deliver within each Conservation Action category.

Finding (21): The majority (>60%) of Conservation Action results and objectives in on-going projects are being achieved or exceeded.

7.3 Generating lessons learned: From projects and within SOS governance and management

As described in the method, the interviews on the governance and management of SOS were designed to collect learnings about the Partnership. There is also information, particularly from the desk review of project documents, which also relate to lessons learned at a project level. It is important to recognise that 'lessons' are learnings which are useful, the most useful being those which can be extracted and applied to future work or projects; lessons which are 'enabling'. There are also lessons which may be project specific, and of limited future use, and those which are truisms, i.e. factual statements which are well known requirements for success.

7.3.1 Lessons learned reported by projects

For all of the 'lessons' reported by the projects, more than two thirds were found to be positive (lessons which appeared to have a positive impact on the project), and slightly less than one third were negative (complaints or sharing lessons which appeared to have a negative effect).

For both the completed and on-going projects, the most reported types of lessons were:

- The need for good communications, training, education and outreach (20% occurrence for completed projects, 11% for on-going projects)
- The need to ensure the involvement of stakeholders and the understanding of their roles (16% occurrence for completed projects and 17% for on-going projects)
- The need to maintain flexibility within the project to respond to new information, ways of working, advice or opportunities (12% occurrence for completed projects, 38% for on-going projects)

These top three lesson types were the same for the completed and on-going projects, but in a different order. Table 7 lists the top five lessons (for both completed and on-going projects, n=7) from a total of 20 reported. These statements are not how they were written by grantees, but appear as a 'lesson type' identified and collated following grouping of their lessons reported.

Gathering lessons learned showed a large variation in quality of lessons reported by grantees. The broad lessons that emerge may however be useful to identify necessary elements for success of future projects. Table 8 suggests example questions which potentially could be derived and used to help assess future projects.

Table 7: Lessons Learned: lesson type and percentage occurrence reported by complete and sampled projects		
% Complete Projects	% sampled projects	Lesson Type
20.3	11.3	(1) Good communications and an education, outreach and training component is important for information sharing, two-way feedback and relationships.
15.7	17	(2) Ensure all stakeholders, particularly the local communities, are included and agree on objectives and actions either informally or in a formal partnership agreement and that local authorities/government are aware and where possible included, and that each knows its role.
11.6	37.7	(3) Maintain flexibility within or post-implementation of the project as, for example, you may identify better ways of working, receive advice or new scientific information, species may not respond as expected or more effective use of funds or additional/alternative areas to work in are identified.
8.7	3.8	(4) There is a risk of delay and complications when objectives rely on in-country/organisational systems and logistics (e.g. reporting, finance, politics, communications, ownership etc.)
8.7	3.8	(5) There is a risk of delay with community-related activities caused by inter and intra community differences, relations and logistics.
7	9.4	(6) Objectives may over or under-estimate the capacity of staff or recipients e.g. more (or less) training/support required, low morale or motivation, formal tracking system for staff activity
0	5.7	(7) Project governance/management issues can have far reaching consequences e.g. not receiving funding in good time, lack of co-ordination early in project, low capacity to cope with for bureaucratic expectations

Table 7: % lesson type for complete and on-going projects as a total of their lessons reported. (Lessons learned for complete projects are recorded from every report submitted, for on-going projects, only the latest report was used.)

Table 8: Possible questions for candidate projects based on past lessons learned	
Lesson (Table 5)	Question generated
1	Do you have a communications plan/ education and outreach component/feedback system?
2	Are all stakeholders identified and are they/will they be communicated with and/or involved? Is there planned or is there the opportunity to develop a 'conservation agreement' between stakeholders?
3	Do you/will you have an internal evaluation and feedback system to enable the project to evolve and maintain high relevance; meeting objectives, but allowing for flexibility?
4	Do you have contacts or knowledge/experience of in-country/regional/organisational ways of working and requirements?
5	How many different communities does the project aim to work with? Is there past history of contact and a working relationship either with you or other organisations? Are there further lessons learned (e.g. from local NGOs) which can be drawn upon?
6	Is this project working with new or existing staff (internal and external)? Is there a contingency period for extra training/follow-up within the plan? Do you have a system for tracking staff activity?
7	Do you have the capacity and experience to meet the requirements of donors? DO you feel you would benefit from additional capacity development support?

