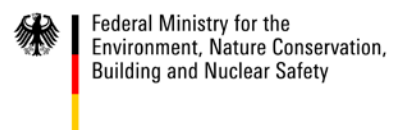




# INDO-BURMA RAMSAR REGIONAL INITIATIVE (IBRRI) Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024



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The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of IUCN and the IBRRI secretariat.

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# 1 SITUATION ANALYSIS



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Ramsar Regional Initiatives

- 1.1.1. The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Convention's regional initiatives support cooperation and capacity building on wetland-related issues in specific regions or sub-regions and improve the overall visibility of the Convention.
- 1.1.2. The Administrative Authorities responsible for implementing the Convention in their countries drive the development and activities of regional initiatives. Initiatives give them – and often their ministers – a platform for collaborating with technical experts and representatives of intergovernmental bodies, Ramsar International Organisation Partners (IOPs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local communities and private companies.
- 1.1.3. Regional initiatives are endorsed by the Conference of Contracting Parties (COP) and by the Standing Committee (SC) in between meetings of the COP. To be formally recognised, they must conform to the *Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention*<sup>1</sup>. They are

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/sc52-22\\_draft\\_revised\\_opguidelines\\_e.pdf](http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/sc52-22_draft_revised_opguidelines_e.pdf)

independently governed and are not authorised to speak or act on the Convention's behalf, but they work in close contact with the Secretariat. Some initiatives receive start-up financial assistance from the Secretariat's core budget.

## 1.2. The Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI)

1.2.1. Decision SC52-20 of the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention endorsed the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI) in June 2016<sup>2</sup>. Details of the initiative are described in document SC52-12, June 2016.

1.2.2. The concept for IBRRI was developed jointly by the Ramsar National Focal Points (NFPs) of the five Contracting Parties: Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam (Fig. 1) and IUCN's Asia Regional Office. The initiative was based on specific needs identified in these countries. The initial objective of IBRRI was to support the effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention among the five Contracting Parties (CPs) by coordinating implementation of the objectives of the 4<sup>th</sup> Strategic Plan 2016–2024.

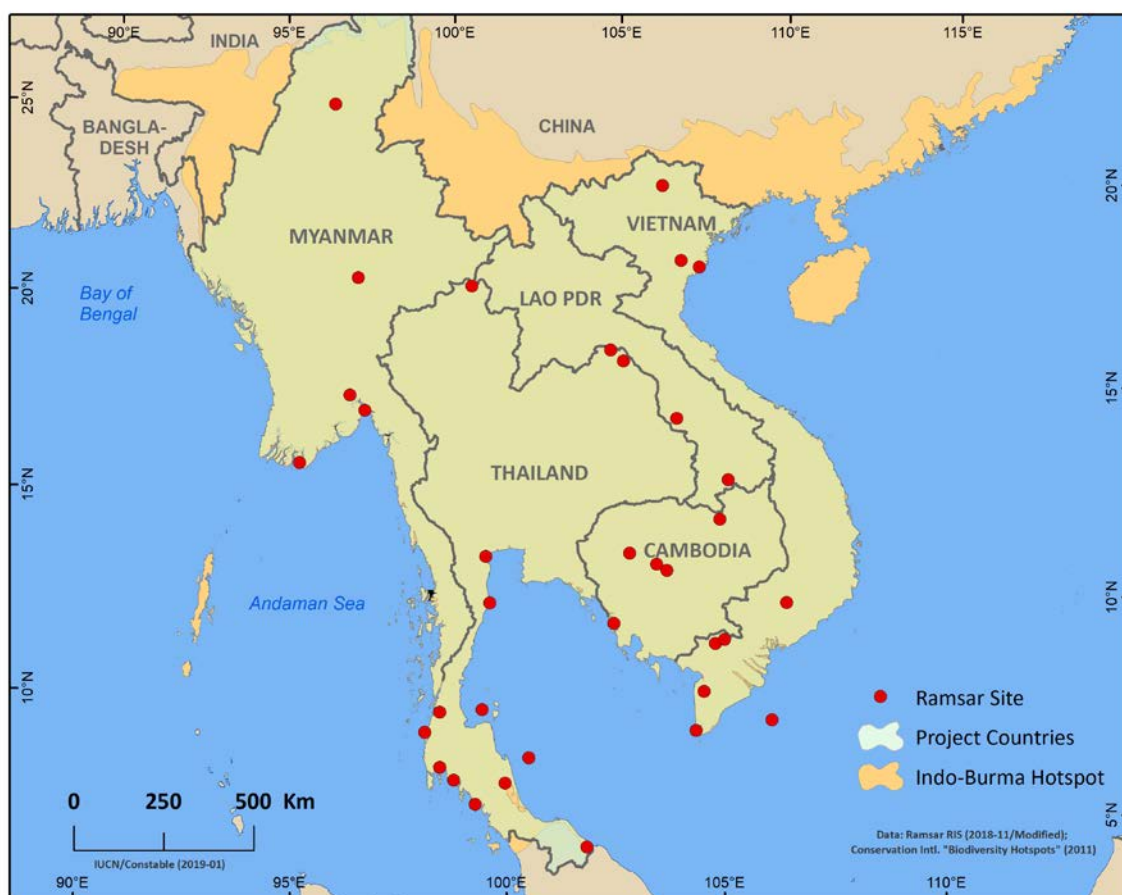


Figure 1. IBRRI Contracting Parties and approximate locations of Ramsar Sites (yellow stars).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ramsar.org/document/decisions-of-the-52nd-meeting-of-the-standing-committee-sc52>

- 1.2.3. The Inception Workshop of the IBRRI was held in Bangkok, Thailand, on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017. The principal aims of the Inception Workshop were: a) to share the objectives of IBRRI with a wider community working on wetlands in the region; b) to discuss the priorities that should be included in a sub-regional Ramsar strategic plan; and c) to explore linkages with existing Ramsar-related programmes and initiatives in the Indo-Burma Region.

The workshop was attended by the Ramsar NFPs (or their representatives) from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam; Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) focal points; Ramsar Communications, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) focal points from both NGOs and governments; and representatives from other Ramsar Regional Initiatives as well as IOPs, academia, NGOs, and other development partners.

### 1.3. IBRRI Secretariat

- 1.3.1. IBRRI is supported by IUCN, which acts as the Secretariat through its Asia Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand, and its country offices in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam.

## 2. Wetlands of the Indo-Burma region

### 2.1. Wetland values

- 2.1.1. The Indo-Burma Region is a geographically diverse landscape. Extending from the coral reefs in the Gulf of Thailand and the Bay of Bengal to the peak of Hkakabo Razi in Myanmar at almost 6,000 metres above sea level, the region is a known hotspot for biodiversity. Wetlands are extensive across this diverse region (Fig. 2). Many different wetland types are present: from coral reefs, coastal mangrove forests, extensive tidal flats, river and floodplain systems, extensive delta systems, seasonally flooded swamp forests, lake, subterranean karstic systems, and a plethora of human-made wetlands such as rice paddies, fishing ponds and irrigation tanks.
- 2.1.2. These wetlands are home to some of the planet's most endangered and charismatic species including tigers (*Panthera tigris*), Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*), Siamese crocodiles (*Crocodylus siamensis*), Mekong and Irrawaddy (Ayeyarwady) River dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*), and giant catfish (*Pangasianodon gigas*). The rivers of the region, such as the Mekong, Chao Phraya, Irrawaddy and Salween (Thanlwin), have some of the highest numbers of endemic freshwater fish species recorded anywhere on the planet.
- 2.1.3. Located along the East Asian-Australian flyway, the region is also critical to a diversity of migratory and resident waterbirds. Many of these waterbirds are globally threatened, such as Baer's Pochard (*Aythya baeri*) and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*). Some waterbirds, such as the Sarus Crane

(*Antigone antigone*), are also important to communities because of their cultural value.

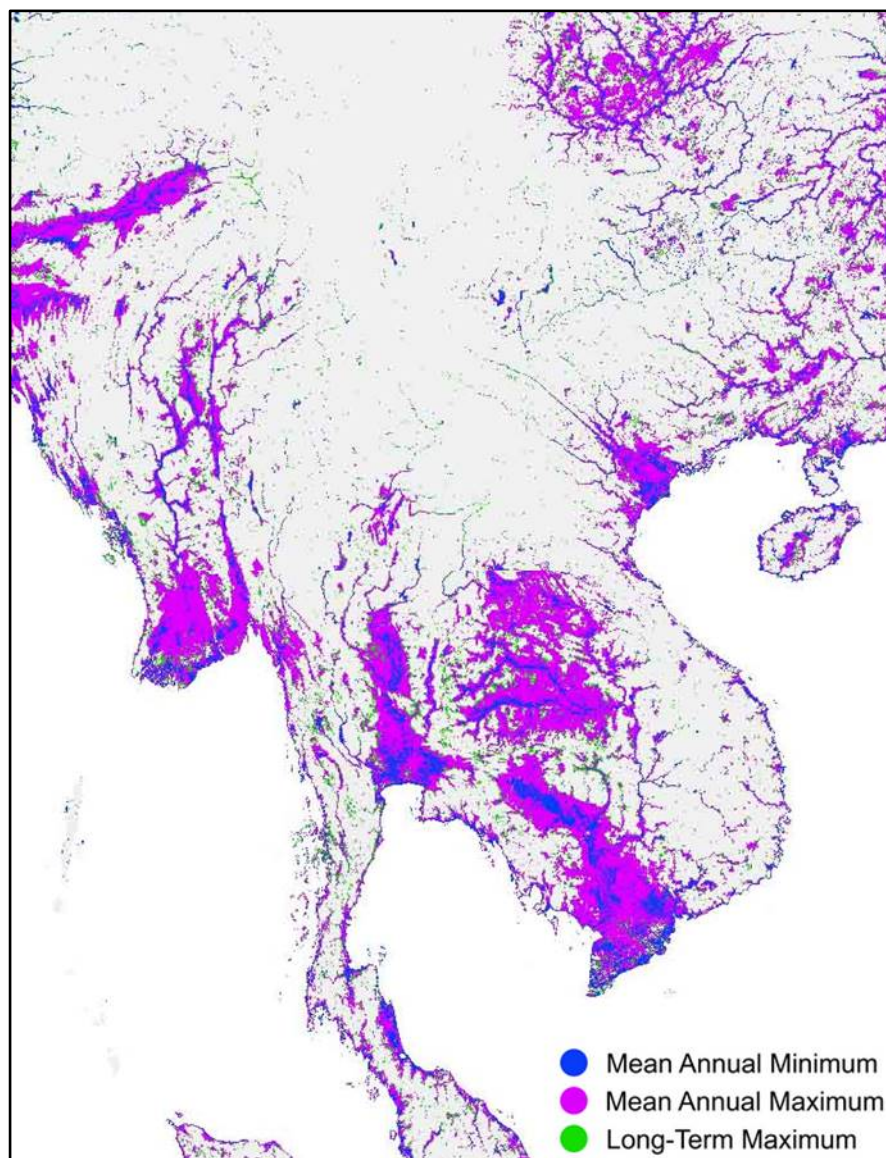


Figure 2. Inundation areas of the Indo-Burma Region. (Source: Fluet-Chouinard et al. (2015)<sup>3</sup>).

2.1.4. The global categorisation of the Freshwater Ecoregions of the World (FEOWs<sup>4</sup>) represents a useful approach for developing strategic large-scale conservation strategies, particularly for addressing threatened freshwater ecosystems. While the Indo-Burma area is dominated by three river systems (the Irrawady, Salween and Mekong) the freshwater regions extend beyond, and are sub-divided within, these main basins. The region comprises 19 (FEOWs) many of which also extend beyond the national geographical borders of the IBRRI Contracting Parties into

<sup>3</sup> Fluet-Chouinard E., Lehner B., Rebelo L.M., Papa F., Hamilton S.K. (2015): Development of a global inundation map at high spatial resolution from topographic downscaling of coarse-scale remote sensing data, *Remote Sensing of Environment*. 158: 348-361.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.feow.org/>

neighbouring states such as India, Bangladesh, China and Malaysia (Fig. 3 and Table 1).

Reference number	Freshwater Ecoregion	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )
719	Chin Hills - Arakan Coast	115,639
720	Sitang - Irawaddy	460,941
721	Upper Salween	142,241
722	Lower and Middle Salween	201,211
723	Inle Lake	688
726	Lower Lancang (Mekong)	195,481
727	Khorat Plateau (Mekong)	223,518
728	Kratie - Stung Treng (Mekong)	108,965
729	Mekong Delta	185,822
730	Southern Annam	71,729
731	Eastern Gulf of Thailand Drainages	34,076
732	Chao Phraya	168,640
733	Mae Khlong	51,028
734	Malay Peninsula Eastern Slope	149,640
735	Northern Central Sumatra - Western Malaysia	97,718
761	Song Hong	201,572
760	Northern Annam	37,260
763	Xi Yiang	517,090
768	Andaman Islands	6,533

Table 1. Freshwater Ecoregions of the Indo-Burma Region.

2.1.5. The Marine Ecoregions of the World (MEOWs<sup>5</sup>) provide a global context for large-scale patterns of species and communities on coastal and nearshore marine shelf areas for the purpose of strategic conservation planning. The diversity of the marine system around the Indo-Burma Region is demonstrated by the classification into four provinces and six MEOWs (Fig. 3 and Table 2). Within these MEOWs there is a diversity of wetland habitats, including mangroves, tidal flats, seagrass beds, coral reefs and rocky shores.

Province	Reference number	Marine Ecoregion
Bay of Bengal	108	Northern Bay of Bengal
Andaman	109	Andaman and Nicobar Islands
Andaman	110	Andaman Sea Coral Coast
Sunda Shelf	115	Gulf of Thailand
Sunda Shelf	116	Southern Viet Nam
South China Sea	112	Gulf of Tonkin

Table 2. Marine Ecoregions of the Indo-Burma Region.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.worldwildlife.org/publications/marine-ecoregions-of-the-world-a-bioregionalization-of-coastal-and-shelf-areas>

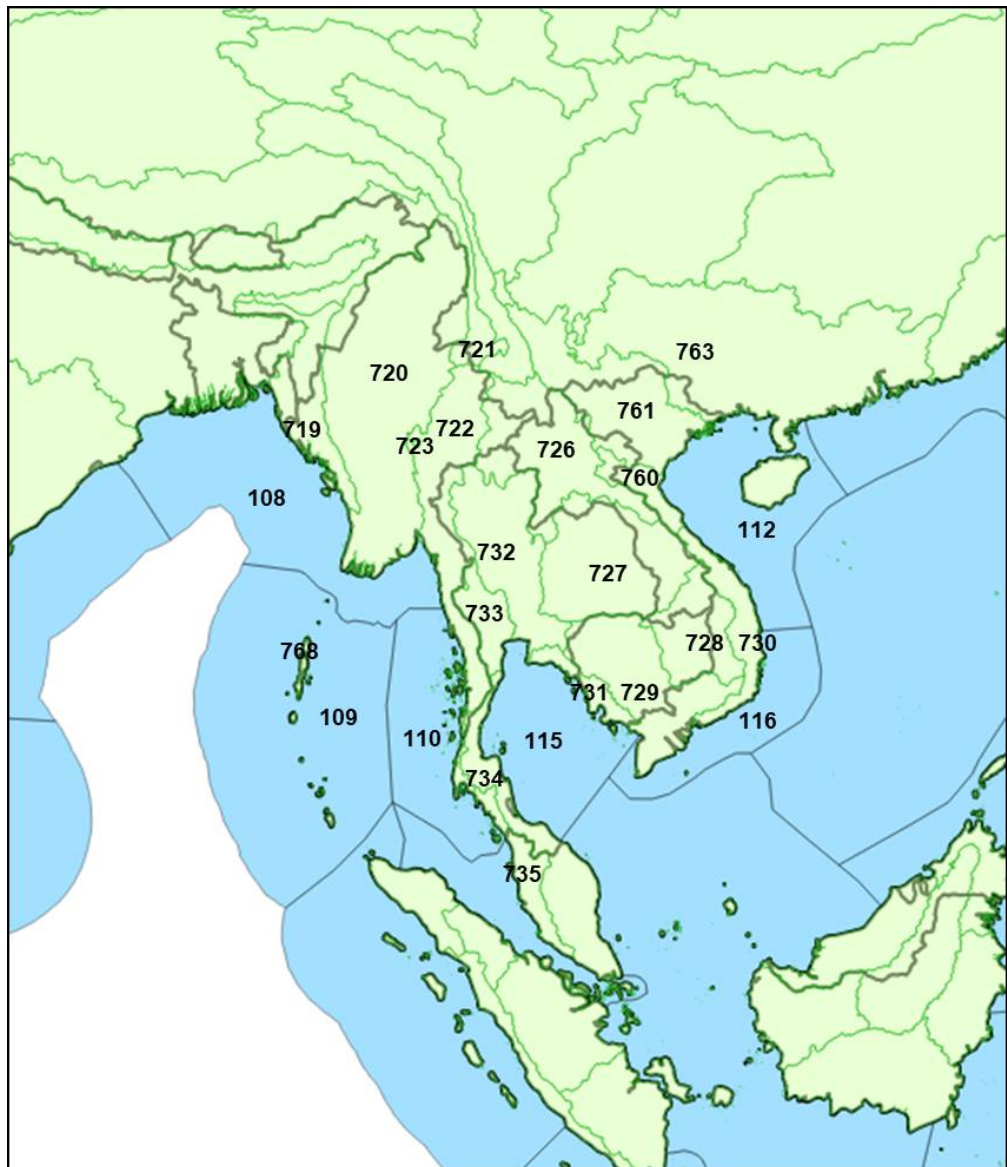


Figure 3. Freshwater Ecoregions (FEOWs, in green) and Marine Ecoregions (MEOWs, in blue) of the Indo-Burma Region.

- 2.1.6. The wetlands of the region are not only important for supporting a vast diversity of fauna and flora; they are also crucial to the well-being of millions of people. Across the region, the diverse wetlands provide human society with multiple benefits: providing food, natural medicinal products, building materials, and protection from storms and floods; as well as regulating water flows and improving water quality.
- 2.1.7. Wetlands are crucial across the region for feeding Indo-Burma’s vast population. For instance, the Lower Mekong Delta supports the world’s most productive inland fisheries, valued at around USD 3 billion per annum. These fisheries support the well-being of millions of people and provide local communities with up to 80% of their animal protein consumption. Similarly, the fisheries

associated with Tonle Sap make up some 60% of the total inland catch in Cambodia. The coastlines of Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam support more than 896,000 hectares of mangroves which provide millions of people with food as well as a variety of other benefits including fuel wood, storm protection and building materials<sup>6</sup>.

2.1.8. The Mekong Delta is the most important rice production region in Viet Nam, significantly contributing to the food security of the nation. The government of Viet Nam has projected an annual rice yield of 23 million tons from this region alone, for both domestic consumption and foreign export<sup>7</sup>. However, the intensification of rice production can compromise other ecosystem services, such as water quality, aesthetic values, and habitat for wildlife, especially aquatic fauna, all of which have serious implications for human health, well being and wider livelihoods in the Delta area<sup>7</sup>.

2.1.9. Across Lao PDR, more than 70% of the population are engaged in fishing-related livelihoods, with a large proportion of fish catches being consumed within households<sup>8</sup>. Fishing is often one of a diversity of livelihood strategies, which also include rice production, livestock rearing, and collection of other aquatic resources. This shows how communities surrounding wetlands are heavily dependent on these ecosystems for the resources and services they provide.

Similar mixed wetland-related livelihood strategies are observed at Moeyungyi Wetland Wildlife Sanctuary Ramsar Site in Myanmar where fishing activities are often complemented by other activities such as collection of insects, trapping of snakes, harvesting of lotus stems for fibre, or collection of lotus pollen<sup>9</sup>. It can therefore be concluded that many of the provisioning services provided by wetlands within the Indo-Burma Region play a key role in wider livelihood and poverty management strategies at the household level.

2.1.10. Aside from being crucial for livelihoods, the wetlands of Indo-Burma provide a range of natural regulating services that maintain conditions for human life not just within the region, but also across the globe. The coastal mangroves that fringe the shoreline of Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam act as significant carbon sinks and hence help mitigate the impacts of climate change. Studies have shown that over 90% of the carbon locked up in the mangroves of the Mekong Delta is belowground in the sediments and soils<sup>10</sup>. Conservation

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<sup>6</sup> Brander, L. M., Wagtendonk, A. J., Hussain, S. S., McVittie, A., Verburg, P. H., de Groot, R. S., & van der Ploeg, S. (2012). Ecosystem service values for mangroves in Southeast Asia: A meta-analysis and value transfer application. *Ecosystem Services*, 1(1), 62-69

<sup>7</sup> Berg, H., Söderholm, A. E., Söderström, A. S., & Tam, N. T. (2017). Recognizing wetland ecosystem services for sustainable rice farming in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. *Sustainability Science*, 12(1), 137-154.

<sup>8</sup> Martin, S. M., Lorenzen, K., & Bunnefeld, N. (2013). Fishing farmers: fishing, livelihood diversification and poverty in rural Laos. *Human Ecology*, 41(5), 737-747.

<sup>9</sup> Merriman, J.C. & Murata, N., (2016) *Guide for Rapid Economic Valuation of Wetland Ecosystem Services*. BirdLife International Tokyo, Japan. 61pp.

<sup>10</sup> Nam, V. N., Sasmito, S. D., Murdiyarso, D., Purbopuspito, J., & MacKenzie, R. A. (2016). Carbon stocks in artificially and naturally regenerated mangrove ecosystems in the Mekong Delta. *Wetlands ecology and management*, 24(2), 231-244.

efforts should focus on maintaining these stocks while also focussing on replanting and regenerating lost mangrove systems so that improved aboveground biomass productivity can catalyse future carbon storage.

- 2.1.11. The river systems of Indo-Burma are predominantly characterised by a flood-pulsed hydrology. The natural floodplain wetlands of these rivers have the capacity to store water and buffer downstream impacts on communities and infrastructure. However, decades of poor land-use planning, and structural interventions, such as channel modification, diversions and dam construction, have profoundly influenced vulnerabilities to flood events, from the household to the scale of the regional economy<sup>11</sup>. Future risk management strategies need to consider the potential role of wetlands, not just in the physical attenuation of flooding, but also (as in the case of parts of the Mekong Delta) in combination with other livelihood activities, such as aquaculture or jute production. The development of such integrated strategies have the potential to address wider issues such as disaster risk reduction and food security.
- 2.1.12. The seasonal flooding of wetlands across the region, which accompanies the monsoon, also plays a vital role in recharging groundwater. In Cambodia, the Mekong, Tonle Sap and Bassac Rivers inundate their floodplains on an annual basis. Modelling has demonstrated that the slow infiltration through the wetlands of these river systems during times of flooding is a crucial mechanism for recharging groundwater and maintaining the viability of groundwater resources throughout the dry season<sup>12</sup>. Similar scenarios are known from Beung Kiat Ngong Wetlands, Lao PDR, where a strong interconnection between surface and groundwater systems leads to seasonal recharging of groundwater sources as the wetland refills during the wet season.<sup>13</sup>
- 2.1.13. Culturally, the wetlands of the Indo-Burma Region are integral to many belief systems. Many temples are intrinsically linked with wetlands. For instance, Shwemyitzu Pagoda in Indawgyi, Myanmar, hosts some 80,000 visitors annually as part of a pilgrimage to the shrine said to contain hair from the Buddha. At Inle Lake, Myanmar, the Buddhist belief in *nats* (animist spirits) has led to the creation of a shrine and the subsequent protection of a small island nature reserve where people are reluctant to damage the plants for fear of harming these spirits<sup>14</sup>.
- 2.1.14. The iconic Sarus crane, which is widespread across the Indo-Burma Region, is embedded in the culture of many communities. The term Sarus is derived from

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<sup>11</sup> Lebel, L., Sinh, B., Garden, P., Hien, B. V., Subsins, N., Tuan, L. A., & Vinh, N. T. P. (2009). Risk reduction or redistribution? Flood management in the Mekong region. *Asian Journal of Environment and Disaster Management*, 1(1), 23-39.

<sup>12</sup> May, R., Jinno, K., & Tsutsumi, A. (2011). Influence of flooding on groundwater flow in central Cambodia. *Environmental Earth Sciences*, 63(1), 151-161.

<sup>13</sup> Lacombe, G., Pavelic, P., McCartney, M., Phommavong, and K., Virossanges, M., 2017, International Water Management Institute. *Hydrological assessment of the Xe Champone and Beung Kiat Ngong wetlands - Final Report*, CAWA Project.

