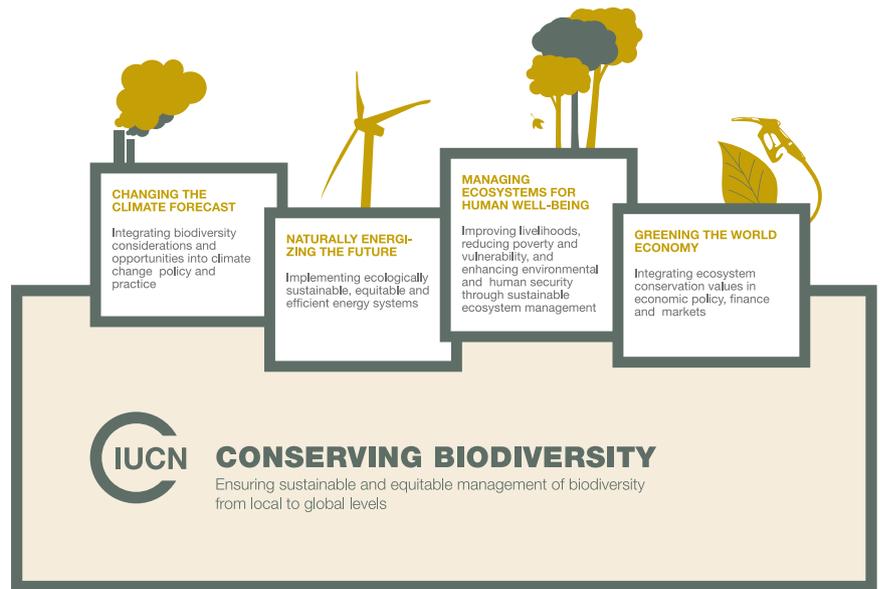




Many Voices, One Planet

Annual Report 2009





About IUCN

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges.

IUCN works on biodiversity, climate change, energy, human livelihoods and greening the world economy by supporting scientific research, managing field projects all over the world, and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,000 government and NGO members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

www.iucn.org

Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA)

IUCN Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) was established in October 2004. The region is the convergence point of Mediterranean, Persian and Arabic civilization. IUCN ROWA covers thirteen countries in West Asia: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

We work through five thematic programmes including: the Regional Water Resources & Drylands Programme (REWARD), Protected Areas Programme, Marine Ecosystem Programme, Business & Biodiversity Programme, and Poverty, Equity & Gender (PEG) Programme. Through these thematic programmes we demonstrate the strengths of IUCN to share knowledge and to develop new models for conservation and sustainable development.

The role of the IUCN ROWA is to coordinate environmental activities at regional and local levels; particularly in relation to regional environmental agreements and global environmental conventions. At the same time, IUCN enhances knowledge, empowerment and governance around biodiversity and water resources management through the design and implementation of projects in the field. IUCN ROWA also focuses on the promotion and facilitation of a multi-stakeholder decision process involving governments, civil society and research institutions. Environmental awareness is a key issue for making a difference, thus the office facilitates communication, coordination, and information exchange among different actors in the region.

www.iucn.org/westasia

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Forward



Climate change and the transition towards a green economy defined and framed environmental activities for the Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) in 2009. Climate change is expected to create human security risks stemming from a change in the availability of and access to natural resources. It will compound existing water scarcity and food insecurity in West Asia which in turn will raise the likelihood of conflicts over access to resources. Hence, there is a need to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation into new thinking of development processes. Besides, new types of policies, partnerships and instruments will be needed to address the uncertainty of climate change.

IUCN ROWA's engagement with the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) through building the capacities of state members in the Arab League and the participation in the COP15 UN Climate Change Conference 2009 in Copenhagen were instrumental in influencing policy. The ongoing debate on climate change sheds light on the extent on how to define and apply environmental justice and the role of transformational global leadership in moving towards a low-carbon economy by investing in nature and harnessing natural solutions.

By enhancing both the human capital and the resilience of our ecosystems we will be more prepared to meet future challenges of climate change. In 2009, IUCN ROWA conducted a number of capacity-building workshops on marine protected areas in Syria, public awareness in Yemen and Jordan and protected area management training in the UAE contributing to nurturing and building the human capital for our members in West Asia to ensure system planning and an ecosystem approach in natural resource management. In addition, training modules on World Heritage reporting were conducted in the region in collaboration with UNESCO.

Engagement with the private sector was crucial to the mainstream environment in many sectors like energy, water and construction. A regional meeting addressing the concept of a transition to sustainability debate at the Alexandria Library addressed the role of the private sector and the means to harness corporate social responsibility (CSR) to move towards a low-carbon economy.

With respect to working with members and commissions, the mission of the IUCN director general to West Asia in 2009 was critical and useful in engaging with members and partners and strengthening the governance of the regional and national committees in West Asia.

Finally, the financial climate and global changes present new opportunities and challenges for the environmental movement to be more innovative, realistic and to provide evidence-based solutions and metrics for the value of ecosystem services.

Odeh Al-Jayyousi, PhD.

Regional Director

Our Donors and Partners

IUCN ROWA is most grateful for all those who contributed to the success of our Regional Office through their generous financial contributions and partnership in 2009.

Our Donors

- The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGCS), Italy
- (Direzione Generale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (DGCS), Italy)
- IUCN Water & Nature Initiative (WANI)
- The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)
- The Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS), Netherlands
- European Union (EU)
- Department of International Development (DFID), UK
- United Nations Environment Programme – Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP ROWA)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Jordan
- National Geographic
- Finish Embassy, Damascus
- The Netherlands Embassy, Damascus
- Petro Canada, Syria
- The Social Fund for Development, Egypt

Our Partners

Egypt

- Arab Water Council
- Bibliotheca Alexandrina
- The Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE)
- Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation
- GEF Small Grants Programme
- Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS)
- CARE International

Iraq

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Jordan

- Ministry of Environment
- The Royal Society for Conservation of Nature (RSCN)
- MercyCorps
- Arab Women Organization (AWO)
- Jordan Badia Research and Development Center (BRDC)
- BirdLife International, Middle East
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations University (UNU) – INWEH

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

- The Saudi Wildlife Commission (SWC) formerly (National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development NCWCD)
- Presidency of Meteorology & Environment (PME)
- Khaled Bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation

Kuwait

- Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
- Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR)
- Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS)
- Arab Centre for Environmental Law (ARCEL) – Kuwait University

Lebanon

- Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL)
- Mada

Palestine

- Palestinian Hydrological Group (PHG)
- Union of Agricultural Working Committees (UAWC)

Syria

- General Commission for Badia Management and Development

Yemen

- Water and Environment Center of Sana'a University
- Ministry of Water and Environment
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
- Social Development Fund

Highlights of the Year 2009



February

REWARD regional training workshop on pro-poor participatory planning of ecosystem services and management – February 15-19

IUCN ROWA participates in the Bahrain global and regional workshop on marine World Heritage – February 24-26

March

REWARD regional training workshop on pro-poor participatory planning of ecosystem services and management March 1-4

IUCN director general on a mission to West Asia — March 24-31

IUCN signs MOUs with the Arab Women's Organization (AWO) and the Badia Development and Research Center (BDRC) for the Azraq Oasis Restoration Project – March 26

IUCN Regional Committee for West Asia convenes its second meeting in Amman – March 30-31

Marine Protected Areas Management Planning Workshop series in Syria – February 28-March 4

REWARD Programme presents five case studies at the World Water Forum in Turkey

April

Azraq Restoration Project holds its strategic meeting in Aqaba – April 15

IUCN organizes a national consultation session on Waqf for Environment and Sustainable Development – April 15



Agrodiaetus elbursicus - Alborz Protected Area - Mazandaran - IRAN.
©Mr. Ali Mohajeri - Natural Environment and Biodiversity Division - Department of the Environment of IRAN.



Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) -
 Gomishan international wetland- Golestan- IRAN
 ©Mr. Ali Mohajeran- Natural Environment
 and Biodiversity Division- Department of the
 Environment of IRAN

<h2>May</h2>	<p>Marine Protected Areas Management Planning Workshop series in Syria April 28-May 2</p> <p>REWARD strategic meeting in Sharm El Sheikh – May 16-19</p> <p>PA Programme participates in WCPA/CEC steering committee meeting in Ecuador — May 11-15</p>
<h2>June</h2>	<p>How to Design and Implement Public Awareness Campaigns – May 31-June 5</p> <p>Transition to Sustainability Debate: Mainstreaming Environment in CSR – June 4</p> <p>Exchange visit to Egypt DSS Project – June 26-30</p> <p>World Heritage nomination for the marshlands of Mesopotamia in Iraq – June 27-29</p>
<h2>September</h2>	<p>IUCN West Asia contributes to gender and climate change training in Bangkok at the UNFCCD and organizes an orientation for Arab government delegates on gender and climate change in cooperation with the League of Arab States – September 24-26</p>
<h2>October</h2>	<p>Training trainers in Yemen on designing and implementing public awareness campaigns – October 4-8</p> <p>The 3rd Marine Protected Areas Management Planning Workshop held in Syria – October 7-12</p>
<h2>November</h2>	<p>Training of trainers on gender and climate change — November 11-12</p> <p>11th WANI meeting – November 15-20</p>
<h2>December</h2>	<p>Media training for sustainable development – December 15-17</p> <p>IUCN ROWA joins the gender team at UNFCC CoP15 in Copenhagen December 7-18</p>

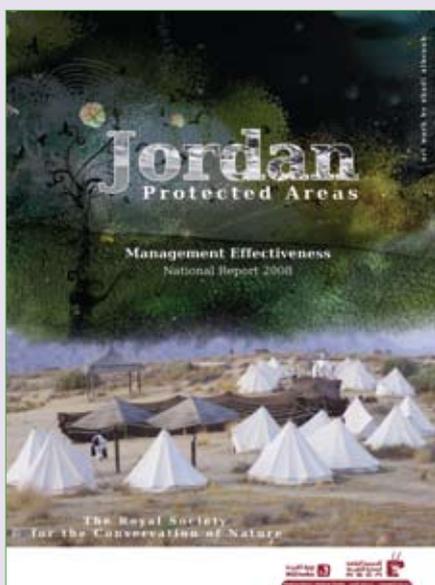
Conserving the biodiversity of life

Programme Achievements

Working with members

Integrated ecosystem management of the Jordan Rift Valley

Many migratory birds rest in the Jordan Rift Valley on their journey from colder regions to Africa. This valley, which is part of the Great Rift Valley, serves as connection between Africa, Europe and Asia. Unfortunately, the Jordan Rift Valley is in danger of losing its natural resources due to the construction of a greater infrastructure to meet socio-economical development needs. As a solution for those imbalances, the Integrated Ecosystem Management of the Jordan Rift Valley Project was initiated in 2007 by the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature (RSCN) to establish a network of four protected areas and seven smaller special conservation areas. These areas will serve as a connection between the larger protected areas for the migrating birds, altogether representing a cross section of all key habitats and ecosystem types in the Jordan Rift Valley. IUCN ROWA is a partner in this project through bringing its international connections and experience to the project's development.



Managing the effectiveness of protected areas in Jordan

As part of the Jordan Rift Valley Project, an evaluation was conducted for management effectiveness of established protected areas in Jordan jointly between RSCN, Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) and IUCN Protected Areas Global and West Asia Programmes.

The evaluation provided a detailed description on the current effectiveness status of protected areas management in Jordan and presented a set of recommendations on how to build the capacities of the RSCN and ASEZA to better manage these areas. Using IUCN's management effectiveness tracking tool (TT), the evaluation looked into TT elements: context, planning, inputs, process, outputs and outcomes. The management effectiveness report presented a detailed analysis of tracking tool elements highlighting the key management issues for each protected area.

IUCN, through its regional and global protected areas programmes, reviewed the management effectiveness report based on its international standards and expertise in protected areas management. This report is considered an example for using the tools of IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). The report was prepared through a consultative process involving protected areas staff, rangers and other institutions.

Influencing policies through protected areas policy review

Reviewing the protected areas policy in Jordan is a different role that IUCN played through the Jordan Rift Valley project. IUCN took part in the steering committee of Jordan's protected areas policy, which sets an overarching national stand in regards to protected areas and their sustainability in Jordan. Such policy provides a standard set of principles and guidelines to support the decision-making process on protected areas management and use. IUCN ROWA has contributed to the preparation and review of this policy with the support of the IUCN Global Protected Areas Programme.

Working with members

Cooperation with the Saudi Wildlife Commission to conserve biodiversity in Saudi Arabia

Building on a 20-year partnership in protected areas management, IUCN ROWA and the Saudi Wildlife Commission (SWC) formerly (National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development) extended their partnership to address the need for biodiversity conservation in Saudi Arabia, especially focusing on effective implementation of Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) obligations.

In view of the fact that the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources is one of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the IUCN ROWA Protected Areas Programme has collaborated with the IUCN Environmental Law Center to develop two strategies for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The first document was a draft national strategy on access and benefit sharing in relation to genetic resources and a draft strategic plan for the collection and documentation of biodiversity-related traditional knowledge and practices. Both strategies are being reviewed by the technical committee of the Saudi Wildlife Commission and will be launched in the near future.

In the framework of cooperation with the SWC, IUCN ROWA has provided technical assistance to initiate the development of an invasive alien species strategy which is expected to be finalized by the end of 2010. In addition, IUCN ROWA is in the process of supporting the SWC in developing a draft assessment of potential climate change in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

A national workshop is planned to take place in Saudi Arabia to start the drafting process of national biodiversity strategy action plans for the Kingdom.

Palestine forest and natural reserves assessment

Following a recently conducted assessment by the UNEP Regional Office for West Asia and the Environmental Quality Authority in Palestine to identify key environmental priorities in Palestine, IUCN ROWA joined forces with UNEP in November 2009 to initiate a project that will technically support the implementation of the identified priorities. This will be achieved through developing an assessment for Palestinian forests and natural reserves, in addition to building the capacity of the Environmental Quality Authority in Palestine which will implement key environmental priorities identified by the recent assessment.

The project team will start the assessment process including data collection in January 2010 in consultation with all partners and stakeholders. Data will be collected from the list of protected areas provided at the beginning of the assessment, yet local authorities requested investigation into other potential protected areas which were not included on the original list but have the same biodiversity value and are earmarked as potential future PAs by ministries and local authorities in Palestine.



Ramallah, Palestine
IUCN©Buthaina Mizyed



©Johannes Fritz, waldrappteam.at

Northern Bald Ibis Project in Syria

A few individuals of the relict wild colony of the Northern Bald Ibis (NBI) *Geronticus eremita* were discovered in the Syrian Palmyra Desert in 2002. IUCN, through the West Asia Protected Areas Programme, has initiated the Northern Bald Ibis Project in 2008 to establish new standards and practices for protected areas design and management in Syria, where activities to conserve the Bald Ibis were undertaken in the Palmyra Ibis Protected Area (IPA). The Bald Ibis is listed on the IUCN Red List 2006 as a “Critically Endangered” species on a global scale.

In 2009, the project accomplished major achievements in partnership with the General Commission for Badia Management and Development. The project scenario was shifted to a higher level during the IUCN director general's visit to the Ibis Protected Area in March 2009, where she met with key officials from the local authorities in Palmyra. This was considered a promising visit to develop positive relations for the project's future.

Building the capacities of the Ibis Protected Area (IPA) team on protected areas management and planning was a major priority of the IUCN project. Under IUCN supervision, eight IPA staff members were trained by the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature (RSCN) of Jordan capitalizing on its long experience in the management of protected areas. Three sectors were targeted and trained including researchers, rangers and PA managers. The training also focused on wildlife research methodologies, patrolling and law enforcement. This training was generously funded by the Finnish embassy in Damascus.

In mid-2009 two sub-adult Bald Ibises were trapped and tagged with satellite transmitters in Palmyra in the framework of cooperation between the Desert Commission, IUCN ROWA and BirdLife Middle East. However, this colony is still clinging to the edge of extinction and the only hope to save it is to ensure maximum breeding success in Palmyra in the years to come, plus discovering all other important sites within the rest of the range in order to try to reduce any associated threats.

The Ibis conservation efforts were undertaken through a joint effort among the General Commission for Badia Management and Development in Syria, IUCN ROWA, BirdLife Middle East and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The Italian Cooperation (DGCS) provided a trust fund for this project, while matching funds were raised locally from the Finnish and Netherlands embassies in Damascus, the Prince Albert Foundation and Petro Canada Inc. Additionally, the National Geographic Society released a grant for tracking the young Ibises along the Arabian peninsula.

The project accomplished its goals in 2009 and the project team is working on mobilizing additional resources through a proposal submitted to the DGCS to fund phase II in cooperation with the State Planning Commission and IUCN partners in Syria. The second phase of the project is expected to focus on local communities around the Bald Ibis Protected Area to improve livelihoods in that area.



WCPA/CEC Steering Committee Meeting in Ecuador
©IUCN

Participation in WCPA/CEC steering committee meeting in Ecuador

A joint steering committee meeting was organized by the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and the Commission on Education and Communication (CEC) in Quito, Ecuador May 11-15, 2009. The IUCN ROWA protected areas officer participated in this meeting which aimed at initiating a dialogue with regional programmes to define key priority issues for joint actions between WCPA, the global IUCN Programme on Protected Areas and IUCN regional focal points for protected areas.

WCPA Chairman Nik Lopoukhine and CEC Chairman Keith Wheeler highlighted the importance of strengthening capacity building and communication for protected areas management and conservation. The meeting also provided a platform to exchange ideas and learning, and to enable the two commissions to contribute to the One Programme concept.



