



Statutes and Operational Guidelines for the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI)

Version 2.0, 29 March 2017

Section 1: Aim, scope, objectives and work programme of the IBRRI

1.1 Aim and scope of the IBRRI

The Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI) is an umbrella initiative to support the effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention and its Strategic Plan in the five countries of Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. It is intended to facilitate the coordinated implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the region. It is fully in line with the "Operational Guidelines for Ramsar Regional Initiatives to support the implementation of the Convention" (SC52-22).

The IBRRI is a regional cooperation framework that is supported by IUCN acting as the Secretariat through its Asia Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand, and its country offices in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam.

1.2 Objectives, work programme and activities

- **Objectives:** The specific objectives of the IBRRI include:
 - a) **Science and knowledge:** Promoting scientific and technical cooperation by supporting joint research on management and wise use of wetlands taking into account aspects of biodiversity, livelihoods, climate change mitigation and other ecosystem services; identifying wetlands playing key roles in providing ecosystem services for the region; working on ecosystem valuation and supporting hydrology and biodiversity surveys and wetland inventories.
 - b) **Site management:** Ensuring the implementation of conservation and wise use strategies for all Ramsar Sites in the region by developing or supporting the development of management plans and regulatory/management tools for wetlands; overseeing and supervising existing projects on Ramsar and providing advice and guidance; supporting the development of new regional projects on the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands; and promoting the use of common tools and approaches to assess the effectiveness of site management.
 - c) **Policy and advocacy:** Engaging in regional dialogues on the development of wetland conservation policy by jointly reviewing and sharing existing policies and working jointly on improvement.
 - d) **Capacity building and awareness:** Supporting capacity building and CEPA programmes through the development of training and educational programmes; developing and providing trainings on the Ramsar Convention and relevant resolutions and guidelines, management planning of Ramsar Sites, transboundary water and wetlands governance.

- **Work programme and activities:**

The IBRRI will develop a regional strategic plan defining specific objectives and activities to be carried out during each three-year phase between Meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (COPs). This plan will be in line with the overall approved and adopted Ramsar Strategic Plan. The work programme of the IBRRI will cover the period between two Ramsar COPs and

should be approved by the IBRRI Steering Committee based on consultations with/proposals by the IBRRI Technical Committee and relevant associated Working Groups. It should focus on the fulfilment of the priorities of the region concerned, and contribute to the implementation of relevant regional and international agreements, thereby serving to build synergies to support the implementation of the Convention in the region.

To fulfil its objectives, and depending on budget availability, the IBRRI will:

- Coordinate and organise courses, seminars, workshops, conferences, and meetings at regional, national and sub-national levels to build the capacity of wetland stakeholders;
- Establish and support networks of wetland managers and researchers to promote cooperation and improve information and experience sharing;
- Establish mechanisms for cooperation with governments, international organisations, NGOs, universities, research institutions and wetland visitor centers to create synergies in implementing the Ramsar Convention;
- Publish and disseminate translated and simplified versions of important information and materials to improve understanding among wetland stakeholders in the region through printed and electronic means.

1.3 Geographical region to be covered by the IBRRI

- The initiative shall work in the territory of the following Ramsar Contracting Parties: Cambodia; Lao PDR; Myanmar; Thailand; and Viet Nam (Figure 1).
- The initiative shall have a particular focus on existing and potential new Ramsar Sites.
 - The Lower Mekong Basin, involving the five countries, will be a major focus of the initiative, in line with the proposal contained in Draft Resolution SC48-24 to “encourage Contracting Parties, international organizations, regional and sub-regional multilateral agreements, and international river basin organizations to identify for possible inclusion among regional initiatives trans-boundary river basins of global importance”.
 - The focus of work will also include wetlands in the other main river basins in the region such as: the Ayeyarwady; Thalween; Chao Phraya; and the Red River.
 - The initiative will also focus on key coastal wetland habitats, including large mangrove areas, coral reefs, large mud flats and sea-grass beds.
- Provinces of Southern China and Eastern India that are part of the Indo-Burma region will also be considered by the IBRRI. Key stakeholders from these countries/provinces may be invited to events/activities; however, no field work will be carried out in these territories under the IBRRI.

