Consultant's Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) Assessment 2016-2019¹

Contents

Ι.	Introduction	1
II.	Aim and objectives	2
III.	Methodological approach	2
IV.	Main objectives of the existing RRIs	4
V.	Key Results	6
	Strategic plan and workplan	
	WWD celebration	
	Website	
	Training events and number of participants 2016-2019	
	Other Capacity building activities	
	Communication strategy	
	Work with Indigenous/local communities	
VI.	Funding	8
	Resource mobilization strategy	
	Independent Bank account for the initiative	
VII.	Legal Status	10
VIII.	Partnerships	10
IX.	Governance	11
	Governing Body	
	Contact with the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands	
	National STRP focal points in the participating countries active in the initiative	
	CEPA national focal point in the participating countries active in the initiative	
Х.	Performance	11
XI.	Key challenges	12
XII.	Conclusions and Recommendations	13
XIII.	Effectiveness Indicators/ Elements for Operational Guidelines	15

Tables:

 Table 1: Distribution of the RRIs in the regions and those analysed based on received

questionnaires.

Table 2: General information about RRIs

Table 3 - Summary of key results

Table 4: Income by source and Expenditures - 2016-2019 (CHF)

Table 5: IOPs partners

Table 6 – Performance Self-Assessment

Annex 1 - List of reviewed documents

¹ Disclaimer The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author, based on an extensive review of documents and reports as reflected in Annex 1, as well as the responses provided to the questionnaire.

Ramsar Regional Initiatives (RRIs) Assessment 2016-2019

I. Introduction

The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) is a Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) whose mission is the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world. It was the first of the modern global multilateral environmental agreements and is devoted to a very critical ecosystem.

As stated in Resolution XII.8 of the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971), regional initiatives under the Convention, include centres for training and capacity building and networks which facilitate cooperation, are intended as operational means to provide effective support for an improved implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in specific geographic regions, through international cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern.

At present there are 4 Regional Centres covering the Western Hemisphere, West and Central Asia, Eastern Asia and Eastern Africa, one partnership formed by Contracting Parties and NGOs, and 14 Ramsar regional networks in various regions. The RRIs promote training and capacity building, scientific and technical cooperation and exchange of knowledge to support the implementation of the Convention.

This assessment follows the one conducted in 2015 of 15 RRIs in accordance with the mandate provided by the 12 Conference of the Parties (COP12). That assessment highlighted 15 achievements and concluded that "A strong institutional base which enables the RRIs to execute targeted programmes, projects and activities in a professional way, with sufficient funding, is an important prerequisite to increase the implementation of the Convention in their respective regions and countries, and beyond".

At COP13 held in Dubai in 2018, Parties recalled that the 19 RRIs under the Convention on Wetlands are intended as an operational means to provide effective support for improved implementation of the Convention in specific geographic regions, through voluntary international cooperation on wetland-related issues. In paragraph 8 of the Resolution XIII.9, the Parties decided that for RRIs to maintain their formal recognition, they must be in line with the following seven principles:

- a. "RRIs must be endorsed by the Conference of the Contracting Parties, or inter-sessionally by the Standing Committee if they are new;
- b. RRIs must be subject to review by the Contracting Parties at each meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
- c. RRIs must develop terms of reference, which cover their own rules of procedure, structure, governance and membership, including the status of the Convention Secretariat's participation in the RRI, and which should be consistent with the Resolutions and Recommendations of the Conference of the Parties;
- d. RRIs must be financially accountable;
- e. RRIs should undertake tasks related to the implementation of the Convention in their region and can speak in their own name only, using their own logo only;

- f. RRIs must submit to the Secretariat, according to the format approved by the Standing Committee, an annual report of progress on their work and a financial summary at the end of each year, together with a work plan and budget for the following year; and
- g. RRIs that have been established for fewer than six years and that want to apply for start-up financial support from the Ramsar Convention core budget must request it in their budget submitted for the following year."

COP13 re-established the Ramsar Regional Initiatives Working Group (the RRI-WG) and requested the group to prepare and submit a draft Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives for adoption at COP14 expected to be held in China. The review of existing relevant Resolutions and decisions as requested by COP13 was presented at SC58, Doc 22.4, as well as the report on the analysis of the legal status of RRIs SC58 Doc 22.3.

II. Aim and objectives

The aim of this assessment is to serve as the basis to draft new Operational Guidelines for RRIs, consistent with the principles identified in Resolution XIII.9, paragraph 8 mentioned above. The new Operational Guidelines are expected to enhance the effectiveness and transparency of the management and operations of RRIs.

Specific objectives

- To assess the governance, financial management and transparency mechanism of each of the RRI's by analysing their past annual reports, of their terms of reference, publications and other available information (e.g., websites, interviews with RRIs' coordinators or other representatives);
- To propose indicators of effectiveness and impact for agreement by the RRI-WG, and prepare an assessment of each RRI's effectiveness and impact in supporting implementation of the Convention;
- Identify gaps and opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of RRIs based on the legal status analysis, review of existing Resolutions and decisions related to RRIs, and above-mentioned reviews.

III. Methodological approach

Literature review

To ensure that an objective analysis could be conducted, the consultant recruited for this purpose reviewed about two hundred documents to obtain information (the list that can be found as annex I).

Key informant Interviews

The Consultant undertook interviews with key staff from the Secretariat, including the Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary General and the 4 Regional Advisors to better inform the contents of the survey, as well as the Chair of the Working Group to brief her on the workplan and clarify expectations of the tasks at hand. She also contacted the Secretariat of the Chemicals Conventions to get some feedback on the work of the Regional and coordinating centres under the Convention, particularly the Basel Convention centres.

Survey of RRIs

A decision was taken in conjunction with the Secretariat to obtain feedback from the 19 coordinators through the means of a questionnaire. Through the survey it was ensured that each

coordinator responded to an identical set of questions to facilitate the comparison between the various RRIs and have written evidence of their responses for future assessment of progress.

This report concentrates on the analysis of the responses provided in the questionnaires for 16 RRIs and the review of the annual reports of those RRIs for the period 2016-2019 (see Table 1). The responses to the surveys can be downloaded from the following link: XXX

There are 19 RRIs composed of 4 Regional Centres, one partnership formed by Contracting Parties and NGOs, and 14 cooperation networks with various approaches to the cooperation, as well as their operations. (See table 1 below). There were three initiatives endorsed by COP7 in 1999 and the last four were approved in 2016 by the Standing Committee. The most mature RRIs have in place all necessary elements to be able to deliver their workplan, i.e., sound operational, administrative and governance procedures, regional strategies and workplans, strong partnerships with donors and a well-established funding base, where Contracting Parties and others make periodic financial contributions. These RRIs also have a well-developed identity, including logos, good working websites and outreach experience.