<sup>14</sup> Nardi, D. (2005). The Green Monks of Burma: The Role of Monks and Buddhist Civil Society in Environmental Conservation in Burma. *The Georgetown University Journal of the Environment*, 7, 5-14.

the Sanskrit term *sarasa*, which means 'bird of the lake'. There are multiple myths and legends associated with the bird, particularly as an eternal symbol of unconditional love, devotion and good fortune<sup>15</sup>. The stylised image of the Sarus crane can be found in many temples in Viet Nam and the Vietnamese have a traditional saying that "birds only stay in good lands", demonstrating the link between wetlands and human cultural identity.

- 2.1.15. It is clear that there is much more to the wetlands of the Indo-Burma Region than their ability to support nature conservation. Through appropriate management and stewardship, wetlands can make positive contributions to a range of broader agendas. The ability of wetlands to store and sequester carbon makes their protection and restoration valuable strategies for Nationally Determined Contributions to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The critical role that wetlands can play in buffering storms, reducing impacts of flooding and providing greater resilience to communities against other hazards makes them integral to achieving objectives within the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The wise use of wetlands forms a vital element of several of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under Goal 6, the restoration of wetlands is considered essential in order to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Similarly, under Goal 15 the protection and restoration of wetlands is a key component to promote sustainable use of ecosystems, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss.

## 2.2. Wetland threats

- 2.2.1. The establishment of IBRRI is considered very timely as the wetlands within the region currently face a range of threats and challenges. It has been estimated that around 80% of the region's wetlands are threatened with conversion to agricultural land or development<sup>16</sup>. The hydrology of the region is set to change widely: more dams are planned for construction in Indo-Burma than in any other region in the world<sup>17</sup>. Although considered a potential source of renewable energy, dams can result in irreversible changes to wetlands, threatening biodiversity and undermining rural economies and livelihoods.
- 2.2.2. Forest loss, including drainage and conversion of peat swamp forests and coastal mangroves, is one of the major drivers of impacts on wetlands. The loss of natural forested wetlands to pulp and paper, rubber and palm oil plantations drives the clearances and accelerates wetland degradation and loss. Estimates

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<sup>15</sup> Adesh, K., & Amita, K. (2017). Sarus Crane in Indian Mythology and Culture. *Int. J. of Life Sciences*, 5(3), 465-470.

<sup>16</sup> Conklin, J.R., Y.I. Verkuil & B.R. Smith. 2014. *Prioritizing Migratory Shorebirds for Conservation Action on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway*. WWF-Hong Kong, Hong Kong. 128pp.

<sup>17</sup> Zarfl, C., Lumsdon, A. E., Berlekamp, J., Tydecks, L., & Tockner, K. 2015. A global boom in hydropower dam construction. *Aquatic Sciences*, 77(1), 161-170.

suggest that only 35% of the historical peat swamp forest area in some parts of Asia remains<sup>18</sup>.

- 2.2.3. Human population is growing rapidly across the region. This has resulted in growing demands on agriculture and food production, and a subsequent physical conversion of natural wetlands into farmed land, as well as increased use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers which impact aquatic ecosystems. Additionally, the expansion of aquaculture in coastal areas has resulted in risks to the environment, human health and wider fisheries<sup>19</sup>.
- 2.2.4. Many invasive alien species threaten the region's biodiversity<sup>20</sup>. The introduction, whether intentional or unintentional, of invasive plant and animal species is resulting in a range of impacts, including the displacement of native species, the ecological and physical modification of ecosystems, and hybridisation and genetic dilution, resulting in economic losses to local communities.
- 2.2.5. Dense mats of the invasive, non-native water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) can choke watercourses, deplete oxygen and outcompete and shade out native flora. As a consequence, the pernicious presence of water hyacinth can impact upon local livelihoods, especially fisheries. At Inle Lake, Myanmar, water hyacinth was introduced in the 1960s as an ornamental species. However today it has become a serious management challenge, especially since it obstructs waterways<sup>21</sup>. In Xe Champhone Wetlands, Lao PDR, water hyacinth is threatening important habitats of the critically endangered Siamese crocodile (*C. siamensis*).
- 2.2.6. The golden apple snail (*Pomacea canaliculata*) is believed to have been introduced to the Indo-Burma Region in the 1980s or 1990s. The snails are voracious herbivores and can cause significant damage to aquatic plants and rice production. A snail with a shell height of 3.5 centimetres can eat up to 12 rice seedlings per day, which can equate to as much as 50% crop loss when snail population densities are high. The snail is also the host of the rat lungworm parasite (*Angiostrongylus cantonensis*) that causes eosinophilic meningitis in humans if the snail is consumed without appropriately thorough cooking<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Posa, M. R. C., Wijedasa, L. S., & Corlett, R. T. (2011). Biodiversity and conservation of tropical peat swamp forests. *BioScience*, 61(1), 49-57.

<sup>19</sup> Gräslund, S., & Bengtsson, B. E. (2001). Chemicals and biological products used in south-east Asian shrimp farming, and their potential impact on the environment—a review. *Science of the Total Environment*, 280(1), 93-131.

<sup>20</sup> Peh, K. S. H. (2010). Invasive species in Southeast Asia: the knowledge so far. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 19(4), 1083-1099.

<sup>21</sup> Lansdown, R. V. (2012). The conservation of aquatic and wetland plants in the Indo-Burma region. *Allen DJ, Smith KG, Darwall WRT, compilers. The status and distribution of freshwater biodiversity in Indo-Burma. Cambridge, UK and Gland, Switzerland: IUCN*, 117-133.

<sup>22</sup> Joshi, R. C. (2007). Problems with the management of the golden apple snail *Pomacea canaliculata*: an important exotic pest of rice in Asia. In *Area-wide control of insect pests* (pp. 257-264). Springer, Dordrecht.

- 2.2.7. Climatic variations and changes across the region are impacting wetlands<sup>23</sup>. Rising annual mean temperatures are altering hydrological functions, such as accelerating snow melt and modifying river dynamics. Monsoonal precipitation is demonstrating increased temporal and spatial variability, often marked by a shorter period but with more extreme rainfall events. Across the coastline of the region, sea level rise in combination with rapid urbanisation is squeezing coastal wetlands and increasing threats to human society. The Mekong Delta is expected to become highly vulnerable to more intense storm events, as well as increasing risks of saltwater intrusion and erosion as a result of rising sea levels<sup>24</sup>. Elsewhere in the Indo-Burma Region, predicted changes in the distribution and amount of monsoonal rainfall will manifest themselves in increases in discharge in the Salween River beyond 2040<sup>25</sup>.
- 2.2.8. Pollution of both inland and coastal aquatic systems continues to increase across the Indo-Burma Region. Increased nutrient loads from agriculture and human wastewater is resulting in widespread eutrophication of surface waters. Chemical and industrial pollution is increasing as development, and particularly urbanisation, is expanding as economies grow<sup>26</sup>. Mining activities are contributing to the pollution of wetlands through increased sediment loads and contamination by associated metals and pH alterations. For instance, at Indawgyi, Myanmar, traditional artisanal gold mining has resulted in contamination of the lake and river environments by mercury used in the mining process. In some localities, artisanal methods have been supplanted by intense, industrial mining activities resulting in even greater contamination and impacts on the environment as well as human health<sup>27</sup>.
- 2.2.9. Many wetland resources are subject to overexploitation across the region. Fish species are threatened by overfishing resulting in population declines of more than 80% recorded over the last 20 years. These declines are manifested in endemic and endangered species such as the Mekong giant catfish (*Pangasianodon gigas*), as well as in smaller migratory species, such as the small-scale croaker (*Boesemania microlepis*), which has experienced an 80% decrease in population size in Lao PDR, despite a law prohibiting their capture during the breeding season<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Junk, W. J., An, S., Finlayson, C. M., Gopal, B., Květ, J., Mitchell, S. A., Mitsch, W.J. & Robarts, R. D. (2013). Current state of knowledge regarding the world's wetlands and their future under global climate change: a synthesis. *Aquatic sciences*, 75(1), 151-167.

<sup>24</sup> Cruz, R.V., Harasawa, H., Lal, M., Wu, S., Anokhin, Y., Punsalmaa, B., Honda, Y., Jafari, M., Li, C. and Huu Ninh, N. 2007. Asia. In M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden, P.J. and C.E. Hanson (eds.), *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, pp. 469–506. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK

<sup>25</sup> Xu, J., Grumbine, R. E., Shrestha, A., Eriksson, M., Yang, X., Wang, Y. and Wilkes, A. 2009. The melting Himalayas: cascading effects of climate change on water, biodiversity, and livelihoods. *Conservation Biology* 23:520–530.

<sup>26</sup> Dudgeon, D., Choowaew, S. and Ho, S.C. 2000. River conservation in Southeast Asia. In: Boon, P.J., G.E. Petts and B.R. Davies (eds.). *Global Perspectives on River Conservation: Science, Policy and Practice*, pp. 279– 308. John Wiley and Sons, Chichester, UK.

<sup>27</sup> Osawa, T., & Hatsukawa, Y. (2015). Artisanal and small-scale gold mining in Myanmar. *International Journal of Human Culture Studies*, 2015(25), 221-230.

<sup>28</sup> Dudgeon, D. (2012). Threats to freshwater biodiversity globally and in the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot. *The Status and Distribution of Freshwater Biodiversity in Indo-Burma*, 1-28.

2.2.10. To conclude, despite the multiple values that the Indo-Burma wetlands provide to human populations within and beyond the region, many threats remain to be addressed. Through IBRRI, there is the potential to develop and implement measures to sustainably address these threats and to stem the loss and degradation of wetlands and the species they support.

### 2.3. Ramsar Sites

2.3.1. There are 32 designated Ramsar Sites across the IBRRI countries (as of April 2018) (Fig. 1). These Ramsar Sites together cover some 759,000 hectares, or approximately 0.4% of the surface area of the five IBRRI countries. Almost half (n=14) of the region's Ramsar Sites (equating to more than half of the surface area) are located within Thailand (Fig. 4). Viet Nam has designated eight Ramsar Sites, while Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao PDR have designated four, four and two respectively.

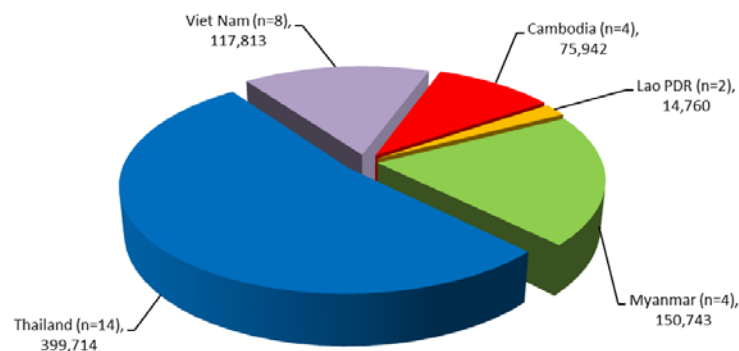


Figure 4. Distribution of Ramsar Sites across the Indo-Burma Region. (Areas are shown in hectares).

2.3.2. Eighteen (or 56%) of the Ramsar Sites are inland wetlands, and 14 (44%) are classified as coastal sites. Across the network of sites, a diversity of wetland types are represented (Fig. 5). Inland systems include permanent freshwater marshes and pools; shrub-dominated wetlands; freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands; seasonal or intermittent freshwater marshes and pools on inorganic soils; permanent, seasonal or intermittent rivers, streams or creeks; subterranean karst systems; and human-made wetlands, including ponds, irrigated land, and seasonally flooded agricultural land. Coastal Ramsar Sites are characterised by permanent shallow marine waters; sand, shingle or pebble shores; subtidal aquatic beds; rocky shores; coastal brackish or saline lagoons; intertidal mud, sand or salt flats; intertidal forested wetlands; and estuarine waters.

2.3.3. Although the Ramsar Sites in the region represent a relatively comprehensive and diverse network of wetland types, there are eleven wetland types of the Ramsar wetland classification that are not represented, including coastal

freshwater lagoons, seasonally or intermittent saline lakes and pools, non-forested peatlands, alpine wetlands, tundra wetlands, freshwater springs, geothermal wetlands, salt exploitation sites, excavations and wastewater treatment areas (Fig. 5). While it is likely that some of these wetland types may not exist within the Indo-Burma Region, attempts should be made to assess the potential to designate future Ramsar Sites in order to address the under-represented types.

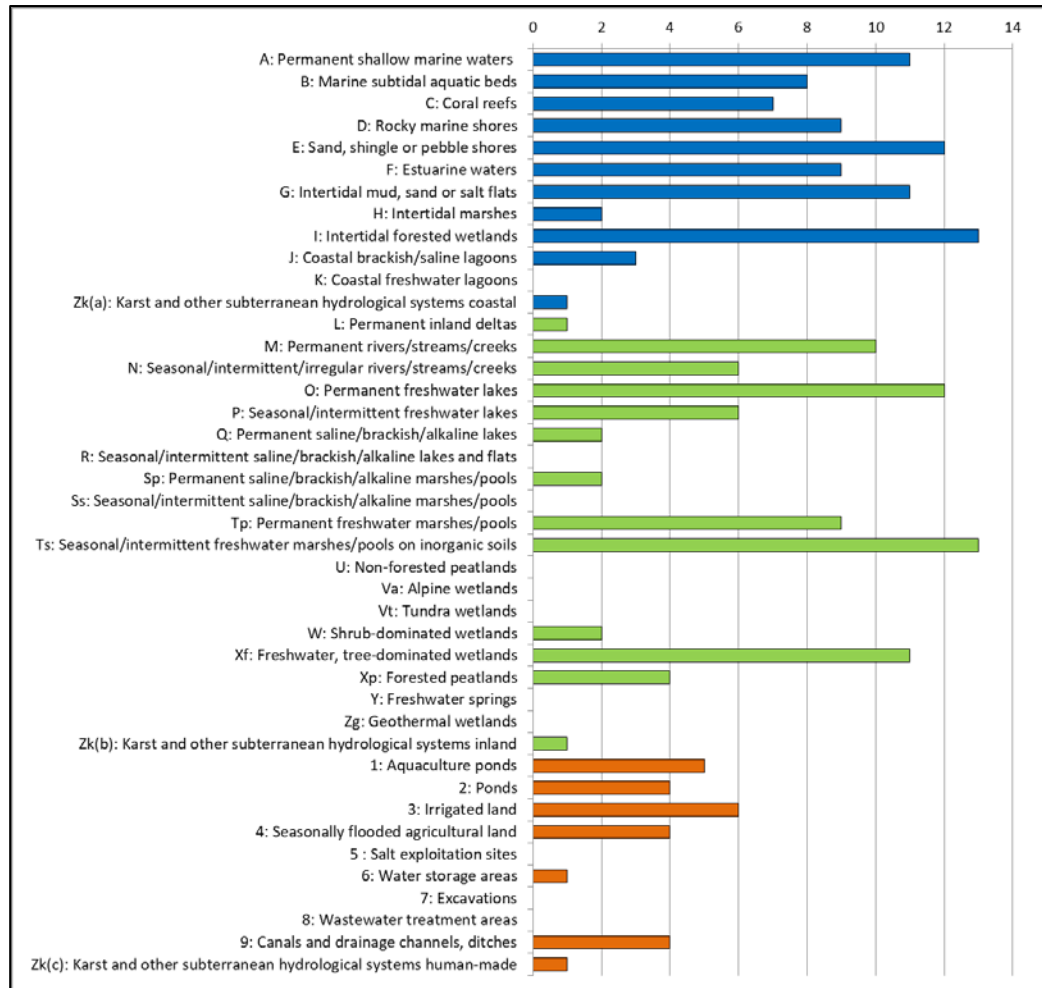


Figure 5. Frequency of wetland types recorded from the 32 Ramsar Sites in the Indo-Burma Region. (Blue=Coastal; Green=Inland; Orange=Human-made).

2.3.4. Additionally, the spatial distribution of Ramsar Sites (Fig. 1) shows that there are many unrepresented ecoregions, especially the FEOWs (Fig. 3). In order to develop a coherent network of sites across the region, further consideration should be given to the distribution and representativeness of sites within the broader biogeographical context. Such considerations will ensure that both wetland types and the wider spatial conservation context are addressed in the plans for future Ramsar Site designation.

2.3.5. The number of Ramsar Sites in the region has been steadily increasing since the accession of Viet Nam on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1989 (Fig. 6). The accession of Thailand

(13<sup>th</sup> September 1998) and Cambodia (23<sup>rd</sup> October 1999) instigated a stepped increase in the number of Ramsar Sites in the region over the early 2000s, with a marked increase in the area of coverage in 2002 as a result of the designation of the Kaper Estuary - Laemson Marine National Park - Kraburi Estuary Ramsar Site in Thailand which covers more than 122,000 hectares. Since the early 2000s the number of Ramsar Sites designated each year has slowly increased as Myanmar (accession on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2005) and Lao PDR (accession on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2010) acceded to the Convention. Since 2010 there has been a steady and increasing number of designations and a growing area of coverage across the region.

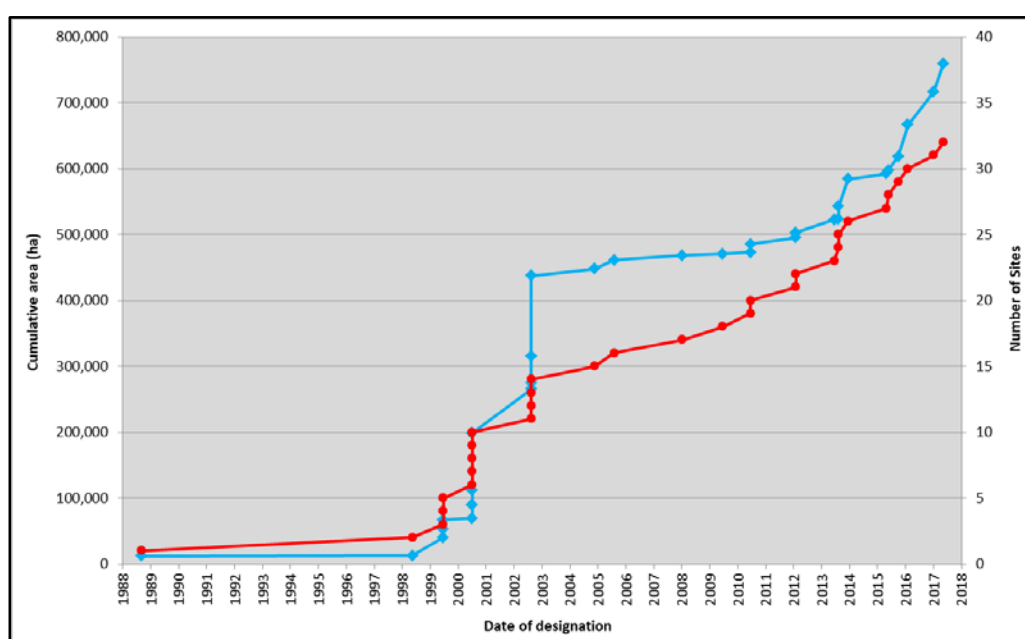


Figure 6. Number and area of Ramsar Sites in the Indo-Burma Region since 1998. (Red line=number of Ramsar Sites; blue line= total area of Ramsar Sites).

- 2.3.6. Ramsar Sites across the region have been designated for a variety of the nine designation Criteria (Fig. 7). Criterion 2 (supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities) has been applied to all 32 Ramsar Sites across the region. Criterion 1 (contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region) has been applied to more than 70% of the Ramsar Sites, and for both of the designated Sites in Lao PDR.
- 2.3.7. The Contracting Parties in all five countries have designated Sites based on Criterion 4 (supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions) and Criterion 8 (an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend). This demonstrates the significant importance wetlands play in the region in supporting fisheries. In Lao PDR, these two criteria have been applied to both designated Sites in the country, but in the other four countries, only subsets of the Sites qualify under these Criteria.

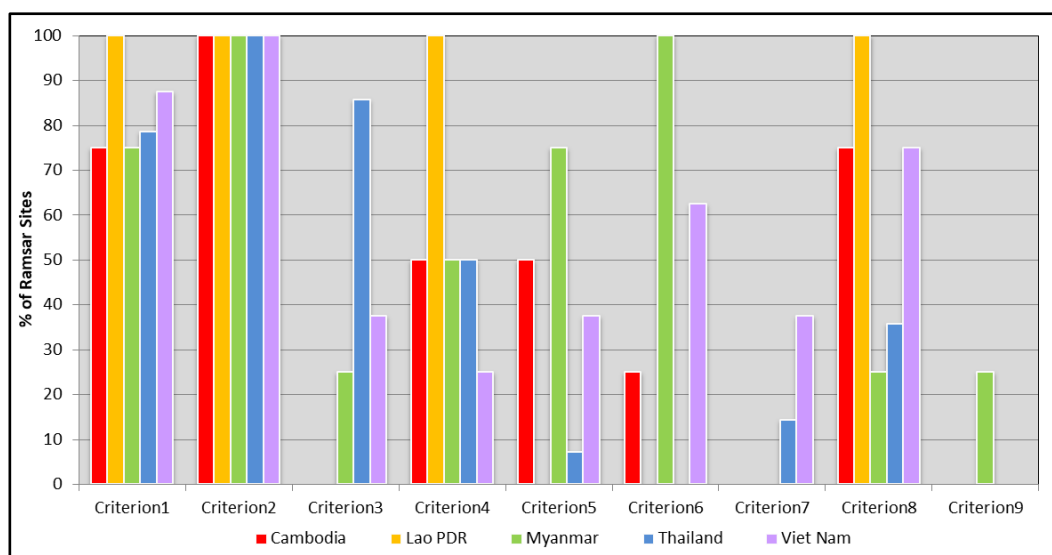


Figure 7. Percentage of Ramsar Sites in each of the IBRRI countries qualifying under the nine designation criteria.

- 2.3.8. The specific Criteria based on waterbirds (Criteria 5 and 6) have not been applied in Lao PDR. In Thailand, Criterion 6 (1% of the individuals in a population on one species or subspecies of waterbird) has not been applied, and Criterion 5 (regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds) has only been applied at one Site. However, in Myanmar all four Ramsar Sites have applicability under Criterion 6, while Criterion 5 is applicable to three.

## 3. Information and data review

### 3.1. National reporting

#### *Analytical approach*

- 3.1.1. The extent of Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan implementation by the five Contracting Parties (CPs) covered by the geographical scope of the IBRRI can be investigated based on the National Reports (NRs) submitted to COP12. These reports were compiled and submitted by all five IBRRI Parties mostly during 2015. COP12 and COP11 NRs are also available for all IBRRI CPs, and these have been used to assess progress in implementation extent between COP11 and COP12 reporting. The analyses of COP11 and COP12 NRs use 74 selected NR indicator questions that apply to all CPs.
- 3.1.2. The Strategic Plan Goals and actions in most parts of this situation analysis are those of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009–2015, since the implementation reported by Parties in their COP12 NRs concern implementation of this Strategic Plan. The four goals of the Strategic Plan 2009–2015 were: a) Wise use; b) Ramsar Sites; c) International cooperation; and d) Implementation capacity. Based on the indicator questions under each of the goals it is possible to derive a percentage implementation for different goals, CPs or regions. The full analysis of the NRs is provided in Annex 1.

3.1.3. COP13 NRs submitted by all five IBRRI Contracting Parties became available late in the timeline of preparing this analysis, but it has been possible to include some limited further analysis of these in relation to the COP12 NRs. This includes a) implementation extent, under the four new Goals of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2024; and b) the main difficulties in implementation, and future priorities for implementation, reported by IBRRI CPs. Note that only 68 of the 74 COP12 indicator questions were included in the NR format for COP13, so the results from the COP13 NR analyses are not directly comparable with those from previous NRs. For assessment of changes in the extent of implementation between COP12 and COP13, the analyses are presented for the 68 NR indicators common to the two sets of reports, presented under the four Goals of the Strategic Plan 2016–2024: a) Goal 1: Addressing the drivers of wetland loss and degradation; b) Goal 2: Effectively conserving and managing the Ramsar Site network; c) Goal 3: Wisely using all wetlands; and d) Goal 4: Enhancing implementation.

