



## Fact Sheet for AEWA International Species Working Group Coordinators





## AEWA International Species Working Groups

### FACT SHEET

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The establishment of inter-governmental AEWA International Species Working Groups (IWGs) is foreseen for prioritized AEWA International Single Species Action (ISSAPs) and Management Plans (ISSMPs). The purpose of these Working Groups is to coordinate the implementation of the plans amongst range states. A coordinating organization and a subsequent Species Working Group Coordinator are identified by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat to organize and facilitate the work of the IWGs.

In addition to the general responsibilities outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and the coordinating organization, this fact sheet provides further information on how Working Group coordination is set up, the main tasks of AEWA Species Working Group Coordinators, as well as on the roles of the IWG Chairs, designated Range States representatives and the Secretariat.

#### 2. ORGANIZATION AND FUNDING OF THE COORDINATION

The commitment of an organization to take over the task of coordinating an AEWA Species Working Group is in most cases formalized through the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and the institution/organization in question. Basic Terms of Reference outlining the role and responsibilities of the coordinator are attached to the MoU. The coordinators are expected to work in close cooperation and consultation with the Secretariat and the elected Chair of the respective Working Group.

The main responsibility of securing funding for the coordinator position falls on the selected coordinating organization and coordinator. The Secretariat has very limited means to assist in fundraising for the Working Groups. The coordination will therefore in most cases be handed over to organizations or government institutions that can either provide the coordination as part of the regular work of their staff or via a voluntary contribution or secondment. The respective Working Group range states might also be willing to contribute towards the funding of a coordinator.

The more time a coordinator has to spend on his or her IWG the better – but almost none of the Working Groups currently in place have a full-time coordinator. Coordination is rather provided as part of - or in addition to - the selected person's main work.

#### 3. MAIN OBJECTIVES OF AEWA IWG COORDINATION

The main objective of setting up and providing coordination for the AEWA International Species Working Groups is to ensure their smooth functioning with the ultimate goal of implementing the Action or Management Plan for the species in question.

Past experience has shown that in the absence of a Working Group with both links to range state governments as well as to relevant national species experts, combined with active coordination of its'

activities, adopted Plans often lay dormant and the rate of implementation as well as the coordination of conservation activities along the flyway, remains low.

#### 4. MAIN TASKS

The main tasks of AEWA International Species Working Group Coordinators are as follows:

- 4.1. Assisting the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat in convening the International Working Group (*essential*);
- 4.2. Organizing and servicing the meetings of the International Working Group (*essential*);
- 4.3. Establishing and facilitating a website and internal workspace for the Working Group (*essential*);
- 4.4. Assisting the range states in preparing National Species Action/Management Plans;
- 4.5. Assisting the range states and other stakeholders in implementing the Plans, including fundraising (*essential*);
- 4.6. Preparing regular updates on the progress in implementation and achieving the goals of the ISAP/ISMP (*essential*);
- 4.7. Organizing updates or revisions of the ISAP/ISMP, as necessary (*essential*);
- 4.8. Establishing and maintaining an information resource base for the species, if necessary.

These tasks are briefly outlined below. Core tasks have been marked as essential. The implementation of tasks will very much depend on the capacity of the coordinating organization and the designated coordinator as well as on the needs and wishes of the Working Group.

##### 4.1. Assisting the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat in convening the IWG (*essential*)

Following the adoption of an AEWA Species Action or Management Plan and once a coordinating organization has been identified, the Secretariat will convene the Working Group by sending official letters to all the AEWA Focal Points in the range states covered by the Action Plan. The letters introduce the selected Species Working Group Coordinator (including contact details etc.) and request Focal Points to nominate two representatives to the group:

- a) one **government representative** from the institution responsible for the implementation of AEWA and;
- b) one **national expert** with in-depth knowledge and experience on the scientific, technical, conservation and/or management issues regarding the species.

The two designated people will be in charge of facilitating the implementation of the Plan in their country and will also act as the link between the IWG and national stakeholders. In this regard, coordinators should encourage the establishment of National Working Groups which in turn should involve and engage all relevant national stakeholders. Additional national representatives and experts are welcome to attend Working Group meetings as part of their national delegation in agreement with the designated government representative.

