



CEC

Commission on Education and Communication

IUCN

The World Conservation Union

Redefining Capacity Development
for the 21st Century

Draft

New Learning for Sustainable Solutions

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Redefining Capacity Development for the 21st Century

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Preface

IUCN is at a critical juncture in redefining its knowledge and learning ecologies and building a 21st century organizational model of a decentralized community poised to enhance its' leadership role in creating innovative sustainable solutions.

But how could IUCN – as the world's leading conservation organization – build the capacity of individuals and organizations to respond to complex sustainable development challenges? How does IUCN meet the conservation challenges defined by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) in a globalizing world? Conservation knowledge- and learning management will be judged by the changes in behaviour or ongoing actions that stakeholders take. Conservation knowledge- and learning management must therefore strive to tackle real world issues, facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing, and integrate learning into workflows.

The World Conservation Union through its components – the six Commissions, more than 1,000 Member organizations and its Secretariat – needs to evolve into a true learning organization if sustainable approaches to natural resource management are going to be implemented on the ground, and around the world. Learning organizations are those “organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. The basic rationale for such organizations is that in situations of rapid change only those that are flexible, adaptive and productive will excel”. For this to happen, it is argued, organizations need to “discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels”¹.

This paper serves as the guiding vision for IUCN and its World Conservation Learning Network (WCLN). It highlights the extent of fragmentation within the conservation and sustainability knowledge continuum, especially with regard to capacity development. It articulates the need for and vision of the WCLN and outlines its added value to the IUCN mission and programme. As one of the outputs of IUCN's Commission on Education and Communication (CEC) Innovation Fund Project for 2005, the paper proposes an approach to capacity building and learning for greater impact and change.

The authors want to thank Achim Steiner, Director General of IUCN, for his continuous support for the WCLN initiative right from its start in 2003 and for making available funds for the WCLN innovation project. They also want to thank Zenda Ofir, the Special Adviser: Knowledge Management in the IUCN Secretariat for her valuable suggestions and guidance.

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¹ Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of The Learning Organization*, Random House, London 1990

1. Introduction

Today, increasing demands are placed on the conservation community by large and often disparate actors in a variety of sectors (poverty, economics, health, community development, urban development, agriculture, etc.). This adds to the complexity of the tasks of the front line conservation worker, the policy manager, and the donor programme officer². With the advent of the internet and a plethora of information flow, the front line worker's ability to access, acquire, apply and manage this knowledge stream is beleaguered. At the same time as the need for conservation knowledge grows in different sectors of society, the capacity to make it available in relevant and accessible formats is diminishing.

Furthermore, the traditional analytical way to address complex issues, such as the role of conservation in a globalizing world, is to divide it into key components, study each component in isolation, and then synthesize the components back into a whole. Scientists and practitioners eventually accumulate enough bits of information and knowledge products on these issues, but often fail to recognize that knowledge only has little to do with stakeholders' capacity for effective action. This specialization of problem solving has created a system of fragmentation, which has become the cornerstone of what it means to be a professional, so much so that practitioners are called "specialists." This fragmentation in conservation science created the silos that hamper communication across specializations and work in isolation within its own discipline.

The situation sketched before poses various challenges to conservation and sustainable development: information congestion, access to relevant information and learning, outreach to and across other sectors. The most important challenge is creating knowledge products that can be effectively used in learning, skill improvement, and job performance improvement. The aim is to create "new knowledge" – relevant, authoritative and accessible – from the ever-flowing continuum of data being generated by people, robots (data gathering devices), and remotely sensing platforms. Behind this flow of data is the need to construct new algorithms and processes of learning that reflect the interaction at the different boundaries and within each of the systems that govern the human-nature interface. This is the breeding ground for the new learning for sustainable solutions.

From this a new paradigm of interconnectivity emerges to realize these new knowledge products that could lead to truly desired results in capacity development and changes towards sustainable solutions on the ground. In practice, demand articulation, knowledge management and learning management are interconnected processes in a continuum of engagement, insight and behaviour change. In reality this paradigm has already started to enter in many ways the thinking within the World Conservation Union as some component programs³ are engaging already in demand articulation and taking initial steps in learning management. The Commission on Education and Communication sees it as its role to help strengthen this development within the Union towards what it calls new learning for sustainable solutions and support in the related organizational learning.