#### *Results and discussion*

- 3.1.4. This assessment of the NRs is cognisant that the veracity of the information included must be taken at face value. While discussions with NFPs have highlighted potential ambiguities and misunderstanding in reporting, the NRs remain as the only official reporting mechanism and therefore the information provided is considered in good faith.
- 3.1.5. Overall the percentage implementation by IBRRI Contracting Parties is similar to the average for all Asia CPs. It is encouraging that comparison between the extent of Ramsar implementation reported to COP11 (2012) and COP12 (2015) indicates that four IBRRI CPs reported increased implementation extent to COP12: Thailand (+21%), Viet Nam (+18%), Myanmar (+11%), and Lao PDR (+10%). However, it is a concern that Cambodia reported much less implementation (-27%) to COP12 than to COP11. Cambodia reported less implementation under each of the four Strategic Plan Goals. In addition, Myanmar reported less Goal 1 (Wise use) implementation. The reasons underlying this reported reduced implementation capacity are not clear and would benefit from further investigation.
- 3.1.6. In contrast to implementation extent changes between COP11 and COP12, for implementation extent reported to COP13 four IBRRI Parties reported reduced implementation: Lao PDR (-17%), Myanmar (-16%), Thailand (-18%) and Viet Nam (-6%). But encouragingly, the IBRRI CP with the lowest COP12 implementation extent, Cambodia, reported a 27% increase in implementation to COP13 (Fig. 8). Nevertheless, it is of particular concern that all five IBRRI Parties reported to COP13 a reduction in implementation of Strategic Plan Goal 4 (Enhancing implementation) suggesting within-country implementation capacity may be decreasing.

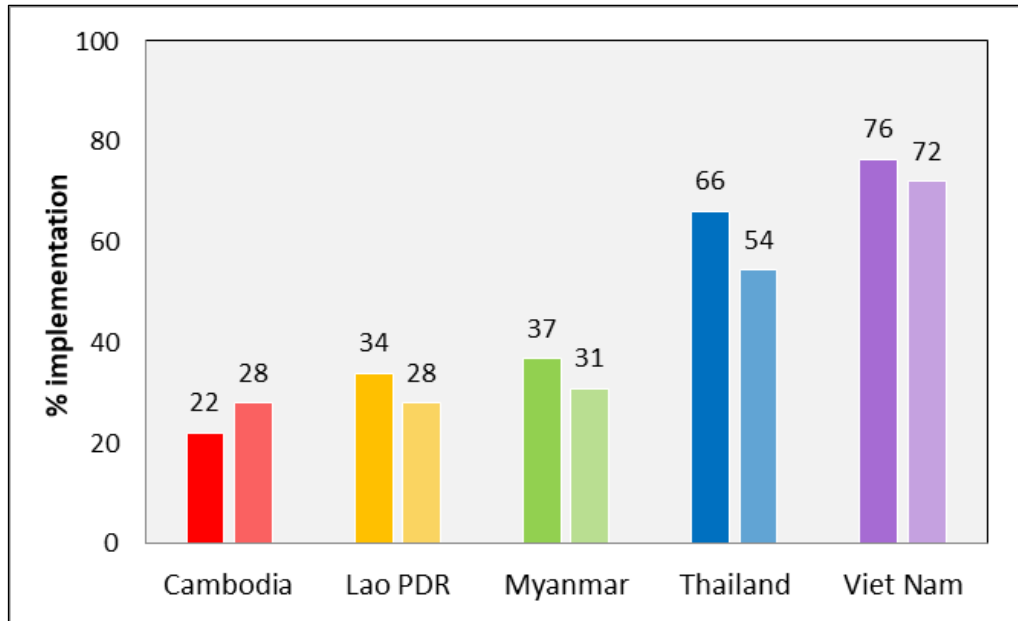


Figure 8. Percentage implementation for COP12 (dark columns) and COP13 (light columns). Percentage implementation values shown.

3.1.7. The overall extent of Strategic Plan implementation differs greatly across all Asia CPs, and between the five Indo-Burma CPs (Fig. 9). Viet Nam reported the highest implementation extent (84%) of any Asia CP, with Thailand also reporting extensive implementation (70%). In contrast, Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia each reported to COP12 less than 40% implementation, well below the regional average of 51%, with Cambodia reporting the least implementation (27%).

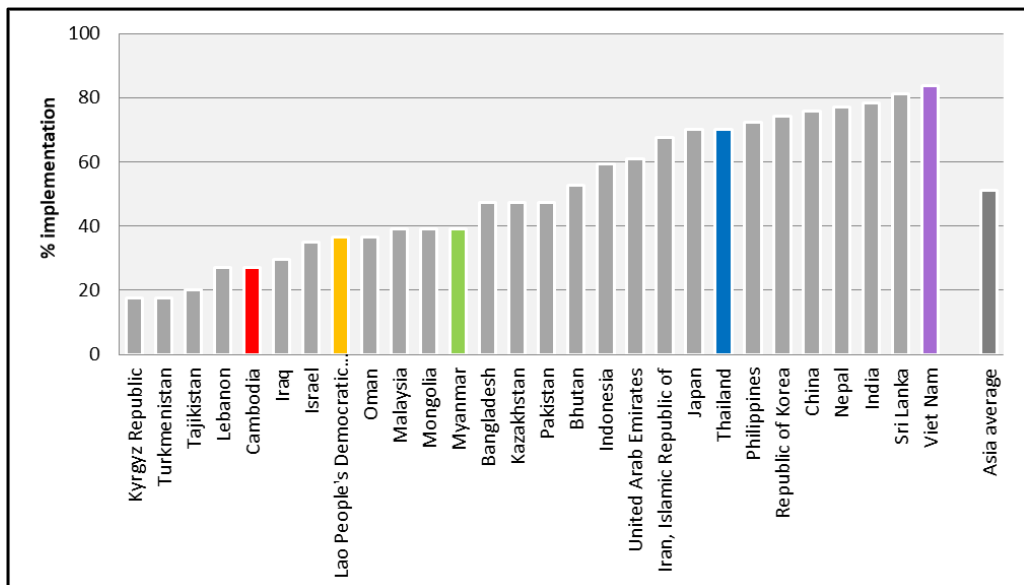


Figure 9. COP12 implementation of Goals 1 to 4 for all Asian CPs.

3.1.8. The relative implementation extent reported to COP13 across IBRRI Parties is similar to that reported to COP12, with Cambodia and Lao PDR reporting least implementation (<30%) and Viet Nam reporting most implementation (72%).

3.1.9. Analysis of progress on the 74 individual actions under the four Goals reported to COP12 highlights possible gaps in implementation and potential needs for capacity building and targeted activities under the IBRRI. The Goal-by-Goal analyses identified 20 actions as potential high priorities for consideration by IBRRI for future Ramsar implementation support to CPs, since attention to these actions would deliver most widespread capacity support to IBRRI CPs. In summary, these 20 actions cover:

- Establishing a National Wetland Policy;
- Undertaking research on agriculture/wetland interactions;
- Ensuring water resource management treats wetlands as natural water infrastructure;
- Implementing wetland restoration programmes/projects;
- Encouraging private sector activities/actions for wise use: Ramsar Sites and all wetlands;
- Incentive measures: actions to implement positive incentives, and removal of perverse incentives;
- Undertaking comprehensive national wetland inventory;
- Establishing management planning for future Ramsar Sites;
- Undertaking management effectiveness assessments for Ramsar Sites;
- Ensuring mechanisms are in place for reporting all Article 3.2 cases (of human-induced negative change to Ramsar Site ecological character);
- Establishing cross-sectoral management committees for Ramsar Sites;
- Establishing networks for knowledge-sharing and training for wetlands;
- Identifying all transboundary wetland systems;
- Developing CEPA Action Plans at national, sub-national and catchment/basin levels;
- Assessing national and local training needs;
- Establishing mechanisms for sharing Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Administrative Authority and Ramsar Site managers.

3.1.10. Providing capacity support for these 20 actions would support IBRRI CPs as follows:

- Cambodia: 18 actions
- Lao PDR: 18 actions
- Myanmar: 13 actions
- Thailand: 6 actions
- Viet Nam: 3 actions

3.1.11. CPs are required to report on their greatest difficulties in implementing the Ramsar Convention in their NRs to the COP. Through this process, IBRRI CPs reported a wide range of implementation difficulties as a consequence of a lack of capacity, resources, knowledge and institutional frameworks and mechanisms.

- 3.1.12. Despite the presence of several well-funded initiatives within the region, lack of funding was reported by all five IBRRI CPs. Lack of wetland/spatial planning laws and regulations was reported by four CPs (Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam), while a general lack of implementation capacity and assistance with addressing conversion of wetlands due to urban and industrial developments were reported by three CPs (Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam).
- 3.1.13. The NRs for COP12 and COP13 also request that CPs report on their priorities for future implementation. The most frequently reported future implementation priorities, as reported by four out of five of the IBRRI CPs, were wetland inventories, national wetland policy/strategies, Ramsar Site management planning and implementation, participatory management and wetland manager training and capacity building. Three IBRRI CPs reported future implementation of national legislation, Ramsar Site designation, and general CEPA activities.
- 3.1.14. Because CPs in their COP12 NRs listed their future priorities and difficulties in only broad, general terms (e.g. cultural values, wetland restoration, research/monitoring) and not against specific Strategic Plan implementation actions, it is difficult to directly compare how well these reflect the implementation gaps identified in this situation analysis.
- 3.1.15. Despite all five IBRRI CPs in their COP12 NRs identifying lack of funding for implementation as one of their greatest implementation difficulties, no IBRRI CP identified accessing increased funding as a future priority. Excluding the funding issue, neither is there a link between implementation issues reported as difficulties and those identified as future priorities for implementation. Notably, two issues (Ramsar Site designation, general CEPA) not reported as being a difficulty were identified for future priority action by two or three of the IBRRI Contracting Parties. However, some other implementation difficulties recognised by two or three IBRRI CPs were also recognised as future priorities: legislative amendments for delivering Ramsar commitments, and wetland/Ramsar Site management planning.

## 3.2. Reporting from the Inception Workshop

- 3.2.1. Group discussions were held at the Inception Workshop for the IBRRI. The discussions focussed on the four strategic and operational goals of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2024 in order to identify, using the targets as guidance, specific operational objectives and activities for the regional initiative.
- 3.2.2. The discussions also highlighted a range of related programmes, projects and activities that the CPs were currently implementing either on their own or in partnership with other countries or partners. A summary of the key findings of the Inception Workshop is provided in Annex 2.

### *Results and discussion*

- 3.2.3. Discussions held at the Inception Workshop summarised a range of activities and ideas that could be incorporated into a strategic plan for the IBRRI. Some of the

suggestions were broad and generic; others were more targeted in relation to implementation of specific aspects of the Convention. The synthesis presented below attempts to summarise the outputs from the Workshop.

- 3.2.4. The language used in the Workshop report complicates the strength of conclusions that can be drawn from the discussions. Many actions are couched in the terms that the IBRRI 'could' do or 'provide' something, such as the IBRRI 'could produce maps of wetlands' or 'provide support for national wetland committees'.
- 3.2.5. It is also clear that there are some distinct ambiguities in the aspirations listed. These may possibly stem from a clear lack of understanding or a dominance of perception of need over reality of need. For instance, there is a specific suggestion for the development of guidance on applying Ramsar Site designation Criteria, and specifically Criterion 8 as it is considered to be an 'overlooked' Criterion. However, as is shown in Fig. 7, the Criterion is already being widely applied to Ramsar Site designation in all countries of the region. Therefore, despite this specific recommendation, the analysis of the actual Criteria used for Ramsar Site designation suggest that guidance on the application of Criteria 3, 7 and 9 may be more useful.
- 3.2.6. While the Inception Workshop generated a broad list of possible activities, there are very limited clear or precise recommendations. Only three activities or actions are presented with a clear emphasis on being a priority or need. These three are:
- The priority is to ensure that management plans can be implemented effectively;
  - Funding is a key element of sustainability for management plans; and
  - There is a need to develop an inventory and better understanding of the impacts of invasive alien species.
- 3.2.7. Rationalising and prioritising the list of possible activities recorded at the Inception Workshop will require a further round of consultation. While there is some correlation with the outputs from the synthesis of the NRs, with the exception of a need for greater financing, there is limited consistency in the summary points generated from the Inception Workshop and the implementation gaps and future priorities reported in the NRs to COP12 and COP13.

### 3.3. Potential regional synergies

- 3.3.1. There are several other regional or sub-regional activities, projects and organisations, which have the potential to provide synergies with the IBRRI. There is potential for these synergies to be explored and for mutual benefits to accrue. Several particular opportunities are highlighted.

### *Ramsar Regional Centre-East Asia*

- 3.3.2. The 40<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee in May 2009 approved the formation of the Ramsar Regional Centre - East Asia (RRC-EA) as a new regional initiative. As of August 2017, the RRC-EA works with 17 countries that are Contracting Parties (CPs) of the Ramsar Convention (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam). The five CPs of the IBRRI all belong to the South Eastern Asia sub-region of the RRC-EA.
- 3.3.3. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by CPs in December 2015 states the objective for the Centre is to:
- “enhance the implementation of the Ramsar Convention primarily in East but also in Southeast Asia through, inter alia, capacity building, awareness raising, enhancing cooperation and networking, and providing technical and financial support.”*
- 3.3.4. With a primary focus on capacity building, RRC-EA programmes its activities based on three pillars of work: a) support to the implementation of CEPA programmes; b) the provision of small grants to partners to implement projects on the wise use of Ramsar Sites; and c) the strengthening of networking approaches among Ramsar Administrative Authorities (AAs) and site managers in Asia.
- 3.3.5. The RRC-EA has provided a series of training sessions and supported the development of draft resolutions for the Ramsar COPs on the use of techniques and tools to enhance conservation and monitoring of Ramsar Sites (e.g. Ramsar Site Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool [R-METT], and Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services).
- 3.3.6. The main challenges for the RRC-EA have been the development of sustainable funding, and the multiple languages present across the region. The RRC-EA is also developing an approach focusing on sub-regional interventions including the Bay of Bengal, the Yellow Sea Region and the Lower Mekong Region (or Indo-Burma Region).
- 3.3.7. Potential areas of cooperation with the IBRRI have been identified, including the development of joint training projects and programmes, and the development and delivery of Ramsar guidance. RRC-EA have recommended that the first step for the development of cooperation with IBRRI should include a joint review of respective work plans and identification of co-funding opportunities for key activities in the Indo-Burma Region.

### *East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership*

- 3.3.8. The East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) is an informal and voluntary partnership launched in November 2006, which aims to protect

migratory waterbirds, their habitat, and the livelihoods of people dependent upon them. As of June 2018, there are 35 Partners, including 17 countries, six intergovernmental agencies, 11 international NGOs, and one international private enterprise. Four of the IBRRI CPs are partners. Lao PDR is currently not a partner. The EAAFP is a formally recognised regional initiative under the Ramsar Convention.

3.3.9. The purpose of the EAAFP is:

*“to provide a flyway wide framework to promote dialogue, cooperation and collaboration between a range of stakeholders including all levels of governments, multilateral environment site managers, agreements, technical institutions, UN agencies, development agencies, industrial and private sector, academe, non-government organisations, community groups and local people, to conserve migratory waterbirds and their habitats.”<sup>29</sup>*

3.3.10. The activities of the EAAFP are centred around five areas:

- Working Groups which provide advice and implementation support across the partnership and address different groups of waterbirds as well as CEPA and Avian Influenza issues;
- Task Forces which are established to address specific issues raised during the Meetings of the Partners (MoP), such as concerns regarding specific species or geographical regions;
- Campaigns which are usually topical and aimed at raising awareness of particular issues across different stakeholder groups, such as local communities, schools and individuals;
- World Migratory Bird Day-related activities during the annual celebration of migratory birds; and
- Asian Waterbird Census (AWC), which is coordinated by Wetlands International but is supported by the EAAFP within the region.

3.3.11. The EAAFP Strategic Plan 2019–2028 provides the framework for operationalisation by the Partners, the Secretariat, EAAFP bodies and other relevant stakeholders in order to conserve migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the EAAF. The EAAFP Strategic Plan 2019–2028 sets out the following five clear objectives:

- Develop the Flyway Network of sites of international importance for the conservation of migratory waterbirds, building on the achievements of the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, with the ultimate goal of establishing a sufficient and efficient network of sites with sustainable management.
- Enhance communication, education, and public awareness of the values of migratory waterbirds and their habitats.

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<sup>29</sup> East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), Partnership Document – version 13. <http://www.eaaflyway.net/documents/key/eaafp-partnership-doc-v13.pdf>

- Enhance flyway research and monitoring activities, build knowledge, and promote exchange of information on waterbirds and their habitats.
- Build the habitat and waterbird management capacity of natural resource managers, decision makers and local stakeholders.
- Develop, especially for priority species and habitats, flyway-wide approaches to enhance the conservation status of migratory waterbirds.

3.3.12. Within these five objectives there is clearly potential for the IBRRI to seek synergies and co-deliver objectives. This is particularly relevant in relation to seeking synergies between a sufficient and effective network of sites for waterbirds and delivering a coherent network of Ramsar Sites, as well as for communication, research, monitoring, management capacity building and CEPA-related activities.

#### *ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity*

3.3.13. The ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) was established in 2005 as an intergovernmental organisation that facilitates cooperation and coordination among the 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS) and with regional and international organisations, on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of such natural treasures.

3.3.14. The mission of the ACB is to:

*“facilitate cooperation and coordination among the ten ASEAN Member States (AMS) and with regional and international organizations on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of such natural treasures.”<sup>30</sup>*

3.3.15. The Strategic Goals of the ACB in order to deliver on the Aichi Targets are:

- Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society;
- Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use;
- To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity;
- Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services; and
- Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

3.3.16. The overall goals of the ACB are:

- Facilitate coordination and cooperation on regional biodiversity conservation programmes;
- Deliver capacity building services;

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<sup>30</sup> Asean Center for Biodiversity (ACB). <https://aseanbiodiversity.org/about-acb/>

- Develop regional mechanisms to sustainably manage and protect biodiversity and ecosystems, and strengthen ASEAN regional positions in negotiations and in compliance with relevant multilateral environmental agreements;
- Impart and deliver to AMS knowledge and tools for managing biodiversity;
- Enhance the linkage between science and policy on biodiversity;
- Promote multi-stakeholder and leadership awareness of the values of biodiversity and the actions that can be taken to conserve it;
- Undertake resource generation and mobilisation measures for impact activities that will enhance biodiversity conservation in the region; and
- Enhance ACB's capacity and sustainability as a regional centre of excellence on biodiversity.

3.3.17. Each of the IBRRI Contracting Parties is also an AMS. Consequently, there are opportunities to seek synergies between the mutually coalescing objectives of the ACB and the Ramsar Convention. Specific opportunities exist, particularly in the delivery of capacity building, the development of regional mechanisms to facilitate the wise use of wetlands, enhancing the linkages between science and policy, and the generation and mobilisation of resources.

#### *ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management*

3.3.18. The ASEAN established the Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM) to enhance regional cooperation on freshwater management. It aims to:

- Promote networking and engage in collaborative action towards the practical implementation of integrated water resources management;
- Promote and facilitate the exchange of relevant information, expertise, technology and know-how among water resource agencies of member countries; and
- Provide or make arrangements for relevant training, education and awareness raising campaigns.

3.3.19. Each individual Member State in the IBRRI has developed its own targets, objectives and strategic guidelines for Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), aligned to the four key issues identified in the ASEAN Long Term Strategic Plan for Water Resources (ASPA-WRM), namely:

- Water supply, demand and allocation;
- Water quality and sanitation;
- Climate change and extreme events; and
- Governance and capacity building.

3.3.20. These issues have been refined into the following four specific objectives under the AWGWRM Action Plan:

- To promote IWRM for sustainability of water resource, equitable accessibility, and sufficient water quantity of acceptable quality to meet the needs of people, economy and environment;
- To manage water resources efficiently and effectively in order to provide adequate and affordable water services;
- To reduce the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation; and
- To reduce risks and impacts of water-related disasters (flood, drought, storm, etc.), and strengthen resilience of social and ecological systems.

3.3.21. All five of the IBRRI Contracting Parties are Member States of the AWGWRM. Opportunities exist to seek synergies between the objectives of IWRM and the Ramsar Convention, especially where wetlands play a key role in, *inter alia*, provision of sustainable and safe water resources, improving water quality and reducing the risk from water-related disasters. There are also opportunities to seek mutually supporting capacity building and related CEPA activities.

#### *Mekong River Commission*

3.3.22. The Mekong River Commission (MRC) was legally mandated under the Mekong Agreement in 1995. The Agreement sets out a framework for achieving the strategic objectives of IWRM, recognising that development decisions by sector agencies in the sovereign riparian countries of the Mekong River Basin may have transboundary consequences, and that the MRC as an intergovernmental river basin organisation relies on Member Countries' endorsement of its orientations and initiatives.

3.3.23. Four of the five IBRRI Contracting Parties are also members of the MRC, namely Cambodia, Thailand, Lao PDR and Viet Nam. Over the recent years, the MRC Secretariat has cooperated with the government of Myanmar in a number of thematic areas, such as improving hydro-meteorological monitoring networks, water quality data sharing, and exchange of expert knowledge in flood prevention and management. The MRC recognises that enhanced cooperation with Myanmar, and also China as another upstream partner, is crucial for the sustainable management of the Lancang-Mekong Basin.

3.3.24. The mission of the MRC is:

*“to promote and coordinate sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries' mutual benefit and the people's well-being.”<sup>31</sup>*

3.3.25. As part of its commitment to regional cooperation, the MRC has developed a Basin Development Strategy for the Lower Mekong Basin in order to set out how Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam will share, utilise, manage and

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<sup>31</sup> Mekong River Commission (MRC). <http://www.mrcmekong.org/about-mrc/vision-and-mission/>

conserve the water and related resources of the Mekong in order to deliver on the goals of the 1995 Agreement.

3.3.26. The strategic priorities for the Lower Mekong Basin development are:

- Address the opportunities and consequences of the ongoing developments, including development in the Lancang-Upper Mekong Basin;
- Expand and intensify irrigated agriculture for food security and poverty alleviation;
- Improve the sustainability of hydropower development;
- Acquire essential knowledge to address uncertainties and minimise risks of the identified development opportunities;
- Seek options for sharing the potential benefits and risks of development opportunities;
- Adapt to climate change; and
- Integrate basin development planning considerations into national systems.

3.3.27. The strategic priorities for basin management are:

- Establish basin objectives and management strategies for water-related sectors;
- Strengthen national level water resources management processes;
- Strengthen basin management processes;
- Develop environmental and social objectives and baseline indicators; and
- Implement a targeted IWRM capacity building programme.

3.3.28. Opportunities exist through the IBRRI to ensure that the wise use of wetlands in the four MRC member states, and also in Myanmar, is considered fully in the delivery of the strategic development and management priorities for the Basin. While the management of wetlands has a vital role to play in IWRM across the entire Mekong Basin, specific synergies exist between the IBRRI and the MRC in understanding the how wetlands can contribute to climate change adaptation, how irrigated rice agriculture can be sustainably delivered, how a variety of developments can benefit from the wise use of wetlands, and how knowledge exchange on wetlands can assist with a targeted capacity building programme.

#### *Lancang-Mekong Cooperation*

3.3.29. The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) forum was established by Beijing, China, in 2015. Named after the Lancang (which rises in Qinghai Province, China and flows south towards the border of Myanmar and Lao PDR), and the Mekong Rivers, the regional cooperation initiative aims to bolster the economic and social development and human well being across this shared watershed.

3.3.30. In March 2016 the first meeting of the LMC Leaders was held in Haiwan Province, China, and resulted in the drafting of the Sanya Declaration of the First

Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Leaders' Meeting. The meeting identified the following priority areas for practical cooperation across the region: connectivity, production capacity, cross-border economic cooperation, water resources, agriculture, and poverty reduction. The Sanya declaration defined 26 measures, which would be required to deliver on the priorities. These measures included, *inter alia*:

- Enhancing cooperation among LMC countries in sustainable water resources management and utilisation through activities such as the establishment of a centre in China for Lancang-Mekong water resources cooperation to serve as a platform for LMC countries to strengthen cooperation in technical exchanges, capacity building, drought and flood management, data and information sharing, and joint research and analysis related to Lancang-Mekong river resources;
- Carrying out technical exchanges and capacity building cooperation in agriculture; establishing more agricultural technology centres and high-quality, high-yield demonstration stations (bases) in Mekong countries; strengthening cooperation in fishery and animal husbandry, as well as food security; and enhancing agricultural development;
- Strengthening cultural exchanges among member countries; supporting exchanges and cooperation among cultural organisations and artists; exploring the possibility of building a Lancang-Mekong cultural exchange platform; maximising the role of cultural centres set up by governments; and carrying out various forms of cultural exchanges;
- Increasing tourism exchanges and cooperation; improving the tourism environment; enhancing regional tourism facilitation; and striving to establish a Lancang-Mekong tourist cities cooperation alliance; and
- Encouraging closer exchanges among government agencies, local provinces and districts, business associations and non-governmental organisations of the six countries to discuss and carry out relevant cooperation.

