

Appendix 5: Evaluators' Response to IUCN Comments on the Evaluation of the CIDA-funded component of the Nile Basin Discourse, May, 2004

IUCN Comments

Introduction

An evaluation of the CIDA-funded component of the Nile Basin International Discourse Programme (referred to in the Evaluation Report as the Nile Basin Discourse) was carried out in April and May, 2004. An early draft report was discussed by the local evaluator and staff of IUCN EARO during a "debriefing meeting" but, alas, no opportunity was provided for IUCN to comment on the final draft report before its publication and submission to CIDA. Thus, after the event, IUCN was asked to make some comments. This is regrettable as the report has already been absorbed by CIDA so that any such IUCN comments are unlikely to be considered in the text as they may be added as an addendum in a later version of the evaluation document.

General Comments

First it is necessary to correct the title of the Evaluation Report. It should read "the CIDA-supported component of the Nile Basin Discourse" with the relevant contract number on the cover. This is because IUCN (together with World Bank and WWF) began the development of the Nile Basin Discourse in January 2000 with funding from WB and the MacArthur Foundation. This continued through to the outset of the CIDA-funded component in April 2002 with further support from WB and a significant amount of financial support and in-kind support from IUCN in that two-year period. It continues still as a programme with support from IUCN despite the absence of a donor-funded project at the moment.

Further it is necessary to remind all concerned that IUCN did not rely solely on the CIDA-funded project to launch the Discourse Desk (which is an entity within the International Discourse). Several donors actively sought involvement in the Discourse from the time of the ICCON meeting in Geneva in June, 2001, and IUCN negotiated support from the World Bank to continue the Discourse in the event that other donor funding was not available by the time the CIDA grant was exhausted. This support is the subject of a letter from the World Bank (dated 2nd October, 2002 and entitled "Support for the position of the Discourse Facilitator for the International Discourse on the Nile") in which it is stated that WB will continue to support the Discourse to the tune of US\$ 120,000 to ensure its continuation beyond the end of the CIDA support. The reason that this did not happen in May, 2004, is a mystery to IUCN but known to be related to changing policies within the WB.

Evaluators' Response

IUCN did have an opportunity to comment on the evaluation findings. As IUCN notes, the evaluator provided IUCN with a draft report and discussed it with them in a debriefing meeting. The report was then revised, incorporating IUCN's comments, prior to submission to CIDA.

Nonetheless, the final evaluation report will include IUCN's comments.

IUCN is correct, this is an evaluation of CIDA's support to the Nile Basin Discourse. The action of IUCN, WWF and World Bank in developing the concept for the Nile Basin Discourse project is noted at the bottom of page 7 and the top of page 8. The inability of NBD to implement programming due to lack of funds seems to indicate that the contributions of others was small, but this was not part of the evaluators' scope of work. In addition, once CIDA funds were exhausted, NBD staff were let go and the equipment is stored. This does not really have the feel of a continued existence, independent of donor funding. IUCN seems to be discounting the important role of the NDFs, the Steering Committee and civil society in general in the continuity of NBD.

Several donors have indicated interest, including the World Bank, but none have provided funding. This was the main motivator for CIDA's evaluation.

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On financial matters, a significant proportion of the Evaluation Report (pages 18, 19, 20 and various comments in other parts) refers to what is described as being "top heavy with overhead costs" and an overly large proportion related to salaries and office costs. What is not mentioned is that this was the result of discussion between IUCN and CIDA before the project began and was an approved budget. This project was set up to establish the Discourse Desk and to begin some activities... not to carry out everything that the Discourse wanted to achieve in three years.

