

A Framework To Guide Strategic Reviews In IUCN

Draft for Review by Senior Management and PDG

Produced by the IUCN M&E Initiative

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Strategic Reviews in IUCN is to review, on a regular and selective basis, the rationale, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and financial viability of an organizational unit at any level – (programme, project, geographic or representational office or, Commission) in order to make key strategic decisions about the rationale, focus, content, scope, direction and resource allocation of the unit. These Reviews differ from in-depth technical programme reviews as they seek to answer higher order strategic questions, and they look at organizational performance as well as programmatic performance.

The Draft IUCN Evaluation Policy to be circulated in early 2001 will set out the types of evaluations and reviews that IUCN undertakes – this will help to position Strategic Reviews in relation to programme or project evaluations.

The need for a common approach to Strategic Reviews and Evaluations is highlighted in the Meta Evaluation carried out in 2000 of all IUCN reviews and evaluations since 1994. The Meta Evaluation indicates that evaluation and review practice in IUCN is far from good practice, and that most reviews and evaluations are undertaken as one-off events with no common framework to guide or track performance over time. The Meta Evaluation recommends a common framework for reviews and evaluations that is based on best practice, and that provides standard TORs, common review questions, reliable and credible instruments for data collection and analysis, so that performance across units and geographic regions can be compared over time.

The purpose of a common framework for Strategic Reviews is to provide IUCN senior managers and Council with:

- an agreed set of performance areas and questions
- a systematic way of collecting data in order to draw conclusions and make judgements and strategic decisions in a transparent and defensible manner and
- a framework around which to report on performance at the organizational level.

The elements of the framework proposed are based on the Organizational Performance Framework developed by IDRC and Universalia (1999) and used regionally in IUCN (ARD, ORMA, EARO) and in other organizations world wide (IDB, WB, IDRC).

The framework includes:

- A set of key performance aspects within which an organizational unit (region, programme, Commission) can be expected to perform to high standards – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, financial viability and impact.
- A set of key factors that affect performance in each of these areas - capacity, motivation and external context.
- Key review questions within each of these areas, for which data is collected from key stakeholders, reports and other sources as appropriate.
- A transparent process of data collection and stakeholder involvement to answer the key review questions, generate findings and reach conclusions about the performance of the unit.

The users and uses of Strategic Reviews are:

- IUCN DG, Council and/or Bureau - for strategic decision making related to the rationale for, focus of, content, direction and viability of IUCN units, and for annual reporting on performance to IUCN Council;

- IUCN Senior Management – for regular oversight of the performance of IUCN units world-wide.
- PDG (Programme Development Group) – in its role as strategic overseers of the performance of peer component programmes
- The Head, Director or Coordinator of the reviewed unit – for improvement of management and programme systems and delivery of results.
- Staff of the unit – for improved delivery of results
- Members of the Union – in their governance role as overseers of the programme and performance of the Union at World Congresses.

METHODOLOGY FOR STRATEGIC REVIEWS

Part One sets out the major areas of performance around which judgements must be made about the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and financial viability of the unit.

Part Two sets out the key factors that contribute to performance in the above areas. The major contributing factors are - the capacity of the unit, motivational factors, and the ability of the Unit to deal with the external context.

There are overlaps in the questions in Part One and Two by design. The reader should consider this an iterative process of dialogue and data collection in order to reach conclusions about the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and financial viability of the Unit.