Table 8: Example questions related to the seven most frequent types of lesson learned which could be generated for review of projects prior to grant allocation where appropriate

Findings:

(22) The most cited project-specific lessons learned are: good communications, education and outreach, involvement and understanding of roles within stakeholders, and maintaining project flexibility (to new information or ways of working).

(23) Reporting lessons learned is a useful process, with the majority of lessons reported being positive, and providing the opportunity to share learnings with future projects.

7.3.2 Interview Results: governance and management

7.3.2.1 Governance

Interviewees were asked both what had progressed well in terms of governance, and also what could be improved.

It was recognised in favour of SOS that:

- The availability and use of technical advice and the scientific basis for decisions is efficient and very strong
- The Partnership is transparent, and has a participatory nature (participation of donors)
- Representation of donors and different stakeholder groups is good
- Governance arrangements have maintained the independence, neutrality, and representation of the different stakeholder groups

Most respondents were very specific in their suggestions for improvement and there were differing perspectives on this matter. Individual responses included:

- The need to address conflicts of interest and its inherent risks (“it is not good practice to have grant recipients involved in Partnership governance”, although one respondent felt that these conflicts of interests had been well addressed)
- Questioning the need for the Donor Council
- Bureaucracy for procurement
- Greater inclusion and capacity building within non-English speaking stakeholders (e.g. recognising the opportunity to support, mobilise and increase the conservation capacity of French/Spanish speaking organisations in West Africa and Latin America by providing for and accepting non-English proposals)
- The need to address gender balance within the Partnership governance
- Better use of existing networks and experience within IUCN
- More site visits to support project directly and increase understanding about a project
- Considering new and relevant strategic directions e.g. for under-represented regions such as the Caribbean, and topic such as the illegal wildlife trade, particularly with CITES now represented on the Donor Council
- Forging better links with other conservation initiatives e.g. the SCBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2001-2020 and the Aichi Targets (12)

There was also a suggestion that by basing the strategic directions for proposals on the Red List, there was an unintended consequence of cutting out funding for species which have not yet been assessed.

Several comments revolved around the facilitation of further fundraising for the SOS Partnership. There existed some expectation for the donors through their credibility, connection, or advice to have assisted with facilitating other fundraising opportunities. There is also a sense of frustration that any guidance in this respect has been lacking or has not yielded fundraising successes. There was an interesting comment also that where it was expected that support from the major SOS donors would invite support from others, it is suggested it may have done the opposite for unclear reasons. (There may be elements which deter other donors e.g. known bureaucratic factors, a feeling that the Partnership is already well supported). Also clear was the fact that significant allocated funds, expected and accounted for at the beginning of the Partnership, did not materialise from the World Bank, which was particularly damaging and disappointing. Expected funds from Nokia also did not materialise due to the effects of the global economic downturn. Finally, views diverged on whether the level of level of bureaucracy and heavy structure was appropriate or required simplification.

Findings:

(24) Governance arrangements are strong and well-regarded, if not overcomplicated in some respects e.g. structure, review, reporting.

(25) Donor support did not meet expectations in awarding funds which were budgeted for or in facilitating further support through their experience and networks.

(26) There are many constructive suggestions highlighting good potential for the improvement and future expansion of SOS (e.g. avoid conflicts of interest, build capacity in non-English speaking regions, reduce bureaucracy, identify new strategic directions and include underrepresented regions and species, improve links with other conservation initiatives).

7.3.2.2 Management

Focusing on the management of the SOS Partnership, when asked about aspects that had gone well, interviewees were extremely positive and congratulatory, citing that the Secretariat is well-run, has strong staff, good systems in place, and that SOS is well recognised within the conservation community. Responses included:

- High quality of work, particularly in light of the small staff size
- Good and inclusive review and selection process
- Good priority setting for proposals, and use of strategic directions.
- Being able to access expertise, e.g. the IUCN SSC, was a particular advantage

When asked what could be improved for the management of SOS, respondents provided a range of suggestions. Comments noted the rigorous process that has been costly and tested the limited capacity of the Secretariat. Suggestions to address this included:

- Increased funding to the Partnership (all respondents)
- Increased SOS capacity (all respondents) with more staff employed, including more Partnership management staff and a high-level fund raising professional
- Relocation of the Secretariat (with the exception of its director) to another country (e.g. UK) thus reducing staff costs and allowing an increase in capacity
- Allowing the director to spend more time on SOS, or having a full-time director (i.e. the 'need for more leadership')

A major reason for needing a larger Secretariat was recognised as the requirement to keep up with the current workload, in particular having the capacity to scale-up the Partnership and keep up with grant management including improving the speed of the review process, and project feedback following monitoring and reporting. Further suggestions included automating project reporting to reduce the reliance on manual systems currently in place to manage the Partnership. There is value in this suggestion as an automated interim reporting system accessible through the website could have benefits both for the grantees and the Secretariat.