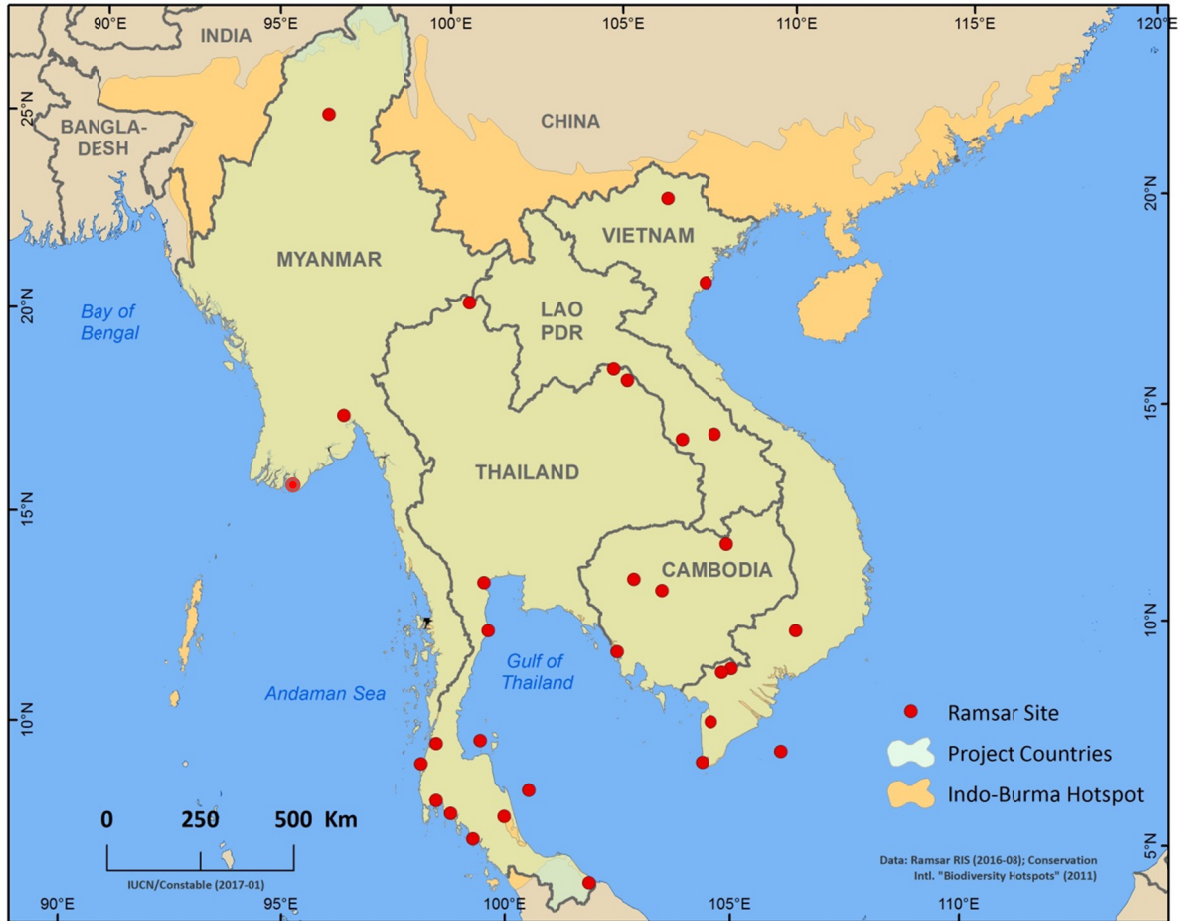


Figure 1: Geographical scope of the IBRRI

1.4 Legal Status

The IBRRI is an informal and voluntary regional network on Ramsar implementation and, as such, does not have a legal status.

1.5 Financing of the IBRRI

- The IBRRI will aim to generate its own resources and to take the necessary measures to establish financial sustainability, allowing for the development of its activities over the long term.
- The participating Contracting Parties and the Secretariat are encouraged to develop project proposals within the framework of the IBRRI work plan, with a view to securing financial support from donors.
- Donors are encouraged to provide funds for the activities of the IBRRI, for example, by financing specific projects or programmes.