3.3.31. Opportunities exist through this cooperation framework to strengthen sustainable socio-economic development objectives and deliver the wise use of wetlands. Multilateral or bilateral projects with China and the IBRRI partner countries could be developed to assist with the delivery of the goals of the Strategic Plan.

#### *International dialogue partners*

3.3.32. The IBRRI should also seek to take advantage of the strengths of the two contiguous major countries in the wider region, namely India and China. Opportunities for collaboration with China exist through the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation framework, but more localised opportunities are also possible between universities, NGOs, tourism projects, etc. Similar opportunities also exist with India. IBRRI countries should seek to engage at a range of levels with these key regional dialogue partners in order to develop mutually beneficial outcomes for wetlands.

### *Links with other conventions and international frameworks*

- 3.3.33. IBRRI countries are members of, and have strong links with, a range of other international conventions and frameworks. These include, *inter alia*, Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- 3.3.34. All of these international conventions and frameworks have links with the Ramsar Convention, and wetlands form part of their wider remit. By working as a coherent body, IBRRI presents opportunities for Contracting Parties to pursue shared agendas, such as policy development or practical project delivery, within these wider international initiatives.

### *Mangroves for the Future*

- 3.3.35. Mangroves for the Future (MFF) is a unique partner-led initiative to promote investment in coastal ecosystem conservation for sustainable development. Co-chaired by IUCN and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), MFF provides a platform for collaboration among the many different agencies, sectors and countries addressing challenges to coastal ecosystem and livelihood issues.
- 3.3.36. The goal of MFF is to promote an integrated oceanwide approach to coastal management and to build the resilience of ecosystem-dependent coastal communities. MFF builds on a history of coastal management interventions before and after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. It initially focused on the countries that were worst affected by the tsunami, but works regularly with IBRRI Contracting Parties in Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and Viet Nam.
- 3.3.37. While mangroves are the flagship species of MFF, activities extend to all coastal wetland systems including coral reefs, estuaries, lagoons, sandy beaches and seagrass beds. The mission of MFF is:
- “To promote healthy coastal ecosystems through a partnership-based, people focused and policy relevant approach that builds and applies knowledge, empowers communities and other stakeholders, enhances governance, secures livelihoods, and increases resilience to natural hazards and climate change.”<sup>32</sup>*
- 3.3.38. Reflecting the growing concern about natural disasters and climate change in the Asia region, MFF's goal is to strengthen the resilience of ecosystem-dependent coastal communities. This goal is addressed by the three following objectives:
- Generate, disseminate and apply knowledge for sustainable management of coastal ecosystems;

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<sup>32</sup> Mangroves for the Future (MFF). <https://www.mangrovesforthefuture.org/what-we-do/focus-areas-and-objectives/>

- Empower key stakeholders to engage in decision-making in support of sustainable management of coastal ecosystems; and
- Enhance coastal governance to promote integrated and inclusive management.

3.3.39. The work of MFF addresses vital coastal wetland systems. The objectives of MFF demonstrate multiple synergies with the ambitions of the IBRRI. Opportunities exist for mutual delivery across all three of MFF's objective areas and also for funding synergies to be sought to support the wise use of coastal wetlands.

#### *Mekong WET*

3.3.40. Funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), the *Mekong WET: Building Resilience of Wetlands in the Lower Mekong Region* project aims to build climate resilience by harnessing the benefits of wetlands in four of the IBRRI CPs: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam

3.3.41. Facilitated by the IUCN Asia Regional Office, Mekong WET aims to help four of the countries covered by the IBRRI to address their commitments to the Ramsar Convention and to also implement their Aichi Biodiversity Targets over the period 2017–2020.

3.3.42. The Mekong WET project was designed to support the development and implementation of a Ramsar Regional initiative. This project contributed directly to creating the IBRRI and ensures in a large part its current functioning.

3.3.43. Therefore its programme explicitly includes opportunities to support the IBRRI, including:

- Developing management plans for 10 Ramsar Sites in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam, with a particular focus on climate change adaptation and resilience building;
- Improving regional collaboration on transboundary wetland management;
- Facilitating knowledge exchange on climate change adaptation in wetland socio-ecological systems;
- Supporting implementation of management plans;
- Sharing lessons on management planning across the network of current and future Ramsar Sites;
- Developing regional training programmes co-led by local universities; and
- Supporting regional transboundary dialogues and a regional STRP.

#### *Other project-based opportunities*

3.3.44. Throughout the Indo-Burma Region there are numerous projects that are being delivered by a variety of organisations and through a multitude of funding sources. Many of these projects are similar to Mekong WET insofar that they

have finite funding and fixed implementation periods. Some of these projects are being delivered by national or international NGOs in one or multiple countries, while others are being implemented by national governments.

- 3.3.45. Funding for these projects comes from a variety of sources including intergovernmental funds, national governments from outside the region, development banks, aid agencies, foundations, and the private sector. For example, in Myanmar, a bilateral project between the governments of Myanmar and Norway – *Conservation of Biodiversity and Management of Protected Areas in Myanmar* – is being funded and implemented through the Norwegian Environment Agency (NEA), working closely with the Myanmar Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) and its Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division (NWCD). Similarly, the Australian Government’s development assistance programme (Australian Aid) has provided AUD30 million between 2014 and 2019 to support the Greater Mekong Water Resources Program which aims to provide more equitable, transparent and effective water resources management while contributing to food and energy security and sustainable economic development in South East Asia.
- 3.3.46. Programmes of the United Nations (UN) are also active across the region. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have been supporting wetland-related activities including natural capital accounting and sustainable farming systems. Opportunities exist to build strong linkages with the various UN bodies active in the region to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes.
- 3.3.47. Many NGOs have successfully secured funding for national initiatives or site based projects, which assist Contracting Parties to implement their obligations under the Ramsar Convention. The following non-exhaustive list provide some examples of NGO activities in the region:
- The World Conservation Society (WCS) has been working in Myanmar, and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has been working in Cambodia, on the protection of river dolphins;
  - Since 2014, Fauna and Flora International (FFI) supported the government of Myanmar to prepare the Ramsar nominations for Meinmahla Kyun, Indawgyi Lake, and Inle Lake, and continues to support wetland conservation in Indawgyi and Meinmahala Kyun. FFI is also working with private companies, mining and government environment departments to ensure that sensitive and rare karstic wetlands and the unique species they support are protected;
  - Wetlands International, working through a network of volunteers and organisations, coordinate the annual Asian Waterbird Census across the Indo-Burma Region as an integral component of its global waterbird monitoring programme;
  - Conservation International (CI) is working with governments and communities from China to Cambodia to protect the forests and wetlands

that feed the Mekong River, to minimise the impact of forest degradation and loss, as well as the effects of dams and other water diversions, and to improve the management of fisheries; and

- The International Crane Foundation is working with local partners across the Indo-Burma Region to secure the population of Sarus crane.

3.3.48. As this snapshot of initiatives demonstrates, the wetland conservation landscape within the Indo-Burma Region is already well served and crowded. All of these individual initiatives have the potential to contribute to the delivery of the objectives of IBRRI.

3.3.49. A potential role for IBRRI is the need to ensure that efforts are not duplicated and that scarce resources are optimised to deliver maximum outcomes.

## 4. Situation analysis

### 4.1. Developing strategic objectives

4.1.1. Undeniably, the wetlands of the Indo-Burma Region are under threat. However, the wise use of wetlands across the region has the potential to assist countries with the delivery of their commitments not just under the Ramsar Convention, but also under broader national targets and challenges (such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change) while at the same time enhancing livelihoods, as well as water, food and energy security. Therefore, while many opportunities exist to stem the loss and degradation of wetlands, the challenge lies in ensuring that actions are prioritised and are resource-efficient in order to ensure the effective delivery of positive outcomes.

4.1.2. The situation analysis has demonstrated that, while the CPs are doing much to implement the Ramsar Convention, there is still much more that needs to be done. Similarly, there are parallel or synergistic initiatives, projects and partners across the region, which provide opportunities for resource efficiencies to be achieved and avoid the duplication of effort.

4.1.3. The development of strategic objectives has considered the degree of implementation of the Ramsar Convention as reported by the CPs, the ambitions as articulated through discussions held at the Inception Workshop, and the potential support and collaboration with existing partners, networks and initiatives.

4.1.4. IBRRI has the potential to greatly improve the implementation of the Ramsar Convention across the region and enhance the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Table 2 summarises the main strengths of the CPs in currently delivering on their obligations under the Ramsar Convention and highlights the

main weaknesses that are compromising implementation. The detail regarding the strengths and weaknesses is provided in the other sections of this document.

- 4.1.5. The establishment of the IBRRI also provides a range of opportunities to seek synergies with existing activities and partners, and to significantly enhance the implementation of the obligations under the Ramsar Convention while adding value to other related ongoing activities. However, a range of threats will remain and the implementation of any strategic actions will need to be cognisant of these and should establish mechanisms to manage them (Table 3).

#### 4.1. Informing the strategic plan

- 4.1.1. The information from the SWOT analysis for the implementation of the Ramsar convention in the five countries collected during the IBRRI inception workshop is summarised in Tables 2 and 3 and has been used to inform the development of the strategic plan. The objectives and activities required to address the multitude of issues embrace all aspects of the successful operation of a regional initiative. Therefore, management and governance issues, CEPA actions and direct conservation activities, are all considered.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing understanding of the objectives of the Ramsar Convention and similar levels of implementation as with the rest of Asia</li> <li>• Some capacity within CPs and established institutional frameworks for the delivery of the obligations under the Ramsar Convention</li> <li>• Track record of partial delivery of Ramsar Convention objectives, such as the designation of Ramsar Sites, development of site management plans, implementation of CEPA activities and international cooperation</li> <li>• Presence of well-established existing Ramsar Regional Initiatives (such as RRC-EA and EAAFP) which support projects, funding and other wetland-related transboundary initiatives across the region</li> <li>• Presence of multiple, broader bodies and initiatives, such as the MRC, ACB and MFF, that are operating across the region</li> <li>• Presence of a network of organisations (such as international and local NGOs) and funding bodies (such as aid agencies, development banks and the private sector) that are active in the five individual IBRRI countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistencies in recognising implementation gaps and future priorities across the five CPS</li> <li>• Reduced level of implementation of the Ramsar Convention demonstrated between COP11 and COP12</li> <li>• Lack of clarity regarding perception of need or actual need with regards to individual CPs requirements to implement their obligations under the Ramsar Convention</li> <li>• Relatively low level of implementation of some Ramsar Convention objectives reported in Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR</li> <li>• Specific gaps in implementation of the wise use of wetlands regarding national policies, water governance, research, restoration, private sector engagement and management incentive mechanisms</li> <li>• Specific gaps in implementation of management plans, integrated committees and effectiveness tracking at Ramsar Sites</li> <li>• Limited biogeographical representation of Ramsar Sites and certain wetland types across the region</li> <li>• Specific gaps in international cooperation across networks and transboundary wetland systems</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of good practice in wetland management, CEPA activities and wise use in national governments and other organisations such as NGOs</li> <li>• IBRRI Secretariat established</li> <li>• Enthusiasm underpinning a ‘new’ initiative</li> </ul>	<p>despite the presence of established networks and mechanisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of CEPA action plans across all CPs</li> <li>• Tensions and competition among different stakeholders, bodies and institutions already active in the region resulting in resource inefficiencies and duplication of efforts</li> <li>• Limited sustainable funding, resources and capacity, and a culture of donor dependency</li> </ul>
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Table 2. Current strengths and weaknesses with regard to implementation of the Ramsar Convention across the Indo-Burma Region.

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To stem wetland loss and degradation</li> <li>• To consistently identify implementation gaps through improved understanding of National Reporting mechanisms</li> <li>• To prioritise activities which are most resource efficient and maximise outcomes across the region, especially in Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao PDR where need is greatest</li> <li>• To develop consistent and effective CEPA action plans in order to communicate initiatives and outputs across the five CPs</li> <li>• To enhance strategic links to existing networks and initiatives, and to build capacity for wise use of wetlands in a strategic manner</li> <li>• To share experiences and co-develop activities through the existing Ramsar-related international cooperation mechanisms RRC-EA and EAAFP</li> <li>• To develop collaborative funding opportunities with other existing networks (such as MRC, ACB and MFF) and partners (such as NGOs and aid agencies)</li> <li>• To contribute to the delivery of wider initiatives such as the SDGs, Paris Climate Agreement, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as broader agendas on poverty eradication, food, water and energy security, and enhanced livelihoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of sustainable funding sources beyond individual projects</li> <li>• Resistance of governments to become less reliant on donor financing</li> <li>• Limited capacity within governments to fully deliver on commitments under IBRRI despite best intentions</li> <li>• Loss or reduction of existing funding for the Secretariat</li> <li>• Being reactive to short-term issues rather than proactive in addressing systemic issues</li> <li>• Weak communication and coordination</li> <li>• Duplication of effort within countries and by other regional initiatives</li> <li>• Poor or inappropriate governance</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce unnecessary competition among different stakeholders and to optimise resource efficiencies</li> <li>• To act as an exemplar in order to demonstrate to other Ramsar Regional Initiatives a pro-active and robust approach to strategic delivery</li> </ul>	
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Table 3. Opportunities and threats for future activities of the IBRRI.

4.1.2. In developing and delivering a strategic plan, it can be useful to consider some underlying principles in order to provide direct benefit to the CPs. These can ensure that targets are met and outcomes achieved without being distracted by attractive but ultimately non-strategic activities. The following principles should be considered by the IBRRI in the final development and implementation of the strategic plan:

- Concentrate on outcomes (e.g. improved implementation of the Ramsar Convention and stemming the loss and degradation of wetlands) rather than outputs (e.g. number of training courses conducted or guidance documents produced);
- Focus on targeting the priority activities in order to maximise outcomes;
- Focus on being predominantly pro-active and not reactive, but avoiding becoming dogmatic to the point of missing opportunities;
- Optimise opportunities and seek to develop clear synergies with other initiatives in order to maximise outcomes and optimise resource efficiency;
- Ensure transparency in decision-making and the application of participatory approaches in order to achieve good governance; and
- With regards to a timeline, it is recommended that the strategic plan be time-bound to complement the timeframe of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2024, subject to review by COP14.

## 4.2. Setting strategic objectives

4.2.1. The IBRRI is and remains a regional initiative of the Ramsar Convention. The adoption of the IBRRI through formal Ramsar Convention processes bestows upon it a range of obligations. These obligations, and their associated aspirations, are set out in Document SC52-12 (June 2016). This document states that a regional initiative (RI) is:

*“an operational means to provide effective support for improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan, and to raise the visibility of the Convention in the region.”*

4.2.2. Specifically, SC52-12 states that the IBRRI:

*“Supports engagement, cooperation and knowledge sharing, provides a regionally focused multi-stakeholder forum for establishing partnerships and improving*

wetland management, and supports research and dissemination of scientific information relating to drivers of wetland loss and degradation. The RI engages in advocacy, policy development and improving of capacity and awareness.”

4.2.3. With regards to specific activities and objectives, SC52-12 states that:

*“The RI will promote the implementation of the Ramsar objectives, reinforce capacities, develop adaptive management of Ramsar Sites, transfer knowledge, and coordinate with other international initiatives.”*

4.2.4. Specific roles and responsibilities are described so that the IBRRI:

*“will be a transboundary facilitation platform. The [Ramsar] Secretariat provides support to organise and undertake events and activities, produce regular communication, raise funds and ensure the timely delivery of work plans. Synergies with the existing water and wetlands programme of the IUCN regional office will be created, in close cooperation with the Ramsar National Focal Points, and with other existing RI in Asia (East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, Ramsar Regional Centre-East Asia).”*

4.2.5. To ensure effective coordination between the IBRRI and the Ramsar Secretariat, SC52-12 states that the IBRRI will have:

*“two key governance bodies (steering committee and technical committee), each including a representative of the Ramsar Secretariat, coordinated by a regional secretariat that will be hosted by the IUCN Asia Regional Office. Also, a regional scientific and technical review panel will be created.”*

4.2.6. SC52-12 also sets out a clear description of the mechanisms to provide coordination, guidance and insight, accepted in their role by the national administrations of the participating countries and other participating stakeholders. It states that:

*“the steering committee is composed of the five Ramsar NFPs, a representative of the Ramsar Secretariat, and the chair of the regional STRP. The committee is chaired by one of the Ramsar NFPs for a period of three years. The committee approves work plans, resolutions, documents and communication and meets annually. The technical committee assures that partners in the RI other than the Ramsar Parties are able to provide guidance. It is composed of representatives of Ramsar Parties and the Secretariat, delegates of the regional STRP, Mekong River Committees, IOPs, other international organisations (UNEP, FFI), local NGOs and academics. It leads the development of work plans, case studies and technical interventions, and reports to the decision-making steering committee. The regional STRP, composed of the national STRP focal points and additional experts, ensures peer review of draft materials and considers how best to disseminate them.”*

4.2.7. SC52-12 also describes financing, operational and collaboration aspects of the IBRRI. All of the factors described above and covered in SC52-12 are required to

be considered in the strategic planning for the RI. This will ensure that it is operating in full compliance to the mandate agreed by the Ramsar Convention.

# 2 STRATEGIC PLAN



## 1. Objectives, targets and activities

- 1.1.1. The **aim** of a Ramsar Regional Initiative is to function as *an operational means to provide effective support for improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic Plan, and to raise the visibility of the Convention in the region.*
- 1.1.2. The Ramsar Convention, through its Standing Committee (SC52-12), has formally adopted decisions on the purpose, geographical scope, operations, governance, resource mobilisation, secretariat and coordination of the IBRRI.
- 1.1.3. The adopted **purpose** of the IBRRI is to be a transboundary facilitation platform that “...*supports engagement, cooperation and knowledge sharing, provides a regionally focused multi-stakeholder forum for establishing partnerships and improving wetland management, supports research and dissemination of scientific information relating to drivers of wetland loss and degradation, and engages in advocacy, policy development and improving of capacity and awareness.*”
- 1.1.4. The original purpose, as articulated in SC52-12, has been considered in the light of the information derived from the situation analysis to ensure that implementation gaps and future priorities align with the original objectives for the Regional Initiative.

1.1.5. All activities and actions undertaken by, or through, the IBRRI need to contribute to the adopted purpose. However, in order to operationalise the Regional Initiative and deliver clear outcomes, the following five **Operational Objectives** are defined:

1. Facilitate and promote wetland knowledge and experience sharing;
2. Support integrated management of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands and ensure conservation of key wetland species in the region;
3. Assist with the development and/or strengthening and implementation of policy frameworks taking into account wetland management and conservation across sectors at all levels;
4. Support wetland communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness; and
5. Ensure sound and sustainable governance and management of the Regional Initiative.

1.1.6. The successful delivery of a range of activities and actions will be required for the Operational Objectives to be achieved and verified through clear targets. The specific targets are derived from the situation analysis and represent a synthesis of the priorities based on the implementation gaps, future priorities and reporting from the Inception Workshop. Each activity should also contribute to the delivery of the Goals of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2024. In order to align with the Convention’s Strategic Plan, it is recommended that the IBRRI Strategic Plan extends, in the first instance, until 2024, or six years, with a midterm review conducted by COP14 (expected in 2021).

1.1.7. A range of activities is described for each target. The activities have clear indicators of success, which follow a SMART (specific-measurable-achievable-realistic-timebound) approach. For each activity, lead responsibilities are described. Often the lead responsibility will be shared among a range of stakeholders.

1.1.8. It is recommended that each of the five IBRRI Contracting Parties be assigned overall responsibility for the implementation of one of the Operational Objectives. As part of this role, it would be necessary to develop details within each activity, and to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are engaged in delivery of the activities and that the indicators were clearly achieved and reported on.

## 2. Implementation Strategy

2.1.1. Within each of the activities described under the five Operational Objectives there is scope to develop a variety of implementation strategies and different actions. Any action should possess a clear target and an indicator of success, which can be used to monitor and evaluate progress. Each activity should be accompanied by a robust budget and a clearly identified funding source. This

should be established in detail by the Steering Committee. An outline estimate is provided in Annex 3.

- 2.1.2. The timeline for implementation reflects the timeframe of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2024, as well as the current state of progress with regards to developing the IBRRI Strategic Plan. Therefore the IBRRI Strategic Plan should cover the period 2019–2024. However, a midterm review should be conducted around the time of COP14 (expected in 2021) to assess progress and to refine activities where necessary. The IBRRI Strategic Plan should also be reviewed and updated in 2024 to align with the 5<sup>th</sup> Ramsar Strategic Plan.

Operational Objective 1	Facilitate and promote wetland knowledge and experience sharing		
Target <i>What has to be achieved?</i>	Activities <i>What has to be done?</i>	Indicators <i>Demonstrators of success</i>	Responsibility <i>Who will take the lead on delivery?</i>
1.1 A network for knowledge and experience sharing is established and active across the Indo-Burma Region	1.1.1 Establish an IBRRI Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) composed of Ramsar STRP National Focal Points, regional and national wetland experts, IOPs and representatives of other pan-regional bodies such as MRC, ACB and MFF in order to provide technical advice on key issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ At least one IBRRI STRP meeting has been conducted every two years from 2019</li> <li>➤ IBRRI STRP meeting reports have been</li> </ul>	STRP National Focal Points in the five Contracting Parties Technical Committee
	1.1.2 Translate the most relevant existing Ramsar Handbooks and other relevant publications and tools (especially addressing Ramsar Site designation, wetland restoration, urban and peri-urban wetlands, invasive species and integrated water resource planning and ecosystem services) into local languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ At least one handbook has been translated into one local and non-technical language each year</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat IBRRI STRP RRC-EA
	1.1.3 Establish, coordinate and manage a regional website to facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Website has been established (either independently or as pages within an established website) by 2020 to facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing in multiple languages</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat IBRRI STRP
	1.1.4 Integrate and co-organise knowledge sharing activities with RRC-EA and the EAAFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ From 2019 onwards, at least one joint activity has been undertaken annually with outputs disseminated to all IBRRI Contracting</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat RRC-EA EAAFP Secretariat
	1.1.5 Production of an Indo-Burma Regional Wetlands Outlook (IBRWO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By COP 14, process for development and production of an IBRWO has been established</li> <li>➤ By COP15, IBRWO report has been published in multiple languages</li> </ul>	IBRRI STRP IBRRI Secretariat STRP National Focal Points National Experts ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity

	1.1.6 Develop and implement an IBRRI scientific and technical research initiative, specifically to target a range of ecosystem services important within the Indo-Burma context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2020, key research questions, research establishments and funding mechanisms have been identified in order to develop a detailed research programme</li> <li>➤ By 2024, research about at least three wetland ecosystem service issues has been conducted and results disseminated</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat IBRRI STRP Technical Committee National experts IOPs
1.2 Knowledge of wetland-agriculture interactions is shared across the region	1.2.1 Synthesise and make available state of the art knowledge on wetland-agriculture interactions relevant to the Indo-Burma context, especially with regards to irrigated agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, a wetland-agriculture regional symposium is organised and delivered</li> <li>➤ By 2022, an IBRRI report on wetland-agriculture interactions and recommendations for wise use has been produced in multiple languages</li> </ul>	IBRRI STRP IOPs
1.3 A standardised wetland inventory is established across the Indo-Burma Region and is based on an harmonised wetlands classification system	1.3.1 Review and assess the status and utility of national wetland inventories and wetland classification systems in the IBRRI countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, a regional wetland symposium on wetland classification and inventory has been organised and delivered</li> <li>➤ By 2022, a symposium report with recommendations on the development of a harmonised pan-IBRRI wetland inventory has been produced in multiple languages</li> </ul>	IBRRI STRP IOPs International and national experts

