

Organisational and Programmatic Review

Summary Report and Management Response – January 2014



Osprey in Doñana National Park (© PJ Stephenson)

The following document comprises:

- 1) A summary of the MAVA 2013 Organisational and Programmatic review carried out by consultants Stephanie Mansourian, Jonathan Loh and Natacha Yellachich with support from Patrick Chalmers.
- 2) A management response by MAVA's Director General following extensive discussions with MAVA staff and Board.

The consultants would like to thank all of respondents of the online questionnaire who took the time to complete it in detail. Sincere thanks to all the interviewees who answered questions face to face, by telephone or Skype. Their insights and opinions about MAVA's evolution have been highly valuable.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this summary report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the MAVA Foundation. Any errors or misrepresentations are exclusively those of the consultants. Much detail from the full report has been omitted to allow a shorter presentation of the findings and conclusions.

Summary Report of MAVA's 2013 Organisational and Programmatic Review

Executive Summary

MAVA commissioned an operational and programmatic review in 2013 to assess the follow-up to its 2010 Review and progress on implementation of its 2011-2015 strategy. The review covered MAVA's values, roles, evolution since 2011 while also assessing the coherence of its programme, its granting strategy and eventual legacy.

An online survey went out to all MAVA's partners and reviewers did 56 interviews with partners and external stakeholders, MAVA staff and its president. Sixteen closed projects were also reviewed and an analysis of the grants management database carried out.

The 2013 review confirmed MAVA's growing importance in biodiversity conservation, particularly in its three priority regions. The foundation has undergone significant changes since 2010 that are overwhelmingly positive. It is highly appreciated and professional, adds value to its partners and has definite positive impacts. MAVA could enhance its influence further by engaging more with other donors, taking more risks with innovative projects, and, collecting and sharing lessons learnt from across its portfolio.

Values

MAVA is operating in line with its four values, which are to be **empowering, unifying, flexible and persevering**. While MAVA has professionalised, it has not lost the foundation's spirit. Flexibility was recognised as the most frequently expressed value, one that distinguishes MAVA from other donors.

Roles

MAVA's reputation continues to grow. For many, MAVA funding serves as a "seal of approval" that helps access other donors. The foundation's role is broader than simply funding biodiversity conservation. It includes providing strategic and technical input, convening donors and grantees, building capacity and encouraging innovation. There is scope for MAVA to expand some of these roles and develop new ones, such as proactively sharing lessons learned. Such changes would have resource implications.

MAVA's evolution

MAVA has effectively addressed most of the weaknesses identified in 2010 and acted on all of the proposed recommendations. MAVA's communications and project administration have improved significantly while issues of over-dependence and lack of sufficient monitoring require further work. Many partners remain heavily dependent on MAVA for funding. That is not necessarily a problem but could become one if MAVA's overall funding were to decrease. Steps therefore need to be taken to help reduce over-dependence on MAVA. Possible actions might include mobilising additional conservation funding, convening donors to increase the resources available for conservation, working with partners to strengthen their fundraising capacity and developing scenarios for future funding levels.

Measuring project impact continues to be a challenge, with limited data available on the impact of, and lessons learnt from, MAVA-funded projects. Given its large portfolios in each region, MAVA could encourage more systematic and rigorous monitoring and recording of outputs, outcomes and impacts of projects and play a more proactive role in promoting lesson learning.

Programme coherence

Regional programmes appear to be well aligned to MAVA's strategy. They consist of a mix of projects spread across capacity building, policy and field work, a range that aids the coherence of regional programmes overall. They add up to more than the sum of their parts and contribute significantly to their respective regional conservation agendas. Further improvements in coherence across regional programmes could be made by reinforcing work on cross-cutting issues such as agriculture or hydropower generation.

It is important for MAVA to **remain close to the ground** and aware of conservation challenges in its target regions. Maintaining regular contact with partners and regional visits are therefore important, particularly to those regions subject to sometimes rapid change, such as West Africa and the Mediterranean.

Granting Strategy

An analysis of the project database concluded that there is no single approach, region or biome that yields better results than others. This suggests that all of MAVA's projects have equally good chances of performing well. It also reflects MAVA staff's ability to choose good projects. These conclusions should be treated with caution, however, since the analysis relied on internal ratings applied via a simple "traffic-light" system, which does not lend itself to nuanced investigation.

Legacy and Impacts

While it is difficult to systematically demonstrate and aggregate impacts from MAVA's collective portfolio because of a lack of consistent objective monitoring, MAVA's legacy is evident. It includes building a conservation community, helping establish protected areas, influencing policy changes, reducing threats and increasing scientific knowledge. If MAVA wishes to more effectively document its impact and legacy, it will need to invest more in monitoring and evaluation.

Finally, MAVA can afford to take more risks in order to catalyse innovation.

See page 17 for MAVA Director General's Management Response to the review.

1. Introduction

In 2010, MAVA conducted a review that contributed to the development of its 2011-2015 strategy. In June 2013, half-way through implementing this strategy, it commissioned an “organisational and programmatic review”. This latest review, whose findings are summarised in this document, aimed to answer the following questions:

Organisational: a) Is MAVA operating in line with its values? b) What role is the MAVA team currently playing and is it adding value to its grantees? c) Have the recommendations from the 2010 review been implemented? d) Do grantees see improvement in the areas identified as weaknesses? e) Do they feel that MAVA has evolved in a positive direction?

