Synopsis of consultation and feedback process for the development of the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions

A summary of how material issues were addressed in the standard development

Gland, July 2020

Documents for the first edition:
- IUCN Global Standard for NbS (download here)
- Guidance for using the IUCN Global Standard for NbS (download here)

Consultation period:
- First consultation (English): 28 Jun 2019 – 30 March 2019 (60 days)
- Second consultation (English, Spanish, French): 1 Sep 2019 – 14 Oct 2019 (44 days)
- Contact for comments: Daisy Hessenberger (daisy.hessenberger@iucn.org) and NbSStandard@iucn.org

Aim of synopsis
This document has been prepared following the ISEAL Code of Good Practice "Setting Social and Environmental Standards Version 6.0 and contains an overview of the consultation process, an analysis of the range of stakeholder groups engaged, as well as a summary of issues raised, general responses to comments and how issues were addressed. Responses to anonymised individual stakeholder comments are provided in the compiled comments document.

Link to current document:
Contents

Synopsis of consultation and feedback process for the development of the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions ................................................................. 1
  Documents for the first edition: ................................................................................. 1
  Consultation period: ................................................................................................. 1
  Aim of synopsis ........................................................................................................ 1
  Context ..................................................................................................................... 3
  Consultation process................................................................................................ 3
  Stakeholders representation in consultation process ............................................. 5
  Issues raised and responses ..................................................................................... 6
  Output of the consultation and development period ............................................. 9
  Thank you and acknowledgements ...................................................................... 10
Context

Nature-based solutions (NbS) are recognized by governments and the private sector as a powerful ally to address societal challenges, such as climate change and food security. As the world turns towards green recovery in a post-COVID context, we will need to ensure that nature reaches its potential in contributing towards a just transition to a sustainable future. With this in mind, a global framework is required to mainstream NbS while protecting people and planet.

After a two-year participatory consultation, IUCN has developed a Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions that will enable both the public and private sectors to consistently and reliably scale-up NbS and help society accelerate its transition to a low carbon future. This Standard has been developed while the world struggles to contain and arrest the spread of the COVID-19. As attention is currently turning to the post-pandemic economic recovery and world leaders contemplate how to build back better, NbS offer a unique opportunity to invest in societal well-being and vibrant economies without having to return to the mistakes of the past.

From the start of the development process of the Standard, IUCN committed to align the development of the IUCN Global Standard for NbS, as much as feasible, to the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Code of Good Practice: Setting Social and Environmental Standards. The ISEAL Code requires that the organisations developing such standards make significant efforts to engage all relevant stakeholder groups in its development work, publish the draft standard at least twice for public consultation and is transparent about the way that feedback is and has been taken into account. Following the ISEAL Code is meant to ensure that the developed standard is relevant, comprehensive and balances different stakeholder needs. This is especially pertinent for the NbS standard, given its wide reaching relevance and the interest it has generated amongst different stakeholders.

The resulting IUCN Global Standard for NbS is informed by the lessons learnt during the global public consultations carried out in 2019. This document will be available from 13hrs on 23rd July 2020 on the IUCN public website. Part I of the Global Standard for NbS lists the Criteria and Indicators, as adopted by the 98th Meeting of the IUCN Council in 2020. Part II, accompanies this booklet to provide the scientific basis and guidance for users. A further document, Part III, will serve later as a user-guide, building upon the lessons of pilots and linked to a self-assessment tool with suggestions of means of verification and design and implementation tools.

Consultation process

To create an iterative process of learning and a robust method of development for the IUCN Global Standard for NbS, the following steps were followed:

1. Information gathering and stakeholder identification
2. Mapping of IUCN NbS Principles to relevant guidelines and standards (Figure 1)
3. Internal consultation with NbS focal points within the IUCN network
4. Public consultation #1 on the first draft of the Standard
5. Collating, analysing, reporting and integrating feedback
6. Bilateral meetings with underrepresented stakeholders
7. Public consultation #2 on the first draft of the Standard
8. Collating, analysing, reporting and integrating feedback
9. Bilateral meetings with underrepresented stakeholders
10. Criteria and indicators presented to IUCN Council for adoption
11. Version 1.0 of the Standard submitted to the IUCN Publications and Editorial Board
12. Version 1.0 of the Standard launched

For each of the public consultations, the draft of the Standard was made available on the IUCN website and the consultation announced in a news article. IUCN members and commissions were informed while the consultation was also publically promoted on social media channels and in relevant networks. This included the “Day for your Say” on 17 September 2019 on which IUCN hosted four regional consultation in-person events over 24 hours. These took place in Fiji, Switzerland, Nairobi and Washington DC engaging IUCN members in the respective regions. In the survey, general questions were asked, as well as a set of question for each criterion and indicator. The latter included first impressions, clarity of messaging and identifying gaps and/or challenges.

