

# Urban and peri-urban wetlands:



***Rob McInnes, Ramsar STRP***

Ramsar Workshop of the STRP NFPs in Africa  
Johannesburg, 30 November – 2 December 2010

# Task description

## Thematic Work Area 2: Strategic, Emerging & Ongoing Issues Lower Priority Tasks

Task No. 2.7:

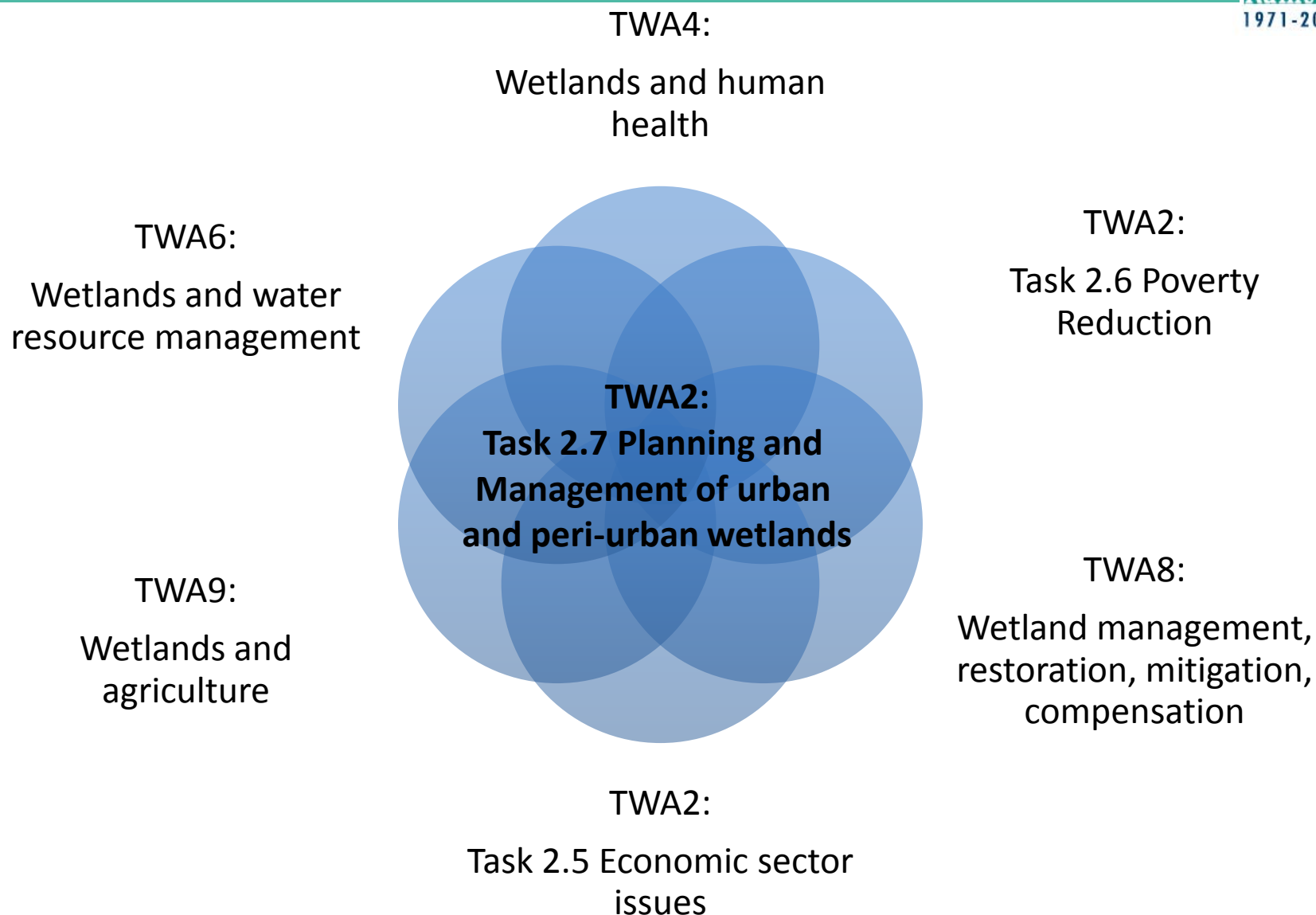
**Planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands –  
guidance**