Training on protected areas selection and management in UAE
IUCN@Khalidoun Alomari

Protected areas selection and management in UAE

Realizing the importance of proper use and management of natural resources, especially with regard to the selection of protected areas, IUCN trained a number of nature conservation and protected areas experts on the selection and management of protected areas. This training course took place in Al Fujairah, UAE November 3-5, 2009 and was organized and funded by the Ministry of Environment and Water in the United Arab Emirates in cooperation with Al Fujairah Municipality.

The training course aimed to build the capacity of the national team in the Emirates to assist them in selecting protected areas based on IUCN standards which should be harnessed in the selection process.

Marine Protected Areas Management Planning Workshop series

Management planning is considered an essential step towards ensuring proper management of marine protected areas. Responding to a Syrian Ministry of Environment request, IUCN ROWA has conducted a series of workshops on marine protected areas management and planning for relevant stakeholders in Syria. The first workshop was conducted in Lattakia February 28-March 4, 2009 and the second workshop took place in Damascus April 28-May 2, 2009. Another workshop was held October 7-12, 2009 in Lattakia focusing on building the capacities of the ministry's biodiversity team as a first step to activate their role in the planning and management processes for MPAs in their country. This training provided Syrian experts with capacities and skills focusing on different components in marine protected areas management. This enabled them to play an active role in the planning and management processes for MPAs in their country. As part of training requirements, participants visited Fanar Ibn Hani marine protected areas in Syria and used the site as a case study for building their management plan. These series of workshops were funded by the Hanns Seidel Foundation and the Regional Activity Center for Special Protected Areas (RACSPA).



Marine Protected Areas Management
Planning Workshop, Syria
IUCN@Mohamed Eltayeb

A roadmap for eco-tourism development in Oman

Despite its arid climate, the Sultanate of Oman is an area of relatively high biodiversity where the rich natural and cultural environments offer a good potential for a successful eco-tourism industry. This urged IUCN ROWA to build a partnership with the Ministry of Tourism in Oman to provide technical assistance and guidance for the proposed eco-tourism development project in the Bandar Khiran area. The overall aim of this project is promoting sound and sustainable local and national economic development within an environmentally sound approach.

An IUCN ROWA mission to Oman resulted in developing a memorandum of understanding for collaborating with the Ministry of Tourism to prepare the eco-tourism and site management development plan for the Bandar Khiran Project. This will lead to further enhancing project dimensions by preparing a zoning plan and a framework for land use planning, assessing alternative eco-tourism and sustainable income-generation activities to existing less-favorable uses of biological resources.



Bandar Khiran, Oman
IUCN@Mohamed Eltayeb

The alert of climate impacts on coral reefs

Coral reefs are highly diverse ecosystems that are vital to the welfare of large human populations, yet they are facing increasing stress due to a number of causes including their vulnerability to climate change. The IUCN Global Marine Programme has initiated a project on coral reefs and climate change funded by Kouni Holdings.

As part of this project, IUCN and Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association (HEPCA) in Egypt organized two workshops in 2009 to address the potential impact of climate change on coral bleaching. The first scoping workshop focused on the tourism industry of the Egyptian Red Sea coast to better understand the vulnerabilities of the tourism sector from climate change impacts. The second workshop focused on building the capacities of coral reef managers, enabling them to respond to climate change impacts on coral reefs. National park rangers from the Northern Red Sea Islands Protected Area took part in these workshops, in addition to staff members from the Wadi El Gemal Protected Area, the Elba Protected Area as well as staff members from the tourism sector and diving industry. As an outcome of the workshop, a publication on climate change and tourism vulnerability in the Red Sea was produced by the IUCN Global Marine Programme.



Yemen LNG Marine Biodiversity Action Plan

In early 2009, the IUCN Global Marine Programme and ROWA Marine Programme finalized a partnership with the Yemen LNG Company Ltd. to design and manage an independent review process of their marine biodiversity action plan. Specifically the agreement is to obtain an independent third-party assessment of the company's strategy for marine biodiversity protection as implemented through its biodiversity action plan. The company is involved in a large-scale project which includes construction and operation of a liquefied natural gas plant in the area of Balhaf, Republic of Yemen.

IUCN has developed an independent review monitoring programme which includes expertise in fisheries, coral reefs, marine ecosystem restoration, marine protected areas, oil and gas pollution and impact assessment. The initial phase is scheduled to last three years (2009-2011) with an outcome of six reports.

Through such an independent environmental auditing process, the company hopes not only to improve its performance with respect to both the environmental and social aspects of its marine biodiversity strategy, but also to demonstrate the actual work done on the ground to its board and other stakeholders. A major environmental challenge for such a large-scale project remains the independent verification of the implementation of their environmental strategies which have been developed on the basis of their environmental impact assessments and best practices in environmental management.

The major shareholders in the Yemen LNG Company include Total (40%), Hunt (17%), Yemen Gas Company (17%) and SK Corporation (10%). Total is also the project leader. With respect to environmental and social issues, the company has followed World Bank/IFC guidelines.

Working with members

Initiation of the Kuwait Coral Reef Survey and Monitoring Programme

As part of working with our members in the region, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in Kuwait partnered with IUCN ROWA to initiate the Kuwait Coral Reef Survey and Monitoring Programme, which will be led and implemented by the EPA. IUCN ROWA will provide technical guidance and support through its marine programme in close collaboration with a number of working groups including the IUCN Global Marine Programme, the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), the Species Survival Commission (SSC) and the Coral Reefs and Climate Change Working Group.

This process will involve developing a strategy to assess the current status of Kuwait's coral reefs and developing a monitoring programme to evaluate the long-term health of coral reefs and identify important coral areas for future protection. The capacity-building component is also a vital part of the project, which was designed to maintain an efficient and professional monitoring and management national team.

Public support for coral reef protection programme will only come through public knowledge and understanding of the area's resources and management goals. The public must also be knowledgeable about potential resource impacts and their causes before they can participate in helping to alleviate these impacts. Moreover, different public awareness activities are also planned to take place in cooperation with selected Kuwaiti NGOs. This project is planned to start operating in 2010 after finalizing the formulation phase in 2009 between all project partners.

Mainstreaming Gender in Climate Talks

Programme Achievements



Minister of Environment in Jordan during the Training of Trainers on Gender and Climate Change, Jordan
IUCN@Rania Faouri

Building an advocacy team for gender and climate

For many years, there has been an assumption that the negative impacts of climate change and the efforts to mitigate them have similar effects on both men and women. However, the world has progressively recognized that women and men experience climate change differently, and that gender inequalities worsen women's coping capacity. It has also been acknowledged that women are important agents of change and holders of significant knowledge and skills related to mitigation, adaptation, and the reduction of risks in the face of climate change, making them crucial agents in this area.

IUCN ROWA has participated in the Asian Chapter of the Training of Trainers on Gender and Climate Change, which was conducted in parallel with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Meeting in Bangkok. The alliance has been conducting groundbreaking work on linking gender and climate change, an aspect that has been strikingly absent up to date. The training was based on a groundbreaking Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change and authored by the IUCN Global Senior Gender Advisor, Lorena Aguilar, on behalf of the alliance.

The main focus of the training course was building blocks of the Bali Plan of Action (mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance) and was conducted in two parts: a three-day workshop with practitioners (Training of Trainers), followed by a half-day briefing to negotiators, where IUCN ROWA has successfully coordinated with the League of Arab States to ensure the Arab negotiators' participation in the Briefing to Negotiators. Thirteen delegates from Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Sudan, in addition to a delegate from the League of Arab States attended the briefing. This briefing was designed to tackle the importance of retaining gender considerations in the UNFCCC negotiating text and has won the praise of government negotiators and community leaders around the world, including Arab government negotiators attending the Asian chapter in Bangkok during October 2009.

Following this training in Bangkok, the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) has united efforts with IUCN Regional Office for West Asia to hold a Training of Trainers on Gender and Climate Change in Amman in preparation for mainstreaming gender issues in a new climate deal at Copenhagen. The West Asian chapter of the training was the 6th and the last in a series of successful workshops held previously in Thailand (Bangkok), Europe (Poland and Germany), the United States (New York), and the Caribbean and the Americas (Grenada) and Africa ahead of the UNFCCC Cop-15 which was held in Copenhagen in December 2009.

The two-day training session was hosted by the Jordanian Ministry of Environment and is being attended by thirty-five participants from Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Palestine as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), USAID and Mercy Corps.