IUCN has a problem with the insinuation by the evaluator that there was unnecessarily high expenditure on salaries and such things as the venue for the second General Assembly at the Hilton Hotel in Nairobi. As stated to the evaluator in the briefing session, IUCN has its standards when employing an internationally appointed Technical Advisor (in this case the Discourse Facilitator) and discusses the budget for this with the donor. IUCN expects international responsibility and expertise from a TA and so he/she has a salary support system that matches that. The opinion of the evaluator that the Discourse Desk, should be seen as an impoverished local NGO is his own and certainly not shared by IUCN - especially as the Facilitator was required to engage with senior civil servants, Ministers and international agencies. While there is criticism of the Desk being situated in "a big mansion with a guest wing in a posh area" there is no mention of the fact that this house was offered to the Discourse by the (then) Minister of Water, Lands and Environment of Uganda at a very reduced rate as his contribution to the Discourse ideal and, as a result, enabled the Discourse to gain support from NBI during his chairmanship of the Council of Ministers of the NBI. Similarly, there is no mention of the extremely reduced rate which IUCN receives from such hotels as the Hilton in Nairobi, enabling meetings to be held there at much lower cost than even the cheapest of other venues. IUCN in Eastern Africa runs, on average, a workshop somewhere in the region each week. It has a costing system that ensures that we pay the lowest rates and costs to each budget -taking into account the costs of airfares (especially for a ten-country programme like the NBD), country per diems and accommodation.

Specific Comments

Page 4. Executive Summary. In the box, there is no mention of the third Steering Committee meeting held in Entebbe in April, 2003.

This is not strictly accurate. The budget discussed and approved by CIDA prior to the start of the program was for one year. As the evaluator notes on page 18 programming funds were moved to cover the Facilitator's salary, and the Communications officer, a key person on a program designed to mobilize and liaise with civil society was not hired. This salary as well was transferred to the Facilitator. These are clear changes to the budget discussed and approved before hand.

The evaluator was asked to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of project management. This, inter alia, requires an assessment of how project funds were used — were they spent properly and were they spent well.

The evaluator notes, on the bottom of page 20 and top of page 21, IUCN's position that the Facilitator's remuneration is within the range they usually pay for staff of this caliber.

The evaluator also notes, at the top of page 23, that the current building was leased at a discount. It is questionable, in the evaluator's opinion, for a civil society project, which may have a role in opposing projects proposed by the Minister of Water, Lands and Environment, to accept subsidies from this person.

The evaluator also notes, on the top of page 22, that the Hilton in Nairobi provided IUCN with a large discount. The difficulty, as the evaluator points out, is that NBD is to become an independent organization, not part of IUCN, and needs to be careful not to develop unsustainable spending habits. It is highly unlikely that NBD will be running a workshop in East Africa every week and thus qualify for the IUCN discount.

It was the Evaluator's finding that there were three meetings; the first was the Cairo meeting of June 2002 at which the Interim Steering Committee was formed, the first Interim Steering Committee was held in Entebbe at the Desk in December 2002 and the second Interim Steering Committee was the December 2003 meeting in Nairobi. During this meeting elections were held and the

Page 4. Last line - It should be added that several National Discourse Forum members were also invited to and attended the Nile-TAC and NELSAP meetings.

Page 11. Evaluation Findings. 6.1 Results Achieved. In Table 2, in the End of Project Status, please note that the second sentence under #1 does not apply as the establishment of the NBD as a separate entity was not an expected output of the CIDA-supported part of the Discourse process. Under #3 in the same place, we feel that Communication and Information Flows have been enhanced and that reference to the website and its use of both communication and information should be made. Incidentally, IUCN has ensured the continuation of the website with other funds since the end of this project involvement.

Page 12, Section 6.1.2. Last paragraph. Mention should be made of the promised WB support (see above).

Page 12, Section 6.1.3 . Line 9: the IUCN project on an Environmental Journalists Network for Lake Victoria which set up a support system with HEMNET was funded!by SIDA (not CIDA) and is about to begin a second phase.

Page 13. Second paragraph. Second sentence. We assume that this refers to the Nile Basin Society which was established by an expatriate riparian in Canada. This organization is hardly "a rival to IUCN", Perhaps a competitor with the NBD for networking with Nile Basin riparians?

Page 14:, 6.1.5, last paragraph, The studies were a particular interest of DFID which was intending to fund same and had requested details of their likely content.