From the analysis of the received questionnaires and the existing annual reports, some initiatives have lost some of their impetus in comparison to when they were established, as well as some of the engagement and commitment from participating Contracting Parties.

Africa	Asia/Oceania	Europe	LAC
Regional Centre –	Regional Initiative for	BlackSeaWet regional	Amazon Basin
Eastern Africa	Central Asia (RRI-CA) (E)	initiative (J)	Wetlands regional
(RAMCEA) (A)			initiative - <i>no</i>
			questionnaire
			received (N)
NigerWet regional	Regional Centre – East	Carpathian Wetland	Caribbean
initiative (B)	Asia (RRC-EA) (F)	Initiative (K)	wetlands regional
			initiative (O)
SenegalWet regional	West Asia (RRC-CWA) (G)	MedWet Initiative -	Centre for the
initiative – no		no questionnaire	Western
questionnaire received,		received before the	Hemisphere –
but other key		deadline (L)	CREHO (P)
information was			
received (C)			
WACOWET regional	Asia RRIs: The East Asian -	NorBalWet regional	High Andean
initiative - no	Australasian Flyway	initiative (M)	Wetlands (Bolivia)
questionnaire received,	Partnership (EAAFP) (H)		- no questionnaire
but other key			received (Q)
information was (D)			
	Indo-Burma regional		Mangroves and
	initiative (IBRRI) (I)		Coral Reefs (R)
			River Plate Basin
			(S)

Table 1: Distribution of the RRIs in the regions and those analysed based on received
questionnaires

Table 2: General information about RRIs-

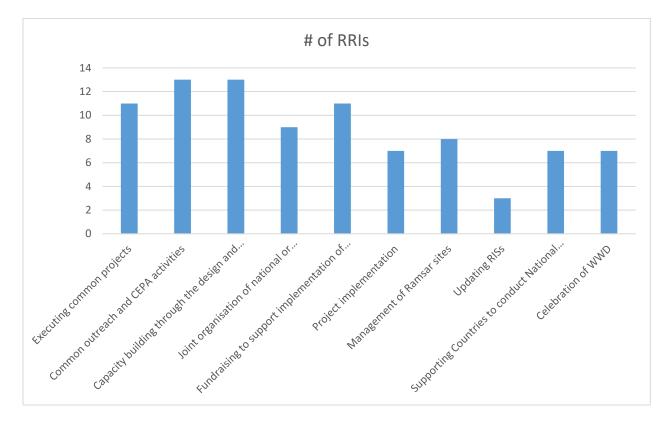
RRI	Date of establishment	Contracting Parties	Type of RRI
A	2005	7 (UG, KE, TZ, BI, RW, DJ, ET)	Regional Centre
B	2003	9 (BJ, BF, CM, CI, GN, ML, NE, NG, TD)	Secretariat with LS
C	2012	4 (SN, ML, MR, GN)	Rotating secretariat
C	2010		with LS
D	2005	13 (BJ, CV, CI, GM, GH, GW, LR, MR, NG, SN, SL, TG)	Secretariat with LS
Ε	2016	4 (KZ, KG, TM, UZ)	Regional Centre
F	2002	15 (IR, IQ, AZ, KZ, KG, TM, UZ, OM) 3 Non-CP (SA, QA, AF)	Regional Centre
G	1999	17CPs (AU, BD, KH, KR, KP, ID, JP, MY, MN, MM,	Network with
		NZ, CN, RU, TH, PH, US, VN), 1 Non-Party (SG) + 21 Partners	Secretariat with LS
н	2009	18 (BD, BT, KH, CN, IN, ID, JP, KP, KR, LA, MY, MN, MM, NP, PH, LK, TH, VN)	Wide partnership with a specific objective with a Secretariat with LS
I	2016	5 (KH, LA, MY, TH, VN)	Network with Secretariat
l	2009	6 (BG, GE, MD, RO, TR, UA)	Network with rotating Secretariat
К	2009	7 (CZ, HU, PL, RO, RS, SK, UA)	Network with Secretariat based on Governments' interest
L	1999	26 (AL, DZ, BA, BG, HR, CY, EG, FR, GR, IL, IT, JO, LB, MA, PT, RS, SI, ES, SY, MK, TN, TR) and Palestinian Authority	Network with Secretariat with LS
Μ	2009	11 (DK, EE, FI, IS, LV, LT, NO, SE, RU) + GL & FA- DK	Network with rotating with Secretariat
N	2016	5 (BO, BR, CO, EC, PE)	Network with rotating Secretariat
0	2009	11 (AG, BS, BB, BZ, CU, GD, JM, DO, LC, SR, TT)	Network with rotating Secretariat
Ρ	1999 (opened 2004)	30	Regional Centre
Q	2005	8 (AR, BO, CH, CO, CR, EC, PE, VE)	Network with rotating Secretariat
R	2009	14 (BR, CR, CO, CU, DO, EC, GT, HN, MX, NI, PA, PE, SV, VE)	Network with rotating Secretariat
S	2009	5 (AR, BO, BR, PY, UY)	Network with rotating Secretariat

IV. Main objectives of the existing RRIs

As detailed below, many of the RRIs are at present supporting the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2016-2024, particularly Goal 2, targets 6 and 7, Goal 3, targets 8, 9, 10, and 12. However, the

main part of the efforts and support provided by the RRIs to the Contracting Parties concentrate on Goal 4, targets 14 to 19.

As evident from the chart 1 below, the priority areas of the RRIs are common outreach activities, capacity building, fund raising and executing common projects, followed by management of Ramsar sites and preparation of inventories.