2. Understanding End-User Needs and Contexts

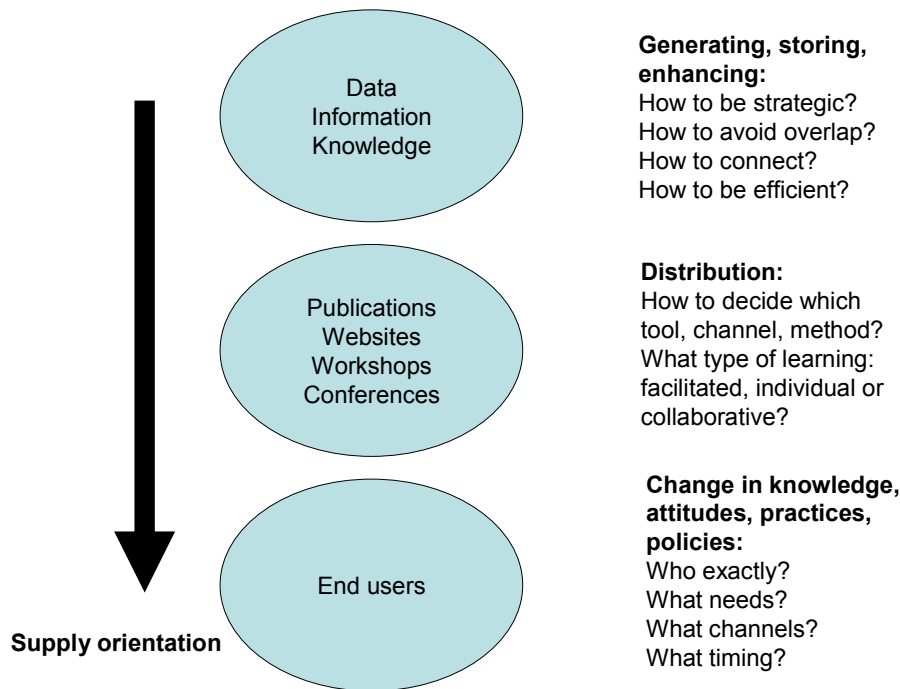
Why does it matter?

Individuals and groups hold deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, and images (mental models) that influence how they understand the world and how they take action. If conservation organizations are to develop a capacity to work with these assumptions, generalizations and mental models, it will be necessary to learn new skills and develop new orientations or re-organize to integrate these deeply ingrained perspectives in the way it manages its knowledge.

2. See also Ger Bergkamp, Frits Hesselink and Keith Wheeler, From Classroom Learning to Networked Learning, New Learning for Water Resource Management, paper presented at Water for Food and Nature Conference, The Hague, January 2005.

³ E.g. the IUCN Water and Nature Initiative, the Commission on Ecosystem Management project proposal for Small Island Developing States, the Global Forest Programs's project to build capacity for the ITTO Guidelines on Forest Landscape Restoration, the WCPA initiative of PALNET etc.

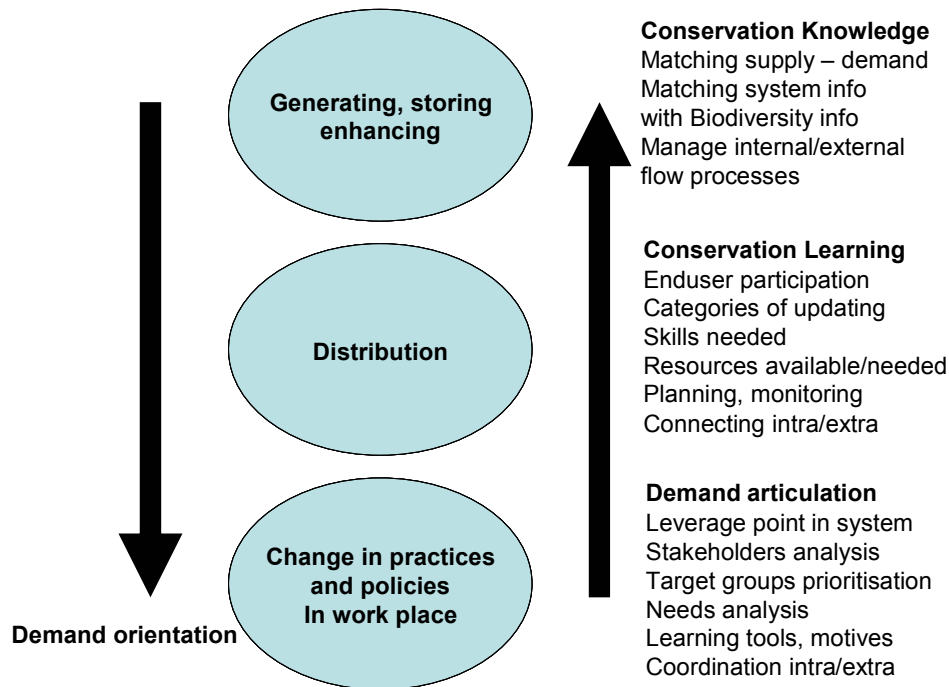
At the moment the paradigm of linear thinking often leads to a supply oriented approach. Experts in biodiversity conservation generate knowledge and distribute this through a limited variety of channels (guidelines, manuals, workshops etc.) to a wide range of end users. Often the impact this knowledge should have on the ground among a specific target audience is not specified in advance. And many questions forthcoming from the target audience's assumptions, generalizations and mental models, often stay (partly) unanswered, impeding impact on policy and practices.