Several respondents shared the view that there is a need for change and new or updated strategies in the next phase for fundraising and communications. Numerous respondents noted the failure to meet expectations and ambitions for fundraising in particular (exacerbated by the economic downturn). The model to seek funding from private sector donors is criticised e.g. as being naïve and too reliant on the notion of philanthropy. It was also stated that donors want something with quick return on investment, which is a hard match with their sustainability requirements for this Partnership. A new approach including public sector funding is requested. It was also commented that it is important to ensure that the support from all donors is recognised and visible.

Finally, there appears to be some management aspects in terms of procedures, line-management or decision-making arrangements that create delays in work or higher workloads (this appears to be related to SOS not being able to have its director dedicated full-time to the initiative). However, the workload, stemming mainly from the high number of projects being reviewed and managed, and the small staffing number, appear to be the main factors putting the most strain on the Secretariat: “it is not about capability, but capacity”. It was also suggested that streamlining and making changes to the efficacy of the reporting system would also assist the capacity to manage the Partnership.

Findings:

(27) The Secretariat is capable but capacity is too low to effectively manage the current portfolio size, the bureaucratic and manual procedures and processes, and the pressure of finding additional funds.

(28) A full-time director and fundraising professional would benefit the Partnership.

(29) The model to seek funding primarily from private sector is flawed, although the global economic downturn has exacerbated the issue.

7.3.2.3 Grantee reporting

Two questions gathered feedback on the aspects of grantee reporting that were most useful and how lessons learned have been used. Most responses to how lessons learned had been used focused on lessons for Partnership management, particularly procedures and processes. This is indicative of the fact that currently lessons learned from grantees’ reports have not been shared with the Technical Advisory Group or the Donor Council.

However, this is also indicative that adaptive management is taking place, as illustrated by the adaptation of the architecture of application, reporting and monitoring systems, and developing tools such as an example application template for grant applicants. It was also stated that this question is premature as the Partnership is currently within a cycle of learning. With regard to the information provided by grantees through their reports it was recognised that the intention is to fully utilise the information presented in the reports, e.g. by taking lessons learned forwards, for which a portfolio analysis would be ideal. This has not been currently possible due to reasons already cited (bureaucracy impacts, funding limitations and lack of capacity).

Again, in terms of identifying the most useful aspects of project reporting, neither the reports nor summary data or information has at the time of evaluation been shared with the Technical Advisory Group or Donor Council. It was stated however that there is ongoing work to identify and refine key indicators from project reporting (the fine detail underneath the overarching Partnership Key Performance Indicators). Within the responses, the most requested elements of reporting were:

- Project impact (although recognised as difficult to evidence)
- Tabulated project outcomes against planned objectives (concise)
- Lessons learned

Although most projects have met reporting requirements, it is understood that streamlining the process would be of benefit to both the grantees and the Secretariat. Respondents recognized the challenges of the onerous reporting process, and suggested the following to increase the usefulness of reports:

- Capacity differences of grantees/organisations should be taken into consideration (e.g. an improved two-tier process with more focus on capacity building for smaller organisations).
- Generation of simple and clear feedback on solid outcomes against clear objectives (reports now are too long and wordy).
- Record information from emails received from grant recipients (e.g. informal information on a projects progress, which may not appear in a formal report, potentially e.g. useful for monitoring and for communications information).

Stories for use in SOS communications were deemed very important and useful by interviewees, but difficult to obtain. There was comment that these difficulties were evident particularly about projects run by larger NGOs, as opposed to those run by smaller organisations who are more eager to share stories and raise awareness of their work.

Findings:

(30) The use and level of engagement with reporting is low in contrast to the grantees' feedback on the amount of effort and time they put into reporting.