- 1- Executing common projects: 11 (B, E, F, G, I, J, K, O, P, R, S)
- 2- Common outreach and CEPA activities: 13 (B, C, E, F, G, I, J, K, M, O, P, R, S)
- **3-** Capacity building through the design and delivery of training events: **13** (A, C, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, M, O, P, R)
- 4- Joint organisation of national or international events: 9 (E, F, G, I, J, K, M, O, P)
- 5- Fundraising to support implementation of the Convention through the RRI or directly to the Contracting Party: 11 (A, B, E, F, G, I, K, M, O, P, R)
- 6- Project implementation: 7 (A, B, E, I, K, M, R)
- 7- Management of Ramsar sites: 8 (A, B, C, E, G, J, K, R)
- 8- Updating RISs: 3 (B, E, K)
- 9- Supporting Countries to conduct National inventories: 7 (A, E, J, K, M, O, R)
- 10- Celebration of WWD: 7 (A, F, I, K, M, O, R)

Others:

- ✓ Promoting adoption of national policies- (Goal 3 target 10)
- ✓ Working to support the implementation activities of contracting parties for the effective management and conservation of wetlands (Goal 3)
- ✓ Promoting scientific and technical cooperation and exchange of knowledge, including traditional knowledge, (Goal 3 target 10)
- Promoting wise use of wetlands through research and sustainable management (Goal 3 target 9)

- ✓ Encouraging accession of non-contacting parties in the region
- Promoting cooperation with other global and regional environmental agreements (Goal 4)

V. Key Results

Strategic plan and workplan

All initiatives have an Annual workplan as submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat once a year, although P did not submit the 2018 annual report nor the 2019 workplan. The quality and depth of annual reports vary enormously, and it is important to ensure that incomplete reports are not accepted by the Convention's Secretariat. An important suggestion made by one of the coordinating units, is to change the timing of submission of the report, as January does not match the Government annual reporting, which makes it very difficult to comply with the provision of an audited financial report before it is approved by the Government Audit office in February-March. 11 initiatives reported that they have strategic plans which are aligned with one or more strategic goals: A, C, D, G, H, I, K, M, P, R and S, of which 3 require updating (A, D, P). F and O stated that they follow the Convention's Strategic Plan 2016-2024 and do not see the need for a specific one for the RRI. According to information from the L website, its Strategic Plan requires updating.

World Wetland Day celebration

7 RRIs (**E** -29 Regional, 24 National, H – 16 National, I – 19, M, 0 – 11 National, P, R- 56 National) stated that they contribute to the celebrations of WWD events, although in most of the cases these refer to national efforts that cannot be directly attributed to the RRI.

		Indicator												
RRI	Strategic plan	Annual report/workplan	Website	WWD Celebration										
Α	X ²	х	X ³											
В		х	X ⁴											
С	X	Х	X ⁵	X										
D	X ₆	x												
E	Under development	x	Х	х										
F		Х	Х											
G	x	x	Х											
н	x	x	Х	х										
I	X	Х	Х	Х										
J		Х												
К	x	x	Х											
L	X	Х	Х											
М	X	Х	Х	х										
Ν		X												
0		х		х										
Р	X7	X EXCEPT 2018/9 and late 2019/20	х	X										
Q		X												
R	X	Х												

Table 3 - Summary key results

² Needs updating

³ Requires re-activation

⁴ Inactive

⁵ Inactive

⁶ Needs updating

⁷ Needs updating

S	Х	Х		
	12	19	12	7

<u>Website</u>

11 RRIs which responded to the questionnaire have websites (**A**, **B**, **C**, **E**, **F**, **G**, **H**, **I**, **K**, **M**, **P**) but 3 of those require reactivating and some require updating. (**A**, **B**, **C**). **L** also has an active website.

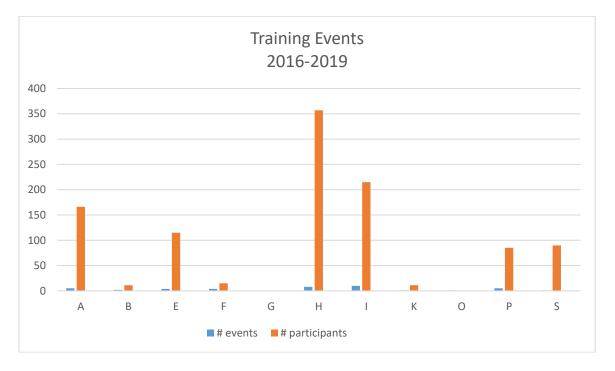
Communication strategy

3 RRIs reported they have a communication strategy (**G**, **H** as part of its Strategic Plan and **P**) and **3** are working on it or planning to finalise one in 2021 (**A**, **E**, **K**). According to its website **L** has a strategy valid until 2020. This is a key area that requires attention as communication and outreach was identified as a key priority by 13 RRIs. A communication strategy should be guiding these efforts.

Training events and number of participants 2016-2019

11 RRIs stated that they had conducted training events in very relevant areas to support the implementation of the Convention in the period 2016-2019 (A - 5, B-2, E-4, F-4, G-Unknown, H-8, I-10, K-1, O-1, P-5, S-1).

It is evident from the responses that the Regional Centres A, F, H and P conducted an average of one training per year between 2016-2019, but I was by far the most active in this area, considering number of events. E also undertook 4 training events per year. On number and countries of origin of trainees F was the most effective, followed by A, as shown in chart 2 below.



Regarding the number of participants, the RRIs reported 166 for A, 11 for B, 115 for E, 15 for F, *357 from 16 countries for H,* 95 technical people and 120 local communities for I, 11 regional participants for K, 85 for P, 90 regional participants for S. With the information available it is evident that more than 1000 people were trained in this period, which is an extremely valuable achievement of the RRIs in contributing to Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan. Although there is no doubt that there is a great value placed on training for national technical staff and communities, the RRIs should aim at having

regional training events where many the member Contracting Parties in the initiative participate to enhance the impact of the training events, exchanging best practices and experiences between participants from different countries and institutions.

Other Capacity building activities

- ✓ Design of e-training modules: S Management of Wetlands River Plate Basin
- ✓ Adoption of common methodologies: A, B, E, H, I, M, P i.e., conducting inventories; wetland assessments
- ✓ Sharing best practices: A, B, E, H, I, K, M
- Promotion of interregional events: C, G, H, I, K, P
- ✓ Translation into local languages: **E, G**
- ✓ Photo contest: G
- ✓ Regional training programme with local Universities on climate vulnerability: I

Work with Indigenous/local communities

4 RRIs reported activities with Indigenous people or local communities: A, E, F and K.

VI. Funding

Resource mobilization strategy

Despite 13 RRIs having identified lack of funding as the main challenge to undertake their functions, only **4** RRIs have a resource mobilization strategy (**C**, **G**, **H**, **P**). It is recommended that the preparation of these strategies get special attention during the next triennium as financial sustainability is a pre-requisite for an RRI to be effective in the long-term. These strategies are particularly relevant for those RRIs that will not be receiving funds from the Secretariat anymore or have stopped receiving funding and have not been able to secure sufficient resources to undertake their mandate.