In a practical sense, the great challenge for IUCN is to change the conceptual design of capacity development projects and programmes by recognizing that knowledge and learning should be planned and managed in a demand oriented way.

How could IUCN achieve this?

Within its core knowledge areas, IUCN identifies issues for capacity development. It engages in demand articulation, identifying the leverage point for the desired change in the wider system. Stakeholder analysis will lead to those target groups that can make a difference (often decision makers and key professionals). A needs analysis will bring to light what their prior knowledge is, what motives they may have for updating their knowledge, what tools are most suitable and how learning can be coordinated within the organization and wider social system. It will also provide indication how to manage the learning process. How end-users can participate in all stages of the capacity development continuum (from planning to evaluation). What the needed skills exactly are, what resources already exist, how to plan and monitor interventions and how to connect with other capacity development interventions (e.g. policy, legal frameworks, subsidies etc.). Demand oriented capacity development is user generated learning embedded in the work process.



Examples of CEC's contribution

- Map courses and capacity development opportunities for conservation
- Start test project to develop the IUCN Institute (certified courses)
- Conduct regularly customer satisfaction surveys
- Involve end users and stimulate end user participation in all aspects of WCLN
- Start demand articulation projects (e.g. Water Partnership project proposal with Wageningen University, The Netherlands)

3. Networked Knowledge – Relevant, Authoritative and Accessible

Why does it matter?

What do conservation organizations and communities “know” about social and economic development; how can they share that knowledge; and how can they learn more and strengthen their knowledge base? What do companies and organizations in the social and economic sectors know about conservation: how can conservation groups access that knowledge; and how can disparate communities come to a greater understanding of the needs and contexts of the other? Central to this is the growing understanding of grounding knowledge in local realities: “Scientific and technical knowledge that is not embedded within knowledge of the larger social and cultural context will, at best have a limited impact and, at worst, will distort development paths.”⁴

The 2004 Knowledge Management Study undertaken by IISD⁵ found that IUCN is already sensitive to issues of capacity building, citizen and community empowerment and the value of local and traditional

4 Stein, J. Opening Networks in Closing Systems: Knowledge Networks and Public Policy. 2003. Prepared for The International Development Research Centre in the preparation of its Corporate Strategy and Program Framework 2005-2010.

⁵ IISD. 2004. Mobilizing IUCN's Knowledge to Secure a Sustainable Future.

knowledge. But the Union may need to strengthen its understanding of the concept of “knowledge for conservation and development” – embedding its conservation knowledge in social, economic and cultural contexts in support of sustainable development. A recurring issue in the literature on knowledge practices is that internal organizational information and knowledge do not necessarily match external complexity⁶.

Making knowledge relevant, authoritative and accessible require the integration of concepts and processes such as dialogue, relationship building, and adaptive learning through constant interaction with users, who have their own knowledge and perspectives to contribute. These networks, or social capital, are increasingly recognized as important as intellectual capital. Social capital is built through interaction and leads to improved knowledge sharing. It is a new view of the old adage that “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know”. As groups begin to explore how to bridge research, policy and action, it is critical to understand how information flows through social networks and how to build social capital with decision makers to create those channels for knowledge.

It is also becoming clear in the knowledge management field is that organizations can apply a variety of modes of collaboration both to improve the quality of their knowledge and get it into use more broadly. The models range from informal internal networks to share information among staff to structured networks of individuals and organizations that are focused on specific objectives.