UNFCCC Copenhagen COP15, Copenhagen
©GGCA

IUCN ROWA joins the gender team at UNFCCC CoP15 in Copenhagen

As part of IUCN's overall participation at the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen December 7-18, 2009, the contribution IUCN made on gender was transformational. The awareness of many delegates as to why gender issues are critical to eventual implementation has been raised thanks to the work and efforts of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA). Gender is now being reflected in several elements of both streams: the Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the Long Term Cooperative Action (LCA). Throughout COP-15, parties exhibited support for gender and gender-equality language. Strong commitment for including gender in negotiations was maintained by the African group, South American countries, Middle Eastern countries, LDCs and Nordic nations.

IUCN, as the founding member of GGCA, organized a series of events on gender and climate change in Copenhagen which met with overwhelming success. The IUCN gender team in Copenhagen was led by Senior Global Gender Advisor Lorena Aguilar, and included IUCN ROWA Gender Focal Point Fida Haddad and Consultant on Gender and Climate Change Natalia Kostus of the IUCN Office of the Senior Global Gender Advisor.

One highlight was a side event on investing in women's leadership for climate solutions hosted during the high level segment. The event was presented by the governments of Finland and Denmark in partnership with South Africa, Jordan, Grenada, Ghana, Lesotho, Costa Rica, AOSIS and the UN Foundation. A number of distinguished speakers were featured including President Tarja Halonen of Finland; US Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi; Minister for Development Cooperation of Denmark Ulla Tørnæs, and Senator Loren Legarda of the Philippines. Following the event, 100 male and female leaders from around the world gathered for a "Women as Agents of Change" photo shoot. IUCN also organized two world-class performing arts events raising awareness on gender and climate change at the Copenhagen talks.

Greening the Regional Markets

Programme Achievements



Dead Sea, Jordan
©Sami Bsaiso

Economic valuation of the Dead Sea Basin

Owing to its extraordinary biological, geological and cultural diversity, the Dead Sea Basin in Jordan attracts thousands and thousands of visitors every year. The northwestern part of this basin extends from the lowest point on earth on the shorelines of the Dead Sea to the undulating hilly landscape as extending east from Jordan Rift Valley. Altogether this creates a unique scenic landscape and amazing visitor experience.

The government of Jordan recently designated this area as a development zone under the mandate of the Jordan Development Zones Commission (DZC). This part of the basin was also identified as a Special Conservation Area by the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature (IUCN member) to mainstream integrated environmental management and encourage environmentally sound economic development.

The DZC realized the need to integrate the value of the environment into development planning of this area in order to strengthen the economic case for nature conservation relative to unsustainable and environmentally hazardous development. The DZC pursued this need and requested technical and financial support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), who subcontracted the IUCN ROWA to conduct an economic valuation of the Special Conservation Area.

IUCN ROWA mobilized a team of regional experts with the guidance of the IUCN Global Economics and Environment Programme. The overall expected result of the subcontract is to integrate environmental economic values into planning scenarios within the Special Conservation Area. The outcomes from this evaluation will be later by planners and decision makers at the DZC to select the best use for the urban natural environment. This valuation will be fully participatory and gender insightful.

A national task force of experts representing key related interest groups is working with the study team to facilitate the valuation process and meaningful outcomes. In addition to synthesizing existing information, all parties agreed to adopt survey-based methods to generate the valuation information and business and resident surveys to better understand the regional economic implications of changes in visitation due to changes in environmental quality. The study outputs and results are due in 2010.

Mainstreaming environment in CSR

Corporate leaders are now realizing that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is no longer defined as a branding and a public relations tool for private sector. It is a commitment from businesses to contribute to the public good in order to enhance the synergies between the three pillars of sustainable development.

This definition was provided by corporations and organizations from the private, public and civil society sectors who participated in the Transition to Sustainability Debate: Mainstreaming Environment in Corporate Social Responsibility that was held on June 4, 2009 marking the World Environment Day. This debate was organized by IUCN ROWA, hosted by the Alexandria Library in Egypt and funded by the Christensen Fund. A number of organizations and companies including Aramex, Proctor and Gamble, the Jordan River Foundation and Fair Trade Jordan also presented their greening and environmental responsibility strategies to participants. Nokia Siemens Networks, the League of Arab States, Libyan Arab Airlines, Excellence Inc., the Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company, Jordan's Balqa Governorate, the Omani Ministry of Tourism, the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, the Jordan Society for Sustainable Development, Jordan's Development Zones Commission, Consolidated Consultants for Engineering and Environment, Ports, Customs and Free Zone Corporation in Dubai all participated in this debate.

This was the second sustainability debate that IUCN held at the Alexandria Library; the first debate was held in June 2008 titled, "Future of Sustainability Debate in the Arab Region: Voices from the South," which was also hosted by the library and funded by Ford Foundation.



Participants of the Transition to Sustainability Debate in Alexandria Library, Egypt
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Working with members

Transition to eco-living

Jordan's natural and historical sites which constitute part of the Kingdom's natural and social capital can be harnessed as eco-villages for sustainable development. Jordan is undergoing major transformations in the education, business and community development sectors. The government is also keen to promote sound linkage between conservation and socio-economic development while also branding Jordan as a pioneer in innovative solutions for sustainability.

IUCN ROWA and the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD), one of IUCN's active members, signed a memorandum of understanding to kick off the Eco-Village Initiative in the presence of HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal, who chairs the JOHUD board of trustees and IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre. Both parties agreed to develop a detailed proposal for facilitating the transition of a selected Jordanian site into an eco-village and jointly mobilize resources for the implementation of related activities.

This initiative aims to facilitate the transition of a Jordanian village over a period of three to five years to become a model for an eco-village that will support economic development and learning. Transition activities will include introducing energy and water conservation measure and technology at the local level, demonstrating the use of renewable energy and implementing integrated environmental solutions for waste and water management. The initiative also includes establishing an environmental learning space to promote environmental stewardship.

Green financing with the waqf mechanism

Linking conservation with culture and reviving local knowledge have always been a key component to IUCN ROWA. This was mainly demonstrated through the traditional Islamic trust (waqf) mechanism that was launched in 2006 as the Waqf for Sustainable Development Initiative. This green financing mechanism was identified in 2008 for as a region-based innovative sustainable financing mechanism for socio-economic development and nature conservation.

In 2009, IUCN ROWA called for developing an institutional model for the environmental waqf using modern methodology through a consultation session, "The New Vision on Waqf for Environment and Sustainable Development". The workshop was an attempt to introduce the waqf initiative nationally in Jordan, where a number of key governmental representatives,

research institutions, businesses and philanthropists were involved in discussing the four dimensions of the waqf initiative: legal, religious, economical and institutional. The involved stakeholders provided a set of recommendations for strategic and operational actions; therefore, IUCN ROWA partnered with the Jordan Chief Islamic Justice Department to establish a steering committee for the initiative chaired by the chief Islamic justice in Jordan. Technical and advisory subcommittees were also formed to assist in the institutionalization and marketing processes at the national level.

The concept of a waqf fund is similar to the idea of endowments to trust funds where the capital fund is invested and the returns on investments are utilized for activities related to the purposes of that fund. By establishing and institutionalizing this green financing mechanism, the waqf initiative is expected to start with a core endowment trust (waqf fund) which in return will invest in two investment categories: environment-friendly investments (integrated farming) and environment-based investments (renewable energy and eco-tourism).

IUCN ROWA, with the support of the steering committee, is reviewing legal and institutional national legislation to facilitate the institutionalization process of the initiative. IUCN ROWA has also approached a number of possible contributors including Islamic banks and individual philanthropists to financially contribute to the initiative. Additionally, the initiative received substantial attention by various groups including press and media coverage at the national and regional levels.





Effective Management of Water and Dryland Resources

Programme Achievements

In 2006, IUCN ROWA started the three-year WESCANA Water Project, funded by DGCS/Italy, to develop systemic approaches to sustainable freshwater management in the West, Central Asia and North Africa (WESCANA) region, in addition to encouraging relevant conducive policies. This project was necessary due to the combination of three factors: scarcity of water resources, absence of a systemic approach for water management in the region and lack of effective ties with global water initiatives and institutions. This project has formed the base for a multi-donor funded regional water programme implemented by IUCN ROWA. This regional water programme, presented as REWARD (Regional Water Resources and Drylands), a challenging innovative programme, is one of IUCN ROWA's five main programme areas for the coming ten years. There are two main components of the WESCANA Project: the Regional Water Knowledge Network and the Demonstration Country Projects in the West Asia and North Africa Region (WANA).



Development of the Regional Water Knowledge Network (RWKN)

Apart from its substantial role in encouraging cooperation between institutions in the region, the Regional Water Knowledge Network (RWKN) mainly focuses on developing systemic approaches for integrated water resource management at the watershed/river basin level, creating multi-stakeholder platforms, capitalizing on the know-how of regional institutions and addressing key water thematic areas relevant to the region. In addition, the RWKN connects network members with other global and regional water initiatives and institutions.