From table 4 we can conclude that the most effective RRIs securing the necessary resources to provide full support for the implementation of the Convention in the various Contracting Parties part of the RRI are H, G, L, I, F, P, E, A, K, S, B and M, and it is important to note that the top 8 (mentioned first) have either independent legal status, or the coordination is managed by an institution with its own legal status, while K, S and M do not.

There is also one RRI with legal status which was not successful in bringing additional resources to support the functioning of the RRI.

Although lack of funding has been identified as the highest challenge, it's clear that some RRIs were very effective in bringing in additional resources during this period, and as stated by some of the older RRIs, being endorsed by the Conference of the Parties every three years is of importance in their resource mobilization efforts. Additionally, it is important to note that in some RRIs, the Contracting Parties participating, particularly those having the coordination role rotating among the member Contracting Parties, are also making important in-kind contributions that are not included in the financial reports.

Independent Bank account for the initiative

From the questionnaires it is concluded that **9** RRIs have independent Bank accounts for managing the resources of the initiative (**A**, **B**, **C**, **E**, **F**, **G**, **H**, **K**, **P** and **I** the account is managed by IUCN), but only 5 produce audited reports (**E**, **F**, **G**, **H**, **P** and **I** as part of the IUCN audited report). It is important to note that in the Rules and Regulations of A, it is stated (2.2.8) that it will have an external auditor.

Source	LS 8	Sec.	National Gov	Local Gov	Others	Total received	Total spent
Α	x	4,670	44,000 UG		UN Foundation	115,386	98,046
~	^	4,070	44,000 00		63,314	115,500	56,040
					BirdLife 3,402		
В	x	30,000	15,000 ML Other 6,000		8,350	59,350	60,315
C ⁹	Х						
D ¹⁰							
E	x	109,73 3	33,150 JP			142,883	110,372
F	Х	10,000	226,000 IR	25,000	25,000 RRC-EA	286,000	286,000
G	Х		411,093 KR	1,621,712	304, 611 (NGOs,	2,337,41	1,998,912
					PS)	6	
н	Х		2,603,824 KR	1,695,938	9,184 IUCN	4,368,39	3,460,510
					59,450 Private S.	6	
I	X	123,00 0	254,000 DE-IKI		14420 IUCN	391,420	360,116
J ¹¹				-	-	0	0
К		3,709	42,840		31,302 (NGOs,	77,851	76,861
					PS)		
L ¹²	Х		726,530		MAVA 638,678	1,312,73	1,231,333
					Others 16,956	5	
М			11,400 FI			11,400	0
N ¹³		120,00 0				0	77,063
O ¹⁴			13,000		60,980	0	73,980
Р	Х		155,000 PA		80,000 (course	235,000	326,020
					fees)		
Q ¹⁵		37,760				0	54,172
R ¹⁶						0	87,027
S		54,738	8,661		5,205 PS		68,604
Total	10	493,61 0	4,485,498	3,342,650	1,316,423	9,406,44 1	8,210,970

Table 4: Income by source and Expenditures - 2016-2019 (CHF)

⁸ Legal Status

⁹ Information provided in the annual reports is not sufficient to estimate total income or expenditures 2016-2018

¹⁰ Information provided in the annual reports is not sufficient to estimate total income or expenditures 2016-2018

¹¹ Information provided in the annual reports is not sufficient to estimate total income or expenditures 2016-2017

¹² Based on information from the annual reports

¹³ Based on information from the annual reports

¹⁴ Based on information from the annual reports

¹⁵ Based on information from the annual reports

¹⁶ Based on information from the annual reports – income in kind contributions CHF 76,407

VII. Legal Status

10 RRIs have confirmed their Legal Status, and additionally I is covered through IUCN. A: 2010; B: 2020; C; E: 2020 KZ; F: 2006 IR; G: 2009 KR; H: 2016 KR; I: as part of IUCN; L¹⁷: 2005 GR, 2014 FR; P: 2004 PA.

VIII. Partnerships

Most of the respondents to the Survey confirmed they work closely in partnerships with the IOPs and some additional institutions that are relevant for the Regional level, except for J, M and S. Of the analysed 16 RRIs, 9 work closely with WI, 7 with IUCN, 6 Birdlife and 5 with WWF, and 2 with IWMI and WWT. There are other regional or global institutions that work with specific RRIs as detailed below in chart 3.

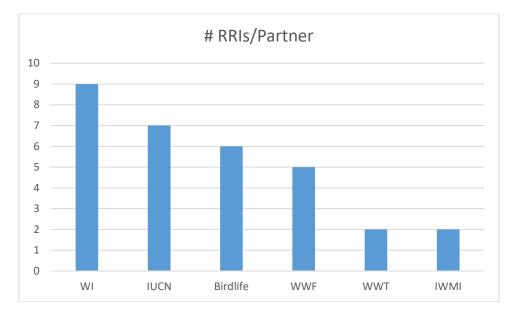


Table 5: IOPs partners

А	В	С	D	E	F	G	Н	1	J	К	L	Μ	Ν	0	Р	Q	R	S
WI	WI	WI		WI			WI	WI		WI					WI		WI	
		IUCN		IUCN		IUCN	IUCN	IUCN		IUCN					IUCN			
WWF				WWF			WWF	WWF		WWF								
BirdL			BirdL	BirdL				BirdL						BirdL	BirdL			
							WWT	WWT										
							IWMI	IWMI										

Other partners:

B: Autorite du Bassin du NIGER
D: MAVA, ECOWAS, UNEP Abidjan Convention, PRCM
E: AEWA, JICA
F: JICA, UNESCO, RRI-EA, UNDP
G: CMS, CBD, FAO, ASEAN, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna
H: UNEP
I: ASEAN, Mekong River Commission

¹⁷ Based on information from SC58 Doc. 22.3

K: Carpathian Convention Secretariat, International Commission for the Danube River

- **O:** UNEP Cartagena Convention
- P: Audubon Society
- R: Comite Intergubernamental de la Cuenca del Plata (CIC)

IX. Governance

Governing Body

10 RRIs reported having a Governing Body/Steering Committee/Management Board that meets between once every 12 to 18 months. 6 have statutes or agreed ToR. A, Rules & Regulations; B: ToR;
C: statutes; D: statutes; F; H: ToR; I: ToR; for J and for E they are under preparation. Having Rules, Statutes or ToR in place is of paramount importance to having clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each of the members, as well as reporting mechanisms, but there should be a periodic evaluation of compliance with them.