If a particular government representative or national expert for the species is already known, the Secretariat can recommend that they be nominated to represent their country in the Working Group. If this is the case,

coordinators should supply the Secretariat with a list of candidates including their institutions/job titles and email addresses during the preparation of the letters to convene the Working Group.

In addition to national representatives:

- c) **observer organizations** are also invited to join the ISWG.

Their role is to assist the IWG in its tasks and to provide expert guidance. Invited organizations usually include the international expert organizations represented in the AEWA Technical Committee (such as Wetlands International, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, BirdLife International, FACE, CIC, OMPO etc.). In addition, other organizations can apply for observer status to the group. All organizations that would like to be granted an observer status to the Working Group must be approved by the IWG members.

In addition to the letters, Focal Points will receive Working Group Terms of Reference as developed by the AEWA Technical Committee and customized for the Working Group in question. The Terms of Reference are revised by the coordinator following instructions from the Secretariat.

Once the formal letters convening the Working Group have been sent, the coordinator will be responsible for collecting the designations of representatives and maintaining a contact list of the Working Group members. The coordinator shall communicate this list as well as any changes to the Secretariat (E-mail to Ms Nina Mikander: [nina.mikander@unep-aeewa.org](mailto:nina.mikander@unep-aeewa.org)). In addition, the coordinator will follow-up with countries that have not yet designated representatives to the group by the communicated deadline.

#### **MAIN STEPS:**

- *supply the Secretariat with a list of key experts in the range states (if known);*
- *provide the Secretariat with customized Terms of Reference for the Working Group;*
- *receive nominations for the Working Group and maintain up-to-date contact list;*
- *remind range states of designations after expiration of the designation deadline;*
- *facilitate the process of observers being invited and confirmed to the Working Group (see guidance for the Admission of Observers to AEWA IWGs).*

#### **4.2. Organizing and servicing the meetings of the IWG (essential)**

The coordinator is responsible for facilitating the work of the IWG between meetings and also for organizing the meetings of the Working Group in cooperation with the AEWA Secretariat. Organizing meetings of the Working Group includes, but is not limited to:

- Meeting logistics (venue, invitations, assistance with visa applications etc.) and fundraising for meetings (as necessary);
- Meeting documents (Note: in addition to sharing the meeting documents via the Working Group website, the Secretariat will set up a page on the AEWA website for the documents. Documents should be ready and online four weeks in advance of the meeting, at the latest);
- Facilitation of national reporting using the CMS Family Online Reporting System (if the Working Group decides to establish a national reporting practice);
- Meeting report and follow-up.

Dates for Working Group meetings should be coordinated with the Secretariat in order to ensure Secretariat availability to assist with meeting preparations as well as availability to attend meetings (as necessary).

The Working Group will decide at its first meeting at what intervals meetings should take place. Meeting frequency is mostly dependent on available funding. Most Working Groups aim to have face-to-face

meetings every two to three years. In an effort to limit meeting costs (particularly in the case of very large Working Groups), coordinators can explore the option of having regional meetings with a smaller number of range states as well as the possibility of organizing Working Group meetings online, where appropriate.

**MAIN STEPS:**

- *Once a critical mass of range states has appointed representatives to the group, liaise with the Secretariat regarding the holding of a first IWG meeting and start fundraising (if applicable), including contacting possible host countries;*
- *Undertake meeting preparations as described above;*
- *Facilitate the IWG meeting together with the elected Chair (and the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat if applicable);*
- *Follow-up on meeting decisions and tasks.*

**4.3. Establishing and Facilitating a Website and Internal Workspace (essential)**

The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat has developed a Drupal content management template for IWG websites. The templates include an external website to present the Plan, the Working Group and the species as well as an internal workspace area open to Working Group members and observers only. The websites are currently all being hosted by the Secretariat.

Coordinators are requested to populate their Working Group websites and workspaces with content and to update the websites regularly. In addition, coordinators are expected to moderate the discussion on the workspace.