Communications tools are as important for knowledge mobilization as models of collaboration, and again, need to be consciously chosen and deployed. Innovation – the generation of new ideas or new applications of existing ideas – often depends on how individuals communicate with each other or reach out to others. The internet has given rise to create a convergence in knowledge ecologies that encompass the conservation community’s vision of catalyzing sustainable solutions to today’s most pressing problems. Models are emerging where knowledge management and learning management are being integrated to form the basis of a new paradigm of organizational development where the interplay of continuous learning and knowledge management are creating opportunities for creative learning communities.

How could IUCN achieve this?

The conservation community needs to invest not just in new machinery to make knowledge management more efficient, but in the flow of know-how that will sustain the conservation community. The IUCN has a good history of knowledge generation, appropriation and exploitation. Knowledge that is visible tends to be teachable, explicit, detachable, and it easy to communicate. Knowledge that is intangible, tacit and less observable is less teachable and more difficult to detach from the person who created it or the context in which it is embedded, and is difficult to communicate.

Examples of CEC’s contribution

As many IUCN Commission members are scientists working in academic or research institutions, commissions are at present the major link of IUCN to science. Yet so far IUCN knowledge does not flow optimally and effectively to and from universities around the world in a structured basis. The result is that IUCN knowledge is hardly used in universities either by teachers or by researchers.

CEC, through the World Conservation Learning Network, offers this structured link between conservation and academia: it currently brings together over 400 environmental faculties, schools and training institutes from different continents. This number is still growing. The flow of IUCN knowledge to universities would make a huge impact of the IUCN program both in academic teaching and research. It also would enhance and multiply the capacity development components and sustainability of projects and program components.

Examples of CEC activities include:

- Expanding regional networks of environmental faculties;
- Linking with existing capacity development networks, appropriate ESD networks and professional development organizations;
- Linking with global institutions such as the United Nations University, Peace University, Agrid etc.;

⁶ Odeh Al-Jayyousi. "Knowledge creation in the water sector: towards a learning water organization". IN: International journal of water resources development 20 (2, 2004) : 165-175

- Developing a portal providing access to IUCN and other conservation knowledge tailored to needs of universities;
- 'Advertising' IUCN's knowledge per component programme to universities through tutorials on the portal;
- Initiating collaboration with IUCN members and partners by working on specific joint projects such as a CEPA eModule (with WCPA, CI, UNDP and WWF), CEPA tools for end user groups of other component programs and profiling these projects at appropriate events (for example, at the CBD Conference of Parties in Brazil, 2006); and
- Implement pilot projects (for example, capacity development assessment for the Small Island Development States, Poverty and Conservation, WANI, digital library, etc.) by engaging end-users and members of the WCLN network in project design, implementation and evaluation.

4. Learning Individuals, Transforming Organizations

Why does it matter?

It is frequently noted that in using knowledge to support environment and development the experience is more often about the lack of local capacity to use knowledge than about the lack of knowledge itself. Stakeholders/audiences are aware of scientific findings, of policy frameworks, of legal requirements; but human capacity for implementation is weak and limited. What is missing is critical mass and continuity of people. The conservation community's key requirement is to focus on knowledge generation within a sustainable development framework, focusing on the relationships between the people who create intellectual capital and those who need to use it.

Knowledge carried by an individual only realizes its larger potential when it is replicated by an organization and becomes organizational knowledge. The challenge the IUCN Secretariat and Commissions have is to embed in its organizational structures and strategies an overarching framework of being and acting as a 'learning organization' in order to achieve its mission. Organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning, but without it no organizational learning occurs.

"New Learning" is a range of strategically planned and managed learning for change interventions at the individual-organizational-social level. It is based on demand articulation, end user participation and the marketing approach of an 'introduction of an innovation'. New Learning makes specific use of (web based) 'any-time-any-place professional updating support' for up-scaling lessons learned beyond the final phases of the project cycle.