Contact with the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands

According to par. 21 of the Resolution XIII.9 (COP 13, Dubai, October 2018) the frequent contact with the Convention Secretariat is considered of importance to ensure that required support is provided to the RRIs and the Secretariat can intervene in a timely manner when necessary. Five (**A**, **B**, **E**, **F**, **I**) stated they have contacted once a month. Four (**G**, **H**, **O**, **S**) stated that they have contact once a quarter. Three (**K**, **M**, **R**) have contact once every 6 months and one (**P**) once a year. The other four did not provide this information.

One a month	Once a quarter	Once every 6 months	Once a year
A, B, E, F	G, H, O, S	K, M, R	Р

National STRP focal points in the participating countries active in the initiative

Only **9** RRIs reported collaboration with STRP focal points in training activities or finalising tools with the support of 39 experts: **A: 3, B: 9, E: 4, H: 10, I:3, K: 2, M: 5, O:1, P: 2.** This is considered a missed opportunity particularly considering the key role that several RRIs are playing in supporting management and designation of Ramsar sites, joint project execution and implementation, assessments and inventories, as well as providing training on the use of technical tools. STRP members could be a great ally in undertaking these activities, as encouraged by par. 24 of the Resolution XIII.9 (COP 13, Dubai, October 2018).

CEPA national focal point in the participating countries active in the initiative

Although it is acknowledged by many RRIs that a key area of their mandate is to promote communication and outreach, only 38 CEPA focal points are active in supporting the RRIs. Only 8 RRIs reported collaboration with CEPA focal points in training activities: A: 5, B: 3, E:4, F, H: 9, I: 5, K: 5, M:3, O:1, P: 3.

X. Performance

On a scale of 0 to 5 (0 = nothing achieved, 5 all objectives achieved), the RRIs provided their selfassessment on how they have contributed to the original motivations/objectives that prompted its creation.

Table 6 – Performance Self-Assessment

А	В	С	D	Е	F	G	Н	Ι	J	К	L	М	Ν	0	Р	Q	R	S
3	3	3	2	4	3	3	5	4	3			2		2.5	2.5		2.5	3

XI. Key challenges

- Lack of Funding: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, I, J, K, O, P, R
- ✓ Weak engagement/commitment of CPs: A, F, H, J, K, M, O
- ✓ Weak technical capacity: **B**
- ✓ Weak HR capacity of focal points or RRI: I, J, K, P
- ✓ Lack of independence from Host institution: **F**
- ✓ Lack of independent legal status: I, K
- ✓ Language constraints: B
- ✓ Weak communication: **B**, **E**
- ✓ Weak support from Secretariat and IOPs: C, D, H
- ✓ Weak enforcement of environmental legislation: E
- ✓ Insufficient experience of Steering Committee members: E, K
- ✓ Weak development of civil society initiatives: E
- ✓ Competition between regional RRIs: F
- ✓ Speed of nomination of sites: G
- ✓ Weak recognition of RRI as part of the Convention: H
- ✓ Lack of coordination between Government sectors: I
- ✓ Lack of common projects: M
- ✓ Frequency of changes of coordinator: P
- ✓ Frequency of changes of members of the Board: P
- ✓ Lack of clarity of role of the Secretariat since 2014: P
- ✓ Environmental degradation: O

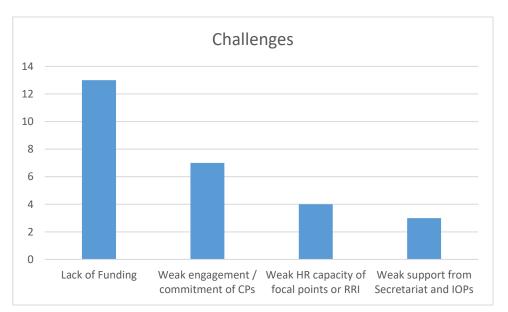


Chart 4. The four main challenges

In comparing these results with those of the 2015 assessment, it is evident that lack of funding and engagement of contracting parties in the Regions continue to be extremely important challenges. It

is worth noting that not having an independent legal status was identified as a challenge this time by 2 RRIs versus 4 in the previous assessment, which is probably explained because B, E and H obtained their independent legal status since the last assessment was undertaken. Most of the abovementioned challenges were identified also in 2015, indicating that some urgent action needs to be taken to address them.

XII. Conclusions and Recommendations¹⁸¹⁹

Based on the evidence provided in the annual reports and surveys, on-going initiatives are mostly compliant with the 7 principles adopted by COP XIII, except for principles C and D. The RRIs are contributing to the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands in different degrees, as shown in this assessment and in the performance, scoring contained in table 6. However, compliance with some of the pre-requisites stated in the operational Guidelines 2013-2015 have been met -to a large extent – only partially (See table 3-4 and charts 1-4).

Considering that Resolution XII.8 - Regional initiatives 2016-2018 in the framework of the Ramsar Convention - approved the validity and use of the *Operational Guidelines for regional initiatives*, as adopted for 2013-2015, for the period 2016-2018, until the amendments requested are adopted by the Standing Committee. These conclusions and recommendations are following the order of the said guidelines and has also taken into account the Operational Guidelines contained in document SC52-22.

Guideline 9 (par. 24 & 25 doc. SC. 52-22) is met differently by the various RRIs, and some stated they meet once a month with the Secretariat and others once a year. *It is recommended that the meeting between the Secretariat and the coordinating unit of the RRI is set at a minimum one per semester, as, if not, it is difficult to ensure that the Regional initiatives' strategic and operational objectives are duly aligned with the Convention's.*

Regarding Guideline 11 (par. 8, 9, 12 & 19 - doc. SC. 52-22) on coordination, all RRIs have established a coordinating system, but its efficiency varies depending on available human and financial resources, and commitment from the Contracting Parties. It has been stated that the frequent changes in focal points for the initiatives hamper these efforts, as well as the changes in Administrative Authorities which are not aware of the commitments made by the previous one vis a vis the RRI. The rotating responsibility of the coordination presents various challenges to AAs because in most of the cases designated staff continue to have all their previous responsibilities plus the additional one on coordination of the RRI, and as evidenced in table 2, some initiatives have a large number of Parties that need to be involved and consulted, and this is very time consuming.