Section 2: Governance, administration and functioning of the IBRRI

The development, coordination and functioning of the IBRRI are the responsibility of the relevant stakeholders. Once fully operational, the IBRRI shall be comprised of the following administrative and technical bodies:

- Steering Committee
- Secretariat
- Technical Committee
- STRP Working Group
- CEPA Working Group

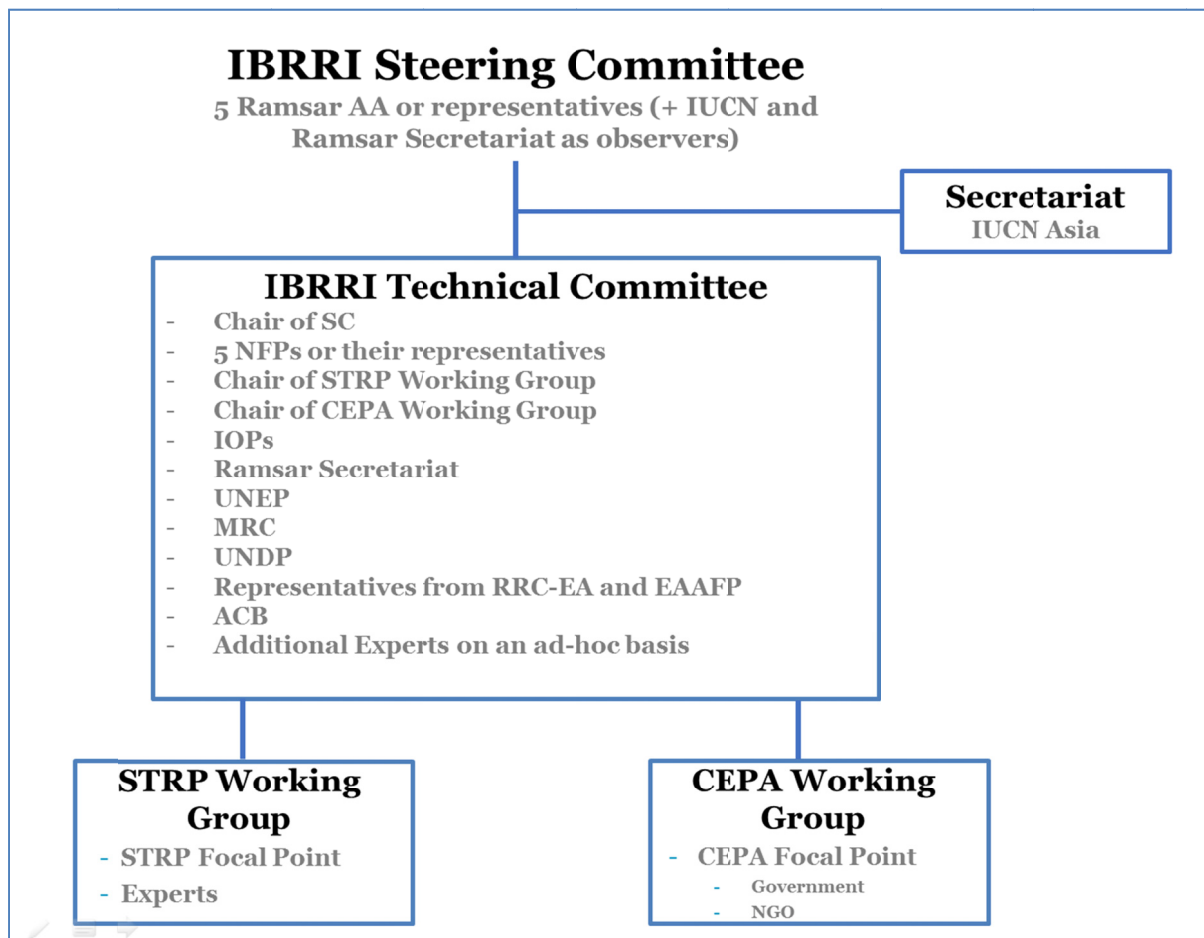


Figure 2: Structure of the IBRRI

2.1 Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee of the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative

Purpose: To ensure the good governance of the IBRRI, a Steering Committee (SC) shall be established to provide oversight of the Initiative's operations. The SC's role and structure allow for transparency in the management of the IBRRI.

Name: The Steering Committee shall be known as the Steering Committee of the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative, or IBRRI SC for short.

Structure and composition:

The IBRRI SC shall be composed of the following members:

- Cambodia Head of Ramsar Administrative Authority (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Cambodia;
- Lao PDR Head of Ramsar Administrative Authority (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Lao PDR;
- Myanmar Head of Ramsar Administrative Authority (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Myanmar;
- Thailand Head of Ramsar Administrative Authority (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Thailand;
- Viet Nam Head of Ramsar Administrative Authority (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Viet Nam;
- The Ramsar Convention Secretariat Senior Regional Advisor for Asia and Oceania (or their duly appointed substitute) as an observer;
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature, Asia Regional Office (IUCN ARO) as a representative of the IBRRI Secretariat and observer.