Principles of New Learning⁷

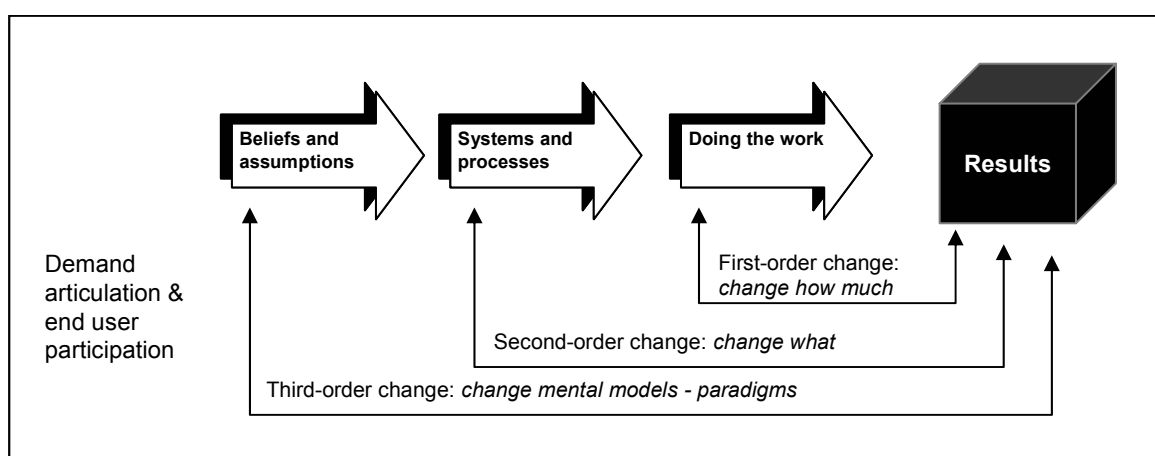
- The learner learns what the learner wants to learn, so focus on key issues
- The people who need to learn are the people who have the power to take action, so focus on key strategically identified staff as opposed to diffused group of end-users.
- Learning often occurs best through "play," through interactions in a transitional medium where it is safe to experiment and reflect.
- Learning often requires altering the flow of time: slow down the action to enable reflection on tacit assumptions and counterproductive ways of interacting; or, at other times, speed up time to reveal how current decisions can create unanticipated problems in the long term.
- Learning often requires "compressing space," as well as time, so that the learner can see the effects of his or her actions in other parts of a larger system.
- This transitional medium must look like the action domain of the learners.
- The learning space must be seamlessly integrated into the work space for an ongoing cycle of

⁷ Adapted from Peter Senge, see note 8

reflection, experimentation, and action.

New Learning is learning for change. It takes place at the individual level (new knowledge, new skills), the institutional level (new priorities, new procedures, and new practices) and the social level (new agendas, new partnerships, new ways of interaction and participation). Over the last decades a range of New Learning opportunities have emerged, that go far beyond the classical teaching and training methods of graduate and postgraduate courses and training workshops.

New Learning for Sustainable solutions requires becoming a learning organization⁸ based on a "transformational learning" approach. In transformational learning, there are no problems to be solved independent of how we think and act in articulating these problems. Such learning is not ultimately about tools and techniques. It is about who we are. This explains why sustainability is a difficult quest and action has been rare.



Third order of change - learning management⁹

These learning opportunities add new forms of learning to the classical approaches, which remain to have their value. New Learning varies from on the job professional updating to communities of practice, interdisciplinary learning and exchange networks and distance learning. New Learning interventions are no longer supply driven, but demand driven. These interventions are more 'facilitating than teaching' and offer opportunities to develop individuals or institutions than prescribe technical or social solutions. New Learning offers an investment in the future of individuals, organizations, and societies.

Moving from traditional learning to New Learning

From Traditional Learning	To New Learning
Orientation on graduate and post graduate formal education	Orientation to include on the job professional updating

⁸ See also Frits Hesselink, Beyond training: protected area organizations as learning organizations. Developing the capacity to change towards management in partnership, in: Communicating Protected Areas, editors Denise Hamu, Elisabeth Auchincloss and Wendy Goldstein, IUCN 2004, p. 207-216

⁹ For change and societal learning, see also Harnessing IUCN's Knowledge for a better world, discussion document on a knowledge strategy for IUCN, p. 46, from where the figure is adapted

World Conservation Learning Network
Innovation Fund 2005

Disconnect with latest developments	Link with latest developments and cutting-edge new practice
Classical teaching methods	Including New Learning techniques such as distance learning methods
Orientation on engineering and infrastructure	Orientation on a variety of know-how and skill-sets
Stand alone initiatives	Approaches integrated in new and existing networks and link with other sectors and civil society
English language	Local language
Supply oriented	Demand oriented

How could IUCN achieve this?

In a range of IUCN projects, experiments are underway with new approaches. It will be important to learn from them and make the results available to the various teams of IUCN in different parts of the world. In the box below an example of such a new approach is analyzed and illustrations are provided of the components of the various entry points. The results may at first look small. But they are real results on the ground and these visible successful changes lead to an increase in the reputation of the conservation effort and they provide opportunities for next and greater steps for biodiversity conservation.