Programmatic: a) Does MAVA’s portfolio of projects add up to a coherent package in each region? b) Is MAVA’s granting strategy effective? c) What works best in terms of interaction, length of project, type of funding, approach and size? d) Does the portfolio deliver lasting results? What were the parameters of success and what gives projects resilience?

The focus of this review is on MAVA’s three priority regions, as well as its global programme. Because it was launched only in 2013, MAVA’s “Sustainable Economy” programme was not considered.

1.1. Methodology

The 2013 review drew on five main sources of data and information:

- a) an online survey questionnaire sent to all 160 of MAVA’s partners, completed by 105;
- b) 47 interviews with partners and external stakeholders;
- c) nine interviews with MAVA staff and president;
- d) an analysis of MAVA’s project database to look for correlations between different dimensions of the granting strategy and project/partner performance;
- e) reviews of 16 closed projects conducted using internal project reports and evaluations, external documentation, correspondence and external evaluations (when available). Additional telephone interviews with project staff and external parties were done to enable triangulation.

2. MAVA Organisational Progress and Evolution

This section explores whether MAVA operates in line with its values while also looking at the roles it plays and its evolution over the last three years.

2.1. Values

In 2011, MAVA defined its key values as **unifying, empowering, flexible and persevering**. Their purpose was to express the fundamental philosophy and essence of the foundation and its founder.

“These inter-related values are extremely important in building a community that catalyses conservation efforts in the parts of the world in which MAVA is active”.¹

¹ Quotes from interviewees and survey respondents are provided throughout the report.

The 2013 review found MAVA is perceived by its partners and staff as operating effectively in line with its four values (see Figure 1).

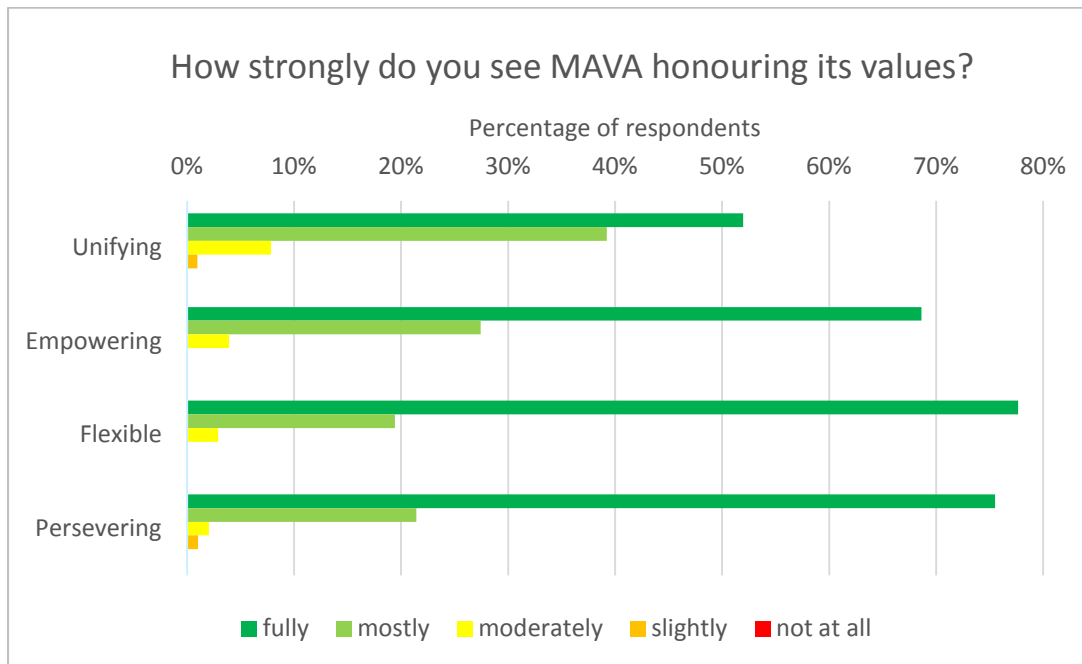


Figure 1: Perceptions of the extent to which MAVA is honouring its values. Over 90% of questionnaire respondents believe that MAVA is mostly or fully honouring all four of its values.

In summary, MAVA certainly operates in line with its four values, expressing some more than others.

Flexibility was recognised as the most frequently expressed value and the one that most distinguishes MAVA from other donors. As illustration, interviewees highlighted MAVA’s willingness to adapt its granting requirements, to adjust work plans and to shift resources in the interests of projects. Being flexible allows MAVA to take risks, to fund projects that other donors might not support or those in countries undergoing political crises. This is a MAVA strength that should be retained.

MAVA’s **persevering** approach was rated highly across all regions, in large part because of its commitment to long-term funding and pursuit of complex conservation challenges.

Empowering was also considered to be well expressed by MAVA in all regions. Nevertheless, it was suggested that MAVA could further strengthen this value by providing more direct support to smaller NGOs, either directly or through its partners, and continuing to focus on capacity building. Continued effort is needed, particularly at the grassroots level in West Africa and the Mediterranean regions, where politics, economics, and ultimately conservation, are evolving rapidly.

In all three regions, MAVA plays a key role in convening different actors, honouring its value of **Unifying**. This has been done through platforms as in the Mediterranean and through promoting cooperation and coherence between conservation actors as with PRCM in West Africa. Yet it could do more to bring together donors and grantees.

2.2. Roles

“I am amazed at the size of the secretariat, that with so few staff they can follow up the dozens of projects that they have.... It is a huge, complex task.”

“MAVA is NOT your typical donor. Its history has been to support conservation, to be engaged in conservation.”

