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**Specialist Group Workshop**  
**Ramsar Training and Advisory Service**

(Referred to as PAPER 5 in Workshop)

**Project Concept – October 2000**

## **A Wetlands Training Framework and Advisory Service**

Enhancing the capacity of Ramsar Convention Contracting Parties  
to deliver conservation of wetlands worldwide

*Prepared by Wetlands International for the Ramsar Convention Bureau*

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#### **1 Objective**

To enhance the capacity of Ramsar Convention Contracting Parties in their delivery of the principles and practice of the conservation and wise use (sustainable development) of wetlands, through improving identification and access to training opportunities and the exchange of know-how in wetland inventory, assessment, restoration, management, public awareness and education.

#### **2 Background & Rationale**

The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) places strong emphasis on the provision of training and capacity-building for wetland science and wise use. It requires, in Article 4.5, that "the Contracting Parties shall promote the training of personnel competent in the fields of wetland research, management and wardening." General Objective 4 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002 is: "to reinforce the capacity of institutions in each Contracting Party to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands" and under Operational

Objective 4.2, includes six priority actions intended to promote training, as shown below

<b>Operational Objective 4.2:</b> <b>To identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands, particularly in developing countries, and to implement follow-up actions.</b>	<b>Action by:</b>	<b>Role of proposed Service</b>
<b>Action 4.2.1</b> Identify at national, provincial and local level the needs and target audiences for training in implementation of the Wise Use Guidelines.	[CPs, Bureau, Partners]	On inception, run 4 initial Pilot National Training Needs Workshops. Repeat Regional review prior to each COP meeting
<b>Action 4.2.2</b> Identify current training opportunities in disciplines essential for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.	[CPs, Bureau, Partners]	Extend and maintain the Ramsar Directory of Training Opportunities. Assess opportunities and exercise quality control. Identify gaps and seek additional partners
<b>Action 4.2.3</b> Develop new training activities and general training modules, for application in all regions, concerning implementation of the Wise Use Guidelines, with specialized modules covering the following fields: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated catchment/river basin and coastal zone planning and management;</li> <li>• Integrated site management planning at the provincial, local or catchment/river basin level;</li> <li>• Wetland restoration and rehabilitation;</li> <li>• Education and public awareness techniques.</li> </ul>	[CPs, Bureau, Partners]	Work with the River Basin Initiative, and the framework of the CBD-Ramsar Joint Work Plan and informed by the Vision for Water for Nature and other relevant strategies, to target delivery and content of training.
<b>Action 4.2.4</b> Provide opportunities for manager training by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personnel exchanges for on-the-job training;</li> <li>• holding pilot training courses at specific Ramsar sites;</li> <li>• siting wetland manager</li> </ul>	[CPs, Bureau, Partners]	Using the web-based tools, in particular the Ramsar experts register and peer-reviewed capacity of training institutes to match needs with opportunities

<p>training facilities at Ramsar sites;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• obtaining and disseminating information about training courses for wetland managers around the world</li> </ul>		
<b>Action 4.2.5</b> Give higher priority in the Operational Guidelines of the Small Grants Fund to support for training activities.	[CPs, SC]	Assist more effective targeting of Small Grants
<b>Action 4.2.6</b> Exchange information, technical assistance and advice, and expertise about the conservation and wise use of wetlands, also with regard to South-South cooperation.	[CPs, Bureau, Partners]	Contribute experience and lessons learnt to the Wise Use Centre

Wetlands training takes many forms, and is needed for the effective implementation of wetland science and management at site, national and wider scales; covering *inter alia* inventory, assessment and monitoring, restoration, national policy and plan development, site management planning and public awareness and education. There are many wetland-related training courses, and much other more project-linked training, that takes place in different countries and for different purposes. The Directory of Wetland Management Training Opportunities, initiated by the Ramsar Convention Bureau as part implementation of the Strategic Plan Objective 4, to date includes 65 training opportunities. Major new initiatives to provide training opportunities are also underway – notably the Wetlands for the Future Initiative that provides funding for wetland-related training in the Neotropics. Numerous other training tools, courses and centres are being developed.

As part of their implementation of the Convention, Contracting Parties are asked triennially to report on their identification of training needs within their countries. By early 1999, however, only 22 advised that a training needs analysis was underway, and 23 that they had systematically reviewed the training opportunities for nationals from their country. Although more Contracting Parties (74) did report that nationals from their country had received wetland-related training it is considered that much of such training was *ad hoc* and opportunistic rather than directed at addressing priority management problems (Ramsar Workplan 1999-2002).

To facilitate the better matching of training needs and training opportunities, and to develop new training initiatives where these are identified as lacking, the Ramsar Convention Bureau has identified the urgent need to develop and launch a major wetland manager training initiative under the Convention, in partnership with its International Partner Organisations, of which Wetlands International is one. Wetlands International and the Ramsar Convention Bureau propose to develop this initiative for a *Wetlands Training Framework and Advisory Service*, and to launch and, as resources permit to make operational, the initiative at the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Contracting Parties of the Ramsar Convention (Spain, 2002). This proposal will, therefore, operationalise implementation of Ramsar Strategic Plan Operational Objective 4.2.

### 3 Wetlands International training experience, background and capacity

Wetlands International, since its formation over 40 years ago, has provided many in-country and centralised training courses, aimed at science professionals, wetlands managers, land use planners and rangers, for example. Courses have been based at well-equipped institutions in developed countries, however, increasingly since the 1980's, Wetlands International has preferred to mount courses in developing countries in order to strengthen capacity, and to make more relevant the transfer of experience of wetlands science and management between countries, whether "South" or "North".