(31) From a governance and management perspective, the most important parts of grantees' reports would be: concise information on impacts, progress against objectives (e.g. tabulated data), and lessons learned.

(32) Communication pieces are challenging to obtain (especially from larger organisations) but are important for the profile of SOS and the individual projects.

7.3.2.4 Measuring conservation 'Impact'

When interviewees were asked if the Partnership was appropriately set-up to deliver and measure conservation impact, the majority of responses were clear that the Partnership is not set up or delivered within a timeframe appropriate for measuring impact. Respondents explained that measuring impact of conservation requires long time frames, investments and continuity (mirroring several grantees' frustrations about the lack of continuity of the priorities and grants). On the other hand, the Partnership is perceived as being well-designed to measure, objectives, outputs, outcomes, with the recognition that achieving 'impact' comes at a later stage. It was commented also that the seemingly negative response to this question should not be taken as a sign that the Partnership is not set up to deliver and measure results, but rather indicates a strong understanding of the general challenges within the field of conservation of measuring impact.

Additional points included that there is a need to prove that funds have been spent effectively and that the current system is able to show positive outcomes, but that it should be recognised, not least from the current and future donor community, that these grants are relatively small and that projects are run within a short time-scale. As already stated, impact may only be measurable over a long time period, but there is also the added difficulty that grants will most often be allocated to projects which are working within larger schemes of work, for which impact may then stem from collective inputs, not limited to SOS. This also is evidenced from the grantees' surveys which found that the majority of projects supported a small component of a larger Partnership. Further suggestions from interviewees regarding conservation impact included:

- It would be more realistic to measure impact several years after the closure of the project
- It would be valuable and relevant to attempt to measure progress in building capacity and relationships
- Improve the extraction of results and lessons learned data

The importance of good relationships and their impact on a project was not only highlighted here, but was also prominent in the analysis of lessons learned and unexpected impacts, being the most commonly cited lesson or impact from the project documents analysed for this report. Further comments suggested that good relations (e.g. with stakeholders), although on the whole difficult to measure, are vital to conservation success. Finally, in light of the responses, measuring the conservation effect of SOS would require a clear strategy of what should be monitored.

Findings:

(33) The SOS Partnership is not set up or delivered within a time frame appropriate for measuring conservation impact, but does deliver return on investment through delivery of measureable outcomes in the short-term. It is important this understanding underlies SOS Partnership donor support.

(34) Conservation impacts are potentially measurable over a long time-scale and will likely result from collective inputs, of which SOS will be part.

(35) Maintaining good relations (e.g. with project stakeholders) is in itself impactful but difficult to measure.

7.3.2.5 Strengthening SOS

When asked to summarise key points which would strengthen the governance and management of SOS the most common responses were:

- Increase funding and reduce time devoted to fundraising by getting more engagement from donors
- Reduce bureaucracy and procedures for both grant management and governance
- Increase Secretariat size/capacity.

Interviewees also gave additional comments at the close of the interview. The general sense of the feedback was that the Partnership is on track and the experiences of these first few years of running the Partnership point to adaptations that could be made. These areas of adaptation included:

- Procedures
- Capturing lessons learned from monitoring and reporting
- Capacity building and scaling up

The last point would see SOS taking advantage of the niche where conservation support is badly needed and well recognised by both those involved in SOS governance and management, and the grantees.

It was commented again that the Secretariat is overstretched and that this should be alleviated by reducing workload or increasing resources and potentially re-locating. The funding model has also proved unsatisfactory and unsuccessful, which has hindered the SOS Partnership. It was felt that with the expertise available within the IUCN, specifically the SSC, it is advantageous and scientifically robust to run such a Partnership. It was felt that since putting in the time, funds and efforts so far, it would be wasteful and disastrous for it not to continue, and that donors should increase and secure future funding to allow for a sustainable future and for SOS to scale-up.

Findings:

(36) There are three main aspects to improve: increase and secure the funding base, adapt procedures and reduce bureaucracy in both SOS governance and grants management, and expand Secretariat capacity.