This section reviews data from the online survey and from interviews. What was clear from all the data and information examined is the extent to which MAVA is much more than simply a donor.

This came out as the vast majority (87%) of questionnaire respondents saying MAVA added considerable value to their work beyond simply funding, a finding echoed by interviewees.

Taking the questionnaire more specifically, it proposed six roles against which respondents were asked to rate MAVA (see Figure 2).

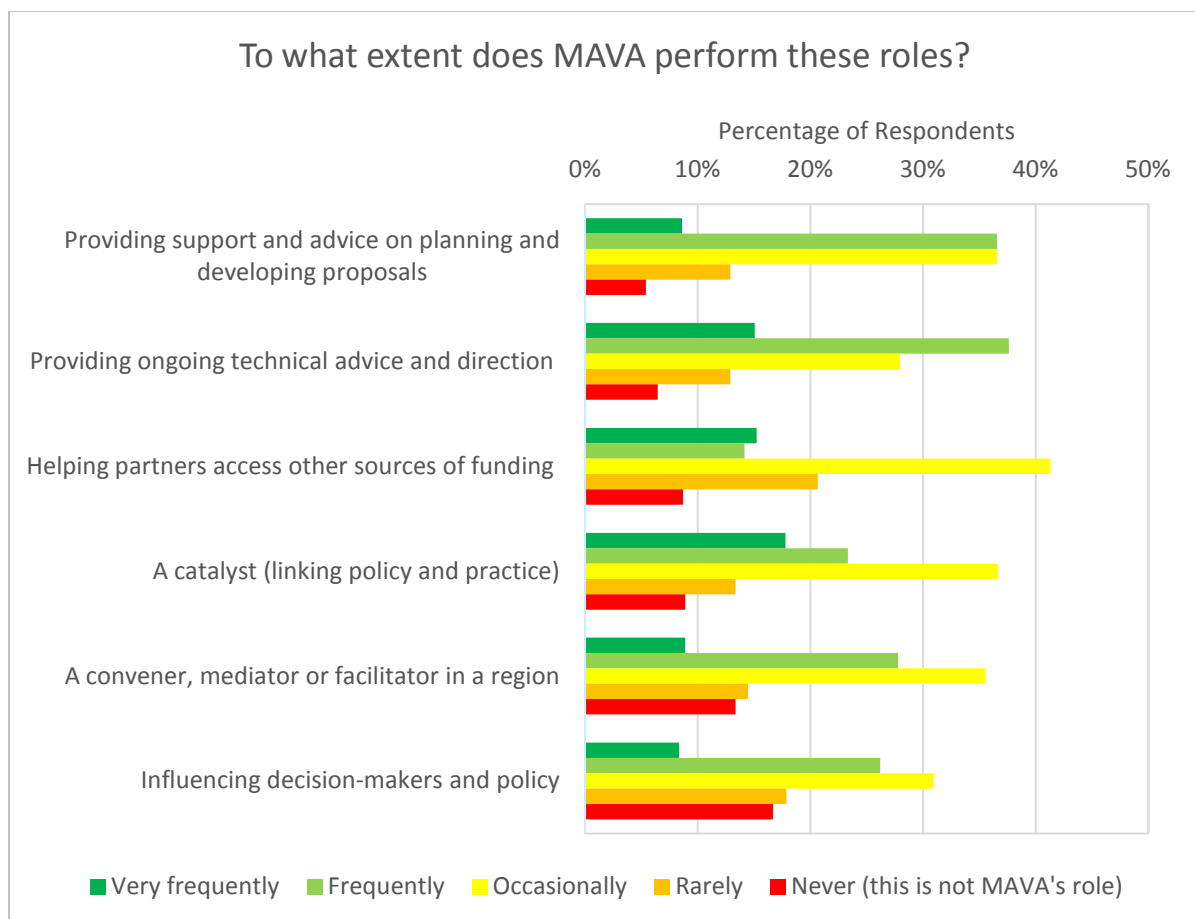


Figure 2: Perception of roles performed by MAVA.

Providing **advice and support**, both in project development and during implementation, rated highest in the survey. Interviewees highlighted the value of this advice. MAVA supports **capacity building** as a priority through technical and financial support, and through organisational and human development.

Combining findings from both online work and interviews, the review found the foundation’s role and reputation to have grown in the last three years. One measure of that was that its award of

funds was increasingly perceived as a **seal of approval** for projects, something that helped them secure additional funding or endorsements.

“Le soutien de la MAVA nous apporte une crédibilité forte, notamment auprès d'autres financeurs potentiels.”

Going beyond MAVA's overall commitment to **biodiversity conservation**, the review identified ancillary roles including **conservation funding, providing strategic and technical input to partners, building capacity, convening donors and grantees, encouraging innovation and sharing the lessons learnt**. MAVA performs all these roles to different extents, with the likes of capacity building being far more prominent than lessons sharing.

MAVA is a major **donor** for biodiversity conservation in its three priority regions, and globally. It funds projects and also organisations through core funding. Increasingly, it could allocate a larger share of its portfolio to **programme** funding. That would help to increase coherence and reduce the overall number of direct relationships MAVA manages.

The provision of **strategic and technical input** has set MAVA apart from many other donors. It is highly valued, makes sense in terms of securing its investment, ensures coherence in its portfolio and helps anticipate potential problems. MAVA provides organisational support and should continue to do so.

Capacity building has always been a fundamental priority for MAVA and continues to be valued by all partners. It is something not often prioritised by other donors. In the Mediterranean and West Africa, in particular, where civil society is still not strong enough, MAVA needs to continue helping build strong conservation organisations.