# Task description

## Task 2.7

In the light of advice from Contracting Parties through their STRP National Focal Points on issues concerning urban wetlands and peri-urban wetlands that would benefit from additional scientific and technical guidance, **consider the preparation of guidance for Contracting Parties and consider ways to disseminate information to Contracting Parties on managing urban and peri-urban wetlands**, in accordance with an ecosystem approach, and taking into account issues such as climate change, ecosystem services, food production, human health and livelihoods.

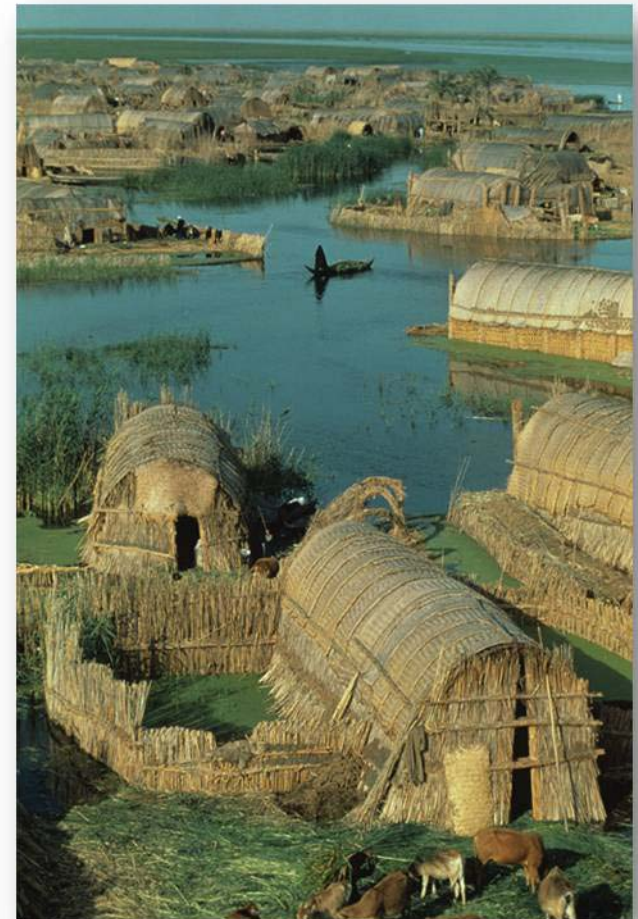
# Task synergies



# Wetlands & humans are intrinsically linked

## Civilisation dawned in the fertile crescent of Mesopotamia

- The establishment of urban settlements depended on wetlands
- Wetlands provided vital resources for urban areas



