

Evaluation Abstract

Title, author and date of the evaluation report:

Representative Office for the CIS: Strategic Review, prepared by Paul Grigoriev, Yemi Katerere and Estelle Viguet, June 2001

Name of organizational unit:

Representative Office of the IUCN for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

Mandate of the organizational unit:

The IUCN-CIS mandate includes the following:

1. To influence key cross-cutting strategic and policy initiatives at the regional/global level by increasing the CIS countries' contribution through the implementation of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) in Eurasia.
2. To influence policies for the integration of biological and landscape diversity considerations into economic sectors taking into account sub-regional particularities and supporting integration through practical actions.
3. To support implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, World Heritage Convention, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Ramsar Convention and other international legal instruments in the CIS through the PEBLDS.
4. To increase Europe's role in new global policy initiatives providing regional support to Pan-European processes (EU directives and CoE Conventions) and bringing the CIS countries' unique nature conservation experience to Pan-European and global levels.
5. To develop an IUCN Regional Programme for Russia/CIS and relevant Sub-Regional Programmes integrated into IUCN Global and Regional Programmes by adding value to existing initiatives, targeting priority activities and preventing duplication through new initiatives.
6. To build the capacity of IUCN constituencies by increasing and strengthening IUCN membership in the Region and by providing services to existing members and Commission members using communication tools and fundraising.

IUCN area of specialisation: Organizational

Geographical area: CIS and Russia

Length of existence of organisational unit:

IUCN-CIS was established in 1998. However, its presence dates back to 1994 when a project office with a staff of one was created. It became the Russia Country Office a year later (1995-1998).

Overall budget of organizational unit: Not specified

Donor(s): N/A

Objectives of the evaluation:

1. Analyze the relevance and strategic focus of the programme work within IUCN-CIS Office, in the context of IUCN's Quadrennial Plan and Business Plan.
2. Overview the effectiveness and efficiency of IUCN-CIS Office as an organizational unit within IUCN;
3. Assess the long-term financial viability and financial risk of the programme.

In addition to issues of specific interest such as management and financial controls, management oversight, links to global thematic programmes, staffing, geographic coverage, etc., the review sought to

determine whether IUCN-CIS has made optimum use of resources, as well as what, if any, changes in the form or direction of that investment could be done to improve effectiveness.

Type of evaluation: Strategic Review/Organizational Evaluation

Period covered by the evaluation: 1998-2001

Commissioned by: Acting Director General of IUCN

Audience: IUCN Director General, IUCN Council and/or Bureau, Programme Development Group, IUCN Senior Management, Director of IUCN Europe Regional Office, Head of IUCN-CIS Office, IUCN-CIS staff, Members

Evaluation team: Mixed Internal/External

Methodology used:

The review process involved the analyses of extensive background documentation, two days of interviewing Thematic Programme Heads at IUCN Headquarters, a one-week mission to Moscow to interview the CIS Office personnel and the Councillor, and telephone interviews with members, donors and partners. The interviews were supplemented by the analysis of questionnaire responses from IUCN Office staff, Thematic Programme Heads, members, and donors.

Questions of the evaluation:

The review focused on assessing the strategic mandate, financial viability, effectiveness, and efficiency of the IUCN-CIS Office. Factors affecting overall performance were also considered, such as strategy, organizational structure and administration, programming, work with constituency, human and financial resource management, and monitoring and evaluation.

Findings:

- IUCN-CIS has made notable progress in establishing its presence and in developing its programme base over a relatively short period of time and under challenging political and financial circumstances.
- The Office has a clear mandate that is in line with IUCN's global mandate, the Quadrennial Plan and Business Plan.
- The presence of IUCN-CIS is considered relevant and of tremendous political value. However, there is considerable range of opinion regarding the relevance of its work in relation to its constituency.
- While the opportunities for carving out its particular niche and influencing policy formulation are limitless, the Office and the Union have collectively been underachieving in their capitalization upon this potential.
- Good progress has been made on programme development. However, there is a concern that programming is too donor driven and opportunistic.
- While membership has been increasing, there is currently only one state member, which is too low a level for such a large geographic area.
- The absence of a Strategic Plan for the Office is the biggest deficiency identified.
- Another central issue concerns the geo-political aspect of the Office's operation, with the relationships between HQ, ERO Tilburg and Warsaw, WESCANA and IUCN-CIS being unclear.
- IUCN-CIS is staffed by dedicated, capable and hardworking individuals. The office possesses a good team spirit, and internal communication among staff members is open and regular. Office management and administrative systems are in place but require further development and refinement.
- Although the Review Team believes that IUCN-CIS can achieve financial viability over the medium to long term, its current financial sustainability is considered worrisome.

Recommendations:

The following three recommendations are considered key to the development of IUCN-CIS:

- 1) Medium-term (3 years) core funding to stabilize and re-position the Office onto more strategic footing must be secured at earliest opportunity.
- 2) The currently uncertain and unsatisfying relationship among HQ, WESCANA, ERO Tilburg and Warsaw and the IUCN-CIS Office must be thoroughly reviewed and clarified, with serious consideration to establishing the Office as an entity independent of ERO and reporting directly to HQ.
- 3) The Office must prepare a Strategic Plan and Business Plan to guide its operations.

The report also contains a comprehensive list of recommendations by review area. Some highlights are presented below:

- Mandate and Strategic Focus: In addition to a Strategic Plan, the Office must develop a Business Plan to map out the road towards financial sustainability. [also see (3) above]
- IUCN-CIS should concentrate more on policy and membership development and support, and on its role on project development and facilitation, as opposed to project implementation.
- Constituency: The Office should build/strengthen relations with governments and other sectors at the highest levels in all member states to ensure its membership is more representative of its mandate. It should also be more cognizant of members' needs to ensure that the relevance of its work is maximized.
- The support available from the Commissions and HQ should be utilized to a greater extent by strengthening the Office's links with Global Programmes. More time should also be devoted to building membership and capacity in the Central Asian states, in case they remain under its mandate.
- Geo-Operational: see (2) above
- Effectiveness and Efficiency: It is essential that a comprehensive M&E system be developed and implemented, as well as clear reporting lines and procedures established.
- Financial Sustainability: Considerably more effort should be devoted to fundraising. [also see (1) above]
- Management: Training or assistance should be provided to office staff in the preparation of a M&E plan, project proposal writing, and the development and implementation of fundraising strategies.

Lessons Learned: Not specified

Language of the evaluation: English

Available from: IUCN Global Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative, Gland, Switzerland; IUCN Office for the CIS