



EVALUATION OF THE IUCN WORLD HERITAGE PROGRAMME

December 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The IUCN World Heritage Programme coordinates IUCN's work on the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, a major global nature conservation instrument. In its advisory role to the Convention, the IUCN World Heritage Programme evaluates sites nominated for World Heritage Status, monitors the state of conservation of existing sites, implements capacity building initiatives, and provides technical advice to the World Heritage Committee. In addition the Programme carries out projects aimed at maximizing the potential of the Convention for nature conservation.

Purpose, objectives and scope

The evaluation of the IUCN World Heritage Programme took place at the request of the Director of the IUCN World Heritage Programme, and was carried out by the IUCN's independent Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. The overall purpose of the evaluation was the help inform future planning and assess programme performance since 2008. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to assess the relevance, performance, organizational capacity and impact (if possible and where relevant and appropriate) of the programme, culminating in recommendations for enhancing programme performance.

Methodology, data analysis and reporting

This report presents the results of an evaluative inquiry mostly conducted between January and August 2013. The evaluation was composed of in-depth structured interviews, focus groups, a survey, extensive document analysis and observation. A total of 68 stakeholders were interviewed and a further 70 completed an online survey.

Information sources were triangulated where possible to ensure maximum validity and to minimise the risk of spurious correlations. The findings are based on descriptive quantitative analysis, comparative qualitative analysis and content analysis of relevant documents. This served to better understand the programme and its evolving context. A draft Theory of Change

was developed to better understand the Programme's underlying logic and situate its results within broader conservation goals.

Main findings

Overall, the IUCN World Heritage Programme is well-functioning, well-managed and well-led. However the workload stress is very high. In view of diminishing resources from UNESCO, there is a serious risk of the workload becoming unsustainable unless either more resources are found or workload is decreased.

Looking at external **relationships**, there is potential to improve the IUCN World Heritage Programme's relationship with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to increase efficiency. There is also potential for improved collaboration and alignment with ICOMOS. With State Parties, increasingly represented by ambassadors rather than scientists, improved, simple communication is key to good working relationships.

Internally, the IUCN World Heritage Programme has made good progress in working with the IUCN's Regional Offices, but integration with other thematic IUCN programmes could be improved. Similarly with the IUCN Commissions, there is scope for increased collaboration.

It is not possible to systematically measure the **impact** of the World Heritage Convention and/or the IUCN World Heritage Programme on biodiversity, management effectiveness, sustainability or local communities and indigenous peoples given currently available data. However there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that World Heritage sites, and the IUCN World Heritage Programme's contribution to these, do have a positive impact.

There is ample evidence that the IUCN World Heritage Programme is a **cost-effective** investment for the World Heritage Convention. The value of expert volunteer time sets IUCN aside as a provider of advice to the Convention. Without clear **efficiency** benchmarks, it is not possible to compare the efficiency of this programme to any others in IUCN.

Despite the complexity of managing two distinct mandates, one stemming from the World Heritage Convention and one stemming from IUCN's Resolutions and Recommendations, the Programme is seen as **effective** overall. However, there is a lack of proactive alignment between the Convention and IUCN Resolutions and Recommendations.

The IUCN World Heritage Programme is perceived as being less effective in providing capacity building for natural World Heritage Site managers, State Parties to the Convention, and other relevant stakeholders. While the IUCN World Heritage Programme is seen to have delivered many valued and useful knowledge products, the extent of use and effect of knowledge products has not been systematically tracked.

The effectiveness of the IUCN World Heritage Programme in influencing the World Heritage Convention and its processes has been mixed. Most stakeholders agree that

the Convention has become increasingly political and this is reflected in the overall decreasing level of acceptance of IUCN recommendations. However, data on Committee decision making over time is not clear cut.

The work of the IUCN World Heritage Programme is perceived to be highly **relevant** to the World Heritage Convention and relevant to the IUCN Programme and Mission. There is scope for World Heritage to become more relevant to biodiversity conservation.

The issue of economic development and World Heritage sites was raised repeatedly by stakeholders throughout the evaluation, and in particular in answer to questions on the relevance of the IUCN World Heritage Programme to the Convention, to the IUCN Programme and Mission, and to biodiversity conservation. Many stakeholders interviewed perceive World Heritage sites as impeding economic development to one degree or another, thereby reducing their relevance to State Parties. This also appears to negatively affect the perceived relevance of the World Heritage Convention and therefore, indirectly, the IUCN World Heritage Programme.

List of recommendations

Relevance

1. IUCN should produce an explanatory document to contextualize the role of World Heritage in its conservation toolkit, demonstrate its role in biodiversity conservation (business case) and manage expectations.
2. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should make use of IUCN knowledge products that allow for prioritization and assessment, such as Key Biodiversity Areas, the proposed Green List of Protected Areas, to increase relevance to biodiversity conservation and, by implication, IUCN's mission.
3. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should define its theory of change or conservation logic relating World Heritage with biodiversity conservation and test the results.
4. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should explore, with relevant stakeholders, the reasons behind the perception that it has a stance against economic development in and around World Heritage sites. This could include clarification and communication of relevant sections of the Programme's World Heritage Convention mandate
5. IUCN needs to clearly set out its formal position on the relationship between World Heritage and sustainable economic development approaches such as No Net Loss and Net Positive Impact, used by other IUCN units and which aim to prevent biodiversity losses. This should include a clear definition of the 'no-go' concept (applicable to the extractive industries). Once this formal position is articulated, it needs to be communicated to relevant World Heritage stakeholders, including IUCN staff.

6. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should facilitate a dialogue with State Parties on how to approach economic development, including in and around natural and mixed World Heritage sites with a view to increasing/maintaining the relevance of both the Programme and the Convention. This dialogue should also contribute to a wider IUCN exercise aimed at defining so-called no-go areas.

Effectiveness

7. The IUCN World Heritage Programme and IUCN senior management should clarify the role of the IUCN World Heritage Programme in relation to its two distinct mandates (stemming from both the Convention and IUCN Resolutions and Recommendations). The IUCN World Heritage Programme should then communicate this role to its stakeholders, addressing any (perceived) conflict of approach.
8. The IUCN should work to improve the alignment between the World Heritage Convention and relevant IUCN Resolutions and Recommendations, and decide who in IUCN should be responsible for ensuring this.
9. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should improve the evaluation process of new World Heritage nominations by:
 - Including more emphasis on future threats to sites, in particular explaining the impact of proposed economic activity
 - Including a greater focus on community and governance issues
 - Ensuring recommendations can feasibly be implemented within the context of the site.
10. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should continue to refine the application of the concept of Outstanding Universal Value, making use of IUCN's flagship knowledge products.
11. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should continue to expand the pool of evaluators and monitoring experts, aiming to achieve technical, regional, linguistic and gender balance.
12. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should improve collaboration with International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), jointly setting relevant and achievable priorities given available capacity.
13. Existing capacity building efforts should be focussed on developing a capacity building programme (for experts, State Parties) meeting the needs of the target audience. This can either be done by the IUCN World Heritage Programme using new and additional resources, or carried out by another player and supported by the programme, feeding in its expertise. Capacity building efforts should seek to:

- Turn guidelines and standards into training materials
 - Offer regionally balanced training opportunities
 - Provide professional accreditation certification
 - Track the deployment of those certified in subsequent evaluation of nominations and monitoring of state of conservation.
14. The Programme should improve the relevance and accessibility of World Heritage knowledge products by:
- Ensuring all new knowledge products have benefited from an up-front demand analysis of potential end users
 - Improving accessibility electronically, including in situations where web access is not available and in as many major languages as possible
 - Monitoring use and effect of use of knowledge products
 - Ensuring best use of IUCN's flagship knowledge products (e.g. datasets, standards and tools related to the Red Lists, Key Biodiversity Areas).
15. IUCN senior management should determine how to best influence the World Heritage Convention to deliver on nature conservation, including consideration of communications aspects, the role of civil society, the role of IUCN Members and how to best use diplomacy and align positions with ICOMOS and ICCROM. This needs to include consideration of the role of the IUCN World Heritage Programme in relation to advocacy and how this should be managed and governed in relation to the Convention mandate.

Efficiency and Cost-effectiveness

16. The IUCN Director General and UNESCO should ensure that the resources allocated to the IUCN World Heritage Programme are adequate to meet the growing workload of the programme.
17. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should investigate opportunities for raising funds, including working with expert fundraisers and mapping potential donors.
18. The IUCN World Heritage Programme, the Global Programme on Protected Areas and the World Commission on Protected Areas should maximize the contributions of WCPA volunteers to World Heritage, for instance through training, skills sharing and accreditation. This should include consideration of the limits of WCPA volunteer contributions, whether/when these are reached, and how to manage the implications.

Impact

19. IUCN senior management should position the IUCN World Heritage Programme as a test case for new data sets, maps and tools to measure impact on biodiversity and local communities and indigenous peoples. The testing should start with uncontroversial World Heritage sites for which good data are available.
20. Systematic monitoring and measurement of impact should be built into Conservation Outlook Reporting when feasible and appropriate, so that the impact of all natural and mixed sites will eventually be measured regularly.

Organisational aspects

21. The IUCN World Heritage Programme needs to prioritise its workload and maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of internal procedures and processes where possible. At the same time, IUCN as a whole, through the Human Resources Management Group and the Director General, should carefully consider the workload/stress level situation of the IUCN World Heritage Programme and propose solutions that either increase resources or reduce workload.
22. The World Heritage Panel should be modernised, including (a) preparation of a clearer and updated Terms of Reference, (b) delineation of clearly defined roles vis-a-vis the IUCN World Heritage Programme, (c) clearer provisions for transparency of its governance, operations, procedures and decisions.
23. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should develop a clear communications strategy/approach encompassing internal and external communications, both with individuals and larger audiences, and including monitoring and reporting of results.
24. The Director General should, with agreement from UNESCO, coordinate a facilitated process to clarify and define roles and responsibilities of the IUCN World Heritage Programme and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and the other Advisory Bodies. This process needs to include identification, and consideration of, the reasons why previous attempts were not fully successful.
25. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should adapt its interactions with the Committee through a better understanding of Committee information needs, including minimum technical jargon, to ensure effective communication.
26. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should strengthen further its long-standing collaboration with the World Commission on Protected Areas, and also explore new opportunities to collaborate with:

- the Species Survival Commission (recognizing that work has already started) on the use of, and contribution to, the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and the Key Biodiversity Areas standard
- the Commission on Ecosystem Management on the Red List of Ecosystems
- the Commission on Economic, Environmental and Social Policy on the Natural Resource Governance Framework and more generally on rights-based approaches and indigenous peoples issues.

27. The Programme should continue its close collaboration with the Global Protected Areas Programme particularly, to ensure congruence between State of Conservation monitoring and the proposed Green List of protected areas, species and ecosystems and associated standards.

28. IUCN senior management should recommend ways of improving IUCN programme integration more generally, including between thematic programmes, and between global and regional levels.

29. The IUCN World Heritage Programme should aim to develop medium to long term reciprocal collaborations with one or two IUCN technical programmes to demonstrate the use of management or restoration tools within World Heritage sites.