

1st February 2011

Dear WOW Steering Committee:

With this briefing note I am pleased to announce the operational end to the UNOPS-executed portion of technical activities within the Wings Over Wetlands initiative as well as the formal closure of the Project Coordination Unit.

After nearly five years of implementation there are many achievements and milestones to be proud of. I am confident the WOW project has indeed pushed the envelope with respect to flyway conservation and produced some very useful tools for the African-Eurasian region. I also have no doubt that within the broader framework of the post-WOW Memorandum of Cooperation, the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, Wetlands International and BirdLife International will continue to demonstrate leadership on these important issues for years to come.

I have grown tremendously – both professionally and as a person I would say – from the insights and contributions of my friends and colleagues within the WOW project. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the entire Steering Committee, its Chairman Dr. Gerard Boere for his inspiring commitment and assistance to the project, Edoardo Zandri, Umberto Gallo-Orsi, Jonathan Barnard, Florian Keil, the many dedicated individuals working on technical activities and all partners who contributed to the effective impact of WOW. Without all of your commitment, dedication and hard work, this project would never have reached such a level of success.

I would like to convey my respect and gratitude for enabling me to deliver this groundbreaking project and to see it through to fruition. I must admit that having invested a considerable amount of energy and time into this project it is difficult to bid you all farewell. I am hopeful nonetheless that our paths will cross again so this is definitely not goodbye.

Yours sincerely,



Camillo Ponziani
Operations Manager
UNEP-GEF African-Eurasian Flyways Project

Summary of Outcomes from the WOW project's Core Management Meeting Bonn, 8 - 9 December 2010

From 8 - 9 December 2010, the WOW Project Coordination Unit held a meeting with the project's core management team to tie off loose ends with respect to implementation and to discuss each facet of the project in depth. In attendance were Florian Keil (FK), Umberto Gallo-Orsi (UGO), Jonathan Barnard (JB) and Camillo Ponziani (CP). Below is a brief synopsis of the outcomes of the discussion for the WOW Steering Committee's consideration and follow-up.

Furthermore, *Annex I* to this document provides a concise snapshot of the decisions taken at the last meeting of the Steering Committee in Wakkerstroom, South Africa and where applicable highlights those issues which are still pending.

I. Protocol for the formal closure of Wings Over Wetlands project

- Bilateral discussions between the project's Executing Agency (UNOPS) and the Implementing Agency (UNEP) are ongoing with respect to the formal closure of the WOW project. Discussions are likely to continue into early 2011 to ensure that UN protocol and closure procedures are adhered to. UNOPS is responsible for submitting a final financial report to UNEP by June 2011 and upon its endorsement, the project can then be considered formally closed.
- Since project closure is already being addressed bilaterally between UNOPS and UNEP, there are no official actions that need to be taken by the Steering Committee at this juncture. The SC may however wish to take stock of the few activities from the workplan which have spilled into 2011 (implemented through co-financing) to make sure these are all brought to a successful conclusion. Furthermore, the SC could also review activities within the overall workplan that were not implemented due to insufficient co-financing and if necessary take these on within the framework of the post-WOW Memorandum of Cooperation.
- No final technical report for the project was drafted by the Operations Manager prior to him going on annual leave on 23rd November 2010. At this point in time some remaining technical activities were still in progress and expected to continue until March 2011. Furthermore, the most recent consolidated report on file (Semi Annual Report # 8) which was circulated to the project Steering Committee in September 2010 is already written as if it were a final report at the request of Dr. Phillip Edwards who completed the Terminal Evaluation Report soon thereafter. The Operations Manager was requested to predict the progress of activities and assume what would likely be achieved by the end of the project. As such, the Operations Manager had to forecast all activities within the workplan to Dec 2010. This work took a considerable amount of additional time and effort from both the Project Coordination Unit and WI's WOW Project Coordinator; more so than any prior technical report. The activities within the workplan have now been implemented in line with the Operations Manager's expectations and therefore, a formal final report may be redundant at this stage.
- Notwithstanding the above, Wetlands International will still produce a number technical reports under its active sub-contracts with AEWA for remaining activities (for co-financing provided by the European Commission, UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and the French Government).