	1.3.2 Develop a harmonised wetland inventory across the five IBRRI countries	➤ By 2024, a standardised pan-Indo-Burma wetland inventory which is accessible to multiple stakeholders has been established	IBRRI STRP National Administrative Authorities IOPs
	1.3.3 Establish and implement an integrated wetland assessment, monitoring and reporting framework for the region	➤ By 2024, a framework for capturing information on the status and trends of wetlands in the region has been established so that information can be used for National Reporting and reporting to the IBRWO	IBRRI STRP National Administrative Authorities Ramsar Secretariat National experts IOPs
1.4 Knowledge on Article 3.2 Reporting is standardised and shared across the region	1.4.1 Liaise with Ramsar STRP, Ramsar Secretariat and other experts on Article 3.2 reporting	➤ By 2020, Article 3.2 knowledge sharing workshop has been organised	IBRRI STRP Ramsar Secretariat Ramsar STRP National experts
	1.4.2 Produce and disseminate guidance on Article 3.2 reporting	➤ By 2021, an IBRRI guidance document providing recommendations on Article 3.2 reporting has been produced	IBRRI STRP Ramsar Secretariat Ramsar STRP
1.5 Knowledge exchange on Ramsar Sites and their management is achieved through study tours	1.5.1 Identify and define the priorities for knowledge exchange through study tours to Ramsar Sites	➤ By 2022, a consultation workshop to identify suitable sites in all five IBRRI countries has been organised	IBRRI Secretariat IBRRI STRP National Administrative Authorities Ramsar Site Managers
	1.5.2 Conduct study tours to Ramsar Sites to facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing	➤ By 2023, study tours to Ramsar Sites in all five IBRRI countries have been conducted	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities Ramsar Site Managers
	1.5.3 Develop a programme of student internships and scholarship programmes relating to Ramsar Sites and wetland management	➤ By 2022, study topics and suitable institutions in all five IBRRI countries have been identified in order to develop an internship programme	IBRRI STRP National Administrative Authorities Ramsar Site Managers

Operational Objective 2	Support integrated management of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands and ensure conservation of key wetlands species in the region		
Target <i>What has to be achieved?</i>	Activities <i>What has to be done?</i>	Indicators <i>Demonstrators of success</i>	Responsibility <i>Who will take the lead on delivery?</i>
2.1 A representative network of internationally important wetland sites is established	2.1.1 Review existing network of Ramsar Sites and other internationally important wetlands and make recommendations for enhancing the site network	➤ By 2020, a review exercise has been conducted and a workshop held in order to produce a report on the proposals for enhancing the existing network of sites	IBRRI Secretariat Site Managers National Administrative Authorities EAAFP Existing project partners
	2.1.2 Develop a regionwide prioritised Ramsar Site designation strategy	➤ By 2021, a strategy document which identifies and prioritises sites for designation has been produced and disseminated in multiple languages	Site Managers National Administrative Authorities EAAFP Existing project partners NGOs
	2.1.3 Designate new Ramsar Sites and (wherever required) extend existing sites	➤ Between 2021 and 2024, at least one new Ramsar Site (or an extension of an existing Site) has been designated in each IBRRI country every year in line with the site designation strategy	Site Managers National Administrative Authorities NGOs
	2.1.4 Ensure that Ramsar Sites Info Service (RSIS) are updated every six years for existing sites and that the Information Sheets for Ramsar Wetlands (RIS) for new sites are complete	➤ By 2024, all Ramsar Sites in the region have a current RIS that is less than six years old	Site Managers National Administrative Authorities
	2.1.5 Develop a regional strategy for sustainable financing of a Ramsar Site network	➤ By 2021, a coherent strategy for the sustainable financing of Ramsar Sites has been developed	National Administrative Authorities Ramsar Secretariat IBRRI Secretariat

2.2 Ramsar Sites are managed effectively	2.2.1 Review current status of management plans across the region and identify gaps	➤ By 2020, a review of all Ramsar Sites has been conducted and the status of management plans has been summarised in a report	National Administrative Authorities Ramsar Secretariat IBRRI Secretariat
	2.2.2 Develop management plans for Ramsar Sites (including wetland delineation and zoning arrangements, and sites with multi-jurisdictional arrangements and multiple designations)	➤ By 2024, all Ramsar Sites in the region have an effective management plan based on best-practice approaches	National Administrative Authorities Site managers NGOs
	2.2.3 Support the development of cross-sectoral governance arrangements	➤ By 2024 all Ramsar Sites have established effective cross-sectoral management arrangements	National Administrative Authorities Site managers Relevant local stakeholders
	2.2.4 Ensure that the management of Ramsar Sites is mainstreamed within developmental and regional planning (such as river basin or coastal zone planning)	➤ By 2024, all Ramsar Sites are fully recognised and integrated within wider regional frameworks	National Administrative Authorities Site managers Other governmental partners
	2.2.5 Track management effectiveness at Ramsar Sites and adapt management-based on outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, the project has disseminated information to, and conducted management effectiveness (R-METT) training for all Ramsar Site managers</li> <li>➤ By 2024, all Ramsar Sites are being managed effectively</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities Site managers

2.3 Action plans are implemented for conservation of key wetland-dependent species for the Indo-Burma Region	2.3.1 Identify key wetland species and habitats based on internationally agreed criteria (such as IUCN Red List, Ramsar criteria, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, a workshop to identify key wetland-dependent species requiring action plans, and develop agreements on a target number of plans for delivery, has been conducted and its report produced</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat IUCN Specialist Groups EAAFP RRC-EA Ramsar Secretariat ASEAN Centre of Biodiversity National and Regional experts Site managers
	2.3.2 Support Red Listing of data deficient wetland-dependent species, with a particular emphasis on fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2020, a workshop to identify which wetland-dependent species are data deficient, has been conducted and a workshop report describing listing targets has been produced</li> <li>➤ By 2021, a mechanism for data gathering and reporting on wetland-dependent species has been established</li> <li>➤ By 2024, reporting and listing targets are met</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat IUCN Specialist Groups EAAFP RRC-EA Ramsar Secretariat ASEAN Centre of Biodiversity National and Regional experts Site managers
	2.3.3 Develop and implement species action plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2024, the target set in 2.3.1 is achieved</li> <li>➤ Beyond 2024, a reporting mechanism to monitor and evaluate species action plans has been established</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat IUCN Specialist Groups EAAFP ASEAN Centre of Biodiversity National and Regional experts Site managers

2.4 Best practice in integrated management of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands in the Indo-Burma Region is documented and promoted	2.4.1 Document best practices in wetland management from the Indo-Burma Region, particularly those that target multiple values and delivery of the objectives of other multilateral environmental agreements or wider international frameworks, such as the SDGs or Paris Climate Change Agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, a workshop which aims to develop a reporting and dissemination protocol to ensure best practice examples are identified and captured (especially of exemplar sites) has been organised</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities IBRRI STRP National and Regional experts Site managers NGOs
	2.4.2 Share experiences, lessons learnt and best practices, especially through 'model sites' as exemplars of particular aspects of wetland management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, a coordinated approach that takes into account language differences for information sharing (through, <i>inter alia</i>, the use of site visits, twinning of sites, staff exchanges, workshops, websites, and symposia) has been established</li> <li>➤ By 2024, wetland managers from all the IBRRI countries have unfettered access to information on best practice examples of wetland management</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities IBRRI STRP National and Regional experts Site managers NGOs
	2.4.3 Produce best practice guidance on integrated wetland management for the Indo-Burma Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2024, a guidance document (paper and electronic) in local languages, which catalogues and describes best practice wetland management approaches across the region, has been produced</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat IBRRI STRP National and Regional experts Site managers NGOs

Operational Objective 3	Assist with the development and/or strengthening and implementation of policy frameworks, taking into account wetlands management and conservation across sectors and at all levels		
Target <i>What has to be achieved?</i>	Activities <i>What has to be done?</i>	Indicators <i>Demonstrators of success</i>	Responsibility <i>Who will take the lead on delivery?</i>
3.1 All IBRRI countries have adopted an effective policy framework ensuring the wise use of all wetlands	3.1.1 Review the status of regional, national and local policies across the region and their inclusiveness of wetland wise use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, a review workshop for each IBRRI country, which identifies relevant policies and the role that the wise use of wetlands should be playing in such policies, has been conducted</li> <li>➤ By 2022, regional review workshop, with a workshop report, which identifies the status of the wise use of wetlands in local, national and regional polices, has been conducted</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities NGOs National and regional Government representatives
	3.1.2 Develop and disseminate best practice guidance on the development and implementation of an effective policy framework promoting and supporting wise use of wetlands policies through publications and policy forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2023, a guidance document in multiple languages, which provides advice to government at a range of levels on how best to integrate the wise use of wetlands within broader policy forums, has been produced</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities IBRRI STRP National experts NGOs
	3.1.3 Support the revisions and/or drafting of national and local policies in all five IBRRI countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2024, all IBRRI countries have policies specific or related to wetlands at local to national levels</li> </ul>	National Administrative Authorities National Governments NGOs
	3.1.4 Review the effectiveness of national policy implementation on the wise use of wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, a monitoring and evaluation framework for assessing the effectiveness of national policies to integrate the wise use of wetlands in all IBRRI countries has been developed</li> <li>➤ By 2024, a monitoring and evaluation framework in one pilot country (to assess effectiveness, and to report back to other countries) has been implemented</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities

3.2 The contribution of wetlands towards wider policy frameworks is recognised and reported	3.2.1 Develop and disseminate best practice guidance on how to assess the impact of wetlands on the delivery of wider policy frameworks, such as SDGs, Nationally Determined Contributions, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2020, regional guidelines on how to assess the impact of wetlands on wider policy frameworks have been developed and made available in multiple languages</li> <li>➤ By 2021, training of wetland managers on how to evaluate the impact of wetlands on wider policy frameworks has been organised and implemented</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities RRC-EA IBRRI STRP
	3.2.2 Produce and disseminate best practice examples of the contributions wetlands make to the implementation of wider policy frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2022, a publication which describes best practice examples of the contributions wetlands make to the implementation of wider policy frameworks, has been produced in both paper and electronic forms, and made available in multiple languages</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat IBRRI STRP National and regional experts

<b>Operational Objective 4</b>			
<b>Support wetland communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA)</b>			
<b>Target</b> <i>What has to be achieved?</i>	<b>Activities</b> <i>What has to be done?</i>	<b>Indicators</b> <i>Demonstrators of success</i>	<b>Responsibility</b> <i>Who will take the lead on delivery?</i>
4.1 An IBRRI-STRP CEPA Working Group is established	4.1.1 CEPA Working Group established by IBRRI Secretariat, with membership and Terms of Reference confirmed	➤ By 2019, the CEPA Working Group is operational	IBRRI-STRP IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities – CEPA Focal Points
4.2 The IBRRI has a coherent communications strategy	4.2.1 Develop a robust communications strategy that ensures synergies across the region are optimised	➤ By 2020, the IBRRI communications strategy has been agreed and a plan for implementation has been produced	IBRRI-STRP CEPA Working Group IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities Pan-regional bodies (MRC, MFF, ACB, etc.) RRC-EAEAAFP
	4.2.2 Utilise the communications strategy to raise the visibility of the Ramsar Convention and wetlands across the region	➤ By 2021, visibility of the Ramsar Convention and wetlands has increased in media reports, government communications and among civil society groups	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities NGOs
4.3 Each IBRRI country has a CEPA Action Plan	4.3.1 Using published Ramsar guidance, develop national CEPA Action Plans in the five IBRRI countries	➤ By 2020, CEPA action planning workshop has been conducted ➤ By 2024, five national CEPA Action Plans have been completed	IBRRI-STRP CEPA Working Group IBRRI Secretariat RRC-EA Ramsar Secretariat NGO CEPA focal points
	4.3.2 Draft, consult, publish and implement national CEPA action plans	➤ By 2024, national CEPA action plans are in the process of being implemented	National Administrative Authorities NGO CEPA focal points

4.4 The training needs of wetland managers are addressed	4.4.1 Assess the different types of training needs of wetland managers	➤ By 2020, IBRRI report on training needs assessment has been developed	IBRRI Secretariat RRC-EA
	4.4.2 Develop a coherent programme of targeted training and capacity building for wetland managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, the training programme commences implementation</li> <li>➤ By 2024, wetland managers have been trained, and webinars, published guidance and training materials have been completed</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat RRC-EA
	4.4.3 Develop 'train the trainer' programmes	➤ By 2022, a 'train the trainers' programme in order to build capacity across the network of wetland managers, has been develop	IBRRI Secretariat RRC-EA Wetland managers
	4.4.4 Develop bilateral training cooperation between Ramsar Sites	➤ By 2020, training exchanges have been undertaken	IBRRI Secretariat RRC-EA Wetland managers
4.5 Wetland training and education centres in IBRRI region linked	4.5.1 Develop networking mechanisms for information and experience sharing between wetland centres	➤ By 2020, information and experience sharing is being reported by wetland centres	IBRRI Secretariat Wetland managers Wetland centre managers
4.6 Private sector engaged in the wise use of wetlands	4.6.1 Seek partnerships with private sector organisations in order to encourage the wise use of wetlands	➤ By 2024, private sector partnership agreements have been established	IBRRI Secretariat Private sector National Administrative Authorities
	4.6.2 Develop guidance and awareness raising materials on the multiple benefits of wetlands for dissemination to the private sector	➤ By 2021, an IBRRI guidance report has been produced in multiple languages and disseminated to the private sector	IBRRI Secretariat NGOs
	4.6.3 Investigate, and where possible, develop private sector financing by demonstrating positive incentives	➤ By 2024, private sector financial support for the wise use of wetlands has been established in at least two IBRRI countries	IBRRI Secretariat Private sector

4.7 Synergies are optimised between Ramsar Regional Initiatives across the region	4.7.1 Actively and routinely engage and communicate with the two other Ramsar Regional Initiatives in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, information is being routinely shared and reported among the three Ramsar Regional Initiatives through electronic and paper-based media</li> <li>➤ By 2022, participation by RRI representatives in other RRI's meetings is established</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat NGO CEPA focal points RRC-EA EAAFP
	4.7.2 Actively and routinely engage and communicate with the pan-regional bodies present in the region including, but not limited to, UN bodies, MRC, MFF and ACB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, IBRRI has been represented in at least three meetings with other pan-regional bodies</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat NGO CEPA focal points
4.8 Participate in side events to promote and celebrate IBRRI achievements at Ramsar COPs	4.8.1 Deliver side events at COP14 and COP15 to highlight the successes of the Regional Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By 2021, a COP side event in order to promote the achievements of the IBRRI has been organised and delivered</li> <li>➤ By 2024, a COP side event to demonstrate the effectiveness of the IBRRI, has been organised and delivered</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities NGO CEPA focal points
4.9 The state of the wetlands in Indo-Burma report (Target 1.1.5) disseminated to decision-makers and media	4.9.1 Dissemination and promotion of the IBRWO and its key messages to regional, national and local decision-makers, and media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ By COP15, the key messages for policy makers from the IBRWO have been disseminated in multiple languages</li> <li>➤ By COP15, the key outcomes of the IBRWO have been disseminated to the media in all five CPs and beyond</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities NGO CEPA focal points IBRRI-STRP (CEPA Working Group)

<b>Operational Objective 5</b>	<b>Ensure sound and sustainable governance and management of the Regional Initiative and its contribution to the effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention</b>		
<b>Target</b> <i>What has to be achieved?</i>	<b>Activities</b> <i>What has to be done?</i>	<b>Indicators</b> <i>Demonstrators of success</i>	<b>Responsibility</b> <i>Who will take the lead on delivery?</i>
5.1 The key governance bodies (Steering Committee and Technical Committee) are functioning	5.1.1 Establish an overarching institutional strategy	➤ In 2019, an agreed institutional strategy for the governance of IBRRI has been produced in multiple languages	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities
	5.1.2 Establish Terms of Reference for a functional Steering Committee	➤ In 2019, the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee have been produced and agreed	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities
	5.1.3 Establish a functional Steering Committee	➤ By 2019, regular meetings of the Steering Committee are being conducted at an agreed frequency, and Committee reports are being produced and disseminated	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities
	5.1.4 Establish Terms of Reference for a functional Technical Committee	➤ In 2019, the Terms of Reference for the Technical Committee have been produced and agreed	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities IBRRI STRP
	5.1.5 Establish a functional Technical Committee	➤ By 2019, regular meetings of the Technical Committee are being conducted at an agreed frequency, and Committee reports are being produced and disseminated	IBRRI Secretariat National Administrative Authorities IBRRI STRP
5.2 IBRRI governance is embedded in national mechanisms	5.2.1 Encourage national governments to formally embed IBRRI responsibilities within national mechanisms (such as in National Wetland Committees)	➤ By 2020, IBRRI is represented in National governance bodies related to the wise use of wetlands and use of wetland natural resources ➤ By 2020, IBRRI governments have a communication IBRRI focal point tasked with promoting the IBRRI at the national level	National Administrative Authorities

5.3 The IBRRI Secretariat is functioning, well-staffed and resourced	5.3.1 Establish a fully funded mechanism and <i>modus operandi</i> for the IBRRI Secretariat	➤ By 2024, full time Secretariat staff are in place and funded through an established long term multi-funding resource strategy	National Administrative Authorities IBRRI Secretariat
5.4 IBRRI engages in dialogues with other neighboring countries of relevance	5.4.1 Ensure regular communication with NFPs and stakeholders of China and India	➤ By 2021, at least one joint meeting has been conducted with wetland managers from IBRRI, China and India ➤ By 2024, information, reports and guidance produced by IBRRI have been disseminated to appropriate authorities and wetland managers in China and India	Wetland Managers IBRRI Secretariat
5.5 Sustainable funding is established	5.5.1 Develop a six-year budget forecast	➤ By 2019, a clear budget forecast for the period up until 2024 has been produced	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee
	5.5.2 Develop annual budgets based on the six-year budget	➤ Annual budgets are produced and disseminated	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee
	5.5.3 Develop a fundraising strategy that seeks to optimise synergies across the region	➤ By 2024, at least three proposals have been submitted by IBRRI Secretariat after approval from the countries ➤ By 2024, sustainable financing mechanism has been developed and secured	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee RRC-EA EAAFP
5.6 Memoranda of Cooperation are established with key organisations	5.6.1 Draft, review and endorse a Memorandum of Cooperation with RRC-EA	➤ By 2020, a Memorandum of Cooperation has been signed between IBRRI and RRC-EA	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee RRC-EA
	5.6.2 Draft, review and endorse a memorandum of cooperation with the EAAFP	➤ By 2020, a Memorandum of Cooperation has been signed between IBRRI and EAAFP	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee EAAFP
	5.6.3 IBRRI Secretariat, on behalf of IBRRI, to draft, review and endorse a Memorandum of Cooperation with other regional initiatives including, <i>inter alia</i> , MRC and ACB	➤ By 2024, Memoranda of Cooperation have been agreed and signed with key regional partners	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee

5.7 The IBRRI is achieving its objectives	5.7.1 Develop a clear monitoring and evaluation framework (quantitative and qualitative) that includes activities-based indicators and interviews with key stakeholders (e.g. including the most significant changes approach)	➤ By 2020, a clear monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee
	5.7.2 Conduct a midterm review of progress against the Operational Objectives	➤ In 2021, a review using the monitoring and evaluation framework has been conducted to assess the progress of IBRRI	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee
	5.7.3 Conduct a review of progress against the Operational Objectives in 2024	➤ In 2024, a review using the monitoring and evaluation framework has been conducted to assess progress of IBRRI	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee
	5.7.4 Develop a new Strategic Plan for beyond 2024	➤ In 2022, the review, planning and drafting of the programme for the development of the IBRRI Strategic Plan beyond 2024, has commenced	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee
5.8 Shape the Ramsar Convention	5.8.1 Share experiences and lessons learnt by IBRRI with other Ramsar Regional Initiatives	➤ By 2024, a global Ramsar Regional Initiative symposium has been organised to share knowledge	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee Ramsar Secretariat Other RRI's
	5.8.2 Influence the Ramsar Convention through activities at COPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ In 2021, at COP14 at least one side event has been organised to share knowledge and experience gained by IBRRI</li> <li>➤ In 2021, at COP14, a draft resolution on a key subject relevant to the Indo-Burma Region and wider wetland management issues has been submitted</li> </ul>	IBRRI Secretariat Steering Committee Ramsar Secretariat National Administrative Authorities

# 3 ANNEXES



## Annex 1: IBRRI Contracting Party implementation analyses

### Introduction

1. The five Ramsar Contracting Parties covered by the geographical scope of the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI) are Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam.
2. This situation analysis of the extent of Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan implementation by the five Contracting Parties covered by the geographical scope of the IBRRI is derived primarily from Contracting Parties (CPs) NRs to COP12, which were compiled and submitted by Parties mostly during 2015. All five IBRRI CPs submitted COP12 NRs.
3. COP11 NRs are also available for all IBRRI CPs, and these are used to assess progress in implementation extent between COP11 and COP12 reporting.
4. The analyses of COP11 and COP12 NRs use 74 selected NR indicator questions, which apply to all CPs.
5. The Strategic Plan Goals and actions in most parts of this situation analysis are those of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009–2015, since the implementation reported by Parties in their COP12 NRs concern implementation of this Strategic Plan.

6. COP13 NRs submitted by all five IBRRI Contracting Parties became available late in the timeline of preparing this analysis, but it has been possible to include some limited further analysis of these in relation to the COP12 NRs. This includes a) implementation extent, under the four new Goals of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2021; and b) the main difficulties in implementation, and future priorities for implementation, reported by IBRRI CPs. Note that only 68 the 74 COP12 indicator questions were included in the NR format for COP13, so the results from the COP13 NR analyses are not directly comparable with those from previous NRs.

7. The following questions have been considered in the analyses:

Q1. What is the extent of Ramsar implementation by Asian CPs compared to global implementation?

Q2. What is the extent of Ramsar implementation by IBRRI CPs compared to other Asian CPs?

Q3. Has there been progress in Ramsar implementation by IBRRI CPs from COP11 to COP12, and from COP12 to COP13?

Q4. What is the extent of Ramsar implementation by different Asian and IBRRI Contracting Parties?

A. Strategic Plan Goals 1–4 – all Asia CPs

B. Strategic Plan Goals 1–4 overall – IBRRI CPs

C. Strategic Plan Goal 1 Wise Use – IBRRI CPs

D. Strategic Plan Goal 2 Ramsar Sites – IBRRI CPs

E. Strategic Plan Goal 3 International Cooperation – IBRRI CPs

F. Strategic Plan Goal 4 Implementation Capacity – IBRRI CPs

G. Which Contracting Parties in the IBRRI are implementing  $\leq 50\%$  of implementation actions under one or more Strategic Plan Goals?

Q5. What is the extent of IBRRI CPs implementation of Strategic Plan individual actions, by each SP Goal?

A. Strategic Plan Goal 1: Wise Use

B. Strategic Plan Goal 2: Ramsar Sites

C. Strategic Plan Goal 3: International Cooperation

D. Strategic Plan Goal 4: Implementation Capacity

E. Strategic Plan Goals 1–4: Combined assessment

Q6. What are the main difficulties in implementing the Ramsar Convention reported by IBRRI Contracting Parties?

Q7. What are IBRRI Contracting Parties' future priorities for implementation?

**Q1. What is the extent of Ramsar implementation by Asian Contracting Parties compared to global implementation extent?**

8. COP12 NRs. Goals 1–4 combined, and by each Goal (average % implementation):

COP12 (2015) NRs	Average % implementation	
	Global CPs (148)	Asia Region CPs (28)
<b>SP Goals 1–4</b>	<b>51.08</b>	<b>51.09</b>
SP Goal 1: Wise use	53.42	53.38
SP Goal 2: Ramsar Sites	53.94	56.79
SP Goal 3: International cooperation	50.19	47.81
SP Goal 4: Implementation capacity	46.87	49.66

- The average extent of Ramsar implementation by Contracting Parties in the Asia region is very similar to global average implementation, both overall and for each of the four implementation Goals.
- In Asia there is slightly more, on average, implementation for Ramsar Sites and for Implementation capacity actions, and slightly less for International cooperation actions, than globally.