The RWKN is categorized into three types of institutions: centers of excellence (network knowledge centers) that provide technical knowledge on key water thematic areas; institutions (water network members) that work on integrated water resources management and are involved in the REWARD demonstration projects or are member institutions in the water thematic sub-networks, and regional institutions (network support members) that support the networking process and activities of the RWKN.

In 2009, five thematic network knowledge centers were identified in Palestine, Jordan, Egypt and Yemen, and thirty-five institutions were involved as members in the water network. Ten potential regional institutions were identified to become part of the key support network, namely the Euro-Mediterranean Information System on know-how in the water sector (EMWIS), the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (GWP-MED), the Arab Water Council, the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), the Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management (INWARDAM), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the League of Arab States, IUCN Water and Nature Initiative (WANI) and IUCN Environmental Law Center (ELC).

Moreover, a number of sub-networks were also formed at the national level around three thematic areas: ground/surface water resource management in mountain watersheds; oases and related groundwater resource management and river restoration. Each sub-network is built up from institutions in different countries of the region, including countries where a REWARD demonstration project is taking place.



REWARD Strategic Meeting in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt
©IUCN ROWA

Working on the ground with the REWARD demonstration projects

To showcase work on the ground, the REWARD Programme developed five demonstration projects in the West Asia and North Africa region in consultation with the RWKN members. The projects are playing a vital role in generating awareness and building the capacity of the RWKN members on systemic approaches.

The demonstration projects are implemented in cooperation with the Jordanian Ministry of Environment, the Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) in Egypt, the Water and Environment Centre of Sana'a University in Yemen, the IUCN project office and the Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) in Palestine. The projects are the Zarqa River Restoration and Azraq Oasis Restoration, in Jordan; District DSTs for Irrigation/Drainage Management in Beni Sueif and Minia, Egypt; Marj Sanour Watershed Development in Jenin, Palestine and Participatory Watershed Management, in Dhamar, Yemen.

Working with members

Restoring the Zarqa River – respecting our rivers

For decades the Zarqa River in Jordan has been heavily polluted by untreated domestic and industrial wastewater in addition to solid waste. Ground and surface water is pumped for agricultural, industrial and domestic uses reducing surface and spring flow to the river. It is now a seriously polluted infrequently flowing stream, reduced to a trickle of black liquid and solid waste running through urban and rural areas. Using the river water for irrigation increases the risks of food contamination that

threatens valuable agricultural industries. Habitats for birds, fish and other biodiversity along the river have been destroyed. However, following the enhancement of Al Samara Wastewater Treatment Plant, the quality of effluent treated wastewater has been improved, reducing the risk to people and livestock health in the area.

In early 2009, the Jordanian Ministry of Environment, in partnership with IUCN ROWA, launched the Institutional Capacity-Building Project for the Zarqa River Restoration. The three-year-project is funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation with about 965,000 Euros.

This capacity-building project is considered the cornerstone for implementing the Zarqa River Restoration Strategy developed by the Ministry of Environment and IUCN ROWA. The strategy is built on the integrated ecosystem management approach that involves all economic, social and environmental sectors in addition to local communities in the different layers and stages of the project.

IUCN and the Ministry of Environment have conducted a series of workshops and stakeholder dialogues with the local communities and stakeholders in hot spots of the river area to come up with local strategic plans from the grass- roots level that will feed into the rehabilitation strategy of the river basin. Moreover, a number of committees were established at the national and local levels to facilitate the decision-making process and empower local communities and increase their participation in decision making at the local level.

The project has established a specialized unit for the restoration project with a qualified technical team that developed a training needs assessment and training programme for project partners.

The Municipality of Zarqa, the ministries of environment, water, and agriculture, and IUCN through the Regional Water and Dryland Programme (REWARD) are working on four pilot areas as part of a roadmap to rehabilitate the river. The new Al Samra Wastewater Treatment Plant downstream of Zarqa is helping clean the water in the lower part of the river basin, and upstream restoration will focus on working with farmers to reduce pollution and use water more efficiently. In the town of Zarqa, the municipality focuses on restoring an area called Janaa'a Park into an urban green space, providing an urgently needed place for people to rest, relax and enjoy a greener and cleaner urban environment. Part of this restoration is currently looking at ways to clean wastewater in the river bed, and in maintaining cleaner and more consistent water flows downstream.

In a step towards raising the awareness of all stakeholders on river restoration methodologies, the project has also started with the translation process of three IUCN publications into Arabic on river restoration management: Ecosystem Approach, Flow and Pay. The three publications will be launched in April 2010.



Zarqa River, Jordan
IUCN©Dana Khrais

Working with members

Azraq oasis restoration

The Azraq Basin forms the largest resource of good-quality ground and surface water in northeastern Jordan. The ecologically sensitive basin suffers from the over pumping of freshwater to Amman and surrounding cities, and irrigating Azraq farms. Azraq Oasis is considered a unique ecosystem in a fragile environment, lying at the heart of the Azraq Basin and recognized as a Ramsar site and identified as an "Important Bird Area" by BirdLife International. The main goal of the Azraq Oasis Restoration Project is to support the improvement of water resource management in agricultural production and to enhance the environmental sustainability of Azraq Oasis through promoting a participative process of sustainable water management for all water users.

IUCN, through the Regional Water Resources and Drylands Programme (REWARD), plays an ideal role in setting out an effective framework for capacity building at various levels to improve water resource management, involving collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders and building their capacities to strengthen interaction between national and local levels.



Azraq Meeting, Jordan
IUCN © Rana Fityani

During the Azraq project strategic meeting, which was held in April 2009, a comprehensive action plan was developed with the involvement of all stakeholders to illustrate the participatory approach that the project aims to achieve. As an outcome of this strategic meeting, the stakeholders agreed on re-establishing the Azraq project steering committee and forming a technical committee that maintains water resources at the local level. In addition, they recommended registering an alliance for the protection of the Azraq Basin, organizing a workshop on decision support systems and building the capacity of community-based organization (CBOs) on strategic planning for water resource management. Project partners and representatives from related ministries, Azraq District and Municipality, NGOs, research institutions, farmers and local community representatives have participated in this meeting which was held in Aqaba, Jordan.

In a step to enhance and transfer knowledge and skills among IUCN REWARD projects, five Azraq key stakeholders joined an exchange trip to the REWARD Egypt Project in Minia, which included a training workshop to build the stakeholders' capacities on decision support tools.

The institutionalization of the Azraq Water Resource Management Committee, an alliance of local communities, governmental departments and farmers, has facilitated the process of developing a comprehensive strategic plan for oasis restoration. The strategy focused on changing crop patterns in the Azraq area in collaboration with the ministries of agriculture and water as well as local farmers. Another area highlighted in the strategy was the development of a feasibility study on the importance of salt extraction in Azraq, which was once an active industry.

As part of incorporating the IUCN membership strategy in projects and programmes, IUCN ROWA has partnered with two IUCN active members in Jordan to implement the Azraq project: the Arab Women's Organization (AWO) whose role is to integrate gender-related issues and community participatory planning, empowerment and management in the project implementation process and the Badia Development and Research Center (BDRC) which is developing a credible and user-friendly information system to facilitate the decision-making process concerning the management of Azraq Oasis activities. This tool will be designed in coordination with key national stakeholders and will be tested and validated before being used as a formal tool for watershed management.

The Azraq Oasis Restoration Project is one of the demonstration projects of the Regional Water Resources and Drylands Programme (REWARD). It builds on the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach in implementing its programmes to come up with pragmatic solutions for the Azraq area. Azraq Oasis restoration is a multi-donor three-year project funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGCS), IUCN Water and Nature Initiative (WANI) and the European Union in partnership with the ministries of environment, water and irrigation and agriculture, in addition to the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature (RSCN), Mercy Cops, the Badia Research and Development Center (BRDC) and the Arab Women's Organization (AWO).

Working with members

Water for Schools

Water for Schools is one of the REWARD projects implemented in a number of schools in the Zarqa and Azraq areas in partnership with the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature in Jordan. The project focuses on initiating change at the local community level by delivering better water services, improving education and catalyzing action. The promotion of a safe water supply and basic hygiene in schools allows children to become agents of change within their families and communities which can lead to rapid improvements in health conditions and a reduction in school absenteeism.

In 2009, a situation analysis was developed for four targeted schools in the Azraq and Zarqa areas, where an education and awareness programme was implemented to promote sustainable water use and conservation. This project is expected to be scaled-up to the national level in the future.



School in Azraq, Jordan
IUCN©Rana Fityani

Sustainable water management to secure livelihoods in Marj Sanour

Located in the southern part of Jenin Governorate, Marj Sanour is a hilly area which suffers from water scarcity and at the same time, suffers from winter flooding, due to unsustainable land use and water management in the watershed. Water supply for both drinking water and irrigation purposes is mostly dependent on groundwater causing depletion in the water level. However, Marj Sanour is a valley with good agricultural potential if action is taken to better manage and harvest the surface water, which will also reduce the pressure on groundwater.