New Learning for Sustainable Solutions: a practical example from the IUCN Program¹⁰

Mainstreaming biodiversity to private Forest owners in Estonia

European Forest program knowledge management:

- Surveys of privatisation trends since transition to new economy
- Surveys of threats and biodiversity loss
- Research for new legislation and administrative procedures

Question Forest Program to CEC:

Help package our research findings and communicate the importance of biodiversity to Private Forest Owners to mitigate negative effects on biodiversity

CEC support: demand articulation

- Leverage point in system: damage and biomass after clear cutting by contractors
- Stakeholders analysis: supplier of machinery, contractors, owners, forest service
- Target groups prioritisation; decision makers, machine operators of contractors
- Needs analysis: attitude & knowledge about leaving behind biomass
- Learning tools, motives: in-company training machine operation, excursions

¹⁰ Piotr Tyszko (editor), Communicating Biodiversity Conservation to Forest Owners in East-Central Europe, IUCN , Wasaw, July 2004, p. 58-68

→ Coordination intra/extra: Swedish supplier, ministry, Forest school, inspectors

CEC advice: manage the learning process

→ End-user participation: planning workshop with decision makers of Companies, Forest School, Forest Service

→ Categories of learning: professional updating, extension, field trips

→ Skills needed: new driving and machine handling skills, after care of clear cutting

→ Resources available/needed: forest school, in-company training, demo sites

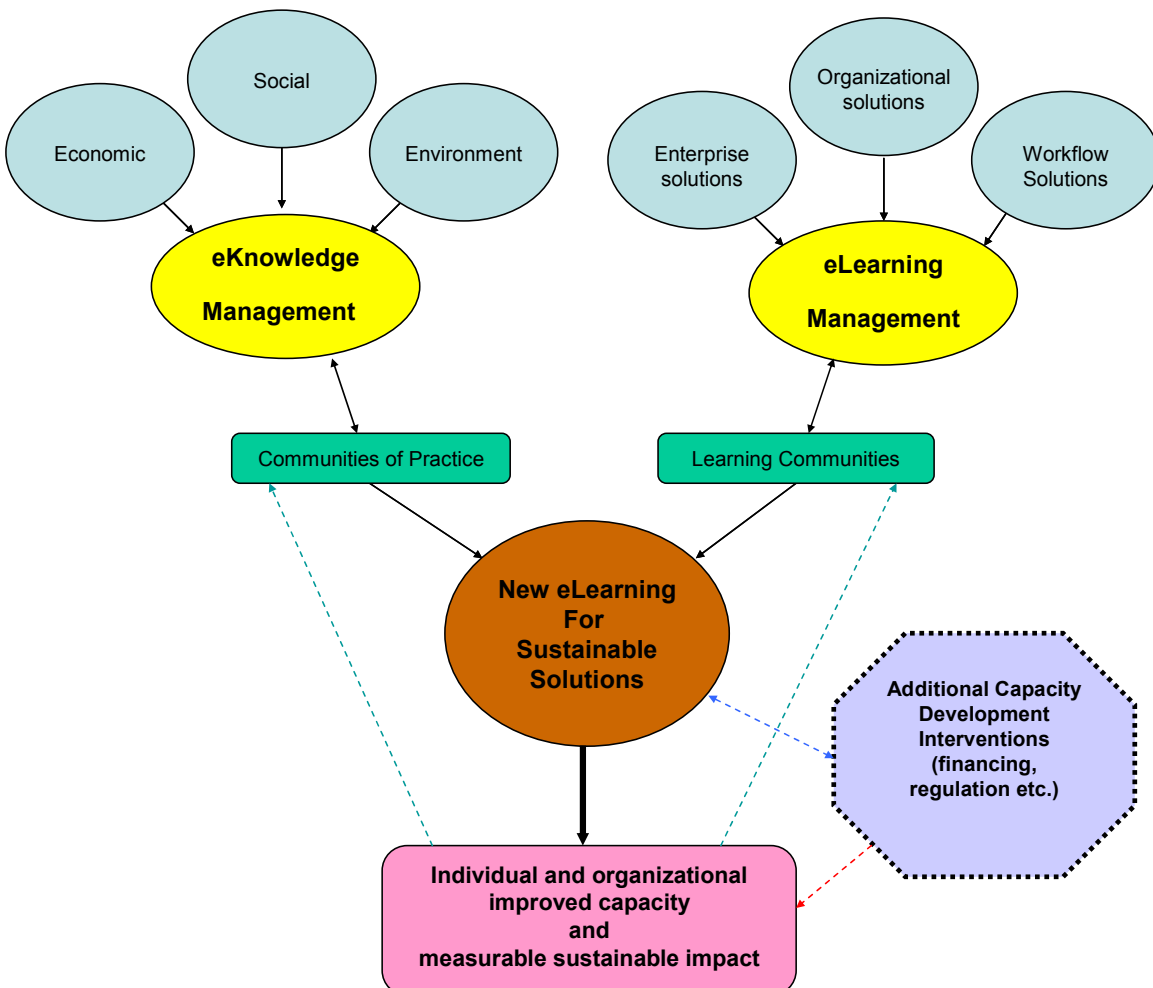
→ Planning, management & monitoring: external support Swedish Environment Institute for pilot project