PART ONE: ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE ASPECTS

	KEY QUESTIONS (questions have been selected as examples from the Enhancing Organizational Effectiveness toolkit and can be adapted)
1. Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How relevant is the unit's work in relation to the Union's KRA's and KEGO? ➤ How relevant is the unit's work in relation to its constituents or stakeholders needs? ➤ Does the unit's work represent cutting edge thinking in conservation and development? ➤ What is the credibility of the unit within and outside IUCN ? ➤ What is its influence within and outside IUCN ?
2. Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How well is the unit's programme related to the IUCN Mission, Vision, KRA's, Strategy (KEGO) ➤ How well has the unit done meeting its annual and strategic plans What are the main reasons to justify the differences between planned results and those achieved ? ➤ How well has the unit done in linking and achieving its results with the IUCN Quadrennial programme KRAs What are the main reasons to justify the differences between those planned and those achieved ? ➤ How well has the unit responded to unexpected and unplanned events? ➤ How well has the unit integrated new thinking from across the Union, and innovation from other sources? ➤ How well has the unit worked with other parts of the Union – regionally and globally?
3. Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How well has the unit managed their resources (staff, funding, time)? ➤ How has it used the core funds received (to invest in new processes, to fund routine operations, risk capital, matching funds, etc)?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is its ratio between technical and support staff? ➤ How efficient are work practices and procedures?
4. Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Does the unit know what impact it has had? How has this been measured or assessed? ➤ What is the impact of the unit within and outside IUCN? ➤ What are the major impact milestones of the unit?
5. Financial viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How adequate is the level of funding of the unit in relation to its programme expected outcomes? ➤ How broad is the funding base of the unit, both in number and variety of funding sources and in the amount obtained from each source? ➤ How dependent has the unit been on IUCN core funds (unrestricted and restricted) in the last 3 years? Why? ➤ How well has the unit done in securing external (non IUCN) financial support for its activities? Why has it succeeded or failed in getting external support? How is this related with the unit's relevance and impact? ➤ Has the Unit been able to keep their expenses within budget in the last 3 years? Has the unit been forced to cut staff because of financial constraints?

A NOTE ON WEIGHTING: Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the weight given to each of the above areas should be equal in reaching a conclusion on the overall performance of a unit.

PART TWO: ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO PERFORMANCE

	KEY QUESTIONS
1. Capacity	<p>Strategic leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Does the Unit have a strategic plan to guide its work? Who participated in its elaboration? Is it aligned with the overall IUCN strategy? Is it known to and supported by the members or constituents of the unit? Is it used regularly for decision making? ➤ Is there a process in place for monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan? ➤ How effective is senior staff in carrying out their strategic leadership role? ➤ How participatory is the leadership style of the unit? ➤ Does the leadership and management of the unit understand and use 'niche' management to help it to achieve its results? ➤ Does the leadership / senior management ensure that the unit undertakes regular situation analysis in order to make strategic choices about its programme and the institutions with which it works? ➤ What governance bodies or mechanisms are in place and how well do they function? (national or regional members advisory committees, or equivalent) ➤ What internal review and organisational development processes are in place and what impact are they having? <p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the structure of the unit (management, decision making) facilitate or hinder the unit in achieving its results? • Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined? • Are there adequate linkages or opportunities for linkages when needed across programmes and projects?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is decision making clearly defined and decentralized appropriately? • Do staff have the authority to set agendas and act accordingly? <p>Programme planning and management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do staff at different levels receive proper guidance from the managers in the unit? ➤ Are the programmes and projects linked to other IUCN units and Programmes? (integration – horizontal and vertical) ➤ What is the involvement of members and Commissions in the implementation of the Programme? ➤ How innovative are the programmes and projects? ➤ Did programmes and projects deliver the committed products on time? ➤ Does the unit have the appropriate resources and management systems and structures to effectively deliver its planned programme? <p>Human resources management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How well do staff profiles fit programme and project needs? ➤ Are there incentives in place to support good performance and career advancement? What behaviors are supported by incentives? ➤ Is there a training programme for the staff? ➤ Is the working environment adequate? ➤ Is there a gender balance mechanism in place and is it used effectively? ➤ Are there unresolved issues of equity of pay? ➤ Is there an ombudsman or SLC function? Is it used? ➤ Are there appropriate staff recruitment and orientation procedures in place? ➤ Is there an effective and supportive staff appraisal system in place and being used? ➤ How well are staff being managed, supervised and mentored? <p>Financial resources management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is there an explicit financial strategy or business plan? ➤ Is there an appropriate budgeting mechanism? Is it participatory? ➤ Do managers at different levels receive timely and accurate financial information? ➤ Are project resources spent on time? ➤ Is there an auditing mechanism in place? What are its results? ➤ Are financial services being effectively provided to sub-units (eg projects) <p>Monitoring and Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are staff trained and skilled in monitoring and evaluation? ➤ What types of M&E processes are in place – for purposes of learning, accountability, control? ➤ Which programmes and processes are doing M&E? Are there major gaps? ➤ How do M&E results feed into reporting and decision-making? <p>Infrastructure and administration support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the offices and equipment (vehicles, computers) adequate to deliver the expected results – and are they managed well? • Is the communication technology (information management, internet, phone lines) adequate to support effective delivery of the programme? <p>Other capacity factors to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process management - Are problem solving processes in place and do they work to the satisfaction of staff? • Inter-institutional linkages – Does the Unit work well with partners, donors and other organizations?
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2. Motivation	<p>History and purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are the milestones in the history of the unit? ➤ How has the unit evolved over time? ➤ Is there a clear sense of purpose in the staff? Is that purpose consistent with the IUCN Mission? <p>Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are the main characteristics of the Unit as perceived by different groups within and outside the Unit and how do such characteristics affect the Units performance? ➤ How is staff morale? ➤ What is the level of commitment of staff and managers? <p>Incentives and rewards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is the staff perception of the incentive mechanisms ? ➤ How does the staff perceive the status of the unit regarding their own interests and career? ➤ How does the staff perceive the level of equity within the unit ?
3. External Context	<p>Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Who are the key stakeholders for the unit? ➤ How do the stakeholders value the unit's products and services? ➤ How responsive has the unit been to its stakeholders needs and requests? ➤ Who are the unit partners in delivering work? How do they perceive the partnership with the unit? (value added?) ➤ Who are the unit competitors? Why are they competitors and not partners? Are they taking over the unit's niche? Why? ➤ How do donors and funders perceive the value of the unit's products and services? ➤ How is the unit affected by donor trends in funding? ➤ How does the political and socioeconomic environment affect the unit? ➤ How is the unit affected by the administrative and legal environment of the country, region?