MAVA's role as a **convenor** is unique and an area of strength it could further expand. MAVA should explore new ways of bringing together donors and grantees to achieve greater conservation outcomes.

A number of respondents commented on MAVA and its founder's willingness to take **risks** and seek innovative solutions. In doing so, the foundation was seen to contribute to expanding conservation knowledge. There were fears, however, that this far-sightedness and opportunism that characterised MAVA in the early days might be lost if the foundation were to become even more structured.

“I expect MAVA to bring innovative things into the mainstream.”

MAVA's experience and network of partners make it well placed to take **risks and innovate**, funding projects that may appear risky, unfashionable or less mainstream, while continuing to invest in its trusted partners. It could earmark some budget to actions or projects that do not have to generate measurable impacts, but may result in unexpected benefits, thus catalysing innovation.

MAVA is not currently perceived as playing a significant role in terms of **sharing lessons** from conservation successes, and yet it can call on decades of experience and institutional knowledge. The foundation could capitalise more on this, and on lessons emerging from its conservation projects, and share these more systematically.

While MAVA currently influences policies through the projects it funds, it could be more proactive in raising the profile of conservation and environmental challenges more generally with **decision-makers**. The foundation has a large portfolio of projects in each region, giving it both credibility and a unique vantage point from which to understand the **bigger conservation picture**. However, it needs to tread carefully (as has always been its way) when it comes to influencing policies and decision-makers directly.

MAVA's particularities as a donor

Partners see MAVA as being particularly **coherent, all-encompassing** and **strategic** as compared with other donors. They say MAVA can move faster than others are able to in times of crisis.

Partners identified MAVA as having a “**human face**” and as being **flexible** and **unbureaucratic**.

MAVA's staff is respected for its **professionalism** and **technical competence**. Partners feel that they can build **close relationships** with MAVA staff.

Partners value MAVA's overarching mission to support **biodiversity conservation rather than having** several priorities.

They see MAVA as having a clear strategy; as being open to **funding new opportunities, unsexy projects or projects that otherwise may not be of interest to other donors**.

Partners say MAVA focuses on **project (and conservation) results**, not on rigidly applying rules and bureaucracy.

They also perceive MAVA as being **apolitical**.

2.3. MAVA's evolution since 2010

Addressing areas identified as weaknesses and implementing the 2010 Recommendations

MAVA's 2010 review identified a number of organisational weaknesses and recommended steps to address these. This section examines the progress made.

The 2010 recommendations were addressed with a detailed management response. Answers to the on-line survey, interviews and analysis carried out by the current review found MAVA has taken all of the recommendations into account and implemented most of them fully. However, two areas need further attention: issues of over-dependence and lack of systematic monitoring.

To recap, the 2010 review identified the following main weaknesses:

1. Project administration
2. Overlap between MAVA, its founder and other institutions
3. Decision-making (overlap between the role of MAVA staff and that of the board)
4. Communications and transparency
5. Over-dependence of grantees on MAVA funding
6. Lack of measures of success and evaluations

Questionnaire respondents were asked to either rate changes in performance since 2011 (if they had worked with MAVA since before 2011) or simply to rate absolute performance (if their relationship with MAVA dated from 2011, when MAVA's new management was put in place).

Eighty-five percent of partners that have known MAVA since before 2011 reported having seen changes, perceiving MAVA to have improved either “somewhat” or “significantly” on all parameters (Figure 3).

“MAVA has not turned into a process machine, and it is still possible to work with the staff in [a] friendly, open way”