Coordinators will be provided with administrator rights (including password and login) for their website as well a user guide on how to use and manage the website. The coordinator may then - in turn – provide others from within the coordinating organization with administrator rights for the purposes of populating the website. However, administrator rights should be limited to a select few in order to avoid difficulties with the website. The Secretariat will also maintain administrator rights for all websites/workspaces.

The Secretariat will, in turn, promote the work of the Working Groups on the AEWA website. Coordinators are therefore requested to forward any interesting stories posted on their news page (for example from Working Group meetings or project results) to the Secretariat.

**MAIN STEPS:**

- Gather content for the website (text, pictures, publications etc.);
- Request template and login details from the Secretariat and proceed with populating the site and creating workspace accounts for all IWG members and confirmed observers;
- Facilitate all IWG correspondence via the internal workspace.

**4.4. Assisting the range states in preparing national species action/management plans**

One of the main means of implementing international species action and management plans is the development of national action/management plans which take into account the situation in the individual range state and also define national implementation priorities and responsibilities. Coordinators should

encourage the development and adoption of national action/management plans (at least in key range states). The AEWA guidelines on the development of national action plans<sup>1</sup> provide some guidance.

#### **4.5. Assisting the range states and other stakeholders in implementing the ISSAP/ISSMP, including fundraising (*essential*)**

Coordinators shall provide assistance to range states as well as other stakeholders in the implementation of the plans where necessary. This can include providing expertise and know-how as well as assisting in fundraising for prioritized implementation activities and projects.

##### **MAIN STEPS:**

- Request range states to provide a list of urgent priority actions for their country based on the ISSAP/ISSMP to be prioritized for fundraising;
- Pass on information on possible funding opportunities to ISWG members;
- Assist range states in setting up possible larger cross-border, regional or flyway conservation projects;
- Facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity building (such as field training) if necessary;
- Liaise with other projects, partners etc. to explore possibilities to collaborate.

#### **4.6. Preparing regular updates on the progress in implementation and achieving the goals of the ISSAP/ISSMP (*essential*)**

The Coordinator will be requested by the Secretariat to prepare updates on progress made with the Working Group and the implementation of the Plan. Updates are particularly needed for meetings of the AEWA Technical Committee, AEWA Standing Committee and the sessions of the AEWA Meetings of the Parties.

As mentioned above under task three, coordinators are also encouraged to share information on progress made within the framework of the Plan with the Secretariat (for example submitting stories on successful projects/meetings etc. to be posted on the AEWA website or to be featured on the AEWA e-newsletter) and of course the wider conservation community.

##### **MAIN STEPS:**

- Provide updates to the Secretariat as requested;
- Inform the Secretariat of particular achievements/projects/implementation progress for wider distribution.

#### **4.7. Organizing updates or revisions of the ISSAP/ISSMP (*essential*)**

The coordinator is also responsible for organizing updates or revisions of AEWA Species/Management Plans in cooperation with the AEWA Secretariat - as necessary. A revision of the Plan is usually foreseen after a certain period of validity (i.e. 10 years) which is specified in the Plan itself. An emergency review of the Plan can also be undertaken should there be any sudden major changes liable to affect the species/population in question.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/publication/aewa-conservation-guidelines-no-1-guidelines-preparation-national-single-species-action>

#### **MAIN STEPS:**

- Plan and execute the revision together with the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat (timeline, possible need for external assistance and subsequent fundraising etc.) as well as the IWG (organize National Reporting for latest data, circulate drafts to all IWG members for comments etc.).

#### **4.8. Establishing and Maintaining an Information Resource Base**

Coordinators are further encouraged to establish and maintain an information resource base for the species in question, if no such information resource base already exists. This could include - but not be limited to – national reports to the Working Group, scientific articles, popular articles, images, maps, observation records, etc. Linking to the tasks described under 4.2 (National reports to IWG meetings), 4.6 (Progress reports on implementation) and 4.7 (Revisions of the ISSAPs or ISSMPs), coordinators should particularly encourage the collection and collation of data and information linked to the goals and objectives of any ISSAP/ISSMP.