# Wetland ecosystem services in urban areas

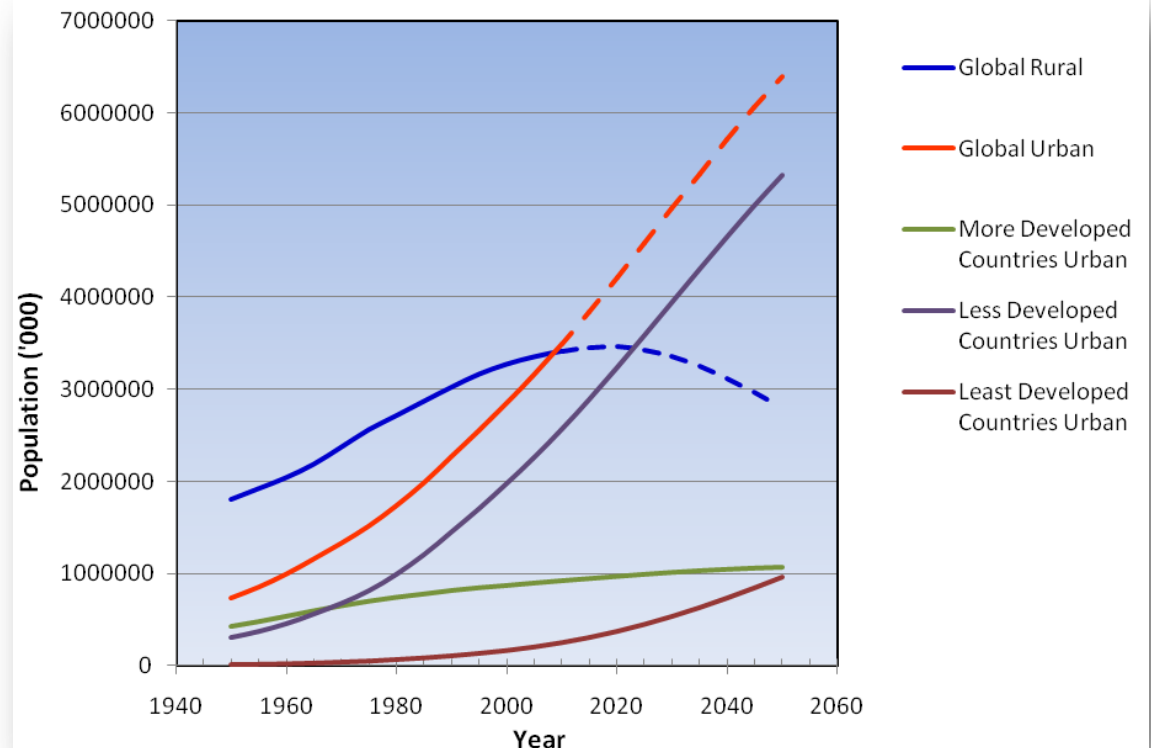
Humans living in urban settlements benefit from ecosystem services



# Urbanization places pressures on wetlands

## The majority of humans now live in urban areas

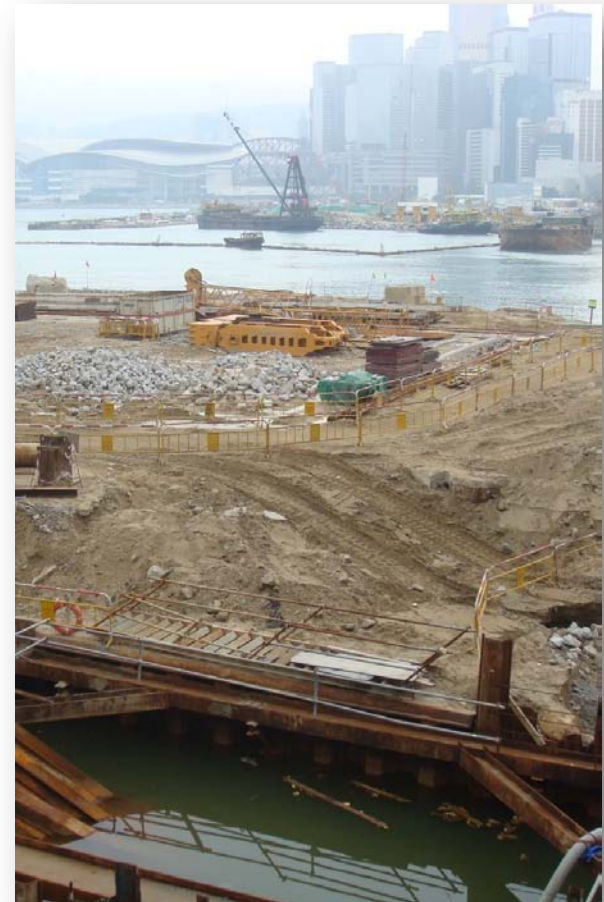
- Shift from rural communities to urban settlement
- Rate of growth expected to continue
- Accelerating shift in less developed countries