Figure 2 lists how this data was used to inform amendments to the draft of the standard. The results of the consultations were then processed in order to report issues to a Standard working group made up of Secretariat and Commission for Ecosystem Management (CEM) IUCN representatives. In order to process the hundreds of individual comments in each public consultation, open ended comments were assigned codes so as to allow authors to track trends in feedback, systematically consider all inputs and be complemented by relevant responses from quantitative questions, in order to inform changes to criteria and indicators.

These general trends, as well as a subset of individual comments, were reported and discussed with the Standard working group to decide what action was to be taken. The representation of stakeholder groups was also reported to identify groups that were not adequately represented and proactively seek their contributions. For example, after the first consultation in English it was
decided to offer the second consultation in English, Spanish and French in order to address language constraints faced by some stakeholders.

![Diagram of consultation process]

*Figure 2: Process followed in each of the two public consultations for the IUCN Global Standard for NbS.*

**Stakeholders representation in consultation process**

The audience for the IUCN Global Standard for NbS is broad, a reflection of the intersectional nature of this approach. Users of the standard include national governments, city and local governments, planners, businesses, donors, financial institutions including development banks and non-profit organisations. All of them will be primary users of the Standard. The Standard can be used by stakeholders working in a range of settings from protected areas to landscapes to urban areas, and across different regions and in modified or intact ecosystems. As such it was of extreme importance that the range of stakeholders be engaged in the consultation and development of the standard.

Upon noting the diversity both present and missing in the participants in the first public consultation, efforts were made to engage with under-represented stakeholder groups in the second consultation. Both the number and diversity, in terms of countries represented, increased as a result in the second consultation (Figure 3). While the first consultation did reach a range of sectors, the second consultation saw the added engagement of indigenous peoples organisations and faith organisations. After the second consultation, effort was made further to engage with Indigenous Peoples, in multilateral discussions. In addition, while Europe kept its majority representation in feedback, the second consultation showed a marked increase in participation from other regions, specifically South America and Africa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public consultation #1</th>
<th>Public consultation #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of survey respondents</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of countries represented</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Issues raised and responses

Each comment received in the public consultations via the survey, as well as a few collated comments provided by groups via email, was assigned a code for the main issue being raised. This was used to identify general issues in the two consultations.

In public consultation #1, of 340 responses, 45 different classes of feedback were identified. In public consultation #2, of 430 responses, 45 different classes of feedback were identified, some different from that of the first consultation. In Figure 4, the top classes of feedback for the consultation #2 are shown, as well as how they were represented in the first public consultation.
Figure 4: Overview of main feedback classes identified in the second public consultation.

These classes of feedback were used to present to and facilitate discussion within the Standard working group. Within each, each comment was read and considered by the consultation analyst from the IUCN NbS Group. Particular comments of note were also specifically brought up with the NbS working group. These discussions were used to inform what action to take for that comment. Different classes of comments required different types of action to address them, as presented for the top five classes in Table 1.