REVIEW OF RATIONALE

This part of the Review should focus on a few basic questions – which may be better answered after the other areas of performance have been reviewed:

1. Does it make sense for IUCN to keep the reviewed unit as it is? Is there a clear Situation Analysis that provides a rationale for the unit?
2. If not, what are the alternatives? Can IUCN make better use of its scarce resources in a geographic area / theme other than this unit.
3. If it is strategically advisable to keep a presence in the area / theme of the reviewed unit for political or strategic reasons, what should the major guidelines be to reorient the unit?
4. If a strong rationale exists, and if there are factors that support some aspects of performance of the Unit (such as strong membership support, donor interest) then it may be necessary for the unit to conduct a thorough Organizational Assessment process in order to identify which are the key organizational issues that are constraining its performance?

STRATEGIC REVIEW PLAN

A Strategic Review requires the preparation of a Plan detailing the tasks, products, responsibilities, schedule and resources required to implement the Review. The scope of the Review needs to be scaled appropriately to the size of the Unit under Review, the numbers of staff, the scope of responsibility of the unit, the extent of member and stakeholder involvement and other factors.

The main stages of the Review Plan are:

1. Preparatory stage:

- Identification of the unit to be reviewed – and the audience / client for the Review. (Who needs to know what.)
- Agreement on the purpose, objectives and uses of the Review – who will use the results for what purposes.
- Development of TOR and methodology for the Review, and identification of sources of data
- Selection of the Review Team and TOR for the Team
- Distribution of tasks among the members of the Team
- Identification of participants and preparation of protocols for interviews and questionnaires to be used.

2. Data collection

- Collection of reports, desk studies.
- Startup workshops with participants of the review to clarify purpose, objectives, questions, data.
- Carrying out interviews (in person or by phone)
- Focus groups if appropriate
- Distribution and receipt of questionnaires (paper and electronic),
- Identification and review of the documentation
- Visits to members, partners and donors, etc.