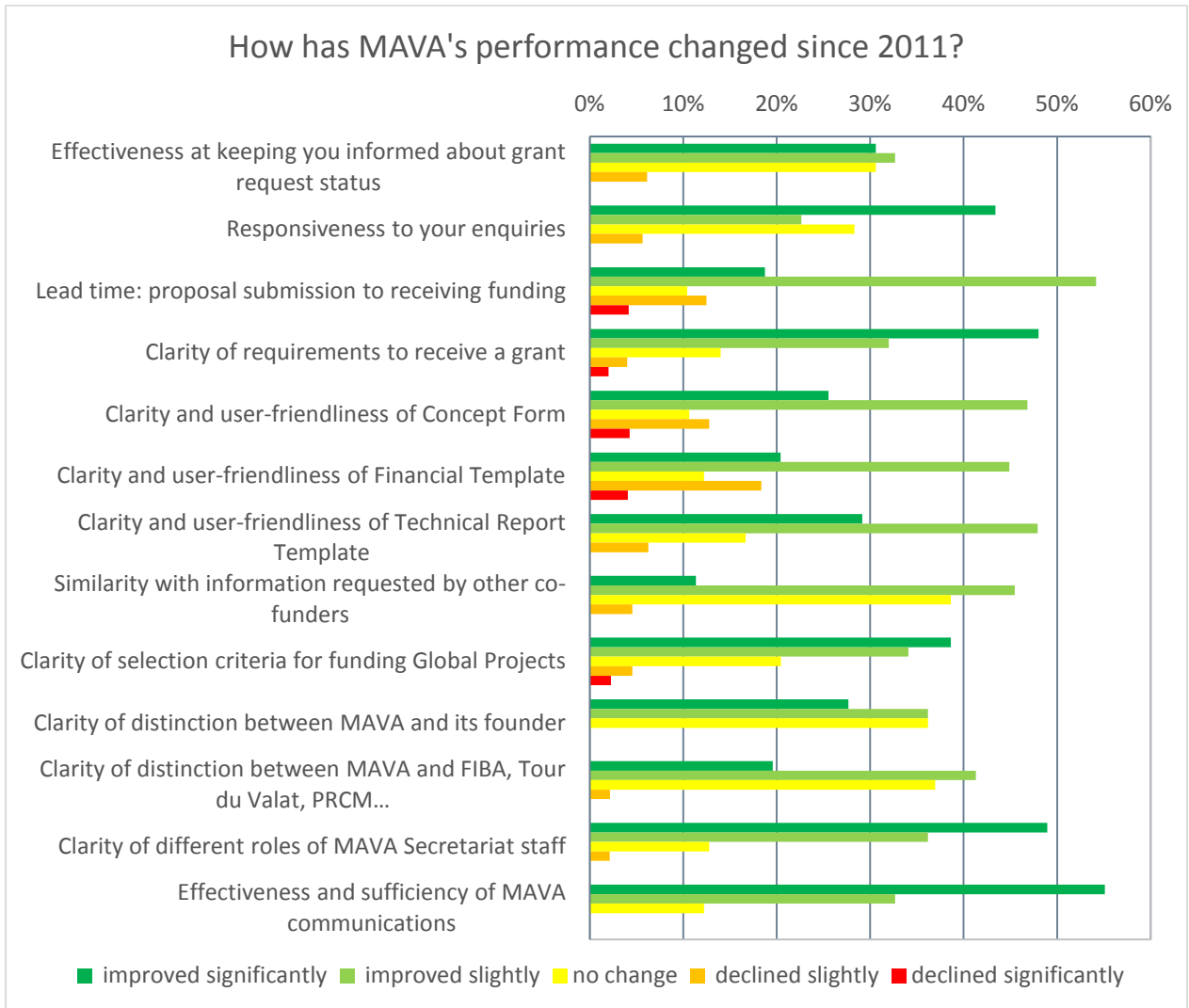


Figure 3: Evolution of MAVA’s performance since 2011 has been very positive.

Survey responses and interviews indicated that MAVA is more professional and better structured than before 2011.

“Before the MAVA strategy was completely cryptic ... It has been a dramatic change, now anybody can propose projects, fill in the forms and apply.”

Respondents felt the greatest improvements in MAVA were in its communications, the clarity of staff roles and of requirements to receive a grant, and the responsiveness of staff to enquiries.

MAVA has improved significantly its transparency, communications and visibility. MAVA's website was generally seen as well-structured and carrying useful and easily accessible information, as was its annual report. A number of small additional improvements were suggested.

"The MAVA website is massively improved and very easy to use."

MAVA's more-structured project cycle management process received mostly praise and some criticism.

Practical guidance about what MAVA funds, how to apply and accompanying application guidelines, have improved. MAVA's staff is appreciated as technically competent, supportive and approachable, this personal touch was much appreciated although respondents fear that greater efficiency might lead to bureaucracy and a loss of this personal touch. Respondents also expressed concerns about staff being potentially over-stretched given the number of projects.

"I think 'formal' communications is sufficient. I would be in favour of more informal communications through meetings, workshops, allowing for exchange of ideas between MAVA partners."

However, comments were made about how the forms and templates needed further improvement and simplification. A number of respondents commented that the use of Miradi and the Open Standards slowed down project development time and increased design costs without always being the most appropriate tool (especially for policy projects or smaller NGOs). However, the greater clarity around application requirements was appreciated.

"Forms/templates were non-existent in the early years. Hence the improvement is tremendous! However, some of the forms/templates could still be made more user-friendly or be explained better."

A few respondents also commented that MAVA seemed less innovative and willing to take risks.

"While more business-like, it is also less inspirational, and more constraining. If MAVA wants to be a trend-setter, empowering and innovative, and be a leader in taking its agenda forward, it must be less prescriptive, and less risk adverse, giving its grantees the room and flexibility – and funding support -- to explore and innovate".

Newer partners who have worked with MAVA since 2011 rated the foundation's performance very highly against similar criteria, as per Figure 4. For all areas except two, at least 75% of respondents rated MAVA's performance as good or very good. Only half rated the user-friendliness of the financial template as good or very good, while less than half believed the harmonisation with co-funders' templates was good or very good.