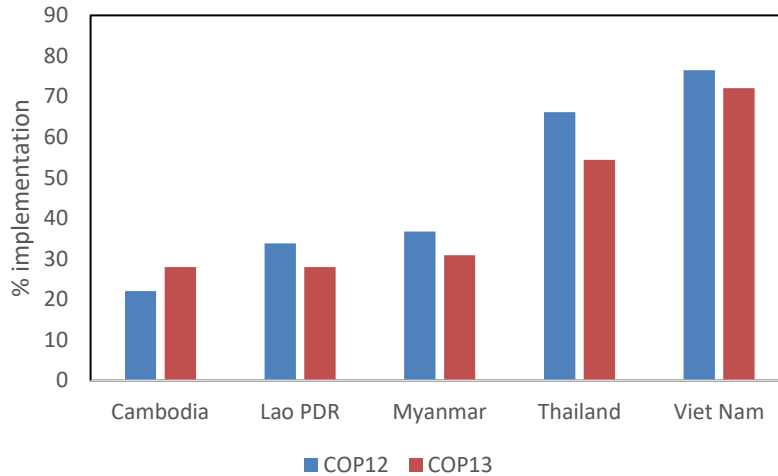
**Q2. What is the extent of Ramsar implementation by IBRRI CPs compared to other Asian CPs?**

COP12 (2015) NRs	Average % implementation	
	Asia Region CPs (28)	Indo-Burma CPs (5)
<b>SP Goals 1–4</b>	<b>51.09</b>	<b>51.35</b>
SP Goal 1: Wise use	53.38	46.12
SP Goal 2: Ramsar Sites	56.79	60.00
SP Goal 3: International cooperation	47.81	52.73
SP Goal 4: Implementation capacity	49.66	52.73

- Average % implementation by IBRRI Contracting Parties is similar to the average for all Asia CPs;
- Average IBRRI CP implementation is higher than average for SP Goals 2 (Ramsar Sites), 3 (International cooperation), and 4 (Implementation capacity); but
- Average IBRRI CP implementation is lower than average for SP Goal 1 (Wise use);
- However, average % implementation is not a particularly helpful indicator for IBRRI CPs since there is a big range of implementation extent reported across these five Contracting Parties (see below).

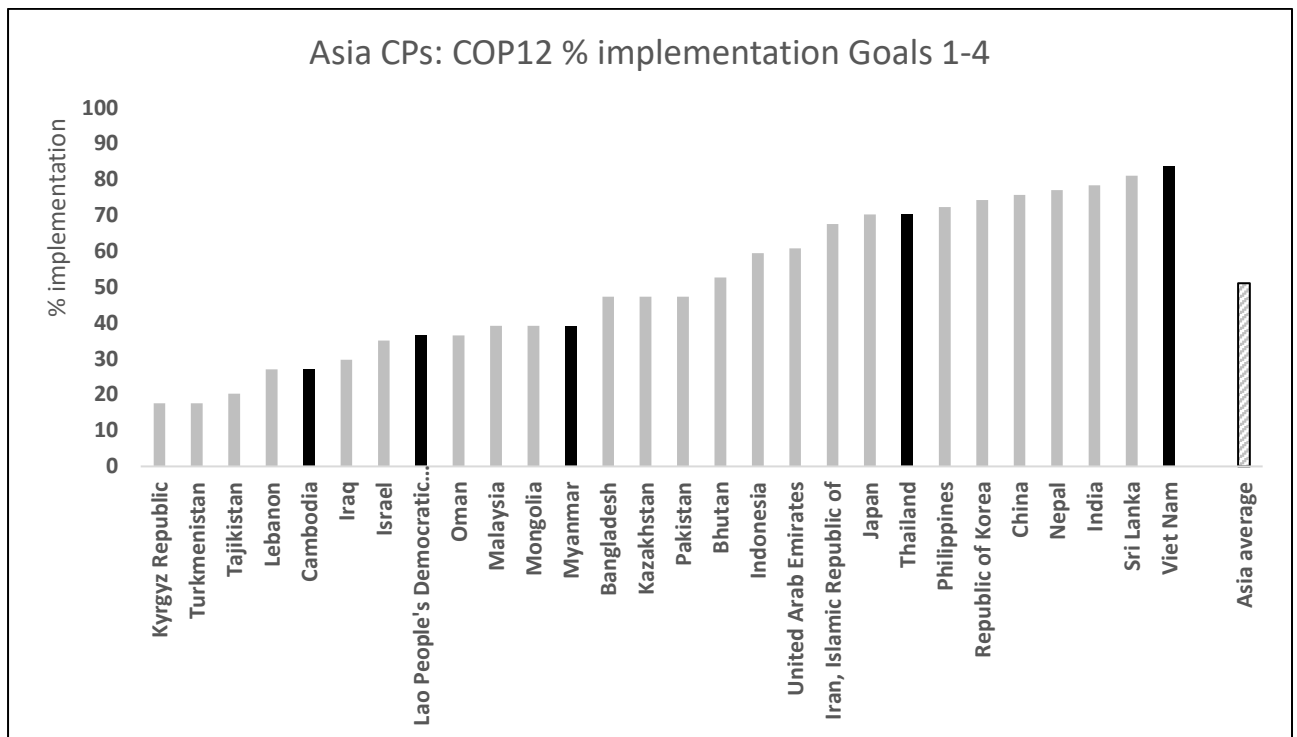
**Q3. Has there been progress in Ramsar implementation by IBRRI CPs from COP11 to COP12, and from COP12 to COP13?**

9. It is encouraging that comparison between the extent of Ramsar implementation reported to COP11 (2012) and COP12 (2015) indicates that four IBRRI CPs reported increased implementation extent to COP12: Thailand (+21%), Viet Nam (+18%), Myanmar (+11%), and Lao PDR (+10%).
10. However, it is a concern that Cambodia reported much less implementation (-27%) to COP12 compared to COP11. Cambodia reported less implementation under each of the four Strategic Plan Goals. In addition, Myanmar reported less Wise Use (Goal 1) implementation. The reasons underlying this reported reduced implementation capacity are not clear and would benefit from further investigation.
11. For assessment of changes in the extent of implementation between COP12 and COP13, the analyses are presented for the 68 NR indicators common to the two sets of reports, presented under the four Goals of the Strategic Plan 2016–2021:
  - Goal 1: Addressing the drivers of wetland loss and degradation
  - Goal 2: Effectively conserving and managing the Ramsar Site network
  - Goal 3: Wisely using all wetlands
  - Goal 4: Enhancing implementation
12. In contrast to implementation extent changes between COP11 and COP12, for implementation extent reported to COP13 four IBRRI Parties reported reduced implementation: Lao PDR (-17%), Myanmar (-16%), Thailand (-18%) and Viet Nam (-6%). However, encouragingly the IBRRI Party with the lowest COP12 implementation extent, Cambodia, reported a 27% increase in implementation to COP13.
13. It is of particular concern that all five IBRRI Parties reported to COP13 a reduction in implementation of Strategic Plan Goal 4 (Enhancing implementation), suggesting within-country implementation capacity may be decreasing. This would warrant further investigation.



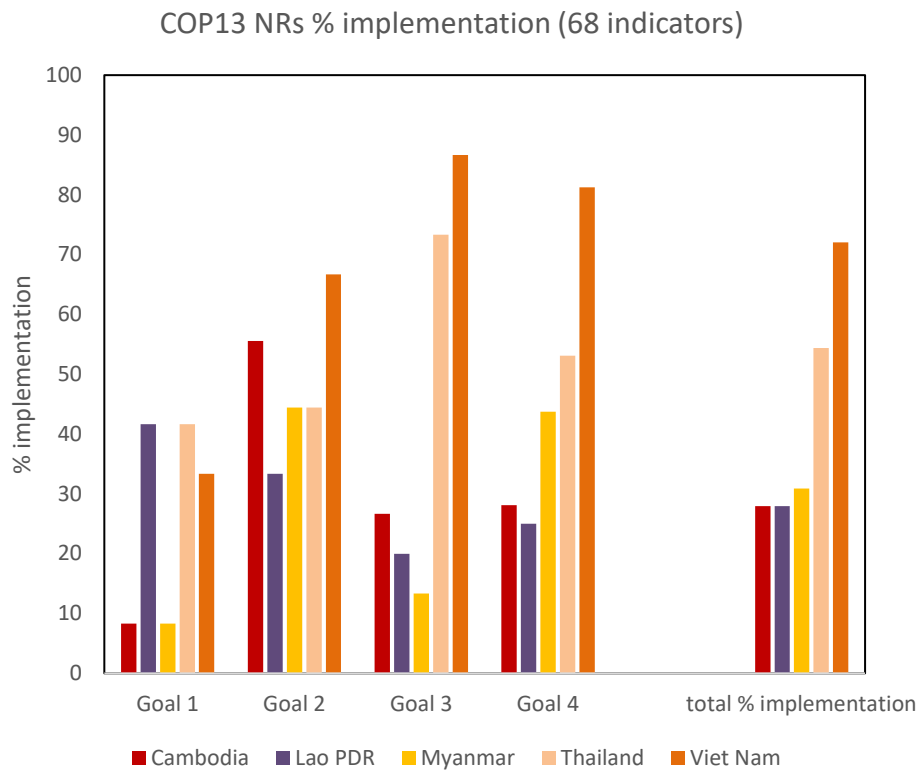
**Q4. What is the extent of Ramsar implementation by different Asian and IBRRI Contracting Parties?**

**A. Strategic Plan Goals 1-4 –Asia and IBRRI CPs**

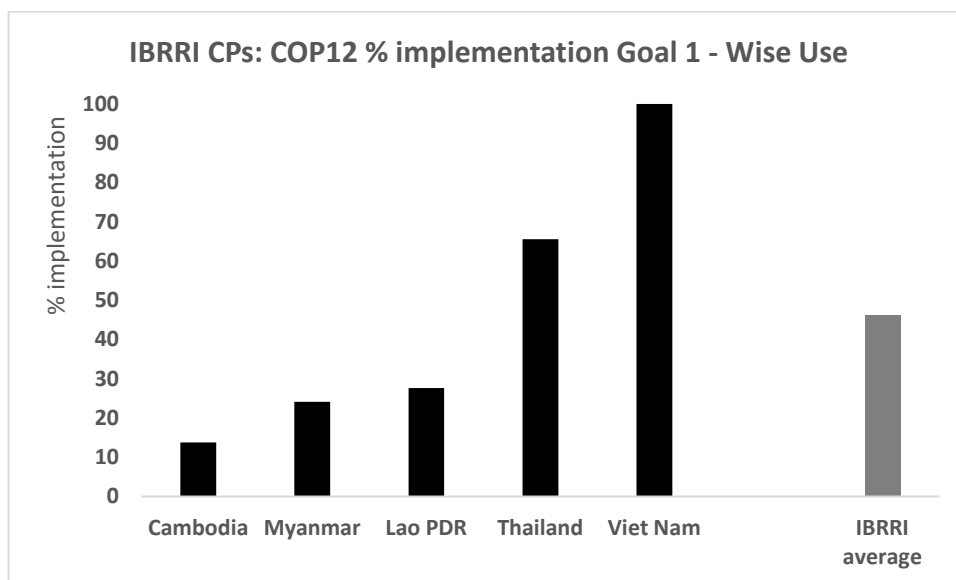


14. The overall extent of Strategic Plan implementation differs greatly across all Asia CPs, and between the five Indo-Burma CPs. Viet Nam reported the highest implementation extent (84%) of any Asia CP, with Thailand also reporting extensive implementation (70%). In contrast, Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia each reported to COP12 less than 40% implementation, well below the regional average of 51%, with Cambodia reporting the least implementation (27%).

15. The relative implementation extent reported to COP13 across IBRRI Parties is similar to that reported to COP12, with Cambodia and Lao PDR reporting least implementation (<30%) and Viet Nam reporting most implementation (72%):



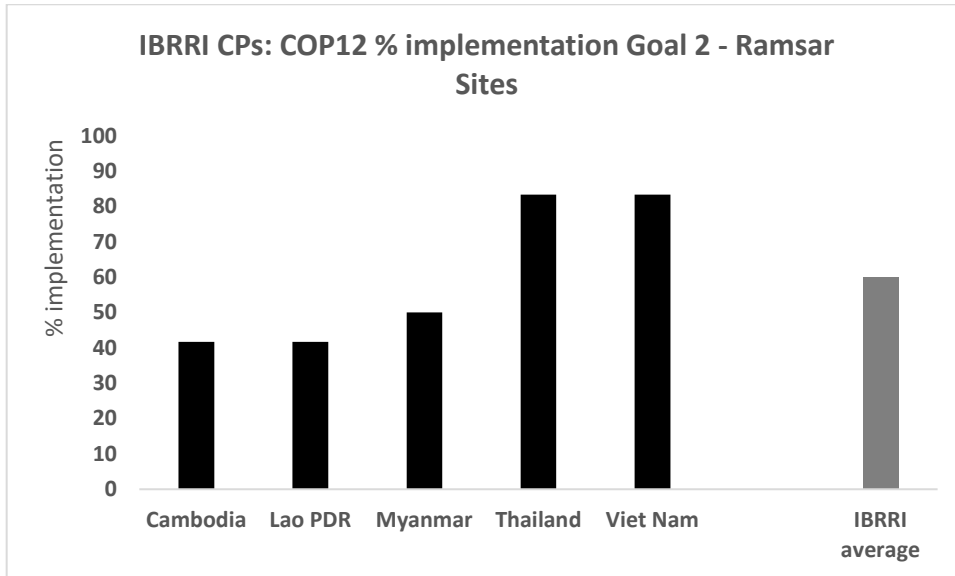
**B. Strategic Plan Goal 1 Wise Use – IBRRI CPs**



16. The extent of Ramsar Goal 1 (Wise use) implementation varies greatly between different IBRRI CPs, with Viet Nam reporting 100% implementation of SP actions under this Goal, and Thailand reporting 66% implementation. However, much less (<30%) Wise use

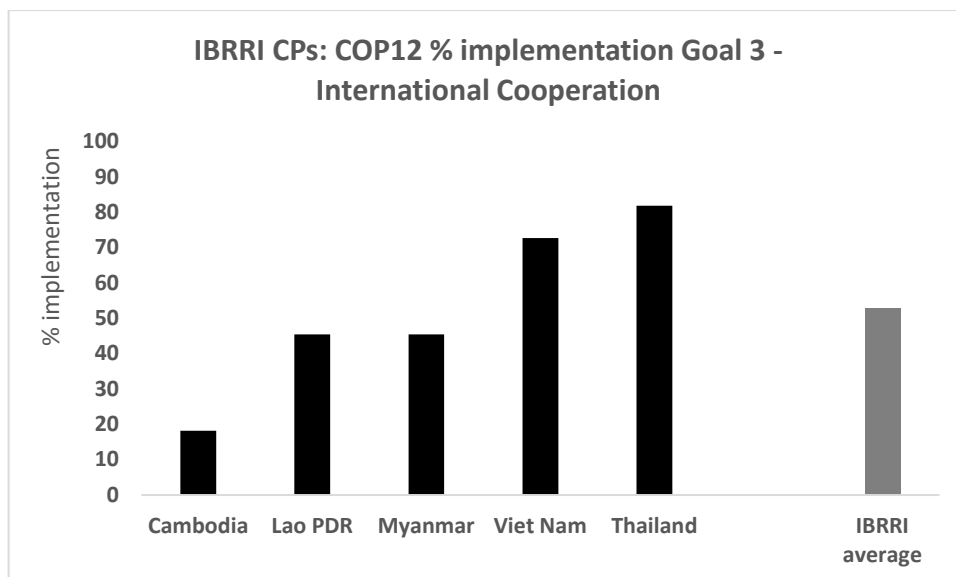
implementation is reported by Lao PDR, Myanmar and Cambodia, with Cambodia (14%) having undertaken very little such implementation.

C. Strategic Plan Goal 2 Ramsar Sites – IBRRI CPs



17. As for Goal 1 implementation, there is a difference between two IBRRI CPs with extensive Ramsar Sites (Goal 2) implementation – Viet Nam and Thailand each reporting 83% implementation – and the other three IBRRI CPs (Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia) each reporting 50% or less implementation.

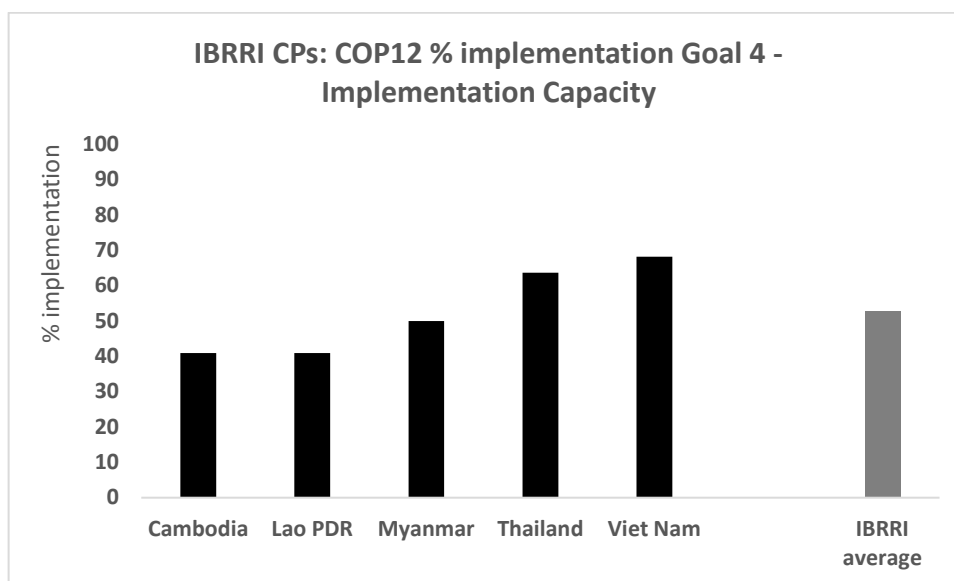
D. Strategic Plan Goal 3 International Cooperation – IBRRI CPs



18. Average IBRRI Goal 3 (International cooperation) implementation reported to COP12 was 53%, with Thailand (82%) and Viet Nam (73%) reporting more extensive

implementation, Lao PDR and Myanmar reporting less (45%) implementation, and Cambodia (18%) reporting the least implementation amongst IBRRI CPs.

E. Strategic Plan Goal 4 Implementation Capacity – IBRRI CPs



19. Implementation capacity (SP Goal 4) is reported as relatively limited across the IBRRI, with Viet Nam reporting 68% and Thailand 64% most implementation, and Myanmar 50% implementation, and with least implementation capacity reported by Cambodia and Lao PDR (each 41%).

F. Which Contracting Parties in the IBRRI are implementing  $\leq 50\%$  of implementation actions under one or more Strategic Plan Goals? (“overall” = Goals 1–4 combined)

IBRRI Contracting Party	COP12: Goal(s) with $\leq 50\%$ implementation of actions
Cambodia	1; 2; 3; 4; overall
Lao PDR	1; 2; 3; 4; overall
Myanmar	1; 2; 3; overall

20. Two Parties (Cambodia and Lao PDR) have implemented less than half the Strategic Plan actions overall and under each of the four Goals, with Myanmar implementing less than half of SP action overall and under Goals 1–3. In contrast, Viet Nam and Thailand are implementing  $>50\%$  of actions under all SP Goals.

21. In summary, least Strategic Plan implementation is being enacted under all SP Goals by Cambodia (14–42%) and Lao PDR (28–46%). These Parties might be identified as potential priorities for future IBRRI support for overall Strategic Plan implementation. A particular focus might be on enhancing Wise use (Goal 1) implementation capacity in Cambodia.

22. Myanmar also reported to COP12 relatively little Strategic Plan implementation (24–50%). However, since that reporting the implementation of the Norway-Myanmar

protected areas and wetland wise use project has been specifically designed to support increased Ramsar implementation.

23. IBRRI might consider focussing attention to implementation capacity particularly to:

- Indo-Burma Parties, and particularly Cambodia (27.0%) and Lao PDR (36.5%), which have the lowest extent of implementation of any RRC-EA parties.
- Strengthening Wise use implementation capacity, which is particularly low among the IBRRI CPs(average 46.1%); and
- Implementation support to Cambodia focussed on Wise use (13.8% implementation) and International cooperation (18.2%); and implementation capacity support to Lao PDR focussed on Wise use (27.6% implementation) and Implementation capacity (36.5%) actions.

#### Q5. What is the extent of RRC-EA CPs implementation of Strategic Plan individual actions, by each SP Goal?

24. The analysis is presented in tabular format for each Strategic Plan Goal separately, and consolidated for Goals 1–4. The status of implementation of each action is colour-coded: *green: Yes; Red: No; Orange: partly/in progress; Yellow: Planned; White: Not applicable/no answer*. The focus of this analysis is on the numbers of IBRRI Contracting Parties answering “NO or Planned” for each action.
25. Note that for Myanmar a number of key actions coded “No” or “Planned” are now in progress or completed through the Norway-Myanmar protected areas and wise use project.

A. Strategic Plan Goal 1: Wise Use

Goal 1 Wise Use	1.1.1 comprehensive national wetland inventory
	1.3.1 National Wetland Policy
	1.3.2a Wetland issues incorporated into: poverty eradication strategies
	1.3.2b Wetland issues incorporated into: water resource management plans
	1.3.2d Wetland issues incorporated into: national forest programmes
	1.3.2e Wetland issues incorporated into: national sustainable development strategies
	1.3.2f Wetland issues incorporated into: national agriculture policies/measures
	1.3.2g Wetland issues incorporated into: CBD NBSAPs
	1.3.3 SEA practices applied for wetlands
	1.3.4 EIAs for developments affecting wetlands
	1.3.5 Legislative amendments for Ramsar commitments
	1.4.1 Ecosystem services assessment for Ramsar Sites
	1.6.1a Research to inform wetland policies/plans on: agriculture/wetland interactions
	1.6.1b Research to inform wetland policies/plans on: climate change
	1.6.1c Research to inform wetland policies/plans on: ecosystem service valuation
	1.6.2 All wetland management plans based on sound scientific research
	1.7.1 Water governance/management systems treat wetlands as natural water infrastructure integral to water resource management
	1.7.2 Wetland CEPA expertise/tools have been incorporated into catchment/river basin planning and management
	1.7.3 Policies/guidelines for enhancing the role of wetlands in mitigating/adapting to climate change
	1.7.4 Plans/projects to sustain and enhance wetlands in supporting/maintaining viable farming systems
	1.8.1 Priority sites for wetland restoration have been identified
	1.8.2 Wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes or projects implemented
	1.9.1 Comprehensive national inventory of invasive alien species currently/potentially impacting ecological character of wetlands
	1.9.2 National policies/guidelines on invasive species control and management established for wetlands
	1.10.1 Private sector encouraged to apply Ramsar wise use principle and guidance in its activities and investments concerning wetlands
	1.10.2a Private sector undertaken activities or actions for the wise use and management of: Ramsar Sites
	1.10.2b Private sector undertaken activities or actions for the wise use and management of: wetlands in general
	1.11.1 Actions to implement incentive measures which encourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands
	1.11.2 Actions to remove perverse incentive measures which discourage conservation and wise use of wetlands
Cambodia	

Lao PDR	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Red	Red	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Green	Green	Orange	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Orange	Red	Red	Red	Red	
Myanmar	Green	Red	Orange	Yellow	Green	Green	Orange	Green	White	Green	Orange	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Red	White
Thailand	Green	Green	Orange	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange	Green	Orange	Orange	Red	Orange	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Viet Nam	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
No. of "NO" + "Planned"	1	3 [2 *]	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	3	1	1	0	3	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	0	3	3	3	3

Shaded numbers indicate the least widely implemented actions ( $\geq 4$  RRC-EA CPs answering "No" or "Planned")

YES	Partly/in progress	Planned	NO	No answer/ not applicable
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<b>Least widely implemented Goal 1 actions (3 IBRRI CPs "No/Planned")</b>	<b>IBRRI CPs reporting "No" or "Planned"</b>
1.3.1 National Wetland Policy	Cambodia, Lao PDR, [Myanmar*]
1.6.1a Research to inform wetland policies/plans on: agriculture/wetland interactions	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar
1.7.1 Water governance/management systems treat wetlands as natural water infrastructure integral to water resource management	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar
1.8.2 Wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes or projects implemented	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand
1.10.2a Private sector undertaken activities or actions for the wise use and management of: Ramsar Sites	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar
1.10.2b Private sector undertaken activities or actions for the wise use and management of: wetlands in general	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar
1.11.1 Actions to implement incentive measures which encourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar
1.11.2 Actions to remove perverse incentive measures which discourage conservation and wise use of wetlands	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand
1.1.1 Comprehensive national wetland inventory**	Cambodia

\* This action is now in progress in Myanmar, with a National Wetland Policy being adopted in 2018, through the current Norway-Myanmar wetland protected areas and wise use project.

\*\* National wetland inventory is included here since, although only Cambodia reported that it does not have such a comprehensive inventory in place it is believed that some national wetland inventories are not fully comprehensive in the coverage of all wetlands and/or all wetland types (inland, coastal and human-made) covered by Ramsar. A comprehensive national wetland inventory is in progress for Myanmar, through the current Norway-Myanmar wetland protected areas and wise use project. It is recommended that a more in-depth review of the extent of national inventory in each IBRRI country be undertaken to clarify the situation.