3. Data analysis and preparation of Report.

- After entering data, the Review Team meeting to analyze the data, produce findings, reach conclusions and draft the Review Report.

4. Presentation and discussion of the report:

- Depending on the scope of the Review, the urgency of the matter and the time available there may be an several cycles of comment and response on the report before the report is considered final by the client. This should be decided and agreed ahead of time by the client (Council, DG, senior management, and the unit under review)

Composition of a Strategic Review Team

Strategic Reviews need to carry the full authority of IUCN senior management. Review Team members should be senior, and command the respect and credibility of component programmes (regions, Commissions, thematic) and the IUCN Council. This is essential if the recommendations are to be credible and acted on.

While a specific Team should be appointed for each Strategic Review, there should be consistency of representation between Review Teams. There should be a representative of the Programme Team and the M&E Initiative on each Review Team, and other members should be selected on a case by case basis depending on factors such as regional geographic and cultural considerations, technical and political factors.

External reviewers should be considered as members depending on the sensitivity of internal issues to be covered. They may be particularly helpful when the Review is focused on a redesign or redirection of a programme unit where new ideas and insights from other sources could be helpful, and where regaining the credibility of donors in the area or field of endeavor is crucial.

Strategic Review Participants

The number and extent of involvement of participants will depend on the scope of the unit being reviewed, the purpose of the Review, and the sensitivity of the concerns. However as general guidance, the Review should include the key management and programme staff of the unit, key partners and members if a region, key clients if a service unit. If the impact of programme is a key concern in the Review, then the Review

should involve beneficiaries of the programmes or projects in a manner that generates clear data on benefits of the programme or service unit.

Resources required

Time and other resources required will depend on the size and complexity of the Unit being reviewed, and also on the number and location of the participants. (eg. large Regional or Country Programme with many sub offices will take more time and resources than single office programmes).

It is estimated that a Strategic Review should take between 2 and 4 weeks of dedicated work taking into consideration field and desk work and a reasonable range of variation in size and complexity. This time will be usually distributed over a longer period (1 to 4 months) depending on the urgency of the Review, the degree to which the views of stakeholders are sought, and how many feedback loops are in the process.

Some Reviews can benefit substantially from the presence of an external consultant (either technical or a management consultant) and resources should be budgeted for this option.

Current experience in Strategic Reviews in IUCN:

There are a number of 'strategic' organizational reviews that have taken place in the Union that can act as a guidance and experience for a more formalized set of Strategic Reviews in IUCN. These include (but are not limited to) the Organizational Reviews currently being undertaken at ROSA and EARO (with support from external consultants), the previous reviews undertaken at IUCN Pakistan by Peter Morgan, and the organizational self assessments experiences at ORMA and BRAO with support from Universalialia.

Copies of some of these reviews are available from the M&E Initiative – along with reference material on Organizational Assessments.

For more information – contact nmm@hq.iucn.org

ANNEX 1:

MAIN DATA SOURCES AND DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Data sources and data collection methods are identified as examples according with the different factors to be reviewed. The following Table provides a starting point for these tasks.

FACTOR	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION TOOLS
Effectiveness	Unit Staff Unit Documents & Reports Other IUCN Units Partners Members	Document analysis Interviews Questionnaires
Efficiency	Unit Staff Unit Documents & Reports IUCN Finance Office IUCN Human Resources Office	Document analysis Interviews
Relevance / impact	Unit Staff Unit Documents & Reports Other IUCN Units Partners (including beneficiaries) Members Donors	Document analysis Interviews Questionnaires Focus Groups
Financial viability	Unit Staff Unit Documents & Reports IUCN Finance Office Donors	Document analysis Interviews
Capacity	Unit Staff Unit Documents & Reports Other IUCN Units Partners Members	Document analysis Interviews Questionnaires Focus Groups
Motivation	Unit Staff Unit Documents & Reports	Interviews
External context	Unit Staff Other IUCN Units Partners Members Donors	Interviews Questionnaires