Additional observers can be appointed by the IBRRI SC as needed upon the unanimous agreement of SC members.

Role: The following roles of the IBRRI SC shall apply from the date of adoption of this document by the IBRRI SC:

- To review and endorse the IBRRI's organizational structure.
- To review and endorse the IBRRI annual work plan and budget, developed by the IBRRI Technical Committee with the support of the IBRRI Secretariat.
- To review and approve the annual budget and financial operations of the IBRRI.
- To review the annual report and performance of the IBRRI.
- To provide advice to the IBRRI Secretariat on any other important matters relevant to the operations of the IBRRI.

Operations:

- The IBRRI SC will communicate and make decisions at face-to-face meetings and by email.

- The IBRRI SC will meet annually, or more frequently if requested by the Chair and approved by the IBRRI SC. The date of the meeting will be announced at least three months in advance and the meeting documents will be distributed at least three weeks in advance.
- Decisions in the meetings of the IBRRI SC will normally be made by consensus. If a vote is required, the simple majority will prevail and if the vote is tied, the Chair will have the casting vote.
- The minimum period of notification to the IBRRI SC members on a matter to be decided by circulated email will be 14 consecutive calendar days. The SC will decide if a longer period of notification is required for specific matters.
- The minimum number of respondents on a matter to be decided by circulated email will be at least half of the members. If an insufficient number of responses is received by the deadline, a decision can be made by the IBRRI Secretariat in consultation with the Chair.

2.2 Terms of Reference for the Chair of the Steering Committee of the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative

Selection of the Chair:

The position of Chair will be open to any member country of the IBRRI.

The decision of the IBRRI Steering Committee on the selection of the Chair will be made by a majority vote among the members of the Committee. In addition, a Vice-Chair, who represents the Chair in case of absence, will be appointed simultaneously.

The Chair is selected for a maximum duration of three years to tie in with the duration between two Ramsar COPs. Upon completion of his/her tenure, the Chair will hand over all information to the incoming Chair. As far as possible, the selection of the Chair will be on a rotational basis among the countries that are members of the IBRRI Steering Committee.

Duties and responsibilities

- The Chair will be responsible for overseeing the ongoing functions of the IBRRI.
- The Chair will have the responsibility of:
 - Convening and chairing the meetings of the IBRRI Steering Committee (SC) and chairing the meetings of the IBRRI Technical Committee (TC);
 - Coordinating and monitoring the activities of the IBRRI SC and TC;
 - Approving the agenda of the meetings of the IBRRI SC and TC;
 - Approving the minutes of the meeting for distribution to the members of the IBRRI SC and TC;
 - Overseeing and conducting an annual review of the operations of the IBRRI and the performance of the Secretariat.
- It is expected that the Chair will be available to attend all meetings of the IBRRI SC and TC. However, if, for an unforeseen reason, the Chair is not able to attend, the Vice-Chair will lead the meetings of the IBRRI SC and TC.

2.3 Terms of Reference for the Secretariat of the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative

The IBRRI Secretariat shall be provided by the IUCN Asia Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand, and the relevant IUCN country offices in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. The Secretariat shall:

- Be responsible for the smooth, day-to-day operation of the IBRRI;
- Prepare and submit for consideration by the Steering Committee the annual work plan of the IBRRI with the corresponding budget, based on the guidance provided by the IBRRI Technical Committee;
- Ensure that detailed reports of the operation of the IBRRI are provided to the Steering Committee for comments every six months (usually June and December);
- Represent the IBRRI in activities and events as required, for example, in Ramsar Standing Committee meetings or COPs;
- Ensure the planning, management, organization, monitoring and evaluation of IBRRI activities;
- Support communication to the general public and the national, regional and international communities about the activities carried out;
- Administer the budget of the IBRRI;
- Cooperate with the Ramsar Secretariat on technical activities;
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Ramsar Standing Committee via the Ramsar Secretariat no later than the 1st December of each year;
- Inform the Administrative Authorities of relevant Parties of the Ramsar Convention in the region about programmes and activities carried out by the IBRRI every year or at the request of the Administrative Authorities;
- Work with the Steering Committee to help raise funds for the operation and activities of the IBRRI;
- Ensure other functions as determined by the Steering Committee.