IUCN is working on a long-term watershed development plan that focuses on sustainable use of water resources and agricultural production as well as on securing livelihoods. This is implemented through a simple model for watershed development planning supported by a user-friendly decision support system (DSS). The project is supported by the Palestinian Water Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Local Government and Environmental Quality Authority, and is being implemented by the IUCN REWARD project office in Palestine with the Palestine Hydrology Group and the Union of Agricultural Work committees.

One of the main targets of the project is to improve productivity of agricultural land by utilizing the retention of surface runoff water in uphill agricultural fields and orchards, ground water recharge increase, and better use of available water resources for agriculture and domestic purposes. Another objective is to increase groundwater resources by employing conjunctive management of groundwater and surface runoff water.

The project made good progress in conducting a hydrological, environmental and socio-economic analysis for the Marj Sanour area, which contributed to the enhancement of conjunctive use of ground and surface water. The socio-economic study was conducted to reflect the participatory approach methodology used in managing natural resource.

Based on the studies and assessments done in Marj Sanour, a conceptual Driving Forces Pressure State Impact Response (DPSIR) framework was designed and built. This methodological framework is a user-friendly system to organize information that reflects cause-effect relationships to facilitate the decision-making process.

Participatory dialogues involving all relevant stakeholders were conducted regularly in Marj Sanour to design a hydrological flow for the watershed and assess the environmental and socio-economic aspects. Stakeholder dialogues resulted in forming a water-user group association for the watershed which has unified all efforts and led to a common concerted action for the seven communities in the area. The steering and technical advisory committee meetings also played a major role in ensuring effective communication among all stakeholders who will endorse the watershed development process.

In order to ensure the maximum involvement of local organizations and stakeholders, a training needs assessment was developed to identify training requirements needed for local communities in Marj Sanour. One of the target groups of this assessment was farmers, who need to be more aware of the best use of natural resources in Marj Sanour. This will enhance collective and communal work and sustainable management in the watershed communities.

The IUCN project office in Palestine is part of the Regional Water Resources and Drylands Programme (REWARD) that is core funded by DGCS/Italy and DGIS/Netherlands, the latter through the IUCN Water and Nature Initiative (WANI).



Marj Sanour Meeting, Palestine
IUCN©Buthaina Mizyed



Dhamar watershed development in Yemen

Overexploitation of groundwater, deterioration of water resources and poor water governance led to water scarcity in Dhamar, an overpopulated governorate in Yemen that depends on groundwater abstraction for agriculture. Sound water resource management is needed to overcome the water scarcity challenge affecting that area. Moreover, the area has been heavily polluted by untreated domestic wastewater and solid waste.

In 2008, a watershed was identified in Dhamar to become one of the IUCN REWARD demonstration projects implemented in cooperation with the Water and Environment Center of Sana'a University and funded by DGCS. This participatory project is contributing to the alleviation of critical problems facing that area by investigating more integrated management of the Dhamar watershed as well as improving drinking water and sanitation for rural communities, and thus contributing to poverty alleviation.

As part of the community empowerment, the project has formed seven male and female water-user groups in the city of Dhamar involving a number of schools, local governmental departments, mosques and NGOs. At the local level, the project has also established 12 water-user groups in the villages of Al Mowaheb, Kharabat Nashtan, Rakhamah, Samh Al Sofla, Themer and Dhy Saher.

Several stakeholder consultation workshops were conducted with governmental and non-governmental organizations at the local and national levels in addition to the project's technical committee to define the strategy of the Dhamar project. In addition, the project developed a number of technical studies and socio-economic surveys to assess the water situation taking into consideration crop patterns, irrigation, rain harvesting and climate change.

The project is exploring and demonstrating how concerted efforts on a watershed basis can create multiplier effects which will increase economic activity and improve livelihoods.

Within the framework of the Dhamar watershed development project, the Water and Environment Center at Sana'a University has implemented a pilot project titled, "Water for Schools". This demonstration project aims to encourage rural communities to better manage water resources based on a participatory stakeholder approach. Water for Schools was implemented in two public schools in the Dhamar watershed area according to specific criteria approved by all stakeholders.

Each demonstration project included the set up of a rooftop rainwater harvesting system connected to a drip irrigation system. Harvested rainwater was used for school toilets and for irrigating one of the school's farms. The governor of Dhamar Governorate, the local council, sheiks, school administrative and teaching staff and pupils were actively involved in the planning and implementation processes. The awareness on integrated water resource management was increased among the rural population in parallel. The rural community of surrounding areas suggested replicating the project in other schools and houses which indicates a high water demand in an area with an increasing drop in the groundwater level.



Dhamar, Yemen
IUCN©Rana Fityani

Working with members

Local water governance in Egypt

Insufficient water management in the Beni Sueif and Minia governorates in Egypt has resulted from a lack of awareness and insufficient communication between stakeholders, in addition to the lack of monitoring and technical capacity. There was an urgent need for effective sound management of available water resources and awareness raising among stakeholders.

The IUCN REWARD Programme is working on a demonstration project in Minia and Beni Sueif which succeeded in narrowing the gaps between water users and governmental officials by adopting a participatory stakeholder-led approach, which is prominently facilitating communications among water managers and users at the local level.

The project is streamlined within the strategic objectives of the Egyptian Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, and is geared to assist in poverty alleviation of rural communities.

The project titled, "System Analysis Tools for Improving River Water Management in Selected Districts in Egypt," is implemented through systemic approaches for planning and management of water resources, giving special attention to poverty alleviation and gender-related issues. The project aims to improve water management, hence improving rural livelihoods in the Ehnasia District in Beni-Suef Governorate and the Samallout District in Minia Governorate.

Apart from the efforts that were made to increase the water awareness level of local communities in Minia and Beni Sueif, the project has also built a functional local network, built the capacities of local stakeholders and developed decision support tools which aim to increase water efficiency and agricultural productivity in this area.

One of the major activities achieved in 2009 involved the development, installation and testing of the Decision Support System (DSS), a computer-based information system that supports decision-making activities. The DSS provides knowledge-based and analytical tools required to support water resource management activities at the district and directorate levels. It provides a model which can be replicated and further up-scaled at the national and regional levels. This system was coupled with a data collection mechanism that resulted in building a database for the irrigation system, crop and water data.

The IUCN REWARD project is being implemented by the Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) in cooperation with the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services and CARE International in Egypt and is funded by Italian Cooperation (DGCS).



Participatory Planning meeting in Bahsamon village in Beni Sueif, Egypt
©Galal Moawad

REWARD events and workshops

REWARD Strategic Meeting

The IUCN REWARD Programme organized a strategic three-day workshop for the REWARD team, REWARD partners, IUCN WANI team, IUCN Mediterranean Cooperation Center and regional and international organizations in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt in May 2009. The workshop explored how to integrate new dimensions that can be emphasized in the REWARD Programme, its demonstration projects and its regional water resource system networks.

New dimensions that were explored focused on dryland management, adaptation to climate change, gender and equity and the institutional change processes necessary to sustain ecosystem resource management. The first two days of the workshop were used to reflect on these new dimensions and to see how they can be practically integrated in the ongoing REWARD work. The last day was used to strengthen the organization of regional networks (Learning Alliances) on specific water resource and dryland ecosystems.



Azraq on camera

As part of the 11th Water and Nature Initiative (WANI) meeting, the global WANI team and IUCN ROWA Programme team, met with various stakeholders of the Azraq Basin during a field visit to Azraq in November 2009. This field visit was organized by the IUCN ROWA Azraq Restoration Project team, a multi-donor three-year project funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGCS) and the IUCN Water and Nature Initiative (WANI). The visit also included a tour of the Azraq Wetland Reserve, a unique ecosystem lying at the heart of the basin and recognized as a Ramsar site for its wealth of biodiversity and importance for migratory bird species.

The team met with governmental officials, non-governmental organizations, local communities and farmers in Azraq to listen to their stories about the water situation and its effects on the economic and agricultural situation. The team was split into three filming groups to address the Azraq situation on camera to document and highlight the governance, empowerment and ecosystem services in that area. This exercise was part of the participatory video approach which WANI is trying to utilize in their projects around the world. It is used to enable groups or communities to take action to solve their own problems and communicate their needs and ideas to decision makers by creating their own film.

Designing and implementing public awareness campaigns

In line with the IUCN mandate to help the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges, Inwent Capacity Building International and IUCN ROWA organized two workshops on public awareness campaigns in the water sector for 30 professionals and water experts from Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco and Syria. The objective of these training workshops is to enhance the capacity of the participants in the technical aspects of designing and implementing public awareness campaigns by identifying the purpose and role of awareness campaigns and developing strategies and work plans.

The first workshop, held May 31-June 5, 2009 in Jordan, was a reflection workshop to come with recommendations for policy and practice around the design and implementation of public awareness campaigns in the water sector. The participants also identified and assessed public awareness training needs of the water sector.