(37) Scaling-up the SOS Partnership is desirable and appropriate based on the niche it fills, matched by the capability and scientific backing of its situation within the IUCN and its network.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Is the SOS Partnership relevant and appropriate? (Evaluation objective 1)

- The SOS Partnership is relevant and valued within the conservation community, as represented by its grantees.
- SOS is appropriate to grantees work through provision of support to larger programmes, by leveraging further support (financial and non-financial), by facilitating the achievement of project objectives and for the outcomes and lessons generated.
- SOS could more appropriately meet Grantees' needs and match their capacity levels on reporting, the content of the reporting – both the level of detail and frequency, communications, and financial procedures if these were simplified and streamlined.
- The information generated by reporting is to a large extent of unknown relevance for the management and governance of SOS because of a lack of synthesis and extraction of major outcomes, impacts (where measurable), and lessons learned.

8.2 Is conservation supported by SOS and are conservation outcomes and impacts reported? (Evaluation objective 2)

- Conservation impact is only potentially measurable over a long time-scale, and the impacts of SOS specifically may also be difficult to identify as SOS support is most likely a contributory factor within a larger, multi-faceted conservation Partnership.
- Project reports reveal that SOS is supporting conservation through the achievement of objectives and outcomes.
 - SOS supported projects (both TSG and RAG projects) are achieving the majority of their objectives and achieving conservation outcomes (expected and unexpected) for the conservation of threatened species.
 - Objectives across all identified Conservation Actions categories are progressing well, there are indications however, that the categories of 'Law and Policy' and Livelihood and Economics' may be more challenging in the short-term than the others.
 - The majority of projects reviewed here are reducing threats, including threats to species' critical habitats, for their focus species and as a minimum they reported progress on improving species status. However, the projects reviewed could not indicate a change in Red List status.
- The majority of projects reviewed are improving at least some elements which facilitate or enable further conservation in terms of legislation, finance and wildlands/protected areas and conservation strategy (e.g. planning), with the latter being the most common enabling outcome for these short-term projects.

- In line with the **SOS Global Environment Objective**, which is “to improve the conservation status of globally threatened species or populations and their habitats”, for the species supported by the grants awarded, there are indications that phase one of the SOS programme is already achieving this.

8.3 Have lessons learned been generated? (Both at the project level and that of SOS governance and management) (Evaluation objective 3)

Lessons for conservation have been generated at a project level, which suggest that:

- Recording lessons appears to be a useful process which can generate future questions and shared learnings, with reported lessons being mostly positive (positive impact on the project), and the most common being related to: the quality of communications, education and outreach, stakeholder relations and maintaining flexibility (e.g. project ways of working).
- The value of good stakeholder relationships for conservation, and the ability of projects to achieve this, should not be underestimated but its impact may be difficult to measure.

Lessons have been generated for SOS Partnership governance and management which suggest that:

- Governance arrangements are strong and well regarded and the SOS Partnership is well placed with the capability and network of experience to deliver its own objectives (Project Development, PDO, and Global Environment, GEO), and there is a niche and a need which supports the scaling-up of the Partnership.
- The SOS Partnership structure is over-complicated and bureaucratic, and capacity within its management, although capable, is too low.
- Donor support has not met expectations either in funds promised nor in assistance to leverage and access more funding opportunities and the phase one model to generate private investment is flawed.
- Communications although valuable are difficult to generate, but there may be other ways to access and create communications information which would not be as burdensome (as reported) on grant beneficiaries.
- There is an imbalance between the time and effort grantees are putting into reporting, and the useful information which is being extracted and fed up to the governance and management of the SOS Partnership. This is related to the lack of capacity, manual processes and the weight and format of the information requested.
- There are a number of suggestions for improvement and expansion, which further highlights the Partnership’s potential. This potential could be met through: increasing and stabilising donor support, increasing SOS management capacity (including a full time director and professional fundraising manager) and adapting, simplifying and developing less bureaucratic procedures and processes.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: The main SOS donors should continue their support at a level which enables SOS capacity to be increased appropriately and which provides long-term security and assistance for procuring new funding sources, so that SOS can continue and build upon the conservation outcomes of the first phase and take advantage of the unique and advantageous position within IUCN and its network. (findings: 1, 2, 5, 6, 9-11, 13-16, 18-22, 2-26, 36, 37)

R2: Increase the SOS governance and management capacity, enabled by secured funding in Recommendation 1 (R1), capacity should be commensurate with portfolio strength and the need and potential for the scaling-up of the SOS Partnership (including increased Partnership management capacity, a full time Director and professional fundraising manager). (Findings: 1,6, 10, 11, 13-16, 18-22, 24, 26-28, 36,37)