II. Contractual Agreements

- All 17 sub-contracts for GEF funds between UNOPS and various project entities have been closed and there are no pending loose ends with regards to the disbursement of GEF funds.
- After 31st December 2010, the Operations Manager no longer has a contract with UNOPS and will be separating altogether from the United Nations. Thereafter, any pending implementation issues should be brought to the attention of UNOPS in Nairobi (Bahaa Al-Asad and Kerstine Kageni).
- BirdLife International anticipates that it will submit its final financial report to Wetlands International in early January 2011. Final payment pending upon the report's endorsement.
- Wetlands International is waiting for UNEP-WCMC's final report (anticipated in early 2011)
- The BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat is required to submit its final activity report to Wetlands International. All remaining funds have been disbursed already but survey work and winter counts in Mozambique, Ethiopia and Southern Sudan are pending.
- Sub-contracts for co-financing with West Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East have all been successfully closed.
- Wetlands International still has open contracts with the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat for contributions from the French Government, the European Commission and the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat. All contracts are expected to be brought to a successful conclusion by March 2011 at the very latest and UGO is following up as focal point for WI. Some final reporting to AEWA will be required by Wetlands International.
- While only marginally connected to WOW, BLI has finalized all contractual obligations and requirements to the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat under the WetCap project. There are unused surplus funds which BLI plans to return to the AEWA accounts. Because this initiative has grinded to a halt completely, it is anticipated that substantial surplus funds exist. The core management group floated the idea of printing the WOW FTK in Arabic or holding a small ToT in the region. This will be followed up by UGO.

III. Review of Component 1 – Critical Site Network Tool

- While the bulk of the activities in the project workplan have essentially been completed under Component 1, there are some glitches to rectify, some minor tweaking work required and efforts to develop a number of additional filters / functionalities that will all spill into 2011.
- Translation of the CSN portal in Arabic, Russian and French is expected to be completed in early 2011, though the work involved in achieving this is not anticipated to be too overwhelming because of the minimal amount of text which needs to be translated.
- Some additional features relevant to AEWA requirements / obligations will also be finalized by the technical team in early 2011. Once this work has been completed it will be possible to produce the list of AEWA populations either for a country or for a specific location. It will also be possible to further filter the list based on species attributes such as IUCN Red List status, taxonomy, etc. The technical team is also hoping to add a feature that will allow the user to visualize the protection status of a site.
- It must be stressed that these additional filters and functionalities are above and beyond what is required by the project and what is documented within the workplan.
- The site descriptions are also pending and will likely be taken on an ad hoc basis after the portal refinement process has been completed.
- A CSN user manual is currently under development and will be ready in early 2011 for circulation. This will be in the layout and design of the FTK.

- The technical team is working on the final text in connection to the Activity 1.9 publication and this is presumed to be at an advanced stage. Once the text has been agreed upon it will be sent to CP for design and then printed.
- The technical team is also in contact with the respective MEAs to ensure that the CSN Tool is endorsed by both the AEWA Technical Committee and Ramsar STRP as per the Project Logical Framework.
- Staff from UNEP-WCMC will be visiting Bonn in February 2011 to meet with the UNEP/CMS Secretariat. Prior to leaving Bonn, the Operations Manager flagged the importance of striking an agreement between AEWA and UNEP-WCMC for the maintenance of the CSN Tool as per the WOW Project Document.

IV. Review of Component 2 – Flyway Training Kit

- 3 out of the 4 project sub-regions have successfully delivered Training of Trainer workshops, with the exception of Eastern and Southern Africa. The BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat should be strongly encouraged to submit an application to the US Fish and Wildlife Service grant window during its next call for proposals.
- The Wadden Sea Programme has generously provided funding to support the printing of the WOW FTK in French. At this stage it is anticipated that the funding will support the printing of 200 hard copies, 200 DVDs, layout costs and distribution expenses. In an effort not to duplicate work, the pending proposal submitted by AEWA for printing of the FTK in French should be used synergistically with funding already committed by the Wadden Sea Programme.
- An agreement between AEWA and Amazon.co.uk is still pending. Once formalised, this agreement will hopefully generate some funding for the distribution of the remaining FTKs stored within the AEWA archive. This issue has been flagged numerous times by the Operations Manager. UGO to take up this issue and follow-up in 2011 directly with the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat.
- Agreements have been signed with relevant training institutions in West Africa, Middle East and in Central Asia for the delivery of the FTK within these institutions' existing programme of work.

V. Review of Component 3 – Demonstration Projects and Exchange Programme

- All demonstration project contracts have been successfully closed with the final disbursements made in November 2010.
- UGO, JB and CP were all taken aback by some of the criticism of the demonstration initiatives within the Terminal Evaluation Report.
- JB indicated that BirdLife International is potentially looking at opportunities to support the continuation of work in the Hadejia-Nguru Wetlands and the replicate the experiences in other areas of the wider catchment.
- A final sub-regional exchange visit within the framework of WOW is currently scheduled for early 2011 in West Africa for Guinea Bissau, Togo, Benin and Guinea.
- Due to internal difficulties at Eurosite efforts to twin North-South wetland sites will have to be picked up post-project.