Table 1: Classes of feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback class</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>How addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wording</td>
<td>Participants indicated either that the wording was unclear or they disagreed with the terms being used.</td>
<td>Wording suggestions were inserted as tracked changes and comments into the draft, which was shared with the Standard working group. Based on feedback these were either accepted, altered or rejected. If the latter two, additional guidance was provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Participants required guidance on how this could be achieved and how identified barriers can be overcome.</td>
<td>Based on this feedback the Standard was separated into three components. Part I is a user friendly booklet for the less technical audience, with case studies and images to assist with communicating concepts. Part II is the guidance, demonstrating the scientific grounding and reason for various components of the standard. Part III, to be launched at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in January 2021, will be the user guide, associated with a list of tools and means of verification to directly address users questions of how various indicators can be addressed. In addition, a metrics focus group was created to compile additional guidance for the self-assessment tool so that for each indicator there is guidance on how to assess the level to which the intervention is in adherence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Participants highlighted the lack or under-representation of an audience group,</td>
<td>Relevant sections were shared with IUCN colleagues with expertise in these areas. In certain cases, bilateral or multilateral meetings were organised to facilitate further feedback from these parties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
or encouraged engaging a specific expert to review this text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Participants agreed with and supported this section.</th>
<th>These responses were noted and used in discussions with the Standard working group when issues were brought up to give a balanced view.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Participants suggested different order, narratives or formatting to facilitate understanding of the content.</td>
<td>The Standard was separated into three components where Part I (the user-friendly booklet) gives that general overview allowing users to find and understand the scientific grounding and reasoning in Part II. Part III, the “how to” user guide will be launched in January 2021. These comments were also used to reformat the Standard, changing the order of indicators and criteria as well as including case studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Participants required further guidance on a specific term.</td>
<td>In certain cases, terms were expanded upon in the text to provide further guidance. Additionally, a glossary was added to Part II of the Standard (the guidance document to Part I, the user-friendly booklet).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Specific comments disagreeing with the content of the Standard</td>
<td>Here the quantitative analysis was used to see how many participants brought this up to see if there were any trends in demands for new or altered content. Where there was disagreement between participants, this was discussed further with the Standard working group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through the combination of quantitative analysis, clustering feedback and highlighting specific key comments, many minor alterations were made as well as the larger issues which were identified (Table 2). Each of these major issues was raised with the Standard working group.

*Table 2: Examples of issues raised as a result of public consultations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback class</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>There was not sufficient emphasis on economic feasibility of an NbS.</td>
<td>A new criterion on economic feasibility was included in the revised iteration (Criterion 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>What is landscape scale? Why is there emphasis on terrestrial only?</td>
<td>The criterion addressing scale was revised to be clearer and indicator in all other criteria related to scale revised. A graphic was included to show how the actions that while an NbS take can be localised in a small or large area, the design needs to take into account the larger area including indirect and connecting land and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
<td><strong>Should this be a standard or renamed to be guidance?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Standard working group agreed on a facilitative standard – non optional yet not formative. Standard consultant confirmed that the written document conforms to what is needed in a standard.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td><strong>Biodiversity loss itself should be a societal challenge.</strong></td>
<td><strong>A seventh societal challenge was added as ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss (reversal of by NbS). NbS that address the seventh societal challenge must also address another societal challenge.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
<td><strong>The language is too scientific or too broad. This needs to be reworded for a specific audience/made more general.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Due to the conflicting nature of comments regarding the broadness/specificity of the language in the Standard, the Standard was separated into two and then three parts so that language not be a barrier to any audience. Part I would focus on the content of the criteria and indicators and have the most globally accessible language. Part II would provide the scientific guidance, aimed primarily at the more technical users. Part III (to be launched at a later date) would be aimed at practitioners as a sort of user guide, learning from the piloting of the self-assessment guide.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td><strong>How can this indicator be met? How is adherence with the indicator measured?</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Standard was separated into two and then three parts so that language not be a barrier to any audience. Part III (to be launched at a later date) would be aimed at practitioners as a sort of user guide, learning from the piloting of the self-assessment guide. A metrics focus group was established and produced scaling guidance for users to be able to assess how well their intervention addresses an indicator.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Output of the consultation and development period**

The final first-ever version of the IUCN Global Standard for NbS has 8 criteria and 28 indicators. It is now composed of three parts where Part I is a user-friendly booklet, Part II is the technical guidance and Part III is the user guide. A tool compendium and a self-assessment tool to enable users of this first version to use the Standard will accompany these. Users will also engage with the Standard by becoming part of the User Group, which itself is part of the larger governance structure.
Thank you and acknowledgements

This first version of the NbS Standard was developed in a consultative manner, drawing on scientific, editing and technical expertise of numerous people from within IUCN and the Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM). The Standard publication was the collective effort of many committed individuals, groups and networks. We thank those who provided comments on previous versions of the document including the hundreds of participants from 100 countries who took part in the two rounds of public consultations enriching the quality and scope of the Standard.

This consultation process was developed with technical knowledge and guidance on standard setting from Assurance Services International (ASI).

This participatory consultation and development process was made possible through the contribution of the Agence Francaise de Développement (AFD), through the France-IUCN Partnership for Nature and Development.