26. Six aspects of Goal 1 (Wise use) implementation have limited execution in IBRRI countries, so that capacity building programmes supported through IBRRI (particularly for Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar) on these issues could have the most widespread benefits. These concern:

- i. National Wetland Policy;
- ii. Research on agriculture/wetlands interactions;
- iii. Wetlands treated as natural water infrastructure in water resource management;
- iv. Wetland restoration;
- v. Private sector engagement; and
- vi. Incentive measures (positive and perverse).

## B. Strategic Plan Goal 2: Ramsar Sites

### 27. General information on Ramsar Sites implementation actions:

Goal 2 Ramsar Sites	2.1.1. National strategy/priorities for future Ramsar Site designation	2.2.1. RSIS used for identifying future Ramsar Site designations	2.3.1. Management planning processes for future Ramsar Site designations	2.5.1. Management effectiveness assessments for Ramsar Sites	2.6.1. Article 3.2 (negative ecological change) reporting mechanisms in place	2.6.2. All Article 3.2 cases reported to Secretariat	2.7.1. Ecological character maintained for other internationally important wetlands (not yet Ramsar designated)
Cambodia	Partly/in progress	Planned	NO	NO	Partly/in progress	NO	Planned
Lao PDR	NO	NO	NO	NO	Planned	NO	NO
Myanmar	*	Planned	NO	Planned	Partly/in progress	NO	Planned
Thailand	Planned	Planned	Planned	NO	Planned	Partly/in progress	Planned
Viet Nam	Planned	Planned	NO	Planned	Planned	Planned	Planned
No. of NO + Planned	2 [1]	1	3	3	1	3	1

Shaded numbers indicate the least widely implemented actions ( $\geq 4$  RRC-EA CPs answering “No” or “Planned”)

YES	Partly/in progress	Planned	NO	No answer/ not applicable
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\* Myanmar is currently developing a national strategy and priorities for future Ramsar Site designation, through the current Norway-Myanmar wetland protected areas and wise use project.

28. *Management planning for designated Ramsar Sites.* The NR format questions on Ramsar Site management planning actions ask for the number of Ramsar Sites for which each action has been undertaken, rather than the coded (Yes: No; In progress etc.) answers as for most other NR questions. Hence these indicator questions are analysed separately here, and are coded relative to the total number of Ramsar Sites designated by each IBRRI Contracting Party.

No./proportion of Ramsar Sites	2.4.1. Management plan in place	2.4.1 + 2.4.3 Management plan in place or in preparation	2.4.2. Management plan being implemented	2.4.4. Cross-sectoral management committee	2.4.5. Ecological character description	No. of Ramsar Sites (2014)
Cambodia	0	1	0	2	3	4
Lao PDR	1	1	1	2	1	2
Myanmar	0	1	0	1	1	1*
Thailand	9	9	5	6	0	14
Viet Nam	6	12	6	0	6	8
No. None + Some	2	1	2	3	1	

All	Most (>50%)	Some (<50%)	None	No answer/ not applicable
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\* Since its COP12 reporting in 2014 Myanmar has designated a further three Ramsar Sites.

29. Designation of Ramsar Sites: note that implementation scores for the management of designated Ramsar Sites are coded relative to the total number of Sites designated by each Contracting Party, such that a Party with only one Site can score the same as a Party with many Sites, if management planning actions are being undertaken for all designated Sites in each Party.

30. Four aspects of Goal 2 (Ramsar Sites) implementation have limited execution in IBRRI countries, so that capacity building programmes supported through IBRRI on these issues could have the most widespread benefits. These concern:

Least widely implemented Goal 2 actions (3 IBRRI CPs "No/Planned")	IBRRI CPs reporting "No" or "Planned"
2.3.1. Management planning processes for future Ramsar Site designations	Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam
2.5.1. Management effectiveness assessments for Ramsar Sites	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand
2.6.2. All Article 3.2 cases reported to Secretariat	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar
2.4.4. Cross-sectoral management committees	Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam

31. Concerning Ramsar Site designations, consideration should be given to the potential for IBRRI to provide future capacity building support for Ramsar Site identification and

designation processes to those CPs with the smallest numbers of currently designated Sites, notably: Lao PDR, Cambodia and Myanmar.

### C. Strategic Plan Goal 3: International Cooperation

<b>Goal 3 International cooperation</b>	3.1.1. Other MEAs' NFPs invited to participate in the National Ramsar/Wetland Committee	3.1.2. Mechanisms for collaboration between Ramsar AA & FPs of UN and other global and regional bodies/agencies	3.2.1. Involvement in development/implementation of a Ramsar Regional Initiative	3.2.2. Support/participation in development of other regional wetland training and research centres	3.3.3. Has funding support been received from development assistance agencies wetland conservation and management	3.4.1. Networks, including twinning arrangements, established for knowledge sharing and training for wetlands	3.4.2. Information about wetlands and/or Ramsar Sites and their status made public	3.4.3. Information about wetlands and/or Ramsar Sites transmitted to Ramsar Secretariat for dissemination	3.5.1. All transboundary wetland systems identified	3.5.2. Effective cooperative management in place for shared wetland systems	3.5.3. Participate in regional networks/initiatives for wetland-dependent migratory species
Cambodia	Partly/in progress	No	Partly/in progress	No	No	No	No	Partly/in progress	No	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress
Lao PDR	No	No	No	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress	No	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress	No	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress
Myanmar	No	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress	No	No	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress	No		Planned
Thailand	Partly/in progress				Partly/in progress	No				Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress
Viet Nam	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress	No	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress	Partly/in progress			Partly/in progress
No. "No" + "Planned"	2	2	1	2	2	4	1	0	3	0	1

Shaded numbers indicate the least widely implemented actions ( $\geq 3$  IBRRI CPs answering "No" or "Planned")

YES	Partly/in progress	Planned	NO	No answer/ not applicable
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32. Two aspects of Goal 3 (International cooperation) implementation have limited realisation in IBRRI countries, so that capacity-building programmes supported through IBRRI on these issues could have the most widespread benefits. These concern:

Least widely implemented Goal 3 actions ( $\geq 3$ IBRRI CPs "No/Planned")	IBRRI CPs reporting "No" or "Planned"
3.4.1. Networks, including twinning arrangements, established for knowledge sharing and training for wetlands	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar*, Thailand
3.5.1. All transboundary wetland systems identified	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar

\* During 2017/18 a knowledge-sharing mechanism for wetland managers between Thailand and Myanmar has been established.

#### D. Strategic Plan Goal 4: Implementation Capacity

33. Some Strategic Plan implementation actions under Goal 4 are not relevant to potential future support through IBRRI, for example those concerning payment of annual membership dues. Only those implementation actions relevant to potential IBRRI support are included in the analysis below

Goal 4 Implementation capacity	4.1.1.a An action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA established: national level	4.1.1.b An action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA established: sub-national level	4.1.1.c an action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA established: catchment/basin level	4.1.1.d an action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA established: local/site level	4.1.2.a How many centres (visitor centres, interpretation centres, education centres) have been established: at Ramsar Sites*	4.1.2.b Centres (visitor centres, interpretation centres, education centres) have been established: at other wetlands*	4.1.3.a Promotion of stakeholder participation in decision-making on wetland planning and management	4.1.3.b Involvement of local stakeholders in the selection of new Ramsar Sites and in Ramsar Site management	4.1.4 Assessment of national and local training needs for the implementation of the Convention	4.1.5.a Opportunities for wetland site manager training provided since COP11: at Ramsar Sites**	4.1.5.b Opportunities for wetland site manager training provided since COP11: at other wetlands**	4.1.6 An operational cross-sectoral National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee or equivalent body	4.1.7.a Other communication mechanisms (apart from a national committee) in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Administrative Authority and: Ramsar Site managers	4.1.7.b Other communication mechanisms (apart from a national committee) in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Administrative Authority and: other MEA national focal points	4.1.7.c Other communication mechanisms (apart from a national committee) in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Administrative Authority and: other ministries, departments and agencies	4.1.8 Ramsar-branded World Wetlands Day activities carried out in the country since COP11	4.1.9 Other campaigns, programmes, and projects carried out since COP11 to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands to people and wildlife and the ecosystem benefits/services provided by wetlands	4.4.1 Receipt of assistance from one or more of the Convention's IOPs for implementation of the Convention	4.4.2 Provision of assistance to one or more of the Convention's IOPs
Cambodia																			
Lao PDR																			
Myanmar												**							
Thailand																			
Viet Nam																			
No. "No" + "Planned"	3	4	3	1	2	2	0	0	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	0	0	1	2

YES	Partly/in progress	Planned	NO	No answer/ not applicable
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\*4.1.2a and b ask for numbers of sites; and 4.1.5a and b for numbers of training opportunities. Coded: some = Yes; none = No

\*\* Myanmar established a National Wetland Committee in 2016.

34. Five aspects of Goal 4 (Implementation capacity) implementation have limited execution in IBRRI countries, so that capacity-building programmes supported through IBRRI on these issues could have the most widespread benefits. These concern:

Least widely implemented Goal 3 actions (≥3 IBRRI CPs "No/Planned")	IBRRI CPs reporting "No" or "Planned"
4.1.1.a An action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA established: national level	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar
4.1.1.b An action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA established: sub-national level	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand
4.1.1.c An action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA established: catchment/basin level	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar
4.1.4 Assessment of national and local training needs for the implementation of the Convention	Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam
4.1.7.a Other communication mechanisms (apart from a national committee) in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Administrative Authority and: Ramsar Site managers	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar

#### E. Strategic Plan Goals 1–4: Combined assessment

35. The above Goal-by-Goal analyses identify 20 actions as potential high priorities for consideration by IBRRI for future Ramsar implementation support to Contracting Parties, since attention to these actions would deliver most widespread capacity support to IBRRI CPs.

36. By Strategic Plan Goal, there are: Goal 1 - nine actions; Goal 2 - four actions; Goal 3 - two actions; and Goal 4 - five actions.

37. In summary, these 20 actions cover:

- Establishing a National Wetland Policy [1.3.1]
- Undertaking research on agriculture/wetland interactions [1.6.1.a]
- Ensuring water resource management treats wetlands as natural water infrastructure [1.7.1]
- Implementing wetland restoration programmes/projects [1.8.2]
- Encouraging private sector activities/actions for wise use: Ramsar Sites and all wetlands [1.10.2a&b]
- Incentive measures: actions to implement positive incentives, and removal of perverse incentives [1.11.1 & 1.11.2]
- Undertaking comprehensive national wetland inventory [1.1.1]
- Establishing management planning for future Ramsar Sites [2.3.1]

- Undertaking management effectiveness assessments for Ramsar Sites [2.5.1]
- Ensuring mechanisms are in place for reporting all Article 3.2 cases (of human-induced negative change to Ramsar Site ecological character) [2.6.2]
- Establishing cross-sectoral management committees for Ramsar Sites [2.4.4]
- Establishing networks for knowledge-sharing and training for wetlands [3.4.1]
- Identifying all transboundary wetland systems [3.5.1]
- Developing CEPA Action Plans at national, sub-national and catchment/basin levels [4.1.1a, b & c]
- Assessing national and local training needs [4.1.4]
- Establishing mechanisms for sharing Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Administrative Authority and Ramsar Site managers [4.1.7a]

38. Providing capacity support for these 20 actions would support IBRRI Contracting Parties as follows:

- Cambodia: 18 actions
- Lao PDR: 18 actions
- Myanmar: 13 actions
- Thailand: 6 actions
- Viet Nam: 3 actions

#### Q6. What are the main difficulties in implementing the Ramsar Convention reported by RRC-EA Contracting Parties?

39. Section 2B of the COP12 and COP13 NRs asks Contracting Parties “*What have been the five greatest difficulties in implementing the Convention?*” This analysis combines these answers in IBRRI CPs COP12 and COP13 NRs.

#### Shading-codes:

COP12 NR only

COP13 NR only

COP12 & COP13 NRs



	Cambodia	Lao PDR	Myanmar	Thailand	Viet Nam	No. of IBRRI CPs: COP12 NR	No. of IBRRI CPs: COP1 3 NR	No. of IBRRI CPs: both NRs	No. of IBRRI CPs: one or more NRs
<b>Drivers of implementation difficulty:</b>									
Wetland conversion - general						0	1	0	1
Wetland conversion - agriculture						2	1	1	2
Wetland conversion - urban/industrial						2	1	0	3
Unsustainable use - general						1	1	0	2
Pollution/ eutrophication						1	0	0	1
<b>Implementation difficulty owing to lack of ...</b>									
Wetland inventory						1	1	0	2
Wetland/spatial planning laws and regulations						3	2	1	4
National Wetland Policy						1	0	0	1
<b>Mainstreaming/awareness-raising wetland conservation:</b>									
Governments/authorities						2	1	1	2
Private sector						1	1	1	1
<b>Wetland services/values' knowledge:</b>									
All stakeholders						1	2	1	2
Governments/authorities						1	1	1	1
Politicians						1	1	1	1
Private sector						1	0	0	1
Technical expertise/research						1	2	1	2
Invasive species control						1	0	0	1
Well-defined Ramsar Site boundaries						1	0	0	1
Wetland and Ramsar Site planning and management						2	1	1	2
Implementation capacity - general						3	2	2	3
National wetland committee (coordinating body)						1	1	1	1
Site community participation						1	1	0	2
Stakeholder conflict resolution (incl. at Ramsar Sites)						1	0	0	1

Wetland management information sharing network						1	0	0	1
Funding						5	4	4	5
Clear (non-overlapping) mandates of government ministries/ local government						2	1	1	2
Wetland conservation agency						1	0	0	1

40. There are some similarities and some differences in the greatest Ramsar implementation difficulties reported by IBRRI Contracting Parties in their COP12 and COP13 NRs. However, overall these implementation difficulties are significantly correlated between the two sets of NRs.

41. IBRRI Contracting Parties reported a wide range of such implementation difficulties, which can be grouped into two categories of issue:

- Four CPs reported drivers affecting the wise use of wetlands; and
- All five CPs reported issues of lack of capacity to implement Strategic Plan actions.

42. IBRRI Contracting Parties reported a wide range of implementation difficulties as a consequence of a lack of capacity, resources, knowledge and institutional frameworks and mechanisms. All such difficulties reported concerned within-country Ramsar implementation (under SP 2008–2015 Goals 1, 4 & 4), with none being reported for Strategic Plan Goal 3 on International cooperation.

43. The four most frequently reported difficulties, for which capacity support would be delivered to the most IBRRI CPs, are:

	No. of IBRRI CPs	IBRRI CPs
Lack of funding	5	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam
Lack of wetland/spatial planning laws and regulations	4	Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam
Lack of general implementation capacity	3	Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam
Addressing urban/industrial conversion of wetlands	3	Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam

44. Capacity support to address the following nine implementation difficulties would each support two IBRRI CPs:

	IBRRI CPs
Addressing wetland conversion - agriculture	Cambodia, Thailand
Addressing unsustainable use - general	Cambodia, Myanmar

Wetland inventory	Thailand, Viet Nam
Mainstreaming/awareness-raising wetland conservation: governments/authorities	Thailand, Viet Nam
Wetland services/values' knowledge: all stakeholders	Myanmar, Thailand
Technical expertise/research	Lao PDR, Myanmar
Wetland and Ramsar Site planning and management	Lao PDR, Viet Nam
Wetland Site community participation	Cambodia, Viet Nam
Clear (non-overlapping) mandates of government ministries/ local government	Cambodia, Lao PDR

45. Capacity support for these 13 implementation difficulties would support IBRRI CPs as follows:

Cambodia: 7 implementation actions  
Lao PDR: 5 implementation actions  
Myanmar: 5 implementation actions  
Thailand: 8 implementation actions  
Viet Nam: 8 implementation actions

#### Q7. What are RRC-EA Contracting Parties' future priorities for implementation?

46. Section 2C of the COP12 and COP13 NR format asks: "What are the five priorities for future implementation of the Convention?". RRC-EA Parties' free-text answers in Section 2C have been interpreted and coded to implementation action categories. This analysis combines these answers in IBRRI CPs COP12 and COP13 NRs. Goals are those in the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009–2015.

#### Shading-codes:

COP12 NR only

COP13 NR only

COP12 & COP13 NRs



	Cambodia	Lao PDR	Myanmar	Thailand	Viet Nam	No. of IBRRI CPs: COP12 NR only	No. of IBRRI CPs: COP13 NR only	No. of IBRRI CPs: both NRs	No. of IBRRI CPs: one or more NRs
<b>Goal 1 Wise Use</b>									
Wise use promotion - general						0	2	0	2
Wetland inventory						1	3	0	4
Wetland values/valuation						1	1	0	2
Wetland cultural values						1	0	0	1
Research/monitoring						1		0	1

National Wetland Policy/strategies/plans						1	1	2	4
National legislation						2	1	0	3
Wetlands and ecotourism						1	0	0	1
Wetland restoration						1	0	0	1
Wetland species conservation						1	0	0	1
Invasive species eradication						0	1	0	1
<b>Goal 2 Ramsar Sites</b>									
Ramsar Site designation						0	1	2	3
Ramsar Site delineation							1	0	1
Ramsar Site management planning/implementation						1	2	1	4
Participatory management						2	2	0	4
Wetland management planning/implementation						2	0	0	2
<b>Goal 3 International cooperation</b>									
International cooperation: information exchange/capacity building						0	1	0	1
International cooperation: transboundary wetlands						1	0	0	1
<b>Goal 4 Institutional Capacity</b>									
CEPA - general						2	0	1	3
CEPA - wetland education centres						1	0	0	1
Cross-sectorial engagement: local government						1	1	0	1
Cross-sectorial engagement: private sector						2	0	0	2
National Ramsar Committee - review						1	0	0	1
Wetland manager training/capacity building						1	3	0	4
National government capacity building						0	1	0	1
Clarification/coordination of wetland agencies roles and responsibilities						0	1	0	1

Ramsar Administrative Authority reorganisation						1	0	0	1
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47. As for implementation difficulties, there are similarities and some differences in the future implementation priorities reported by IBRRI Contracting Parties in their COP12 and COP13 NRs. However, COP13 NR future priorities significantly differ from those listed in COP12 NRs ( $r = -0.208$ ;  $P = 0.295$ ).

48. The eight most frequently reported future implementation priorities, for which capacity support would be delivered to the most IBRRI CPs, are:

	No. of IBRRI CPs	IBRRI CPs
Wetland inventory	4	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam
National Wetland Policy/strategies/plans	4	Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam
Ramsar Site management planning/implementation	4	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand
Participatory management	4	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand
Wetland manager training/capacity building	4	Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam
National legislation	3	Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam
Ramsar Site designation	3	Cambodia, Myanmar, Viet Nam
CEPA - general	3	Cambodia, Myanmar, Viet Nam

49. Capacity support to address the following four implementation difficulties would each support two IBRRI CPs:

	IBRRI CPs
Wise use promotion - general	Cambodia, Myanmar
Wetland values/valuation	Thailand, Viet Nam
Wetland management planning/implementation	Cambodia, Viet Nam
Cross-sectoral engagement: private sector	Cambodia, Myanmar

50. Capacity support for these 12 implementation difficulties would support IBRRI CPs as follows:

Cambodia: 9 implementation actions  
Lao PDR: 5 implementation actions  
Myanmar: 8 implementation actions  
Thailand: 7 implementation actions  
Viet Nam: 8 implementation actions

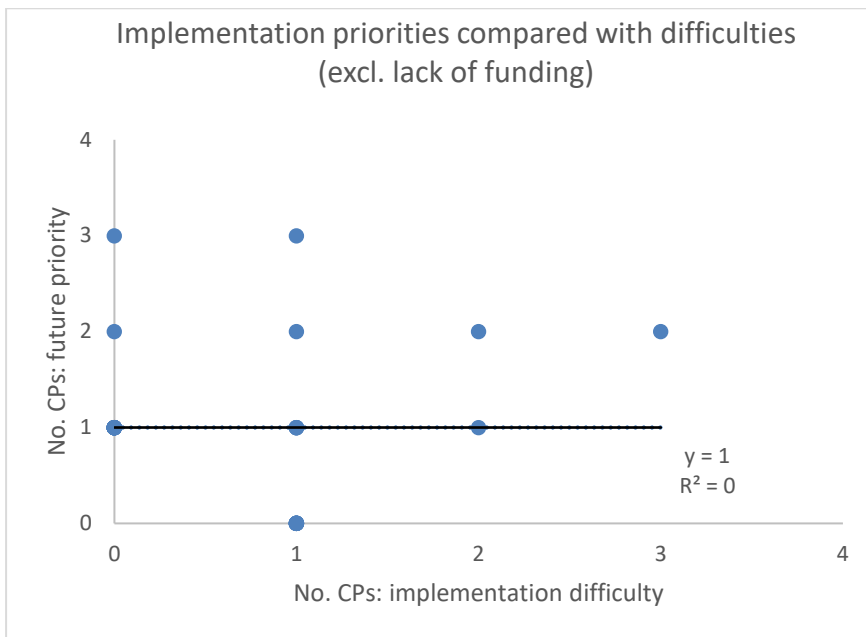
**Q8. Do IBRRI Contracting Party future implementation priorities reflect their greatest implementation difficulties and their implementation gaps?**

51. IBRRI Contracting Parties, in their COP12 NRs, listed their future priorities and difficulties in only broad, general terms (e.g. cultural values, wetland restoration, research/monitoring) and not against specific Strategic Plan implementation actions, it is difficult to directly compare how well these reflect the implementation gaps identified in this situation analysis. This analysis is derived from COP12 NRs only.

**A. Implementation difficulties and future priorities**

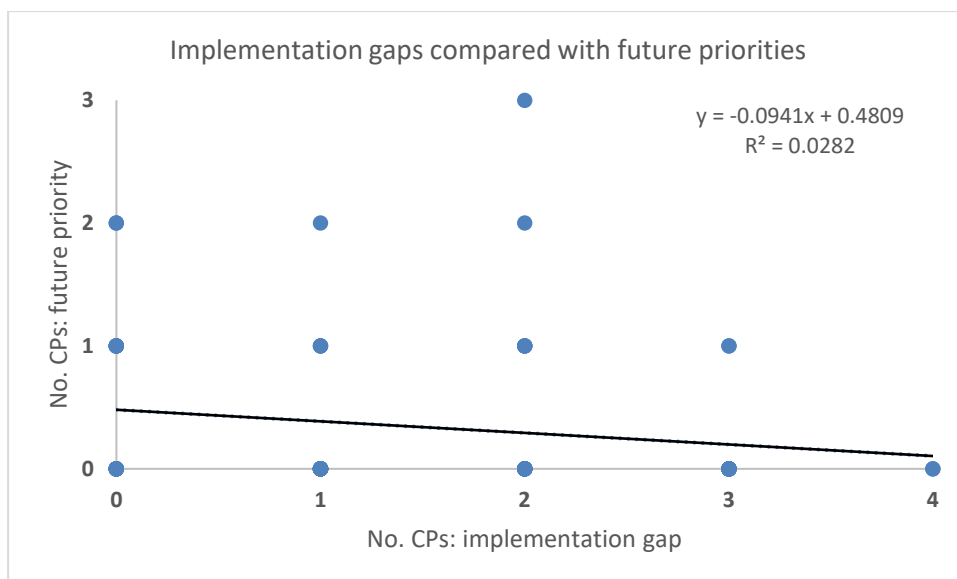
52. Despite all five IBRRI Contracting Parties in their COP12 NRs identifying lack of funding for implementation as one of their greatest implementation difficulties, no IBRRI CP identified accessing increased funding as a future priority.

53. Excluding the funding issue, neither is there a link between implementation issues reported as difficulties and those identified as future priorities for implementation. Notably, two issues (Ramsar Site designation, general CEPA) not reported as a difficulty were identified for future priority action by two or three of the IBRRI Contracting Parties. However, some other implementation difficulties recognised by two or three IBRRI CPS were also recognised as future priorities: legislative amendments for delivering Ramsar commitments, and wetland/Ramsar Site management planning.



**B. Implementation gaps and future priorities**

54. Similarly, there is no clear link between those actions identified as IBRRI Parties implementation gaps and those identified in COP12 NRs as future priorities.



55. Some actions were identified by several IBRRI CPs as both implementation gaps and future priorities, notably:

- 1.3.1 National Wetland Policy (gap: 2 CPs; priority 3 CPs), and also
- 1.3.5 Legislative amendments for Ramsar commitments (a gap for two CPs also recognised as a future priority by two CPs).