R3: Build on the fund raising experiences of SOS Phase One, learning from positive achievements and working with the new and improved outline 2015-2020 strategy. In line with R2, it is recommended to employ a fundraising professional, to identify and build other funding sources (public sector), and to extend research in order to better identify private sectors' ways of working; how CSR is done and measured and nature of philanthropic contributions (to identify how SOS can meet their requirements). There are also other ways of gaining corporate support which could be considered e.g. payroll giving, staff/customer fundraising, staff time, gifts of stocks/shares. (Findings: 9-11, 13-16, 18-22, 25, 29)

R4: Reduce Bureaucracy by simplifying procedures and processes, in particular project reporting and related monitoring*. Reporting should achieve a balance which recognises capacity differences (e.g. a two-tier system which concentrates more on capacity building for smaller organisations) and which avoids a process which could be counter-productive to the Partnership and individual project aims. (Findings: 3, 4, 7, 11, 24, 36)

**A streamlined and automated reported format for interim reported would benefit both the Grantees and the Secretariat. A suggestion would be to have less focus on 'impact' in the interim. Develop a lighter weight, concise, structured and automated (6 monthly or mid-term) reporting system (e.g. include features such as a progress grading system (tick-box or scale) against objectives which can automatically generate descriptive statistics). Concentrate on the final report for success measures.*

R5: Aim for the achievement of objectives and outcomes combined with longer-term monitoring. Re-evaluation of projects 5-10 years after funding may help to reveal impacts and the part played by SOS support. It should be recognised (e.g. by Partnership donors) that 'Impact' should not and cannot be a short-term measure of success for SOS projects, as impacts are only potentially measureable in the long-term and would most-likely be as a result of combined efforts (e.g. a number of grants and partnerships). (Findings: 7, 8, 11, 13-22, 33, 34)

R6: Consider supporting longer-term programmes to increase the potential impact of SOS. These could be both long term* and concentrated more on capacity building (e.g. for small organisations, for organisations in non-English speaking regions). Recognise the impact of creating strong stakeholder relations within projects, and encourage their development. (Findings: 1, 8, 10-14, 17, 18-22, 33-35, 37)

**Reliant on R1, a smaller portfolio with longer-running projects would potentially create the opportunity for measures of success such as impact, in line with R5, impacts would be a long-term goal.*

R7: Ensure better use of reports with information from projects feeding back to SOS governance and management (e.g. annual summary), this relates to recommendation R4 (improving processes). Consider using reported lessons learned to generate questions to assess and assist future projects. (Findings: 5, 23, 30, 31)

R8 Consider different ways of generating communications stories which do not over-burden or rely directly on grantees, e.g. use of information from site visits, generation of case studies from phase one projects, identification of individual project champions or ambassadors to report news from the field (e.g. community volunteers), or better capture and use of informal information from emails. (Findings: 4, 32)

10. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Method

1a: Grantees Survey

SOS – SAVE OUR SPECIES EVALUATION SOS GRANTEES QUESTIONNAIRE

The following 10 questions are designed to help assess the SOS - Save Our Species grant making programme, from which you/your project were beneficiaries. Please take the opportunity to feed-back about the programme, ticking the boxes where relevant and adding your specific comments in the spaces provided. Thank you for your time.

1. How do you regard SOS as a grant making mechanism?

- Insignificant
Some value
Good value
Significant value

Please explain your answer:

2. How relevant is the SOS programme to your organisation and the work that you do?

- No relevance
Minor relevance
Relevant
Highly Relevant

Please explain your answer:

3. How would you describe the procedure for attaining the SOS grant, in terms of difficulty and complexity?

- | <i>Difficulty</i> | | <i>Complexity</i> | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Easy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Poor | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| As expected | <input type="checkbox"/> | Straight-forward | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Difficult | <input type="checkbox"/> | Too time-consuming | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please add any comments you may have on the SOS call for proposals and guidelines, application submission and the grant processing phase, including any requests for additional documents and modifications/clarifications by the SOS Secretariat :

4. How would you describe the level of reporting required following allocation of your grant (e.g. compared to grants of a similar size or from similar sources)?

- Too little
As expected
More than expected
Too much

Please add any comments:

5. Have any of the SOS procedures helped you to consider or develop 'lessons learned' for the project for which the grant was awarded?