VI. Review of Component 4 – Communications

- One last WOW news digest is expected in early 2011 to showcase a final series of stories on the

WOW project. FK highlighted plans to tidy up the website and to make it more of an archive. Following this, it is expected that FK will wind down his duties as the project's Communication Officer.

- FK should raise the issue of the wingsoverwetlands.org & flywayconservation.org domain name costs directly with the post-WOW partners and how these costs will be covered post project. These costs were picked up and reimbursed by the PCU during the life of the project.
- The post-WOW partnership should discuss what to do with the current WOW website and may also wish to consider the proposal concept suggested by FK at the last SC meeting (see *Annex II* circulated as a separate document) as it did not have sufficient time to fully discuss the proposal at length.
- In October 2010, UGO highlighted that there is a surplus of approximately 33,000 USD (updated figure to be confirmed) currently earmarked for printing. There seems to be a consensus that these funds ought to be used for the production of case studies or some sort of publication to support the post-WOW partnership. UGO, JB and CP agreed that perhaps a generic leaflet similar to that produced by the East-Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership in February 2010 could potentially be useful to raise awareness. CP stressed however that while the PCU has no reservations in producing something to support the post-WOW partnership, some connection or synthesis of the WOW project must also be presented. Decision on this issue needed from the partners involved on how best to use these funds within the framework and priorities of the new partnership.

VII. Terminal Evaluation

- As pointed out by the Operations Manager in December 2010, the Terminal Evaluation Report is now final and will not be amended further. If however, there are still strenuous objections not, in the stakeholder's view, adequately addressed in the revised report / footnotes, then a formal 'management response' can be sent to the Evaluation Office. The Evaluation Office will append, in full, any such responses received in an annex to the report itself, however, they also reserve the right to add their own comments / views on them. As such, partners are encouraged to submit their management response at their earliest convenience.

VIII. Considerations for the post-WOW partnership

- While AEWA has stepped forward to act as Secretariat to the post-WOW partnership, no focal point has been assigned internally yet to track and lead activities. In addition, a first rotating Chair has not been formally nominated by the group.

ANNEX I: Decisions Taken at the last WOW Steering Committee Meeting and Pending Issues

Agenda Item	Decision Taken	Pending Issues (if any)
<i>Welcome and adoption of agenda</i>	No formal decision taken	None
<i>Formal endorsement of minutes from Steering Committee teleconference of 11 November 2009</i>	Minutes from SC teleconference from 11 November 2009 endorsed in full and without amendments	None
<i>Open discussion and review of the previous day's session where all core outputs and activities from the regional centres / demonstration projects</i>	No specific decision taken during the discussion of this agenda item. SC members shared their thoughts and impressions of the various strands of technical work and demonstration projects.	None
<i>Update on re-classification of Operations Manager post and next steps</i>	No formal decision taken though the SC did express their unanimous support for the re-classification expected to take effect in July 2010 for the final six months of the project.	None
<i>Financial update</i>	SC members requested clarification on a number of gaps within the budget. By and large the project is financially on track to deliver all expected outputs. SC agreed that any future GEF surplus from demo projects after April 2010 would be held as contingency by the PCU and re-allocated as necessary by the Steering Committee.	None
<i>Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	SC members received an update from the PCU on the plan and work schedule for the final evaluation. No formal decision taken. With regards to the initial calculations prepared by the PCU on the management costs of the project, the SC felt that other factors such as co-financing should also be included somehow. The SC would review this issue only if it is explicitly requested by the Terminal Evaluation Consultant.	None

<p><i>Final "lessons learned" publication</i></p>	<p>Following a lengthy discussion on this project output, there was still disagreement among SC members on the type of material which should be drafted as part of the final suite of WOW publication(s). Bearing in mind that there are insufficient funds to produce a final publication, the SC agreed that as a first step the SC Chair together with the PCU and WI Project Coordinator should prepare a detailed annotated contents with suggestions on who should contribute to each section.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In October 2010, UGO highlighted that following a scan of the remaining budget available there is a surplus of approximately 33,000 USD (updated figure to be confirmed) currently earmarked for printing; • There seems to be a consensus that these funds ought to be used for the production of case studies or some sort of publication to support the post-WOW partnership; • UGO, JB and CP agreed that perhaps a generic leaflet similar to that produced by the East-Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership in February 2010 could potentially be useful to raise awareness. CP stressed however that while the PCU has no reservations in producing something to support the post-WOW partnership, some connection or synthesis of the WOW project must also be presented; • Decision on this issue needed from the partners involved on how best to use these funds within the framework and priorities of the new partnership. Decision anticipated in February 2011.
<p><i>Web domain for www.flywayconservation.org</i></p>	<p>No formal decision from the SC on this agenda item as it was felt that the issue ought to be picked-up by the post-WOW group once an identity and communication needs are established.</p>	<p>Proposal prepared by WOW Communications Officer to be reviewed again at a later stage.</p>