The Working Group websites can function as a platform to store information related to the species – in particular within the internal workspace area under the heading “Resource Documents” which allows the sharing of documents and information within the closed circle of the Working Group members.

### **5. “CORPORATE IDENTITY” OF THE AEWA SPECIES WORKING GROUPS**

As the Working Groups are functioning under the framework of AEWA, the Secretariat has made efforts to ensure that a common - albeit not very strict – branding is applied to all groups identifying them as AEWA Species Working Groups. This “corporate identity” of the Working Groups is still under development, but the following tools currently adhere to a similar format:

- Working Group logos
- Websites/workspaces
- Working Group letterhead
- Meeting document format
- Promotional materials (banners, stickers etc.)

For more information and guidance as well as templates, please contact the Secretariat.

### **6. WORKING GROUP CHAIR**

#### **6.1. Election and Term of a Chair Country**

As specified in the generic Terms of Reference developed by the AEWA Technical Committee in 2009 for AEWA International Species Working Groups, a Chair country shall be elected amongst the range states of each Working Group. The first election should be carried out at the first face-to-face meeting of the Working Group.

Preferably the Chair country should be represented in the Working Group by a designated government official. As the range state governments are charged with the implementation of the AEWA Species Action and Management Plans which apply to them, the inter-governmental Working Groups should also be chaired by a government representative, when possible. Should no government representatives have been

designated to the Working Group, a designated national expert may be elected to chair the Group as an exception. The chairmanship is normally rotational.

## **6.2. Role of the Working Group Chair**

The elected Chair of each Working Group presides over the Working Group meetings. As such, the Chair will be consulted and kept informed about the preparations of meetings by the Coordinator and the AEWA Secretariat. The Chair also has the right to invite additional participants as observers to meetings of the Working Group in consultation with the Coordinator and the Secretariat.

In the periods between the meetings, the Chair is the first contact point for the Coordinator and the Secretariat when consulting the range state governments and other members of the Working Group, providing guidance as necessary.

## **7. WORKING GROUP MEMBERS**

### **7.1. Role of the designated government representatives**

A core task of each designated government representative is the responsibility to coordinate or to organize/provide for the coordination of the national implementation of the respective Action or Management Plan and to function as the link between the International Working Group and the National Working Group (or other national body dealing with the implementation of the Plan). This includes but is not limited to guiding national implementation activities according to decisions taken under the Working Group and also consulting with relevant national stakeholders before reporting back to the Working Group on national implementation progress.

### **7.2. Role of the designated range state experts**

The role of the designated range state experts in each Working Group – beyond actively contributing to the work of the Group based on their expertise – is to strengthen and maintain the technical and expert network relevant for the species in question in their country. In addition, designated experts are also expected to function as the link between the international and national expert networks.

## **8. SECRETARIAT ROLE & CONTACTS**

As mentioned throughout this fact sheet, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat works in close cooperation with the IWGs and selected coordinators providing guidance and assuring that the IWGs are functioning consistently. The main Secretariat tasks include the following:

- Identification of a coordinating organization/institution, negotiation of modalities regarding coordination (drafting Memorandum of Understanding, Terms of Reference etc.);
- Convening of the IWG;
- Involvement in IWG meeting preparations and execution: i.e. in putting together the meeting agenda, providing guidance as well as templates for more formal agenda points (election of Chair country, etc.), providing guidance on national reporting (including access to the CMS Family online reporting system), attending IWG meetings to assist with their facilitation;
- Providing a customized website/workspace template for each prioritized IWG including technical support as feasible;
- Providing general guidance on national action planning processes, including best practice examples;
- Passing on any relevant information regarding funding opportunities to the coordinators as well as fundraising for IWG species conservation activities through the CMS Family Champions Programme;

- Requesting coordinators to provide updates and reports on IWG activities and ISSAP/ISSMP implementation as necessary;
- Prompting coordinators to organize updates/revisions of their respective ISSAP/ISSMPs as necessary, including providing guidance throughout the revision and adoption process.

In addition, the Secretariat can also provide guidance in cases where disputes occur amongst IWG members or between the IWG and third parties.

For more information, please contact the Secretariat:

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