- Yes
No

If Yes, please describe key lessons learned as a result of SOS procedures:

6. Has the experience with SOS differed from other grants you may have been awarded?

- Not Applicable
Yes
No

If Yes, please describe any differences and their impact:

7. How did you use the SOS grant?

- To finance a stand-alone project
As top-up funding for an ongoing project
As funding for a small component of a longer-term programme

Please explain or describe other uses, and add comments:

8. Has the SOS grant helped you to gain more support for your work?

- Yes
No

Please describe the additional support and how SOS has helped facilitate it (this may include also, but not be limited to, the leveraging of additional funding on top of the matching funds requested by the SOS guidelines):

9. Would the project for which the grant was allocated been able to achieve its objectives without the specific SOS grant?

- Yes
No

Please explain concisely (bullet points) what your project has achieved as a direct result of receiving the SOS grant.

10. Please use the space below for any further feedback you have about the SOS –Save Our Species programme. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Annex 1b: Governance and Management Questions and interviewees

1. Can you identify elements that you feel have worked well in the management of the SOS Partnership?
2. Are there management elements you feel need improving or that you would suggest were done differently?
3. In terms of governance, what has worked well?
4. Is there anything you would suggest or do differently in terms of the Partnership governance?
5. Have lessons learned (reported by the grant recipients) informed decisions within SOS?
6. What has been the most informative and useful aspect of the grantee reporting process?
7. Is the SOS Partnership appropriately set-up to deliver and measure conservation impacts?
8. Taking into account what you have learnt from this process, can you summarise your key ingredients which would strengthen the SOS grant making mechanism?

(Plus time for additional comments)

INTERVIEWEES (A-Z):

- Alessandro Badalotti IUCN SOS Co-ordinator
- Luigi Boitani University of Rome/SSC Chair, SOS Technical Advisory Group (TAG)
- Simon Bradley IUCN SOS Communication and Marketing Officer
- Julien Calas FFEM Member SOS-TAG (SOS Donor)
- Morgane Daget IUCN SOS Administrative Assistant
- Valerie Hickey World Bank Task Manager for SOS, Member SOS-TAG (SOS Donor)
- John Robinson Wildlife Conservation Society/SSC Member, SOS-TAG
- Jon Paul Rodriguez IUCN SSC Deputy Chair SSC, Member SOS-TAG
- Jane Smart IUCN Director, Global Species Programme
- Simon Stuart IUCN SSC Chair, Species Survival Commission
- Jean-Christophe Vié IUCN Deputy Director, Global Species Programme & SOS Director
- Mark Zimsky GEF Member SOS-TAG (SOS Donor)

Annex 2: Evaluation Terms of Reference

Independent Evaluation of the Save Our Species Program Terms of Reference 28 March 2014

Introduction

SOS - Save Our Species is an initiative intended to be a long-term global programme to improve the conservation status of globally threatened species, their habitats and the people depending on them. It provides grants for conservation of globally threatened species. By strategically focusing on species conservation priorities identified by the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) and the SOS Working Group (a technical group of experts associated to the initiative) and by providing rapid action funding that can be mobilized quickly during crises, SOS aims to provide critically-needed resources where and when they matter most.

Background

SOS is executed through IUCN, with a secretariat in the IUCN Global Species Programme. SOS Calls for Proposals for Threatened Species Grants (TSG) are issued once or twice a year and applications are accepted for a period of 6-8 weeks following this announcement. All applications submitted are screened for eligibility, reviewed by experts (according to taxonomical and geographical expertise) and finally reviewed by the SOS Working Group before being submitted to the SOS Donor Council for validation and funding. SOS Rapid Action Grants (RAG) can be submitted on a rolling basis to the SOS Secretariat for review and approval.

Projects selected for funding are reviewed in detail during a negotiation phase with the applicant and before a grant agreement is finalized and signed. Funded projects submit regular progress reports that require the SOS Secretariat's review to assess progress against planned milestones and the achievement of project objectives and results.

SOS is uniquely positioned to engage international corporations, foundations, individual donors, and governments at the highest level. In addition to funding from GEF, World Bank, Nokia, FFEM and Fondation Segré, the partnership is expected to benefit from additional contributions for species conservation from the private sector. SOS has both the credibility and scope to offer meaningful and high profile return on investment from the private sector and others. SOS offers private sector partners a highly attractive opportunity to help prevent biodiversity loss on a truly global scale.