56. However, from COP12 NRs there are a considerable number of such implementation gaps concerning three or four IBRRI CPs which were identified by no IBRRI CPs as future priorities:

- 1.6.1a Research to inform wetland policies/plans on: agriculture/wetland interactions (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 1.7.1 Water governance/management systems treat wetlands as natural water infrastructure integral to water resource management (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 1.10.2a Private sector undertaken activities or actions for the wise use and management of: Ramsar Sites (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 1.10.2b Private sector undertaken activities or actions for the wise use and management of: wetlands in general (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 1.11.1 Actions to implement incentive measures which encourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 1.11.2 Actions to remove perverse incentive measures which discourage conservation and wise use of wetlands (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 2.3.1. Management planning processes for future Ramsar Site designations (3 IBRRI CPs)

- 2.4.4. Cross-sectoral management committees for Ramsar Sites (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 2.5.1. Management effectiveness assessments for Ramsar Sites (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 2.6.2. All Article 3.2 cases reported to Secretariat (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 3.4.1. Networks, including twinning arrangements, established for knowledge sharing and training for wetlands (4 IBRRI CPs)
- 4.1.1.a An action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA established: national level (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 4.1.1.b An action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA established: sub-national level (4 IBRRI CPs)
- 4.1.1.c An action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA established: catchment/basin level (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 4.1.4 Assessment of national and local training needs for the implementation of the Convention (3 IBRRI CPs)
- 4.1.7.a Other communication mechanisms (apart from a national committee) in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Administrative Authority and: Ramsar Site managers (3 IBRRI CPs)

57. Finding ways and means of providing IBRRI support for the implementation priorities and gaps identified above might be considered by IBRRI for priority attention.

## Annex 2: Outputs from the IBRRI Inception Workshop

### Summary of the exercise on other programmes and initiatives in the region

Ramsar Strategic Plan Goals	Related programmes, projects and initiatives
Goal 1: Drivers of wetlands loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lao PDR: Climate Change Adaptation in Wetland Areas (CAWA) project</li> <li>• Myanmar: Community-led Coastal Management in the Gulf of Mottama (GoMP) project</li> <li>• Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam: Mekong WET project</li> <li>• Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam: Mangroves for the Future (MFF) Initiative Regional Steering Committee</li> <li>• National Coordination Bodies</li> <li>• LMB countries: Nexus study on trade-offs between energy, water and food security.</li> </ul>
Goal 2: Conservation and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambodia: Designate new Ramsar site</li> <li>• Cambodia: Monitoring of globally threatened and near threatened species of waterbirds</li> <li>• Cambodia: Wetland/habitat management</li> <li>• Lao PDR: Climate Change Adaptation in Wetland Areas (CAWA) project, MRWP project</li> <li>• Myanmar: Conservation of biodiversity and improved management of protected areas in Myanmar (with NEA)</li> <li>• Myanmar: Small Grant Program for ASEAN Heritage Parks (with ACB)</li> <li>• Myanmar: Community-led Coastal Management in the Gulf of Mottama (GoMP) project</li> <li>• Myanmar: National Wetland Committee</li> <li>• Thailand: National Wetland Inventories updated</li> <li>• Thailand (and other countries): R-METT</li> <li>• Viet Nam: Migratory Bird Study (bird banding)</li> <li>• Viet Nam: PA solution, nomination of Van Long Ramsar site, support site management Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam: Mekong WET project</li> <li>• Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar: GEF Peatlands project</li> <li>• Ongoing project funded by GEF: Conservation of critical wetland protected areas and Lower Mekong Landscapes</li> </ul>
Goal 3: Wise use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambodia: Wise Use Guidelines</li> <li>• Lao PDR: Creating Artificial Wetlands Associated with Hydropower Reservoirs for Improving Local Livelihoods</li> <li>• Lao PDR: Rainfall Runoff Model Development to Run Climate Change Scenarios and Impact on Wetlands for CAWA Initiative</li> <li>• Lao PDR: Mekong Integrated Water Resources Management (M-IWRM)</li> </ul>

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- Myanmar: National Wetland Committee
  - Myanmar: Community-led Coastal Management in the Gulf of Mottama (GoMP) project
  - Thailand: National wetland Inventories updated
  - Thailand: Valuation of Ecosystem Services, TEEB (UN Environment Programme)
  - Thailand: Conservation of Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Bird Tourism Development in Pak Thale
  - Viet Nam: Natural Capital Accounting (UN Environment Programme)
  - Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam: Mekong WET project
  - Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar: GEF Peatlands project
  - Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam: Sustainable Use and Management of Wetlands in the Lower Mekong Basin
  - Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam: Mangroves for the Future (MFF) Initiative
  - Cambodia, Viet Nam: National Ecosystems Assessment (UN Environment Programme)
- 

Goal 4: Enhancing implementation

- Cambodia: Wetland CEPA (World Wetland Day, Welcome to the Bird, etc.)
  - Lao PDR: CEPA project (central and local)
  - Myanmar: Community-led Coastal Management in the Gulf of Mottama (GoMP) project
  - Myanmar: Development of National Wetland Policy
  - Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam: Mekong WET project
  - Lao PDR, Thailand: Enhancing Synergies and Coordination in implementing Ramsar convention and other biodiversity-related conventions (UN Environment Programme)
  - Regional Political Fora (Asia-Pacific Ministerial Forum, UN Environment Assembly) to raise the profile and political buy-in from policy-makers and other stakeholders on wetland issues
  - Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam: Sustainable Use and Management of Wetlands in the Lower Mekong Basin
  - Mekong Wetlands University Network's annual wetland training activities (six countries in the Mekong Region)
-

## Summary of the group discussion on the development of an IBRRI Ramsar strategic plan

### *Goal 1: Drivers of wetlands loss*

#### **Target 1: Identify benefits that wetlands provide to key sectors**

- Provide assessment and evidence on benefits provided by wetlands in IBRRI areas through the development of economic valuation, pointing out the costs of alternatives and calculating the monetary investment that would be needed to compensate for the loss of wetlands.
- Prepare policy briefs, blue prints, and planning frameworks.
- Provide support and guidance for the development of National Wetlands Committees, with representatives from all sectors.
- Key specific opportunities identified included:
  - Influence the Environmental Code in Cambodia;
  - Influence Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) guidelines Cambodia;
  - Support Natural Capital accounting in Myanmar;
  - Provide inputs to the MRC's preliminary design guidance for hydropower; and
  - Support trainings on tools for the rapid assessment of wetlands services (e.g. Rapid Assessment tool, TESSA).

#### **Target 2: Sustainable water use**

- Support the development of an annual report on the State of Wetlands, similar to the MRC State of the Basin report.
- Share information on minimum flows and environmental flows for key wetlands in IBRRI areas.

#### **Target 3: Public private sector implementation of guidelines**

The approach toward the private sector should focus on the identification of incentives for the use of best practice guidelines and safeguards. Lecturing the private sector is not effective. The Ramsar network worldwide, through its large number of Contracting Parties and sites, is an important opportunity for companies to gain visibility on their best practices.

- The development of PES may be a tool to effectively engage the private sector.
- The development of the Environmental Code in Cambodia is an opportunity to work on best practices for companies.
- The IBRRI could support the development of practical guidelines, co-drafted by Ramsar stakeholders and key private sector companies in the region.

#### **Target 4: Invasive species**

- There is a need to develop an inventory and a better understanding of impacts of invasive alien species (IAS) (e.g. mimosa, hyacinth, tilapia, golden apple snails).
- The IBRRI could work on the development of guidelines on IAS management.
- These technical guidelines could be complemented by guidelines on policy, legislation and institutional approaches to prevent and manage IAS.

### *Goal 2: Conservation and management*

#### **Target 5: Effective planning and integrated management**

The priority is to ensure that management plans can be implemented effectively and integrated with other plans in Ramsar sites.

- IBRRI could provide a review of possible approaches in the IBRRI countries, develop tools or guidelines, and provide capacity building for focal points to support the integration of Ramsar site management plans within existing governmental planning processes.
- The development of management plans in Ramsar sites needs to start with a review of existing plans (e.g. community plans, water use plans) and support the reciprocal integration through consultations.
- IBRRI can help develop guidelines on consultations for management plans.
- Funding is a key element of sustainability for management plans. The IBRRI should provide guidelines for the development of sustainable financial mechanisms for management and issue short papers and guidance on how to advocate for government or donor (including private sector) investment.

#### **Target 6: Enlarge Ramsar site network and connectivity**

- The IBRRI could organise a consultation platform every two years, bringing together all Ramsar focal points in each country to share plans for designations, challenges and lessons learnt.
- The IBRRI platform is an opportunity to work on a more integrated site designation plan at a regional level, focusing on the connectivity between sites, e.g. transboundary sites, connectivity for species, hydrological connectivity).
- The IBRRI could support designation of Ramsar sites based on other criteria aside from biodiversity. The development of technical documents, translated to local languages, and with support for RIS drafting, could support a better understanding of criteria such as Criterion 7, focusing on fish species, Criterion 8 focusing on fish habitats, or Criterion 9 on non-avian animal species population. This improved understanding could help Contracting Parties to better plan Ramsar sites designation according to these often overlooked criteria.

#### **Target 7: Address threats at sites**

- At the regional level, IBRRI could provide a review of key/pressing threats to Ramsar sites in IBRRI countries and develop guidelines, protocols and trainings to address these.
- IBRRI could support the sharing of best practices (and also present unsustainable practices) through exchange visits and study tours.

#### **Goal 3: Wise use**

- The fact that IBRRI works with only five countries is an opportunity to strengthen the work on transboundary sites and transboundary assessment (on biodiversity and livelihoods).
- IBRRI could guide member countries in developing regulations and facilitate the development of wise use mechanisms for all wetlands.
- IBRRI could have an important role as a platform of experts to provide advice and exchange lessons learnt.
- IBRRI could produce maps of wetlands in the region, based on existing inventories.
- IBRRI could help prevent overlap and promote more cooperation.
- IBRRI could develop joint products such as a State of the Mekong Wetlands report (also mentioned under Goal 1).
- IBRRI could develop case study materials that specifically target the key sectors that impact wetlands to bring these sectors into a dialogue.
- IBRRI could have a key role in implementing Target 13, related to cross-sectoral dialogue.
- IBRRI could provide an opportunity to strengthen regional representation for a greater voice. The IBRRI could help to develop regional positions for the Ramsar SC agenda as well as for regional institutions and platforms such as the ASEAN.
- IBRRI could also look beyond Ramsar and could assist with coordination with other MEAS and strategies/plans (e.g. CBD, SDGs).

#### *Goal 4: Enhancing implementation*

##### **Priorities 1 and 2**

- IBRRI could translate key handbooks/guidelines in local languages (simple ones, on wise use, monitoring, management, restoration, participation).
- IBRRI could provide a platform to revise action plans and management plans for countries.
- IBRRI could support the development of National Wetlands Strategies and Action Plans (NWAP).
- IBRRI could provide guidelines on the integration of local knowledge and mechanisms in management processes for Ramsar sites.
- IBRRI could develop or support the dissemination of capacity building programmes on wetlands, training of trainers, Ramsar site management, monitoring, ecosystem services and health, learning and exchange.

##### **Priority 3**

- IBRRI could play a key role in awareness raising through the use of media (e.g. through IUCN's partnership with Thai PBS).
- IBRRI could promote international collaboration to manage transboundary wetlands.
- IBRRI could support forums and workshops for the development of regional wetland species action plans (e.g. Sarus crane, catfish, dolphin, and crocodile).

## Annex 3 Draft Budget

Operational Objective 1	Facilitate and promote wetland knowledge and experience sharing	Indicative Budget (USD)
1.1 A network for knowledge and experience sharing is established and active across the Indo-Burma Region	1.1.1 Establish an IBRRI Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) composed of Ramsar STRP National Focal Points, regional and national wetland experts, IOPs and representatives of other pan-regional bodies such as MRC, ACB and MFF in order to provide technical advice on key issues	20,000
	1.1.2 Translate the most relevant existing Ramsar Handbooks and other relevant publications and tools (particularly addressing Ramsar Site designation, wetland restoration, urban and peri-urban wetlands, invasive species and integrated water resource planning and ecosystem services), into local languages	25,000
	1.1.3 Establish, coordinate and manage a regional website to facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing	10,000
	1.1.4 Integrate and co-organise knowledge sharing activities with RRC-EA and the EAAFP	2,500
	1.1.5 Produce and publish an Indo-Burma Regional Wetlands Outlook (IBRWO) report	10,000
	1.1.6 Develop and implement an IBRRI scientific and technical research initiative, particularly to target a range of ecosystem services important within the Indo-Burma context	15,000
1.2 Knowledge of wetland-agriculture interactions is shared across the region	1.2.1 Synthesise and make available state of the art knowledge on wetland-agriculture interactions relevant to the Indo-Burma context, especially with regards to irrigated agriculture	10,000
1.3 A standardised wetland inventory is established across the IBRRI and is based on an harmonised wetlands classification system	1.3.1 Review and assess the status and utility of national wetland inventories and wetland classification systems in the IBRRI countries	5,000
	1.3.2 Develop a harmonised wetland inventory across the five IBRRI countries	20,000
	1.3.3 Establish and implement an integrated wetland assessment, monitoring and reporting framework for the Region	20,000
1.4 Knowledge on Article 3.2 reporting is standardised and shared across the Region	1.4.1 Liaise with Ramsar STRP, Ramsar Secretariat and other experts on Article 3.2 reporting	2,500
	1.4.2 Produce and disseminate guidance on Article 3.2 reporting	5,000
1.5 Knowledge exchange on Ramsar Sites and their management is achieved through study tours	1.5.1 Identify and define the priorities for knowledge exchange through study tours at Ramsar Sites	2,500
	1.5.2 Conduct study tours to Ramsar Sites to facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing	20,000
	1.5.3 Develop a programme of student internships and scholarship programmes relating to Ramsar Sites and wetland management	20,000
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>187,500</b>

<b>Operational Objective 2</b>	<b>Support integrated management of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands, and ensure conservation of key wetlands species in the region</b>	<b>Indicative Budget (USD)</b>
2.1 A representative network of internationally important wetland sites is established	2.1.1 Review existing network of Ramsar Sites and other internationally important wetlands and make recommendations for enhancing the site network	7,500
	2.1.2 Develop a region-wide prioritised Ramsar Site designation strategy	10,000
	2.1.3 Designate new Ramsar Sites and (wherever required) extend existing sites	10,000
	2.1.4 Ensure that RSIS are updated every six years for existing sites and that RIS for new sites are complete	10,000
	2.1.5 Develop a regional strategy for sustainable financing of Ramsar Site network	5,000
2.2 Ramsar Sites are managed effectively	2.2.1 Review current status of management plans across the region and identify gaps	7,500
	2.2.2 Develop management plans for Ramsar Sites (including wetland delineation and zoning arrangements, including for sites with multi-jurisdictional arrangements and multiple designations)	35,000
	2.2.3 Support development of cross-sectoral governance arrangements	10,000
	2.2.4 Ensure that management of Ramsar Sites is mainstreamed within developmental and regional planning (such as river basin or coastal zone planning)	10,000
	2.2.5 Track management effectiveness at Ramsar Sites and adapt management-based outcomes	25,000
2.3 Action plans are implemented for conservation of key wetland-dependent species for the IBRRI areas	2.3.1 Identify key wetland species and habitats based on internationally agreed criteria (such as IUCN Red List, Ramsar criteria, etc.)	10,000
	2.3.2 Support Red Listing of data deficient wetland-dependent species, with a particular emphasis on fish	5,000
	2.3.3 Develop and implement species action plans	50,000
2.4 Best practice in integrated management of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands in the IBRRI areas is documented and promoted	2.4.1 Document best practices in wetland management from the IBRRI areas, especially those that target multiple values and delivery of the objectives of other multilateral environmental agreements or wider international frameworks, such as the SDGs or Paris Climate Change Agreement.	15,000
	2.4.2 Share experiences, lessons learnt and best practices, especially through 'model sites' as exemplars of particular aspects of wetland management.	20,000
	2.4.3 Produce best practice guidance on integrated wetland management for the IBRRI areas	20,000
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>250,000</b>

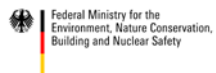
Operational Objective 3	Assist with the development and/or strengthening and implementation of policy framework taking into account wetlands management and conservation across sectors and at all levels	Indicative Budget (USD)
3.1 All IBRRI countries have adopted an effective policy framework ensuring the wise use of all wetlands	3.1.1 Review the status of regional, national and local policies across the Region and their inclusiveness of the wise use of wetlands	5,500
	3.1.2 Develop and disseminate best practice guidance on the development and implementation of an effective policy framework promoting and supporting wise use of wetlands policies through publications and policy forums	7,500
	3.1.3 Support the revisions and/or drafting of national and local policies in all five IBRRI countries	2,500
	3.1.4 Review the effectiveness of national policy implementation on wise use of wetlands	5,000
3.2 The contribution of wetlands towards wider policy frameworks is recognised and reported	3.2.1 Develop and disseminate best practice guidance on how to assess the impact of wetlands on the delivery of wider policy frameworks, such as SDGs, Nationally Determined Contributions, etc.	5,000
	3.2.2 Produce and disseminate best practice examples of the contributions wetlands make to the implementation of wider policy frameworks	10,000
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>35,500</b>

Operational Objective 4	Support wetland communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA)	Indicative Budget (USD)
4.1 An IBRRI-STRP CEPA Working Group is established	4.1.1 CEPA Working Group established by IBRRI Secretariat, with membership and Terms of Reference confirmed	2,500
4.2 The IBRRI has a coherent communications strategy	4.2.1 Develop a robust communications strategy that ensures synergies across the region are optimised	7,500
	4.2.2 Utilise the communications strategy to raise the visibility of the Ramsar Convention and wetlands across the region	7,500
4.3 Each IBRRI country has a CEPA Action Plan	4.3.1 Using published Ramsar guidance, develop national CEPA Action Plans in the five IBRRI countries	15,000
	4.3.2 Draft, consult, publish and implement national CEPA action plans	5,000
4.4 The training needs of wetland managers are addressed	4.4.1 Assess the different types of training needs of wetland managers	7,500
	4.4.2 Develop a coherent programme of targeted training and capacity building for wetland managers	25,000
	4.4.3 Develop 'train the trainer' programmes	7,500
	4.4.4 Develop bilateral training cooperation between Ramsar Sites	10,000
4.5 Wetland training and education centres in IBRRI region linked	4.5.1 Develop networking mechanisms for information and experience sharing between wetland centres	5,000
4.6 Private sector engaged in the wise use of wetlands	4.6.1 Seek partnerships with private sector organisations in order to encourage the wise use of wetlands	5,000
	4.6.2 Develop guidance and awareness raising materials on the multiple benefits of wetlands for dissemination to the private sector	7,500
	4.6.3 Investigate, and where possible, develop private sector financing by demonstrating positive incentives	7,500
4.7 Synergies are optimised between Ramsar Regional Initiatives across the region	4.7.1 Actively and routinely engage and communicate with the two other Ramsar Regional Initiatives in the Region	5,000
	4.7.2 Actively and routinely engage and communicate with the pan-regional bodies present in the region including, but not limited to, UN bodies, MRC, MFF and ACB	5,000
4.6 Participate in side events at Ramsar COPs to promote and celebrate IBRRI achievements	4.6.1 Deliver side events at COP14 and COP15 that highlights the successes of the Regional Initiative	5,000
4.7 The state of the wetlands in Indo-Burma report (Target 1.1.5) disseminated to decision-makers and media	4.7.1 Dissemination and promotion of the IBRWO and its Key Messages to regional, national and local decision-makers, and media	15,000
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>142,500</b>

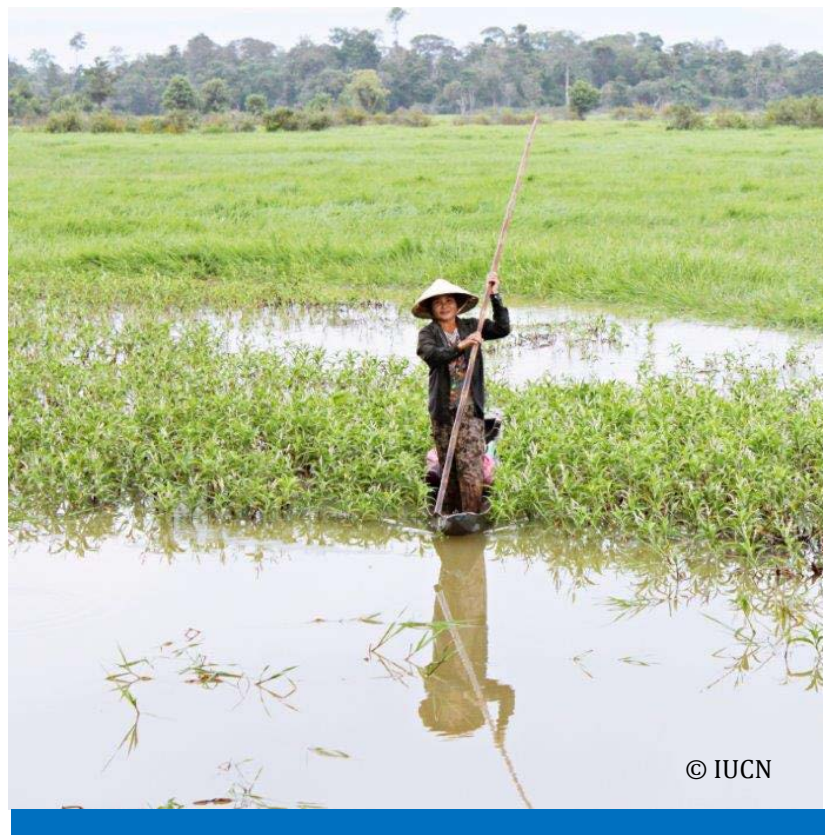
Operational Objective 5	Ensure sound and sustainable governance and management of the Regional Initiative and its contribution to the effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention	Indicative Budget (USD)
5.1 The key governance bodies (Steering Committee and Technical Committee) are functioning	5.1.1 Establish an overarching institutional strategy	2,500
	5.1.2 Establish Terms of Reference for a functional Steering Committee	2,500
	5.1.3 Establish a functional Steering Committee	15,000
	5.1.4 Establish Terms of Reference for a functional Technical Committee	2,500
	5.1.5 Establish a functional Technical Committee	0
5.2 IBRRI governance is embedded in national mechanisms	5.2.1 Encourage national governments to formally embed IBRRI responsibilities within national mechanisms (such as National Wetland Committees)	5,000
5.3 The IBRRI secretariat is functioning, well-staffed and resourced	5.3.1 Establish a fully funded mechanism and <i>modus operandi</i> for the IBRRI Secretariat	2,500
5.4 IBRRI engages in dialogues with other neighboring countries of relevance	5.4.1 Ensure regular communication with NFPs and stakeholders of China and India	5,000
5.5 Sustainable funding is established	5.5.1 Develop a six-year budget forecast	1,000
	5.5.2 Develop annual budgets based on the six-year budget	1,000
	5.5.3 Develop a fundraising strategy that seeks to optimise synergies across the region	5,000
5.6 Memoranda of Cooperation are established with key organisations	5.6.1 Draft, review and endorse a Memorandum of Cooperation with RRC-EA	2,500
	5.6.2 Draft, review and endorse a Memorandum of Cooperation with the EAAFP	2,500
	5.6.3 IBRRI Secretariat, on behalf of IBRRI to draft, review and endorse a Memorandum of Cooperation with other regional initiatives including, <i>inter alia</i> , MRC and ACB	2,500
5.7 The IBRRI is achieving its objectives	5.7.1 Develop a clear monitoring and evaluation framework (quantitative and qualitative) including activities based indicators and interviews with key stakeholders (e.g. including the most significant changes approach)	5,000
	5.7.2 Conduct a midterm review of progress against the Operational Objectives	2,500
	5.7.3 Conduct a review of progress against the Operational Objectives in 2024	5,000
	5.7.4 Develop a new Strategic Plan for beyond 2024	25,000
5.8 Shape the Ramsar Convention	5.8.1 Share experiences and lessons learnt by IBRRI with other Ramsar Regional Initiatives	5,000
	5.8.2 Influence the Ramsar Convention through activities at COPs	5,000
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>97,000</b>

## Indicative budget summary 2019-2024

Operational objectives		Indicative Budget (USD)
Operational Objective 1	Facilitate and promote wetland knowledge and experience sharing	187,000
Operational Objective 2	Support integrated management of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands and ensure conservation of key wetlands species in the region	250,000
Operational Objective 3	Assist with the development and/or strengthening and implementation of policy framework taking into account wetlands management and conservation across sectors and at all levels	35,500
Operational Objective 4	Support wetland communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA)	142,500
Operational Objective 5	Ensure sound and sustainable governance and management of the Regional Initiative, and its contribution to the effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention	97,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>712,000</b>



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