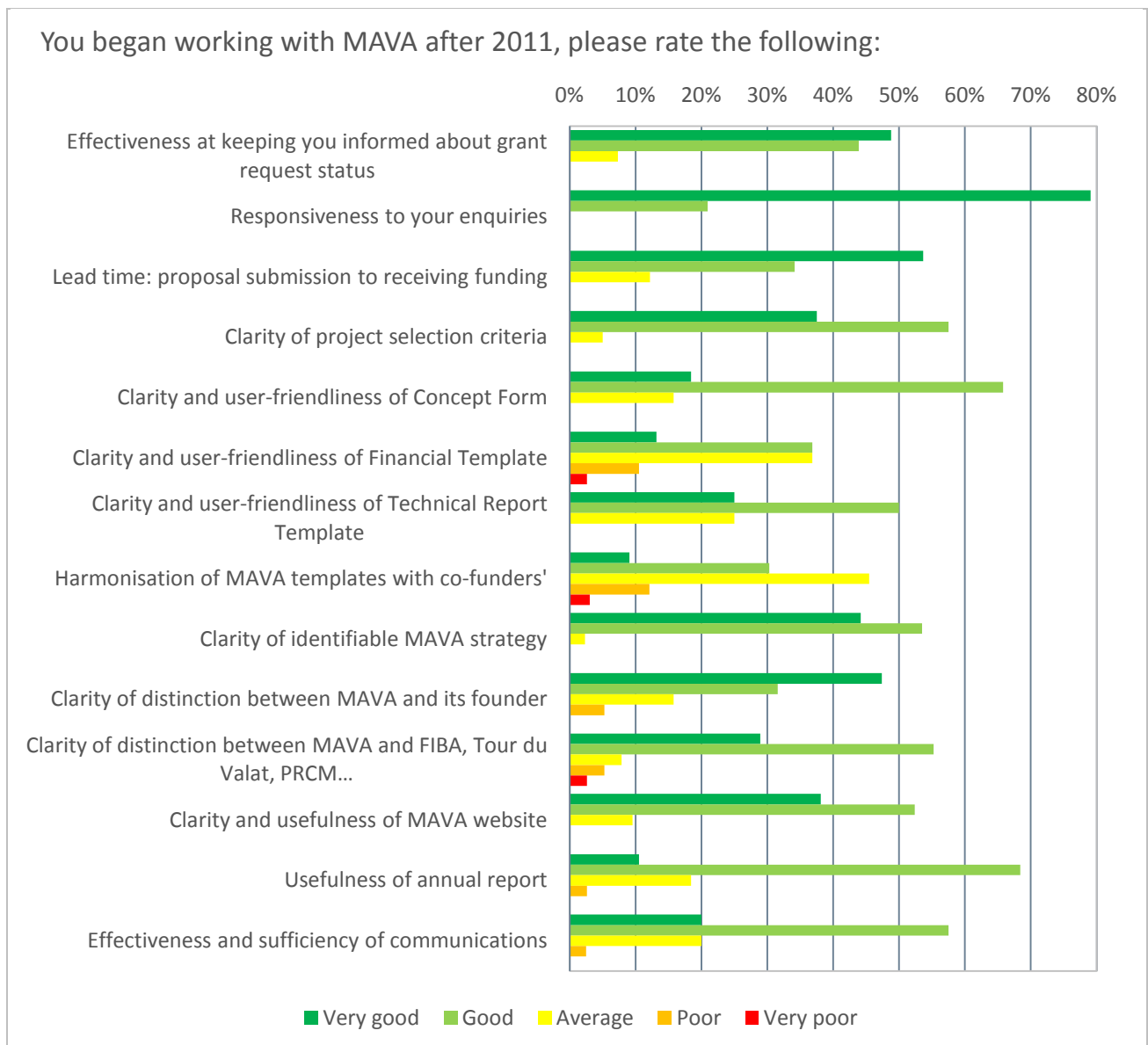


Figure 4: Rating of MAVA’s performance by newer partners was generally very high.

Dependence on MAVA Funding

Figure 5 illustrates the levels of survey respondents’ financial reliance on MAVA. The majority of respondents reported that they depend on MAVA for up to 40% of their funding, while 15% depend on MAVA for 60% or more of their funding.

For nearly a third of all respondents, dependence on MAVA since 2011 has either increased somewhat (14%) or significantly (18%) while 45% reported no change. Only 17% of respondents said their dependence had decreased. It should be noted that partners with whom MAVA ended its relationship were not included for obvious reasons, but this may slightly skew the data towards higher number of highly dependent organisations.

A large number of respondents said that they had taken steps to reduce their dependency on MAVA.

MAVA secretariat has also acted to reduce partner dependence - as was recommended in the 2010 Review. It asked partners to examine their long-term sustainability and to consider how they can reduce dependence on MAVA. It gives help for joint fundraising with other donors, though this is not being done systematically.

The global financial crisis has affected NGO incomes significantly, especially in the Mediterranean. In West Africa some bilateral donors have reduced their commitment. This, in combination with mounting conservation challenges, has meant that many organisations have found it difficult to reduce their dependence on MAVA funding without undermining their conservation efforts.

“.....due to the crisis situation in Spain, national and regional administrations are not capable any more to fund projects as before, so MAVA funding is more necessary than ever.”

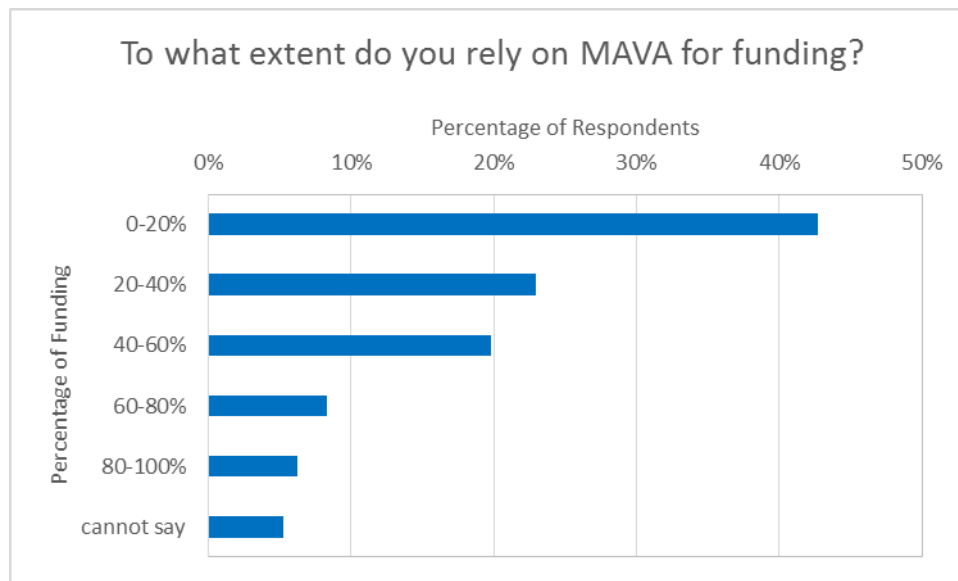


Figure 5: Financial dependence on MAVA. On average, respondents rely on MAVA for about a third of their funding.