Following the workshop in Jordan, Inwent and IUCN ROWA conducted another training of trainers workshop in partnership with Sana'a University in Yemen October 4-8, 2009, where 30 trainers were trained on designing and implementing environmental public awareness campaigns.

The outcome of the workshops showed not only a high level of cooperation between the different participants, but also intensive knowledge sharing in the domain of water awareness approaches. These workshops are part of a series of courses conducted every year by IUCN ROWA and Inwent, which aim to build the capacities of all stakeholders to better address critical environmental issues in the region.

Five regional case studies presented at the World Water Forum

During the World Water Forum in Istanbul, Turkey, the IUCN Regional Water Resources and Drylands Programme (REWARD) presented five case studies demonstrating REWARD pilot projects in Jordan, Palestine, Egypt and Yemen.

These cases were presented in the IUCN Pavilion at the forum organized by the IUCN Water and Nature Initiative (WANI). The case of the Zarqa River in Jordan was highlighted through a photo exhibition that demonstrated the environmental degradation in the river. IUCN ROWA has also supported the participation of the Arab Water Council in the forum and contributed to a number of sessions on groundwater management and wastewater reuse.

The Wealth of Our Cultural and Natural Heritage

Programme Achievements



Participants of the World Heritage Sub-Regional Meeting in Meknes, Morocco
©UNESCO

Sub-regional meetings on the Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the Arab States

After the first regional meeting on the Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the Arab States which took place in Bahrain in December 2008, the Arab states were divided into three clusters to attend the sub-regional World Heritage meetings that were held in Jordan, Qatar and Morocco. The IUCN Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) has actively participated in the three meetings.

The first cluster sub-regional meeting was held in Amman, Jordan in April to include Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. During the same month, a second meeting was held in Doha, Qatar for the Gulf countries, Egypt, Sudan and Yemen, followed by the last meeting which was held in June in Meknes, Morocco to support World Heritage monitoring and assessment work in the region.

World Heritage monitoring and assessment work aims to analyze the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in terms of the convention, signatories and conservation status of World Heritage sites. It also addresses the need to conserve World Heritage sites and maintain their outstanding universal values in the Arab region. It is worth mentioning that the Arab region is the first to fill out the assessment questionnaires which will be presented to the World Heritage committee in order to prepare an action plan to be implemented by state parties in coordination with the World Heritage Center.

UNESCO has three advisory bodies to mentor this process consisting of: ICOMOS - the International Council on Monuments and Sites; ICCROM – the International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property to mentor cultural sites and IUCN — the International Union for Conservation of Nature as a mentor for natural world heritage sites, which is represented by IUCN ROWA, to deal with four natural World Heritage sites and one mixed cultural and natural heritage site.



World Heritage nomination for the Marshlands of Mesopotamia in Iraq

The marshlands (al ahwar) of Mesopotamia in southern Iraq, are registered on UNESCO's World Heritage tentative list in preparation for nominating it to be a natural and cultural (mixed) World Heritage site. IUCN ROWA has trained a number of stakeholders mainly represented by the governmental sector in Mesopotamia to start preparing the nomination file for this site. Training on the World Heritage nomination process for the marshland of Mesopotamia in Iraq was held in Amman on June 27-29, 2009 and was organized and funded by the UNESOC Iraq office and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The training was facilitated by the World Heritage focal points in IUCN ROWA and ICCROM, an intergovernmental organization dedicated to the conservation of cultural heritage.

Training focused on building Iraqi capacities to enhance the Mesopotamia site in meeting the standards of the outstanding universal values for World Heritage sites in terms of protection and management, integrity and authenticity and meeting the criteria.

The Mesopotamian marshlands are an integral part of the Tigris-Euphrates River Basin, which is shared by Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Studies from the third World Water Forum in Kyoto indicated that of the 10 per cent of the marshlands left, one-third has disappeared in the past two years with many endangered species such as the Sacred Ibis and African Darter hanging in the balance.



IUCN ROWA World Heritage Focal Point Haifaa Abdulhalim with Tim Badman Head of IUCN World Heritage Programme at IUCN Head Quarters, Switzerland
©IUCN

World Heritage focal point awarded by Hanns Seidel and RSCN

The Hanns Seidel Foundation, in association with the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature in Jordan, has created a regional training award for individuals working in environmental organizations. IUCN ROWA World Heritage focal point Ms. Haifaa Abdulhalim was awarded US\$4,000 for submitting a proposal on the World Heritage Convention and its implementation training, which she has used to pursue global World Heritage training organized by IUCN in Switzerland in September 2009. The training programme addressed the role of IUCN as an advisory body for the World Heritage Convention.

Outstanding Universal Values now in Arabic

In line with IUCN ROWA's strategy to regionally promote IUCN's role as the advisory body to the World Heritage Committee on Natural Heritage, the IUCN Outstanding Universal Value, Standards for Natural World Heritage publication was translated into Arabic with the efforts of the IUCN West Asia World Heritage focal point. This manual sheds light on the cultural and/or natural significance of any site that makes it so exceptional to entitle it to be on the World Heritage list.

World Heritage regional workshop for teacher-trainers

As part of strengthening the World Heritage Convention in the Arab region, IUCN ROWA contributed to the regional workshop on World Heritage education for teachers/trainers in the Arab region which was held in Amman November 9-11, 2009. The IUCN regional World Heritage focal point presented the background and global overview of the World Heritage Convention and addressed the importance of educating younger generations on basic conservation principles of natural heritage sites.

This training is part of UNESCO's Young People's World Heritage Education (WHE) Programme that seeks to encourage and enable tomorrow's decision makers to participate in heritage conservation.



Tasilli World Heritage mixed site, Algeria
IUCN©Haifaa Abdulhalim

IUCN contributes to the Bahrain Action Plan for the Marine World Heritage Programme

and Regional Workshop on Marine World Heritage February 24-26, 2009 to build on previous analyses of inadequacies and imperatives of the convention with regard to the marine environment and to develop a clear road map of action. The road map, when implemented, would significantly move the world community closer to more effective application of the convention in the marine environment. The road map is called the Bahrain Plan of Action for Marine World Heritage. IUCN ROWA participated in this meeting and took part in building the Bahrain plan of action.

The World Heritage Convention is the highest protection mechanism available to recognize and protect the best marine sites around the globe. The goal of the Bahrain action plan was building greater capacity within the global WCPA marine network in helping deliver World Heritage-related technical support, carrying out a global thematic review of marine World Heritage and carrying out review of marine World Heritage in the Arab region. It is hoped that this renewed momentum being given to marine World Heritage, combined with new strong partnerships developed at the regional and global levels will encourage, assist and support nations to use the convention to better recognize their outstanding marine areas.



Bahrain Global and Regional Workshop on Marine World Heritage, Bahrain
©Dan Laffoley

Communicating the Environmental Message

Working with members

IUCN promotes investigative environmental reporting for journalists

In an effort to harness the vital role of press and media institutions in raising the consciousness towards environmental stewardship and sustainable development, a group of Jordanian journalists were engaged in an interactive 3-day training workshop titled "Media for Sustainable Development." The training was conducted December 15-17, 2009 by IUCN ROWA in partnership with Ministry of Environment in Jordan through the Zarqa River Restoration Project and funded by the Amman office of UNESCO and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation.

The training was an opportunity for journalists to sharpen their skills in writing effective environmental reports that address social, economic and political dimensions. A wide range of current environmental and scientific terms that are addressed in our daily newspapers and TV reports were presented to the participants. Throughout the training IUCN applied the UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development Media Training and Resource Kit, a handbook for journalists to enable them to develop and articulate stories on sustainable development issues like climate change, energy use, pollution and resource depletion.

Building and selling the environmental story with professionalism, accuracy and impartiality were topics introduced by international media specialists, who provided some key tips and techniques on covering investigative reports.

Participants were introduced to the serious ecosystem degradation and pollution facing the Zarqa River Basin through a field visit. The participants were presented stories of local communities living alongside the river and how such environmental deterioration is substantially destroying people's lives and health. The field visit was followed by the launch of an award for the best investigative reports on the Zarqa River Basin.



Media for Sustainable Development Training, Jordan
IUCN©Rania Faouri

IUCN in the media

In 2009, IUCN received news coverage through TV interviews with the IUCN Regional Director Dr. Odeh Al Jayyousi, who has also written and published a number of articles throughout the year on climate change and its linkage to protected areas, forests and international agendas, in addition to other issues like greening businesses and sustainability.

The Waqf for Sustainable Development Initiative has received much interest from Jordan Radio and Television who addressed this issue through a number of TV and radio interviews with the IUCN regional director. A number of articles on waqf were also published in Jordanian newspapers.