→ Connecting intra/extra: Swedish company, Estonian contractors, Estonian legislation, Forest Owners association, pioneers among owners, customer satisfaction surveys

If IUCN was to become a learning organization, its senior management should become the designers, stewards and teachers. They are responsible for building an organization where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models – that is they are responsible for learning.

Examples of CEC's contribution

CEC could help to develop greater connection between the notions of IUCN as 'learning organization' and insure the connection to the larger 'learning society', thus enhancing the political and social impact of IUCN's activity. CEC could also contribute expertise on the demand side of managing the learning – those interventions that will lead to greater action and impact.

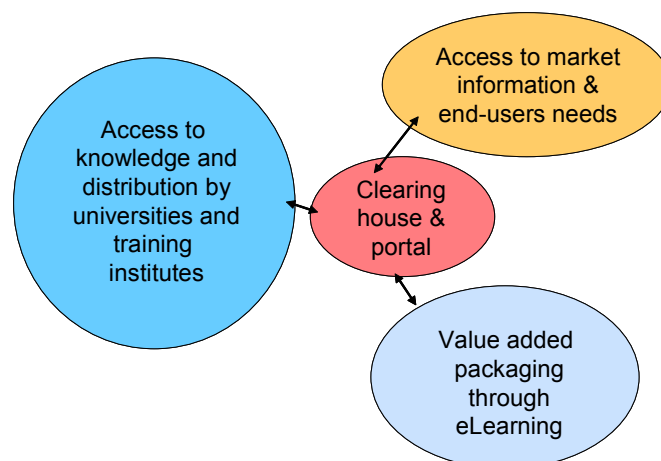


Examples of practical activities include:

- Assist in knowledge management capacity building/training in IUCN;
- Provide support and expertise to integrate Learning management and demand articulation into work processes, annual plans of the one programme;
- Provide support and expertise to integrate learning management and demand articulation in IUCN's knowledge management strategy, as well as its marketing & communication strategy;
- Link IUCN with existing New Learning Initiatives (e.g. NatureServe/CISCO) to access experience and lessons learned;
- Set the agenda on New Learning and WCLN through participating in conferences (e.g. Rome, March 2006, Amsterdam, October 2006); and
- Evaluate SUR/WCLN distance education course on IWRM and SD and make assessment widely available (and adapt learning strategy).

5. Operational Modalities of the World Conservation Learning Network

CEC has launched the World Conservation Learning Network (WCLN) – a partnership between the world of conservation and the world of higher education and training. The WCLN is focusing on continually improving the competency of IUCN stakeholders - both professionals and organisations in environmental and conservation management as a response to change being driven by globalization. As organizational learning continues to evolve, learning solutions will become more geared toward the specific needs of organizations and more closely embedded in the explicit activities of the workplace.



In the short term the WCLN has adopted a three pronged approach to network development to begin to catalyze the IUCN Learning Community:

(1) Finding those predisposed to this area of work

It is easy to waste time attempting to bring about changes with people who do not want, or are not ready for, such changes. As part of its strategy, the IUCN CEC has begun a transformation/strategic partnership process aimed at being the catalyst and support for the entire Union to become a learning organization. The WCLN is the vehicle for this transformation. It became apparent that external change leaders (individuals and organizations) needed to be engaged in partnership with the CEC-WCLN. To this end CEC identified a series of leading thinkers in the area of Knowledge Management and Learning Management. Through a self identification process CEC has engaged with the leading Universities in the world over the past 18 months to begin to share a common vision on the creation of a conservation learning community. This has grown to the BINGOS: a partnership with CI and WWF is formed to engage in a pilot project. Working relations are set up with other institutions, such as the UNDP and UNU.

