SESSION SYNTHESIS

BLOWING UP THE BARRIERS:

DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

IUCN WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS Marseille 2020

Session Highlights

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

SARDOR RUSTAMBAEV
His Excellency, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan in France

“ — For the Aral Sea region, international collaboration is key, particularly for attracting the best specialists, the best scientists and researchers. — ”

SESSION MODERATOR

NICOLAS BUCHOUD
The Grand Paris Alliance, France

KATE NEWMAN
World Wildlife Fund, USA

We do not yet have a complete picture of how nature functions on earth, and then how the infrastructure we need will interact with nature. Once we have the right data that we need in the right place, systematically available to all decision-makers, we can start to expect to see consistent design patterns as we move forward.

DIEGO JUFFE BIGNOLI
University of Kent & DCP

In development corridor planning there has been no meaningful engagement of stakeholders. Biodiversity baselines are also poor meaning that conservation outcomes cannot be accurately measured.

LUCY WARUINGI
African Conservation Centre, Kenya & DCP

In Kenya, cumulative impacts including social, economic, and environmental, and biodiversity risks are not well articulated, not well documented, and not visible to the private investor at the project level.

DR. PEM NARAYAN KANDEL
Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal

For Nepal, the integration of guidelines at the local government level has enabled it to be successfully rolled out.

Even at the local level between sectors, coalitions are critical to start to discuss the challenges upfront, not when the project is already financed, designs are already approved, when the project is already underway.

VANESSA BAUER
GIZ, Germany

We need to seek a language that financiers understand to integrate nature and biodiversity considerations into projects that can be financed.

TOWFIQUA HOQUE
Global Infrastructure Facility, World Bank

Quotations may be paraphrased or reduced for clarity.

Session Overview

The IUCN World Conservation Congress hybrid in-person and virtual forum session (Sept 6, 2021) hosted by WWF, UNEP-WCMC, and the Development Corridors Partnership brought together experts from across public and private sectors to explore practical solutions to the complex challenges faced in the planning and implementation of sustainable infrastructure. Setting the tone of the session, Nicolas Buchoud, a leading infrastructure expert and our session moderator, posed the question:

How can we break barriers to acquaint the world of infrastructure with biodiversity?

Over the course of the ninety-minute session, key insights and examples were provided to illuminate the practical and realistic solutions available for future sustainable infrastructure development. The discussion was guided by overarching responses to the challenges highlighted during a previous webinar series hosted by WWF and the Infrastructure and Nature Coalition surrounding data and standards; awareness, technical capacity, and know-how; collaboration & participatory approaches; and policy and regulatory incentives.

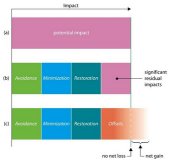
Our keynote speaker initiated the session's emphasis on practical and participatory approaches by evidencing the efforts undertaken by the Government of Uzbekistan to restore the Aral Sea region after years of significant ecological degradation and biodiversity loss. The value of international collaboration was fundamental to this restoration and benefits have already been accrued by both local people and nature. The following panel discussion grounded the need for obstacles faced in delivering sustainable infrastructure to be tackled through the clearer translation of science to the private sector and policy-makers. Solutions without feasible translation into these sectors will fall short of meeting the demands of the 21st century, including climate resilience, protecting ecosystems and their services, and prioritizing essential biodiversity habitat.

Session speakers, virtual: Lucy Waruingi (left) and Vanessa Bauer (right), and in-person: Sardor Rustambaev, Kate Newman, Nicolas Buchoud, Tofiqua Hoque, and Diego Juffe Bignoli (from left to right) in Marseilles, Sept 2021

Key Tools for Sustainable Infrastructure

The objectives of global conventions cannot be met without sustainable infrastructure. Infrastructure, as it is planned and implemented today, will compromise the targets which are set such as, maintaining species and maintaining connectivity of ecosystems in the draft of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). To achieve such objectives, we must innovate by improving current processes and enabling stakeholders across governments, private sectors, and institutions to use the available practical tools designed to bridge the science-policy gap for sustainable infrastructure. For instance, improving the use of Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) is a holistic route to assessing the indirect and cumulative impacts of infrastructure projects, which is urgently required in contrast to the singular project impact approach commonly undertaken. If SEA practitioners are required by contractual regulation to iteratively use the Mitigation Hierarchy for example, at the onset of project planning, development could potentially lead to no net loss (or even net gain) for biodiversity.