It is recommended that Contracting Parties confirm their commitment to the initiative as a prerequisite to the COP re-endorsement ton ensure continuous engagement of CPs members of RRIs, as per par. 9 of doc. SC. 52-22. In the case of the rotation mechanism, the letter of commitment from the coordinating Contracting Party for the following period(s) includes the designation of the coordinating Team.

On guidelines 12 and 13, (par. 12 - doc. SC. 52-22) as mentioned by some respondents, when there is an on-going project with the necessary funds to work together, the initiatives are very successful in achieving the expected results. However, drafting good project proposals, presenting and negotiating with donors is also time consuming, and managing the funds to comply with donor

¹⁸ Specific recommendations on the conclusions reached by the consultant are presented in *italics*

¹⁹ All conclusions and recommendations reflect the consultant's views

requirements can be a huge burden for the coordinating body. In the view of the consultant, it has been easier for entities with a legal status to secure and manage resources through various projects. Considering the relevance that projects play in the implementation of the mandate of various RRIs, it is recommended that *those RRIs with rotating chairing mechanisms make additional efforts to dedicate the time needed to draft and negotiate the proposals, manage the financial resources and ensure adequate and timely reporting to donors.*

Regarding guidelines 14 to 18, (par.3, 2, 8 doc. SC. 52-22) the majority of RRIs have developed their statutes, ToR or operational guidelines for their Governing Body or mechanism. It is worth noting that some rotating Secretariats of RRIs hosted by the Administrative Authority do not consider it necessary to have specific ToR or statutes to coordinate the RRI because Government institutions already have their own rules, regulations and procedures which apply mutatis mutandis to the RRIs.

When reviewing these documents, Parties have been very ambitious when adopting them but that in reality many of the requirements therein are not always met.

It is recommended that compliance with the existing ToR/statutes is assessed every three years for RRIs with independent secretariats, and documents are updated based on the results of the assessments.

Guidelines 20-22 (par. 20 & 21 doc. SC. 52-22) have been partially met as the work with partners and other stakeholders has been very limited in many cases, as evidenced in Section VIII and table 5 above.

It is recommended promoting active work with at least one relevant IOP in the geographical area covered by the RRI.

As mentioned in section V above, the work of the RRIs is aligned with one or several targets of the Convention's Strategic Plan. It is important that the annual report clearly identifies the target (s) they have contributed to the previous year and they intend to contribute to in the following year's workplan.

On guidelines 25 and 26, (par. 13, 20 & 23 - doc. SC. 52-22) it is noted that there is some coordination with some CEPA and STRP focal points of some countries but there is significant room for improvement involving a higher number of focal points.

On guidelines 27- 32, (par. 11, 31- 37 - doc. SC. 52-22) one of the key weaknesses identified is the lack of expected national support by the countries concerned, both from the financial and human resources perspective, and this has a lot of room for improvement.

One key recommendation is to request the Governments members of the initiative to provide a letter of commitment before every COP, indicating their financial contribution to the initiative, including inkind, as well as designating the official in the Government that will be the focal point for it during the following triennium.

Considering the challenges faced by many administrative authorities regarding human and financial resources, one of the solutions could be to merge initiatives and avoid endorsing new ones until the existing ones are fully operational and sustainable financially. The approach of the Basel Convention by which one of the regional initiatives acts as coordinating centre for the regional initiatives in a given geographical region might be an option in this case, but the Coordinating Centre will need

special support in resource mobilization to fund its operations and establishing small secretariats solely dedicated to the coordination of the initiatives in the region.

As stated above, mobilization of resources is still a big challenge for the initiatives and adopting a strategy for this purpose might provide the necessary clarity on the way forward and the priorities to secure the necessary resources; however, as mentioned in the previous paragraph there is a need for effective national contributions.

Regarding guidelines 33- 36, (par. 38-40 - doc. SC. 52-22) almost all initiatives except for one presented their annual reports to the Secretariat, but as stated above, the quality of those reports makes it very difficult to assess the impact and success of the RRIs. *The depth of the information and the quality of the financial report in most of the cases leaves a lot to be desired.*

It is recommended that the annual reports sent to the Secretariat by the coordinating body are endorsed in advance by the AA of the Contracting Parties members of the initiative and that the template is modified further to give more clarity to the coordinating units on the expected inputs in the report.

It is also recommended that the Secretariat explores options to support RRIs with the auditing services by an external auditor for RRIs that cannot afford it. It is also recommended that it undertakes random audits of fund management by RRIs to ensure there is no reputational risk for the Convention regarding misappropriation or mismanagement of funds from diverse sources with the aim of supporting the implementation of the Convention through the RRIs.

Last but not least, considering that there are several very mature and successful initiatives, *it is recommended that cooperation between networks and centres from different regions is promoted. Consideration should also be given to making better use of e-learning modules that could benefit other countries speaking the same language, or modules could be also translated and adapted to other regions and countries' specificities.*

Based on the above analysis, conclusions and recommendations, I would like to propose some key effectiveness indicators and elements for the operational guidelines.

XIII. Effectiveness Indicators/ Elements for Operational Guidelines

Measuring effectiveness of the RRIs must be done based on the individual mandates of each initiative and as evident in section IV, there is a large diversity of objectives. Comparing actual achievements against set goals is key to be able to draw conclusions on the value added of individual RRIs. Comparing the RRI aims, such as training or designation of Ramsar sites against actual results in the triennium.

1- Communication with the Secretariat- Effective and frequent communication and coordination with the Secretariat is imperative and the RRIs coordinating bodies should have as a minimum 2 working meetings per year with the relevant Secretariat staff. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that there is clarity on the application of global guidelines at the Regional level, and that the strategic and operational objectives of the RRI remain in harmony with those of the Convention's strategic plan. RRIs should ensure that the planning of the yearly workplan and the strategic plan involves the Ramsar Secretariat along with other key stakeholders.