Page 6.2.2 Second paragraph, last sentence. IUCN has been "sensitive" to the development of CSO organizations and networks for decades in this region - which is why IUCN offered to set up and host the NBD. One of the reasons that some of the policies and procedures of IUCN "may not have gone down well with some Steering Committee members" is because the Steering Committee wished to take control of the process and budget without having any responsibility for the funds. To this end, IUCN asked the steering committee on several occasions, the last being at the General Assembly in December, 2003, if the NBD would like it to withdraw so that the Steering

Interim Steering Committee transformed into a proper Steering committee. There were therefore only two Steering Committee meetings during the life of the project. If a Steering Committee meeting was held in April 2003 this would be the second Steering Committee meeting - between those of December 2002 and 2003. Please confirm date.

Okay.

The fifth outcome of the CIDA project was "Establish a permanent and independent organization for discourse on Nile River Basin Issues." This seems to imply that establishment of NDB as a separate entity was an expected result of the CIDA project.

The evaluator agrees that communication and information flows have been enhanced and discusses the website at the top of page 15.

This funding has not come through, and there are indications it may not, due to changing priorities within the Bank.

IUCN is correct: apologies, this should be SIDA.

Yes the organization referred to is the Nile Basin Society. It may not be a rival to IUCN but it is a rival to NBD, an IUCN hosted project as acknowledged by IUCN.

Noted.

The evaluator is aware of the difficulties and has tried to be balanced on this issue. However, the evaluator did not note activities that IUCN could have implemented to promote ownership and control without lowering accountability, for example inclusion of Steering Committee Members in the facilitator's annual performance review. Another example is provided on page 17, where Steering Committee Members expressed concern that they were not consulted on draft newsletters.

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Committee could take over control of the process. In every case IUCN was requested to continue as it was supporting the NBD and facilitating its operations... a point not mentioned in the Evaluation Report. _____

Page 17. First paragraph, last line. We mention this "top heavy" reference in the general comments, above. Please note that DFID had originally agreed to support the NBD without having to contribute in any way to the overheads and personnel costs - a clear indication that support was not related to core costs.

Page 17. 6.5.1. Sustainability. Please note that the NBD has, in fact, continued and that the Uganda NDF has taken over interim control of the coordination as well as there being several NDFs that are self-supporting. Examples being the National Nile Basin Discourse Forum, Egypt and the Friends of the Nile Basin in Sudan.

Page 21. First paragraph. Second sentence. It is IUCN's conviction that the eventual NBD must be an international NGO - probably registered in Uganda. It must be international (i.e. not national, local) to facilitate its ease of operation in the ten riparian countries and to have credibility at international forums. It will also need some international status to be able to interact with NBI in many countries and to have an international constituency. The same comment applies to bullet #2 on page 22.

Page 23. Lessons learned. 4 ' point on the negative side. The date of the steering committee was agreed by email consensus as the most appropriate date - the only person unable to attend on that date being the chairman who accepted the date in writing. The Secretary subsequently decided to get married on the first day of the meeting - both these points were transmitted to the Evaluator.

Otherwise we find the evaluation adequate and would appreciate if our comments could be incorporated somehow- so that the final version can be sent to potential donors/partners in the future.

IUCN EARO 6th
July, 2004

It is very difficult for a donor to fund an organization to implement program activities when the donor is aware that core costs have not been covered as the potential for the organization to fail to deliver is very high.

As noted above, once CIDA funds were exhausted, NBD staff were let go and the equipment is stored. That the cost conscious NDFs are continuing is not in doubt and one of the reasons the evaluator held them up as an example.

By local, the evaluator meant in the Nile Basin, and operating within the usual environment prevailing for NGOs in the region, not at the highly inflated rates of international NGOs and UN agencies.

Noted, however the Chairman and the Secretary are pretty important to holding a meeting. IUCN is correct that the Chairman accepted the date, but he stated that he wished a different date and seemed to feel that his request was not accommodated. As noted above, it is normal for the Chair to call the meetings.

Accepted, and included.
PSI/MICRODE CONSULT
6th July, 2004

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