Key examples of recent training events are 1996-1997: 100 Indonesian middle level forestry managers were trained in Indonesia and in the UK (for specialised courses); in Senegal, West African specialists have developed wetlands training programmes for managers in

over 11 countries of the region.

The effectiveness of training provided by Wetlands International reflects the strength of its network of committed professionals, based in the world's leading research and teaching institutions, government institutes, and conservation partners. In particular, the Specialist Groups network of Wetlands International and that of its international Partners will be asked to provide a quality control review advisory group, with the function of ensuring that the web directory of training opportunities and register of training experts is kept up to date and of a high calibre.

#### **4 Implementation**

The approach envisages the development of a training framework that will:

- assist Contracting Parties review their training needs in a standard way;

- develop a comprehensive and interactive directory of training opportunities;

- provide an Advisory Service, including a manned help-desk, to assist Contracting Parties in matching their training needs with the available opportunities;

- assist those needing training in finding the necessary resources for such training; and

- identify and seek to fill gaps in the availability of training at the appropriate level, topic and location.

It is anticipated that in the development of the Training Framework and Advisory Service, Wetlands International would be responsible, on behalf of the Ramsar Convention Bureau for programme development, and for establishing linkages with other organisations including international NGOs with relevant environmental training programmes, and national institutes and agencies providing wetland training.

*Phase 1 implementation will involve:*

- Identification of Contracting Parties key needs through four pilot Regional Needs Assessment Workshops, in 2001.

- Baseline assessment and peer review of wetland training opportunities and expertise; and

- Consolidation of the opportunities identified in Phase 1. as a Training Opportunities web-searchable database.

- Establishment of the Training and Advisory Service Help Desk, with English, French and Spanish language capacity

*Phase 2 will involve:*

- Assistance to contracting Parties in assessing their wetland training needs, including the development of a standard training needs assessment process and tools; and

- Facilitation and active management to enable the matching of needs with opportunities, through use of web-searchable Training Opportunities database and help-desk assistance.

#### **5 Targeting mechanism: setting priorities**

An unstructured approach to training needs assessment, provision of training and other assistance would quickly exceed the full capacity of the proposed Training and Advisory Service, unless a targeting mechanism exists. This mechanism would establish criteria for decisions to be taken on the acceptance or modification of requests, and would aim to prioritise training requests, while at the same time assisting Contracting Parties to obtain the most sustainable result.

Key criteria might include:

Whether in-country or regional training infrastructure was available, and how this might be developed

Whether past training and follow-up actions were effective, so that adjustments can be made

Evaluation of the sustainability of the capacity building being provided, to ensure that staff being trained would be retained and be capable of disseminating their expertise

Whether synergy could be demonstrated with in-country training organisations, and capacity-building work already undertaken or planned by other Partner agencies

## **6 Outputs and Products**

Web-accessible searchable and updated database of Training Opportunities, identifying training centres, training courses, and other training opportunities, developing the existing Ramsar Convention Directory of Wetland Management Training Opportunities;

Wetland Training Advisory Service:

with help-desk (in the Ramsar Convention languages) to assist those with training needs to connect with appropriate training programmes, and

assist in identifying sources of funding for those needing training;

Overview of global wetland training needs and priorities, to assist in identifying gaps and the priority development of training needs not currently met.

Formal launch at Ramsar COP8 of Wetland Training Framework and Advisory Service

## **7 Anticipated Outcomes**

More Contracting Parties to have completed training needs assessments, in line with Ramsar Strategic Plan target (Objective 4.2.1 More than 75 CPs to have completed training needs analyses by COP8).

Improved access to training opportunities and increased numbers of key staff trained in wetland management in contracting parties, leading to

Increased Contracting Party capacity to implement the principles and practice of sustainable development of their wetlands.

## **8 Timescales**

By COP8 (second half of 2002):

four Regionally based National Needs Assessment Workshops completed, by the end of 2001;

an on-line Wetland Training Opportunities database;

an analysis of wetland training opportunities world-wide;

a manned Wetland Training Advisory Service with help-desk assisting Contracting Parties and their nationals to identify training opportunities;

a training needs assessment process and tools available to Contracting Parties;

training needs assessments undertaken where necessary with assistance from the Advisory Service in at least 75 Contracting Parties.

After COP8:

continuing development and updating of Training Opportunities database;

training needs assessments progressively completed by all Contracting Parties following standard processes;

analysis of Contracting Party training needs and priorities

identification of gaps in training opportunities in relation to needs and priorities and the development of further training opportunities to meet these priorities.

## **9 Costs**

Costs for this Training and Advisory Service fall into the categories of:

Phase 1 - Design and implementation of the Service (in 2001)

Internet website development

Review and assessment of training opportunities

Design of the role of the Helpdesk, and its procedures for provision of advice and implementation visits to Contracting Parties from the Advisory service

Pilot regionally based National Training Needs Assessments, to be undertaken with assistance from the Advisory Service in 4 Contracting Parties (one each for Ramsar Regions: Asia, Oceania, Africa, Neotropics.)

Phase 2 - ongoing work of the Service

Identification of needs and actions required in at least 75 Contracting Parties (by COP8)

Continuing assessment and quality control of training opportunities

Internet website management

Training Advisory visits to Contracting Parties, including use of trained facilitators

Helpdesk

Provision of products in computer and hard copy formats

Initial development of the Service in Phase 1 will be implemented using existing staff, assisted by short term inputs from consultants. For Phase 2, a dedicated full-time staff member will be required for the Help Desk, assisted by short term secondments of existing staff and also drawn from Specialist Groups, and partner organisations. It is proposed that the helpdesk (project co-ordinator and one staff) be based in a regional office of Wetlands International, with one staff member nominated as a Focal Point in each of the other two regional offices.

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