Steps therefore need to be taken to help reduce over-dependence on MAVA. Possible actions might include mobilising additional conservation funding, convening donors to increase the resources available for conservation, working with partners to strengthen their fundraising capacity and developing scenarios for future funding levels.

Lack of measures of success and evaluations

The 2010 review recommended: a) ensuring that all projects include in their design better measures of success and b) that more external evaluations be carried out. Data from the survey showed that more than two thirds of respondents had taken steps to evaluate their MAVA-funded work. External project evaluations were carried out for approximately 35 projects between 2008 and 2012, and MAVA is increasingly strengthening its partners’ monitoring capacity. Nevertheless, more needs to be done if MAVA wishes to document its impact and legacy.

Internally, MAVA has been rating its projects on a subjective scale using “traffic lights”, which represents a step forward in measuring performance. The rating is essentially based on the project reports and any dialogue between the MAVA programme managers and project staff or external stakeholders. This is used as a means of informing the MAVA Board of project and partner performance. This review used this rating system to analyse MAVA’s granting strategy – see section 3.2.

3. MAVA Programmatic Effectiveness and Legacy

This section reviews the coherence of MAVA's programmes, explores what links there might be between its funding strategy and project success, and reviews MAVA's legacy.

3.1. Programme Coherence

Coherence means different things to different people. For the purpose of this review, coherence within each MAVA region was the main focus although the cross-regional coherence of work done and that of MAVA's work as it stands within the broader conservation agenda were also considered.

Nearly all questionnaire respondents were aware of other MAVA-funded projects in their regions but very few, other than staff, knew enough about MAVA's programme to express an informed opinion about its coherence.

That said, there was no evidence of incoherence in any of the three regional programmes. Projects were found to fall within the strategic priorities, to add up generally to more than the sum of their parts and to contribute significantly to the respective regional conservation agendas. The global portfolio, by its very nature, is less coherent, lacking a strategic focus.

MAVA has been investing, for many years, in approaches that create coherence. These include developing networks, funding capacity building, promoting joint proposals and establishing or using umbrella organisations to distribute funds locally (e.g. MedPAN in the Mediterranean). Numerous respondents indicated that they would welcome MAVA playing a more proactive role to encourage greater NGO collaboration.

"Increase of information on other related projects (thematic, regional) may help to strengthen conservation efforts and may support higher conservation results; "

"Faire circuler entre les porteurs des projets des résumés de leurs actions pour encourager la création de synergies entre différents programmes."

MAVA needs to **remain close to the ground** and to stay abreast of local challenges and political developments in order to be able to develop, maintain and fund a coherent strategy. Keeping in regular contact with partners and conducting regional visits is therefore important, particularly in West Africa and the Mediterranean.

3.2. Granting Strategy

MAVA's project database was analysed against all possible recorded variables to determine whether the foundation's granting strategy is effective and to identify what might be factors of success. The database carries data on each project's budget, duration, thematic category, biome and type of partner. The respective performance of projects and partners is periodically assessed using a simple traffic light system and recorded in the database. Correlations between different aspects of the granting strategy were analysed.

No correlation was found between project/partner performance and any of the continuous variables analysed. In other words, it made no apparent difference to overall performance whether a project was large or small, fully or only partly MAVA-funded, of long or short duration, focused on any particular category (be it capacity building, applied research or anything else), concentrated in one category or spread across many, or based in any particular biome.

The results of the database analysis can be interpreted to mean that all of MAVA's projects have equally good chances of performing well, regardless of the kind of grant being awarded. No

particular strategy appeared more likely to spawn high-performing projects. This is, perhaps, a very positive message, suggesting MAVA need not constrain its grants to any particular size, duration, category of project, biome, type of institution or region. It could also reflect the MAVA staff's ability to choose good projects. The caveat is that there were insufficiently granular data from which to draw significant conclusions.

3.3. Legacy and Impacts

To assess MAVA's legacy and impact, project documentation and interviews were complemented by a more detailed analysis of 16 closed projects.

To measure MAVA's legacy, it is important to examine the conservation impacts of its projects. In practice, this is difficult to assess because impacts are often **indirect** (through capacity building of other organisations, or providing expertise...) or achieved after projects end.

"We carry out final and independent project evaluations for all our projects (above 50K euros), but these evaluations rarely go as far as 'impact' evaluation, focusing more on 'results' and other factors."

Notwithstanding the potential for MAVA to do more substantive monitoring and evaluation, the foundation has already had significant positive conservation impacts and built a substantial legacy. From the review of 16 closed projects, a number of interesting high level generic results emerged:

Building a conservation community (capacity building) – MAVA has built a strong community of practice in its regions. While this does not represent a direct conservation impact, it is a legacy of the foundation at the outcome level.

Policy changes – through projects supported by MAVA, policy frameworks have been improved in all three of its priority regions. Examples include establishing criteria for oil and gas exploration in Mauritania, mangrove policies within the Abidjan Convention, land-use policies in Switzerland and the Alps and improved wetlands protection in Tunisia.