Ensuring the tools available are used by the correct stakeholders is the first step in building the capacity required across private and public sectors. Key tools highlighted in this session are presented below:

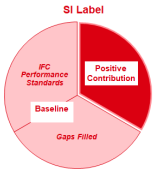


The Mitigation Hierarchy

This decision making framework is structured around four well-established steps for managing the impacts of development on biodiversity: 1. Avoid impacts before they happen (e.g. re-design), 2. Minimise unavoidable impacts as far as possible (e.g. wildlife crosses), 3. Restore/Remediate impacts that are immediately reversible, 4. Offset any residual impacts, to achieve a desired net positive outcome (for example, net gain).

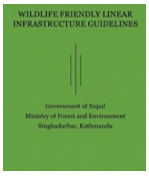
Sustainable Infrastructure Navigator Tool

The Sustainable Infrastructure Tool Navigator was designed to help users identify the most relevant tools for their needs and goals. You can search our database by keyword or filter by types of tools, sectors and infrastructure lifecycle phases, amongst other things. Detailed information on each tool helps you evaluate applicability and relevance for your specific application context.



Sustainable Infrastructure Label (FAST-Infra)

The new Sustainable Infrastructure Label (SI Label) created by the Finance to Accelerate the Sustainable Transition-Infrastructure initiative (FAST-Infra) is designed to enable project sponsors, developers and owners to signal the positive sustainability impact of infrastructure assets, and attract investors seeking assets that positively contribute to sustainable outcomes.



Wildlife Friendly Linear Infrastructure Guidelines

Case Study: Nepal

New wildlife friendly infrastructure guidelines (2021) have been rolled out across all 752 local governments of Nepal. Designed using participatory approaches with government agencies, civil society, and conservation partners to conserve and mitigate losses to Nepal's rich floral and faunal biodiversity as infrastructure development increases in the effort to upgrade Nepal's status to a Middle-income country by 2030.

Conclusion

The consensus of the session explicitly called for the conservation science and research communities to better translate their expertise into practical solutions for investors and financiers of infrastructure projects to mainstream sustainability in practical terms. Three key concepts (provided below) were agreed upon as critical conditions to deliver sustainable infrastructure, with an emphasis placed upon enabling multi-level stakeholders and decision-makers with practical solutions.

Enhance international collaboration

- Build capacity at an institutional level for consultants and practitioners in the negotiation processes of project design
- International collaboration is necessary beyond financial aid requirements, as scientific expertise is necessary for the evidence base of policy decision-making

DEVELOPMENT CORRIDORS PARTNERSHIP

Infrastructure & Nature Coalition

Improve exisiting processes

- Improve existing processes for the intended users rather than creating new requirements
- Tailor sustainability tools to the financiers, investors, and government institutions
- Simplify processes to encourage use

Raise awareness & accessibility

- Solutions are not targeted for use by the private sector which stalls their practical implementation
- Different sectors are simply not aware that tools exist to facilitate sustainable infrastructure investments, planning and implementation

“ Infrastructure is one of the top reasons why nature is converted to unproductive uses of our land and water resources. We have to face this directly. We have a range of barriers and challenges but everything on Earth is a challenge, and every aspiration we have is a challenge. There are really only a few things humans have on this Earth that have huge impacts on biodiversity, and one of those is infrastructure, and we are not doing enough. We cannot wait another ten years. ”

Kate Newman

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Synthesis by Molly Brown, Amayaa Wijesinghe, and Ryan Bartlett

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UNEP-WCMC

Development Corridors Partnership

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