- 2- Percentage of active members in the initiative At least 50% of the members must participate in the activities carried out during the year. In the cases where this threshold is not met, the RRI should be considered inactive and will not be endorsed by the COP until this threshold is met again. Administrative Authorities members of the initiative should reiterate its continuous commitment to the initiative, including financial or human resources to be provided for each triennium as a precondition for the COP re-endorsement of the initiative. At least 50% of member countries need to submit the letter to the Secretariat before the deadline for finalizing the COP document.
- 3- Approved ToR of Governing Body and/or statues that are complied with. The compliance with the existing ToR/statutes should be assessed every three years, and ToR/statutes should be updated based on the results of the assessments.
- 4- Effective partnerships with IOPs or other relevant regional or global institutions. RRIs should ensure that the planning of the yearly workplan and the strategic plan involves the IOPs active in the Region and should report on roles played by the IOPs and other key partners in the implementation of the annual workplan, referring to specific joint activities in the annual report submitted to the Secretariat. Each RRI should ensure active work with at least one relevant IOP in the geographical area covered by the RRI as a precondition for reendorsement of the RRI.
- 5- Alignment of the RRI Strategic Plan with the Convention's approved strategic plan The RRIs should ensure that specific goals and targets of the Convention's Strategic Plan be clearly identified in the annual workplans and RRI strategic plans, as well as clarifying in the annual reports how the initiative has contributed to meeting the goals/targets.

Initiatives that have not contributed effectively to at least 3 Targets of the strategic plan in each triennium should be considered inactive and will not be endorsed by the COP until the RRI can demonstrate that it has achieved its objective during two consecutive years.

- 6- An active website, or as a minimum a communication strategy based on the CEPA guidance is important and all RRIs should provide evidence of the communication efforts during the previous two years
- 7- RRIs whose main mandate is to provide training or support other capacity building activities should report on a yearly basis the number of events organised, people trained per country, as well as provide an analysis of the evaluation results by participants. Training modules should benefit from either the Secretariat endorsement or the regional representative of the STRP, to ensure quality and contents reflect accurately the approved global tools and they are well adapted to the Regional contexts. On other capacity building activities there should a clear statement detailing the number of Parties that benefitted from the undertaken activities to be able to assess impact at the regional level.
- 8. Successful financial sustainability A Resource mobilization strategy for the RRI with the objective of mobilizing sufficient financial and human resources may assist with the full implementation of the annual workplan. Additionally, it is important to measure how cost-effectively, efficiently, and quickly the planned activities are achieved. The financial report should include information on number of Contracting Parties contributing human or financial resources to the implementation of the initiative; number of other partners contributing to the initiative; expenditures against individual activities and results.

Furthermore, it is recommended that financial audited reports for all cash contributions received are shared with the Secretariat on a yearly basis.

9. Timely and adequate reporting – The reports not only need to be shared with the Secretariat in a timely manner, but also with all the Administrative Authorities of the Contracting Parties members of the initiative who should provide written endorsement to said report. The quality and contents of the report needs to comply with above mentioned conditions to be accepted by the Secretariat. In case of failing to submit 2 consecutive good quality reports, the Secretariat will advise COP to consider the initiative as inactive until the following COP, conditional to having submitted adequate reports during the transition period.

ANNEX 1

List of reviewed documents

Annual Reports

rri_east_africa_2019_20_e rrc east africa 2018 19 e **RAMCEA** annual report 2017 RAMCEA annual report 2016 rri niger 2019 20 f rri_niger_2018_19_f rri_niger_river_basin_2017-18 rri 2016-17 niger river basin rri senegal 2019 20 f rri_senegal_2018_19_f rri_senegal_river_basin_2017-18 rri 2016-17 senegal river basin rri west african coastal zone 2019 20 f rri_west_african_coastal_zone_2018_19_ rri west african coastal zone 2017-18 rri_2016-17_west_african_coast rri_central_asia_2019_20_e rri_central_asia_2018_19_e rri central asia 2017-18 rri 2016-17 central asia rri_central_west_asia_2019_20_e rrc_central_west_asia_2018_19_e rri_centre_central_west_asia_2017-18 rri 2016-17_central_and_west_asia_centre rri_eaafp_2019_20_e rri_eaafp_2018_19_e rri e-asia australasian flyway 2017-18 rri e-asia australasian flyway 2016-17 rri_east_asia_2019_20_e rrc_east_asia_2018_19_e rri_centre_east_asia_2017-18 rri 2016-17 east asia centre rri indoburma 2019 20 e rri indoburma 2018 19 e rri_indo-burma_2017-18 rri 2016-17 IBRRI Annual Report rri black sea 2019 20 e rri_blacksea_2018_19_e rri_black_sea_coast_2017-18 rri_2016-17_black_and_azov_sea_coast rri_carpathian_2019_20_e

rri carpathian 2018 19 e rri carpathian wetlands 2017-18 rri_2016-17_carpathian rri_medwet_2019_20_e RRI annual report form MedWet 2018 rri_mediterranean_2017-18 rri 2016-17 mediterranean rri_norbalwet_2019_20_e rri norbalwet 2018 19 e rri_norbalwet_2017-18 rri_2016-17_norbalwet rare - Informe Amazonas 2019 rri amazon 2018 19 s rri amazon basin 2017-18 rri_2016-17_amazon_river_basin rri - InformeIRCariwet2019 rri caribbean 2018 19 s rri caribbean 2017-18 rri_2016-17_caribbean rri_creho_2019_20_s rri_centre_western_hemisphere_2017-18 rri 2016-17 western hemisphere centre rri - IRR Cuenca del Plata 2019-2020 final rri plata 2018 19 s rri la plata river basin 2017-18 rri 2016-17 la plata river basin rri high andean 2019 20 s rri_high_andean_2018_19_s rri_high_andean_2017-18 rri_2016-17_high_andean rri mangroves reefs 2019 20 s rri_mangroves_reefs_2018_19_s rri_mangroves_and_reefs_2017-18 rri_2016-17_mangroves_and_reefs