2.4 Terms of Reference for the Technical Committee of the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative

Purpose: In order to provide the IBRRI with technical guidance and to ensure inclusive, transparent and multi-stakeholder participation in its activities, a Technical Committee shall be created.

Name: The Technical Committee shall be known as the Technical Committee of the Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative, or IBRRI Technical Committee.

Structure and composition: The IBRRI Technical Committee shall be composed of the following members:

- The Chair of the IBRRI Steering Committee;
- Cambodia Ramsar National Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Cambodia;
- Lao PDR Ramsar National Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Lao PDR;

- Myanmar Ramsar National Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Myanmar;
- Thailand Ramsar National Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Thailand;
- Viet Nam Ramsar National Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Viet Nam;
- The Chair of the STRP Working Group;
- The Chair of the CEPA Working Group;
- One representative from the each of the Ramsar Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs) in the region, namely: BirdLife, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); the International Water Management Institute (IWMI); Wetlands International (WI); the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT); and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF);
- The Ramsar Convention Secretariat Senior Regional Advisor for Asia and Oceania or their duly selected substitute;
- One representative from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP);
- One representative from the Mekong River Commission (MRC);
- One representative from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP);
- One representative from the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia;
- One representative from the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership;
- One representative from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB);
- Additional experts on an ad-hoc basis, upon request of the IBRRI Technical Committee or the IBRRI Steering Committee. These experts may include, but are not limited to, the STRP and CEPA focal points;
- The IBRRI Secretariat as an observer.

Role: The following roles of the IBRRI Technical Committee shall apply from the date of adoption of this document by the IBRRI SC meeting:

- Lead the development of the strategic plan for the IBRRI;
- Lead the development of the annual work plan and technical interventions for submission to the IBRRI Steering Committee;
- Review and provide comments on IBRRI technical outputs and publications;
- Provide guidance on funding opportunities to the IBRRI Secretariat.

Operation:

- The Committee will communicate at face-to-face meetings and by email.
- The Committee will meet at least once a year and possibly more frequently depending on the needs and budget availability. The date of the meeting will be announced at least three months in advance. Meeting documents will be distributed at least three weeks in advance.
- The Committee will be chaired by the Chair of the IBRRI Steering Committee.
- Decisions in the meetings of the Committee will normally be made by consensus and submitted to the final approval of the Steering Committee.

- The minimum number of respondents on a matter to be decided by circulated email will be at least half of the members. If an insufficient number of responses is received by the deadline, a decision can be made by the IBRRI Secretariat in consultation with the Chair.
- The Technical Committee can organise small working groups to address particular issues of interest as/when needed and upon approval by the Steering Committee.

2.5 IBRRI Thematic Working Groups

Purpose: In order to provide additional technical guidance to the activities of the Technical Committee of the IBRRI, to strengthen its role in CEPA implementation, and to enhance its linkages with the global Ramsar STRP, the following two Working Groups are created:

2.5.6 STRP Working Group

Name: Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) Working Group, or STRP Working Group, of the IBRRI

Structure and composition:

- Cambodia STRP Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Cambodia;
- Lao PDR STRP Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Lao PDR;
- Myanmar STRP Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Myanmar;
- Thailand STRP Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Thailand;
- Viet Nam STRP Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Viet Nam;
- Up to five national or regional experts invited by the STRP Focal Points on an ad-hoc basis, depending on the needs and budget availability.

Role:

- Provide technical and scientific inputs to, and support the implementation of, the IBRRI work plan;
- Discuss and review scientific knowledge on Ramsar/wetlands in the region;
- Review scientific documents produced by the IBRRI;
- Disseminate information to the global STRP;
- Help disseminate STRP information and products, adapted as appropriate to the national context;
- Prepare regional contributions to STRP to be discussed in the Technical Committee.

Operation:

- The Working Group will communicate at face-to-face meetings and by email.
- The Working Group will meet upon request of the IBRRI Steering Committee or Technical Committee and approval by the Chair of the IBRRI Steering Committee depending on the needs and budget availability. It will interact by email, Skype and other means as often as needed.
- The date of the meeting will be announced at least two months in advance. Meeting documents will be distributed at least one week in advance.