The UNFCC COP15 Climate Summit in Copenhagen also raised regional media interest, especially satellite channels. The IUCN regional director was interviewed on Al Jazeera Arabic Satellite Channel, Kuwait TV, Saudi Arabia TV, and Libyan TV seeking IUCN's opinion on the Copenhagen discussions.

IUCN also received coverage in the Jordanian newspapers on the gender and climate change training organized by IUCN ROWA and GGCA in Amman in November 2009.



Media Coverage for IUCN activities
IUCN©Rania Faouri

Good Governance of Natural Resources



Hima Akkar, Assi River, Lebanon
©Society for Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL)

Working with members

Promoting sustainable livelihoods through better governance

During the 2006 war in Lebanon, the rural and remote areas were the most affected, destabilizing the livelihood base of rural communities living on scarce natural resources. The economy in Lebanon depends largely on dryland agriculture and important fishery breeding activities along the Assi River. In the upper watersheds there are important forest areas that need protection, restoration and management. In Syria, there is a need to improve the national and comprehensive legal framework regulating management of protected areas, ensure land rights and benefits to traditional users, and also to support the regulations of sustainable development in eco-tourism and livelihoods.

This created an opportunity for IUCN to initiate a project in Syria and Lebanon on improving natural resource governance for rural poverty reduction to promote sustainable livelihoods by better governance rooted in local and district level institutions through effective local decentralized governance of natural resources.

The project focuses on the empowerment and awareness raising of local communities, especially farmers and local government agencies, to build their capacities on sustainable management of natural resources. At a different level, the project also focuses on effective stakeholder dialogues that strongly coordinate the activities and decision-making processes of all key stakeholders at the community, governorate and national levels.

In 2009, the project team developed a partnership with civil society organizations in Lebanon and formed steering and local committees at the national and local levels. In addition, and to ensure the maximum engagement of all stakeholders, a number of consultation workshops were organized in Lebanon to come up with stakeholders' analysis, problem trees and action plans for the project. The same process is planned to take place in Syria within the coming year.

This project, which is funded by the Department of International Development, is being implemented by the IUCN ROWA Protected Areas Programme in partnership with the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon, MADA, the municipalities of Hermel and the Bekaa region in Lebanon, the General Commission for Badia Management and Development in Syria, the Syrian Society for Wildlife Conservation, and other community-based organizations in targeted areas in Syria. The cooperation between IUCN ROWA and partners in Syria and Lebanon will be formalized under a special technical cooperation agreement.

Launching the IUCN Palestine Strategy

IUCN ROWA launched the Strategy for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development in Palestine through the IUCN Marj Sanour Project office in Palestine. Since the establishment of the Palestine project in early 2008, the project team has been involved in various stakeholder meetings and workshops to engage them in the formulation of the IUCN programme strategy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The strategy addressed the need to empower vulnerable households in marginalized areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to exercise their rights to access, manage, conserve and utilize their natural resources in different ecosystems in a sustainable way. Four thematic areas were highlighted through the strategy concerning the conservation and sustainable use of Palestinian biodiversity, water resource management, drylands management as well as marine and coastal area management. Additionally, the strategy encouraged the use of traditional knowledge systems, capacity building and training, assessing the impact of climate change on biodiversity and natural resources as well as species conservation



Launching of IUCN Palestine Strategy, Palestine
IUCN©Buthaina Mizyed

Influencing policies through the League of Arab States

In 2005, IUCN ROWA was granted observer status in the League of Arab States after a decision to this effect was taken by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment. This is a unique opportunity for IUCN to foster, promote and evolve a regional approach for environmental conservation and to provide the IUCN global experience to the Arab World.

During the last four years, IUCN ROWA actively participated in the Arab League technical committee for environmental conventions by providing technical input to activate the Ramsar Convention in the region, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

In December 2009, IUCN participated in the 10th Arab League Meeting held in Damascus-Syria. The meeting aimed at following up on the implementation and the status of the Multilateral Environment Agreements in the Arab region including the UNCCD, UNCBD, CITES, Ramsar, CMS, ACCOBAMS and the Bonn Convention. The IUCN ROWA representative submitted a concept to support the Arab states on the implementation of the UNCBD (2010-2011) and to evaluate and follow up on the progress of implementing the 2010 biodiversity goals.

IUCN ROWA has influenced the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment to mainstream the gender component in the League of Arab States shared-vision statement to the Copenhagen UNFCCC COP15.



League of Arab States Meeting, Syria
IUCN©Khalid Alomari

Constituency Support

IUCN director general's mission to West Asia

In a step towards lifting the local and regional conservation priorities to the international level, IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre undertook a mission to the West Asia region in March 2009, specifically to the countries of the Levant: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine. During this mission, the director general met with government officials in each country to discuss means of cooperation and national environmental priorities of each country. The meetings demonstrated IUCN's role in providing a rich platform for all stakeholders to come up with logical solutions for the hot environmental issues in the region. The director general also met with IUCN membership organizations in each country to strengthen the role of the IUCN in providing the platform and value to all members in the region.

The director general started her mission in Lebanon, where she met with Ministry of Environment Secretary General Berj Hatjian. They discussed means of fostering the existing partnership between both IUCN and the ministry and activating Lebanon's state membership in IUCN. The ministry praised IUCN's efforts particularly demonstrated during the oil spill crisis during the last war on Lebanon in 2006, where IUCN played a major role by sending an international expert to assess the impact of this crisis and later resulted in the production of a documentary on the Lebanese oil spill. The director general also met with IUCN members in Lebanon from local NGOs, lead by Dr. Ali Darwish, IUCN chairman of Lebanon National Committee and West Asia regional councilor. IUCN members presented their projects, programmes and activities to the IUCN director general, who stressed the importance of IUCN members who are considered the core of IUCN's governance.



In Syria, the director general officially launched the Northern Bald Ibis Project in the Syrian Palmyra Desert, a project that is being co-managed by the General Commission for Badia Management and Development. The IUCN director general was warmly received by Director of the General Commission for Badia Management and Development Ali Hamoud and IUCN Project Director in Syria Gianluca Serra who presented the project's objectives and progress. The director general also met with the minister of local administration and environment and discussed activating Syria's membership in IUCN.



The next stop was Jordan, where the Director General Marton-Lefèvre met with IUCN members in the presence of former Jordanian prime minister Adnan Badran and Ministry of Environment Secretary General Faris Al Junaidi, IUCN Regional Councilor for West Asia Mohamed Shahbaz and IUCN Jordan National Committee Chairman Fadi Sharaiha. During the director general's presence, IUCN ROWA, represented by the regional director, Dr. Odeh Al Jayyousi, signed a memorandum of cooperation with two IUCN member organizations: the Jordan Badia Research and Development Center to develop a decision support tool for the Azraq Oasis Restoration Project and the Arab Women's Organization to implement the Empowerment Community Participation for the Azraq Restoration Project. The director general also met with IUCN ROWA staff in the new premises of the regional office, where the IUCN regional director, Dr. Odeh Al Jayyousi delivered a presentation on IUCN work and strategy in West Asia. The director general also attended the second day of the regional committee for West Asia (RCWA) meeting, chaired by Mohamed Shahbaz, West Asia regional councilor and RCWA chairman.



The final stop in the director's journey was Jenin in Palestine, where she took a tour to a number of protected areas and sites. She met with Jenin Deputy Governor Abdullah Barakat and the government departments' directors as well as other stakeholders in Jenin. The meeting tackled a number of environmental challenges facing the governorate and the importance of joining forces to overcome these challenges. The director general also attended a national meeting in Ramallah with ministry representatives and a number of national stakeholders. Ministry of Agriculture Secretary General Azzam Tubeileh highlighted the state of agriculture in Palestine. In addition, IUCN presented its Palestine strategy to participants who called upon accepting Palestine as an IUCN member considering its rich biodiversity and uniqueness.

IUCN©Rania Faouri



Working with members

IUCN Regional Committee for West Asia meeting convenes in Amman

The IUCN Regional Committee for West Asia (RCWA) held its second meeting in Amman, Jordan March 30-31, 2009 in the presence of IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre, IUCN West Asia Regional Director Dr. Odeh Al Jayyousi and RCWA Chairman Mohamed Shahbaz.

A number of important decisions were taken during the meeting, which was attended by IUCN commission focal points in the region, IUCN West Asia Regional councilors, the IUCN ROWA team, the IUCN Mediterranean Cooperation Center representative in addition to RCWA committee members.

IUCN ROWA presented its 2009-2012 programme to participants and did a mapping exercise to incorporate the members' work within IUCN programmes. Commission focal points also delivered presentations on the commissions' work in the region.

A number of taskforces were formed to follow up on issues related to the operational guidelines for the committee, the next regional conservation forum, IUCN Palestine membership, follow-up on war and environment resolutions, fundraising, the committee's financial account and follow-up on communication and educational activities in the region.

IUCN Regional Committee for West Asia (RCWA) Structure

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