Standing Committee & COP documents

sc51_11_regional_initiatives_e
sc52-infdoc04_assessment_rris_e
sc52-22_draft_revised_opguidelines_e (1)
sc53-11_rri_wg_e Report on Ramsar
Regional initiatives 2016
sc54-com11_dr_rris_e_clean
sc57_decisions_e
sc58-22.2_secretariat_report_rris_e

sc58_22.4_review_rris_resolutions_and_d ecisions e cop12 res02 strategic plan e 2016 2024 0 rri revised operational guidelines 2016 24 e **PowerPoint Presentation RRIs 2015** Ramsar RRI Operational Framework sc54-20.2_rris_2019_2021_e cepa_programme_2016_2024_e Ramsar Strategic Plan 2013-2015 cop11res03-e Ramsar Rec_5.14e.doc Ramsar Rec_6.11e.doc Ramsar Resolution VII 22 e.doc Ramsar Resolution VII 26 e.doc Ramsar Resolution VIII 30 e.doc Ramsar Resolution VIII 43 e.doc Ramsar Resolution VIII 41 e.doc Ramsar Resolution X 07 e.doc Ramsar Resolution X 06 e.doc Ramsar Resolution XI 5 Ramsar Resolution XI_5. pdf" Ramsar cop12 res08 regional initiatives e Ramsar xiii.9 rris e **Ramsar ToR Regional Initiatives**

Surveys

Ramcea\Survey Ramsar RRIs Final English Ramcea\RAMCEA Rules and Regulations final 101115 final Ramcea\RAMCEA STRATEGY 27072011 2018 Enquête IRR._Nigerwet Senegalwet assessment questionnaire Enquête IRR. Senegalwet Senegal wet\Appui officiel pour initiative Senegal Senegal wet\COMPTE RENDU SENEGALWET Senegal wet\Contract Senegalwet 2018 V2 signed Senegal wet\DV Projet de REGLEMENT INTERIEUR SENEGALWET Senegal wet\DV PROJET DE STATUTS SENEGAL WET Senegal wet\FACTURE 2019 IRR SENEGALWET

Senegal wet\Facture IRR SénégalWet 788[19217] Senegal wet\IRR SENEGALWET Rapport annuel 2018 et Plan de travailr 2019revIG Senegal wet\IRR SENEGALWET Rapport annuel 2019 et Plan de travail 2020 Version finale Senegal wet\Lettre appui Mauritanie Senegal wet\Lettre DPN C-Ramsar SENEGALWET Senegal wet\Lettre Mali-appui officiel Initiative regionale SENEGALWET Senegal wet\LIGNES DIRECTRICES IRR Senegal wet\Manuel de Procédures SENEGALWET Senegal wet\Note de Concept Congres mondial mareseille 2020 Senegal wet\Note technique SENEGALWET.doc" Senegal wet\operational-guidelines-2013-2015-fr.doc" Senegal wet\Organisation réunion des organes Senegal wet\Plan d'actions SENEGALWET Senegal wet\Plan de travail 2020 Senegalwet Senegal wet\Présentation logo et charte graphique Senegal wet\Projet de REGLEMENT INTERIEUR SENEGALWET Senegal wet\PROJET DE STATUTS SENEGAL WET Senegal wet\Rapport de mission du Coordon nateur de l'Initiative régionale Ramsar des pays du bassin du Fleuve du Se ne gal Senegal wet\Rapport SénégalWet Mauritanie (26-27 Juillet 2019).2 Senegal wet\Resolution C 1-001 Dakar disposition transitoire-senegalwet Senegal wet\Resolution C 2-001 CONAKRY Senegal wet\RESOLUTION C Senegal wet\Senegalwet assessment questionnaire Senegal wet\SENEGALWET Rapport Annuel 2017 et Plan de Travail Budgétisé 2018.doc" Senegal wet\Situation de l'execution bud gétaire du plan d'actions Senegal wet\Stratégie IRR SenegalWet Version finale 23 04 2018.doc"

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WACOWET Enquête IRR WACOwet \Liste des pays membres de WacoWet WACOWET \charte ww adopt e V 260607 WACOWET \Facture IRR WACoWet 779[19218] WACOWET \kakemono 1 WACOWET \NOTE DE CADRAGE FR WACOWET \PLAN STRATEGIQUE wacowet (2008-2017).pptx" WACOWET \Plan strat gique2 ww 260607 WACOWET \Protocole_portant_cr_ation_de_wacowe t_version_finale_1 WACOWET \RAPPORT D'ATELIER DU **RESEAU WacoWet-DM-IG** WACOWET \RAPPORT DE REUNION WACOWET \RESOLUTION C 1 Chami WACOWET \RESOLUTION DE Chami -2019 WACOWET \Résolution de Chami-Wacowet WACOWET \RI WACOWet 260607 WACOWET \stratégie wacowet Francais WACOWET \w.n.wacowet_protocol2007 WACOWET Capacity Development Plan -Final 2013 WACOWET Cotonou protocol ENG WACOWET HUMAN RESOURCE POLICY 2013 WACOWET Rapport annuel 2019 et PTA 2020

Survey Ramsar Regional iniatiative Regional Center in Central and West Asia

Regional Center East Asia Survey

RRC-EA Annual Report 2020 and Work Plan 2021 Ramsar Regional Center East Asia Survey\Audit reports Ramsar Regional Center East Asia Survey\RRC-EA Strategic Plan 2017-2024

Ramsar Regional Center East Asia Survey\TOR - RRC-EA Steering Committee (adopted) vFeb 2018 Survey Ramsar Regional Initiatives EAAFP Strategic Plan **ToR Management Committee** Auditors' reports Sustainable Financing Strategy Survey Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative Statutes Indo-Burma and Operational Guidelines (IBRRRI) Strategic Action Plan BlackSeaWet Minute of 1st Meeting of BSW Tulcea 2010 Minutes of 5 meeting of BSWI fin Survey Ramsar RRIs_Final Survey Carpathian WI ToR Survey Ramsar RRIs_ Final English_NBW **CREHO** Survey Ramsar RRIs Informes de Auditoria 2016-19 https://1drv.ms/u/s!ApOjdT4NwgLhebm8 Pv1FF6kxpIc?e=seHmjn **Estrategias** https://1drv.ms/u/s!ApOjdT4NwqLhfzYkO cKi56dorkQ?e=2Saheb Manuales Institucionales: https://1drv.ms/u/s!ApOjdT4NwqLhgQIN X2Ym2svt4svD?e=y6nOtx Caribwet Survey Ramsar RRIs

Ramsar Regional Center East Asia

Cuenca del Plata Survey Ramsar RRIs Informe curso final_Resultado2020 cuenca del plata

Survey Ramsar, Encuesta sobre IRR de Manglares y Corales final rev1