- The Working Group will appoint a Chair by a majority vote among the members of the Working Group. The Chair is selected for a maximum duration of three years and will represent the Working Group at the IBRRI Technical Committee meetings. As far as possible, the selection of the Chair will be on a rotational basis among the countries that are members of the IBRRI.
- Decisions in the Working Group will normally be made by consensus and submitted for the final approval of the IBRRI Technical Committee.
- The minimum number of respondents on a matter to be decided by circulated email will be at least half of the members. If an insufficient number of responses is received by the deadline, a decision can be made by the IBRRI Secretariat in consultation with the Chair of the STRP Working Group.

2.5.7 CEPA Working Group

Name: Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Working Group, or CEPA Working Group, of the IBRRI

Structure and composition:

- Cambodia CEPA Government Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Cambodia;
- Lao PDR CEPA Government Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Lao PDR;
- Myanmar CEPA Government Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Myanmar;
- Thailand CEPA Government Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Thailand;
- Viet Nam CEPA Government Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Viet Nam;
- Cambodia CEPA NGO Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Cambodia;
- Lao PDR CEPA NGO Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Lao PDR;
- Myanmar CEPA NGO Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Myanmar;
- Thailand CEPA NGO Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Thailand;
- Viet Nam CEPA NGO Focal Point (or their duly appointed substitute) as a representative of Viet Nam;
- Up to five national or regional experts invited by the CEPA Focal Points on an ad-hoc basis, depending on the needs and budget availability.

Role: The main function of the CEPA Working Group is to:

- Inform the IBRRI Technical Committee on important CEPA issues and the progress of implementation of the CEPA Programme in the region;
- Advise the IBRRI Technical Committee on CEPA work priorities at the national and regional level, including the CEPA priorities of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and the CEPA priorities of the IBRRI strategic plan and annual work plans;

- The Working Group will also have a key role in advising the IBRRI Technical Committee on the form and function of the next CEPA Programme.

Operation:

- The Working Group will communicate at face-to-face meetings and by email.
- The Working Group will meet upon request of the IBRRI Steering Committee or the Technical Committee and approval by the Chair of the IBRRI Steering Committee, depending on the needs and budget availability. It will interact by mail, Skype and other means as often as needed.
- The date of meetings will be announced at least two months in advance. Meeting documents will be distributed at least one week in advance.
- The Working Group will appoint a Chair by a majority vote among the members of the Working Group. The Chair is selected for a maximum duration of three years and will represent the Working Group at the IBRRI Technical Committee meetings. As far as possible, the selection of the Chair will be on a rotational basis among the countries that are members of the IBRRI.
- Decisions in the Working Group will normally be made by consensus and submitted for the final approval of the IBRRI Technical Committee.
- The minimum number of respondents on a matter to be decided by circulated email will be at least half of the members. If an insufficient number of responses is received by the deadline, a decision can be made by the IBRRI Secretariat in consultation with the Chair of the CEPA Working Group.

2.6 Review of the Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed by the members of the Steering Committee at least once every three years. Any changes must be approved by the Steering Committee.

Section 3: Funding and reporting of the IBRRI

3.1 Financing of the IBRRI

The IBRRI shall generate its own resources and take the necessary measures to establish financial sustainability.

All participating Contracting Parties are encouraged to provide assistance and in-kind contributions to the IBRRI. Voluntary contributions in cash are also welcome. In addition, donors are encouraged to provide funds for the activities of the IBRRI.

An annual budget will be allocated to meet the expenditures of the IBRRI. The Steering Committee will make decisions on the budget allocation through its annual meeting.

The IBRRI will have its account at the IUCN Asia Regional Office, in the form of a specific project, and will seek and receive grants and donations made by interested persons or legal entities, national or foreign, public or private sectors and NGOs.

3.2 Reporting and evaluation of the IBRRI

The IBRRI will present an annual report on progress with work and financial status in the past year to the Ramsar Secretariat, together with finance and work plans for the coming year, according to the format adopted by the Ramsar Standing Committee.

Section 4: Communication and relation between the Ramsar Secretariat and the IBRRI

The IBRRI is not and cannot act as a regional office of the Convention. It shall establish its own identity, to avoid any confusion between the roles of the IBRRI, the Ramsar Administrative Authorities, and the Ramsar Secretariat.

The IBRRI will maintain regular contacts with the Ramsar Secretariat through its Senior Regional Advisor for Asia and Oceania to ensure that the objectives of the IBRRI are in alignment with the Convention's Strategic Plan, and that Ramsar's Operational Guidelines are applied.