<p><i>UNEP Flyway Paper: The Experience of UNEP GEF and Partners in Flyway Conservation, 2009. UNEP GEF Portfolio Outlook and Evolution. Biodiversity Issue Paper BD/001. UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya</i></p>	<p>SC decided that the UNEP/GEF Task Manager should consolidate feedback raised by Taej Mundkur immediately prior to the meeting together with the points raised by Nick Davidson during the SC and forward these to the GEF STAP for review.</p> <p>Points raised by Taej Mundkur prior to the SC meeting are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review points out the strengths of the review which is useful, but also states that “<i>much of its content is process-oriented and institutional in nature – and has little to say about those sections</i>” – so it appears that the reviewer has focused his/her comments only on one objective of our paper; • The focused approach of our two projects (individual species/suite of species) as clearly defined “hard targets” has been appreciated (para 1). So does the call for a focus on regional planning coupled with site-specific proposals (para 3); • Our paper unquestionably does not set out to provide a review of flyway type projects in general, but has specifically focused on the lessons learnt from only two projects – the very first two migratory bird flyway GEF-funded projects. It does not aim to review in detail the broader issue of how GEF projects could cover all migratory species; • We include specific recommendations on what the GEF process would benefit to consider should they wish to improve/streamline development, funding / co-funding and delivery of such global/regional projects. Given that engagement in regional projects involves developing relationships with a number of governments, securing national commitments of GEF national allocations and other in kind resources, and a high level of co-funding, and that this is a time-intensive and labour-intensive process - this is an important issue; • We recognize that one of the strengths of GEF projects is in their demonstration value. Thus in principle they work to achieve solid results at demonstration sites that have value for a much large suite of sites in the country (or region). Thus our review covers only 28 sites directly tackled in the two projects, but has direct and indirect value for a much wider number of sites. In addition, the training kit and CSN tool for example are intended to extend the multiply the work at a number of sites; • Our experience has shown us clearly that demonstration projects that have an impact on the site, particularly those that focus on development and implementation of a wetland management action plan, can be very expensive and thus quickly scale up total cost and complexity of the developing and implementing such projects; • We fully agree the need to deal with commoner species and their role in providing a range of ecosystem services – and we would support not to focus only on threatened species. But in terms of GEF criteria, is it easier to sell this broader diversity support role than globally threatened species? <p>Points raised by Nick Davidson during the SC meeting are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In principle it is important to formally respond to the STAP response, at the very minimum to make sure that our comments to their review are on record; • Based on the nature of the response, it appears as though the review was very personal in nature and perhaps not reflective of the broader STAP technical group; • The SC’s formal response should indicate that we have concerns that based on the content of the review there are some misunderstandings on the part of the specific individual who undertook the review with respect to the intentions and aims of the paper. 	<p>Response to STAP pending</p>
<p><i>Promotional / Outreach plan for core WOW outputs</i></p>	<p>The SC suggested a number of changes to the promotional plan presented by Florian Keil which should be amended accordingly and re-submitted for the SC’s review. It was agreed that the WOW FTK should be launched at the SBSTTA meeting in Nairobi (May 2010) and follow with the launch of the CSN Tool at the AEWA 15th Anniversary Symposium (June 2010)</p>	<p>None</p>

<p><i>Next steps on the WOW Partnership Agreement</i></p>	<p>SC decided to hold a separate bilateral discussion specifically on issues and obstacles to the current WOW MoC.</p>	<p>To date no focal point has been assigned to track and lead the post-WOW Partnership activities.</p> <p>In addition, a first rotating Chair has not been formally nominated by the group.</p>
<p><i>Other business:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Possibilities of a farewell meeting at the end of 2010</i> b) <i>Data sharing agreement for CSN Tool if needed</i> c) <i>Distribution plan for the WOW Flyway Training Kit</i> d) <i>UNOPS procedures for closing projects</i> 	<p>No formal decision taken</p>	<p>None</p>