# The pressure of urbanization

## Many human activities now threaten wetland ecosystems

- Direct loss of habitat
- Pollution of water
- Reduction in water resources
- Contribute to climate change



# Impacts extend beyond formal city limits

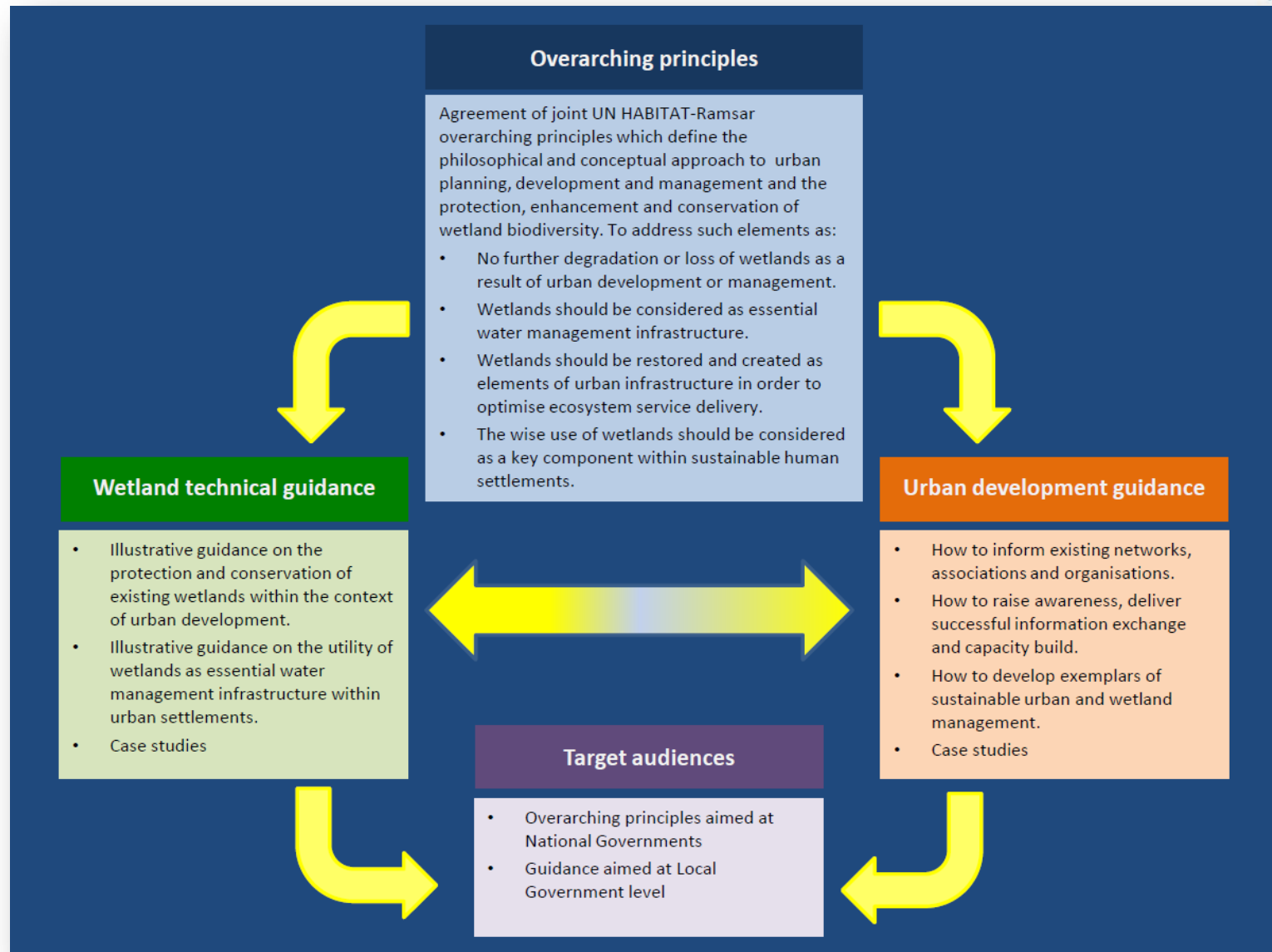


Impacts on wetland ecosystems occur within and beyond city boundaries

# Progress to date

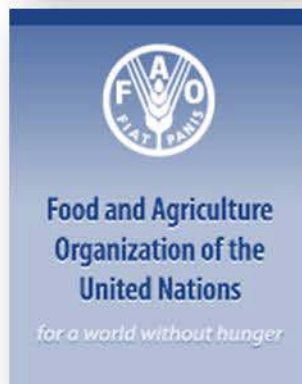
- Expert Workshop held in Naivasha, Kenya on 16-17<sup>th</sup> November 2009 supported by UN HABITAT and Ramsar Convention.
- Approximately 30 participants from around the world including urban planners and managers and wetland experts attended the Workshop.
- Report produced summarizing the issues relating to urban development and wetland management and outlines the stages to take this initiative forward.
- Invited Workshop was held on the 19-20<sup>th</sup> February 2010 in Gland, Switzerland, in advance of the STRP mid-term workshops including wetland and urban planning experts.
- Workshop concluded that a set of **Overarching principles** are required to provide the framework for future progress.
- Outline of a draft resolution and technical annex circulated to experts for comment in September 2010.
- Participation in CBD COP including City Biodiversity Summit and side event on Wetlands and Urbanization.

# Progress to date



# Progress to date

Working and developing relationships with many parties . . .



# Wetlands offer unique possibilities

However, wetlands have traditionally been seen as an obstacle to urbanization:

- Health
- Flooding
- Drainage
- Biodiversity



# Wetlands offer unique possibilities

Yet wetlands have the potential to offer solutions to a range of urban issues:

- Health
- Flooding
- Drainage
- Biodiversity



# Wetlands are unique among ecosystems

The presence of water at or near their surface makes wetlands unique among ecosystems. Consequently, wetlands can provide:

- Water management infrastructure
- Sustainable sanitation solutions
- Low cost alternatives to traditional engineering
- Multiple benefits to a range of stakeholders

**The key issue for urban planners and managers to consider is how can they change their perspective on wetlands and see them as a **key solution provider**.**



# A change of perspective

The key issue for the biodiversity or wetland conservation sector is to promote wetlands which:

- Use biodiversity to deliver solutions
- Utilise common and widespread species and do not have to be populated by charismatic or iconic species
- Depend on biodiversity at range of levels from the microbial to the ecosystem
- Deliver many ecosystem services

**But which fundamentally increase the total stock of wetlands in urban areas.**



# The challenges ahead

## Wetlands provide both opportunities and challenges within urban environments

- There are opportunities for joint implementation of MEA resolutions – CBD, Ramsar, UN-Habitat
- There is a need to create capacities within local planning authorities
- Wetland wise use principles need to be nested in urban planning processes
- There is a need to develop good communication tools
- Best practice case studies need to be developed and disseminated
- We need to work towards best practices for urban planning and wetland management

# The immediate challenges ahead!

## Break out groups

### Objectives:

- Based on your experiences can we define the problem?  
(30 minutes)
  - Drivers
  - Impacts
  - Barriers
- Based on your experiences can we define the solution?  
(30 minutes)
  - Hypothetical
  - Theoretical
  - Best practice examples

# The immediate challenges ahead!

## Break out groups

### Instructions:

- Break into groups
- Appoint a rapporteur
- Appoint a time-keeper
- Summarize discussion for reporting back
- Limit reporting back to 10 minutes per group