Purpose and Objectives of the Evaluation

The overall purpose of this evaluation is to strengthen SOS as a grantmaking mechanism and as a means of delivering outcomes and impacts for species conservation. To that end, the specific objectives of the evaluation are to:

1. Assess the extent to which SOS is relevant and appropriate to the grantees and species conservation;
2. Assess the extent of different kinds of conservation actions SOS tends to support and the extent to which grantees are able to report conservation outcomes and impacts;
3. Generate lessons learned to date on the implementation of SOS, covering management and governance of SOS.

An evaluation matrix outlining the main questions and methods related to each objective is attached.

Intended Uses and Users

The evaluation is commissioned by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The main users and uses of the evaluation are:

- IUCN and SOS management to adjust its efforts in grantmaking and supporting the delivery of conservation action, outcomes and impacts.
- The World Bank and Global Environment Facility to adjust their support for small grantmaking schemes.

Evaluation methods and questions

This evaluation will use mixed methods and will include a survey of grantees (using both quantitative and qualitative questions), a desk review of relevant documentation and a small number of semi-structured interviews. The desk review will include internal SOS reporting, particularly on the Key Performance Indicators as specified in the SOS Project Appraisal Document (PAD).

- Number of stakeholders for semi-structured interviews: 10-15 (List attached)
- Grantees for survey: up to 100

The questions and methods posed for all three objectives are intended to allow a degree of triangulation and synthesis. For example, perceptions collected under Objective 1 on the value and appropriateness of the SOS grantmaking mechanism can be compared with the analysis of activities, outcomes and impacts under Objective 2 and with lessons learned generated under Objective 3. Finding convergence or divergence in comparison will help triangulate or highlight key challenges depending on the outcome.

Management of the Evaluation

The evaluation will be managed by IUCN's independent evaluation function, housed in the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (PM&E). PM&E will work closely with the SOS Secretariat to provide day to day support, supply documentation, create access to stakeholder lists and stakeholders. The PM&E Unit will verify that the draft report conforms to this TORs, answers all questions as best as data will allow, is useful and conforms to the IUCN Monitoring and Evaluation Policy.

The PM&E Unit will also require IUCN and SOS Secretariat to prepare and implement a management response to each and every recommendation of the evaluation as is normal procedure within IUCN.

Qualifications of the Evaluator

This evaluation will require a consultant who has

- A graduate degree in biological, social or management sciences with an emphasis on quantitative and qualitative research methods;
- 5-10 years of experience working with conservation or development organizations or in the field of evaluation;
- Ability to work with limited supervision;
- Superior English language skills.

Outputs and deliverables

- Draft and final report
- A powerpoint presentation of the findings and recommendations for SOS staff and donors and/or two web-ex presentations

Work plan and budget

The evaluation has a budget of USD 10,000.

The work plan and deliverables for this evaluation are as follows:

- Approval of Terms of Reference by IUCN and World Bank and procurement of the consultant – February 2014
- Data collection and preparation of the draft report – April - May 2014

- Review and revision – May 2014
- Draft report – early June 2014
- Circulation of the final report – end June 2014

Annex: Evaluation Matrix

Objectives	Methods	Questions
Relevance and appropriateness of SOS	Survey of SOS grantees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do grantees value SOS as a grantmaking mechanism? • How relevant is SOS to grantees' work? • How appropriate is the SOS grantmaking mechanism to grantees' work? • What have SOS grants allowed grantees to do that they would not be able to do otherwise?
Actions, outcomes and impacts	Desk review of all project documents, including for individual projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of actions does SOS typically support? • What outcomes are grantees reporting? What is the typical amount of time elapsed before outcomes are reported? • What impacts are grantees reporting? • What are the factors that tend to increase the delivery of outcomes and impacts?
Lessons learned	Interviews with SOS Secretariat, senior IUCN and Species Survival Commission staff and members, SOS Technical Advisory Group, World Bank/GEF officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has worked/ not worked in the management (including fundraising and communications) and procedures of SOS as a grantmaking mechanism? As a means of delivering conservation outcomes and impacts? • What has worked / not worked in the governance of SOS, in terms of legitimacy and participation of stakeholders, accountability, fairness, transparency, and efficiency?