(2) Core community-building activities and network development

How those predisposed begin to know each other and to work together involves an ongoing cycle of community-building activities and practical experimentation. The former must be intense enough and

open-ended enough to foster trusting personal relationships and to lay a foundation of knowledge and skills. The latter must offer realistic starting steps in applying new knowledge and skills to important issues. We are all taking together. There are no "teachers" with correct answers, only guides with different areas of expertise and experience that may help along the way. This community is reinforced and expanded through a variety of other meetings and communications media, including electronic mail, bulletin boards, and research documents. Especially important are semi-annual gatherings, originally organized for reporting on projects underway in participating organizations. These large gatherings will become an ongoing dialogue rather than a one-way reporting on various projects.

(3) Practical experimentation and testing

Ultimately, what nurtures the unfolding community most is serious, active experimentation where people wrestle with crucial strategic and operational issues. Most projects focus on key issues, because of the resulting motivation for learning and because of the potential for significant improvement in IUCN key results. Several potential projects with internal and external partners are at the moment in the pipeline: they range from e-learning management support to IUCN component programs to professional updating through e-learning for protected area managers and demand articulation projects for sustainable development. Evaluation of these test project and regular customer satisfaction surveys are planned to keep WCLN demand oriented and of added value to IUCN and its partners.

Bringing together sets of networks

With this three pronged approach, WCLN intends to engage four target audiences: the community of institutes of higher education and training, the World Conservation Union, the wider conservation community and the development community. Success with one audience will positively influence the WCLN reputation with other audiences, and as WCLN aims to be a broker in the end the different audiences will increasingly be interlinked in the WCLN partnership.

WCLN working committees

The WCLN Working Committees progress various areas of WCLN's work. They are headed by members of the WCLN Steering Committee. Whilst involvement in the various Committees is determined by professional expertise and interest, the spectrum of WCLN membership is represented: non-governmental organizations and institutions of higher education and training focused on building professional capacity through new learning approaches.

- **A community of practice for academic and professional exchange.**
Providing a clearing house and community of practice to facilitate global opportunities for exchange and collaboration in fundraising, research, teaching and learning for environmental sustainability.
- **Networking networks and know-how**
Providing a gateway to knowledge and experience gained around the world in establishing and managing national and regional networks of universities and training institutes in environmental sustainability, and stimulating cooperation and exchange between networks in order to increase professional capacity development for environmental sustainability.
- **Distance learning products and distribution**
Establishing the first global centre of excellence for the distribution of knowledge on environmental sustainability for on-the-job professionals, and ensuring distribution of this knowledge to practitioners and students globally, using the most efficient, high-quality methods in distance learning.
- **Dialogue on capacity development**
Establishing a regular dialogue on strategically planning professional capacity development and learning to work towards the Millennium Development Goal of Environmental Sustainability.
- **Marketing and Communication**
Providing relevant information on trends in: capacity development for environmental sustainability; the market for professional development; distance learning; the needs and satisfaction criteria of end-users; the cost-effectiveness of approaches in various countries; and innovative ways of promotion, distribution and use of learning modules.

Facilitating Exchange

The WCLN Portal – is the venue and vehicle for exchange. There needs to be certain capability in the interaction that takes place, and a management of the feedback mechanisms to insure that everyone has an opportunity to create this new knowledge and to use this new knowledge in an open source way. It provides:

- A personal navigation window – to relevant information and learning opportunities that immediately provide a solution tailored to implementation requests;
- A platform for exchange – for communities of practice in conservation and sustainable development;
- A brokering service – between higher education, capacity development, conservation and sustainable development sectors to match demand and supply; and
- A centre of excellence – for on-the-job professional updating and development through integrated distance learning.

Funding

As separate funding for WCLN still is limited¹¹ (basic funds and personnel to develop and maintain a high quality portal - as catalyst for WCLN activities - are secured), the funding strategy for the short term is to a two way strategy. At the one hand directed to develop projects in partnership with internal and external clients, who are ready and ask for new learning approaches. This way WCLN also demonstrates its demand orientation and customer oriented style of working. At the other hand directed to make WCLN part of the IUCN core operation budget. This will demonstrate that change occurs from the inside out!

¹¹ In the Business Plan for WCLN (IUCN Commission on Education and Communication, November 2004) a more detailed overview of costs of WCLN over a four year period and funding strategies are provided.