Protected areas – Protected areas remain a cornerstone of biodiversity conservation and MAVA has contributed to the establishment of a significant number. Among them are the Jablanica-Shebenpark in Albania, the Parc Jurassien Vaudois in Switzerland and, recently, 20 Ramsar sites in Tunisia.

Awareness-raising and changing attitudes – MAVA projects such as "Wildscreen" in the Mediterranean, have increased awareness of our shared natural heritage, which contributes to changing behaviours and, ultimately, to protecting biodiversity and ecosystems.

Reduced threats – In many cases, a project's conservation outcome is to reduce or remove a threat to biodiversity. In the Balkans and the Alps, MAVA has helped to halt hydropower development on some biologically important rivers. Spain's Doñana National Park is another example of the same.

Increased scientific knowledge – MAVA has supported increased levels of scientific knowledge about biodiversity, both in its target regions and globally (e.g. IUCN Red List), helping build the intellectual base camp for all conservation work done around the world.

Models for replication – Several MAVA funded projects have been used as models or pilots to be replicated by the organisations involved and/or their partners. The Rhone Valley project run by WWF Switzerland is now being replicated in the Rhine. In Africa, lessons from a joint IUCN and Wetlands International mangroves project are being replicated in Kenya.

In addition to noting these generic conservation impacts, the 2013 review examined what factors enhanced project resilience. Reviewers did this by seeking out **parameters of success** both at the level of MAVA's selection of projects and of partners implementing those projects.

Among the parameters identified was the creation of **platforms of common interest groups**, which help create a critical mass for lobbying. One example is the work done on agricultural policy reform in Switzerland. Another important parameter was **funding stability**, which enables MAVA partners to focus more on conservation than spending significant resources, time and energy on fundraising. **Integrated** projects are more likely to succeed. These are ones that include a number of approaches (combining field work with capacity building and policy work) – as was done in the Tunisian wetlands project. These also better reflect the complexity of conservation work.

Using adaptive management techniques, based on monitoring results, enables projects to make necessary corrections en route. This has happened successfully in cases where MAVA funded several phases of a project. An example is the DASHI project, which underwent an external evaluation in 2011 that helped shape the project's next phase.

Other successful approaches incorporated **both bottom-up and top-down** elements, merging work done with local communities together with top-down approaches to enhance the chances of having significant impacts. So it was with MAVA-funded projects in West Africa that combined work at government levels with support for community groups intent on finding alternative economic activities.

It is hardly surprising to find that projects with **clear objectives and tangible outputs** are better positioned to deliver measurable results.

Additional elements that might help **MAVA** ensure its portfolio delivers lasting results include being **politically savvy** – which is to say staying abreast of relevant political debates so as to identify opportunities as they arise and to embrace them. That awareness also helps to identify potential partners. Developing a **trust** and **understanding** among such partners has enabled MAVA to draw the best out of them, a factor that came out strongly during interviews.

That leads on to yet another parameter of success identified in the review, namely the **choice of partners**. Good partners are not only technically competent but also have the necessary relationships to support the project objectives.

To conclude, there is already an evident legacy from MAVA's nearly 20-year involvement in its three priority regions and globally, even if the means to quantify it remain elusive. Despite taking steps to address this issue, as recommended in the 2010 review, MAVA is not yet in a position to demonstrate systematically whether its portfolio is delivering lasting results. Nor is it able to determine objectively what guarantees the success of a project.

To address this gap, MAVA could improve its monitoring efforts at several levels. Among the possible approaches could be to allocate a percentage of each project budget to monitoring and lesson learning. MAVA could also fund partners to improve their skills in monitoring and evaluation. Finally, the foundation could also improve internal monitoring by refining its "traffic light" system and recording project results according to whether they are outputs, outcomes or impacts.

MAVA Director General's Management Response to the 2013 Organisational and Programmatic Review

(version française ci-dessous)

Firstly, I would like to thank all of our partners and friends who took the time to give us feedback as part of this review. Your comments help us to understand what is working and where we need to improve. We are pleased to note that the series of changes implemented following our last review in 2010 are generally appreciated by our partners. The changes have had the intended effect of providing greater clarity and structure to our work, and providing added-value to our partners, while not losing the essential 'MAVA spirit' created by our founder Luc Hoffmann and pursued by his son André, who took over as President of MAVA in 2010. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the MAVA team for their work in implementing the range of changes we undertook since 2010. The positive feedback that we receive today on the results of these changes is largely due to the critical contributions of the MAVA team in reshaping the foundation.

The feedback from the review might best be encapsulated as follows: 'MAVA is doing really well. Please do more of everything you're doing and assume some additional roles'. This message has prompted careful discussion at MAVA as to what our role or roles should be and, importantly, what they should not be. We have concluded that we will maintain our commitment as a funder and 'defender' of biodiversity conservation, while having no intention to become operational ourselves. We will continue to work via partners that we support financially and technically. We do not see a role for ourselves in engaging in policy influence directly, except through our partners. Likewise, influencing conservation agendas in our priority regions will be done mainly via our funding choices rather than through directly engaging with key stakeholders to shift conservation agendas in particular directions.

We are committed to maintaining flexibility in our approach to working with partners and throughout the lives of the projects we fund in order to achieve the best results. We believe that one of our most important legacies is to leave behind a thriving community of strong, capable and interlinked conservation organisations. Thus we plan to take a fresh look at our approach to capacity building to ensure that we are doing enough in each of our regions. Given our limited staff size, this may entail working with intermediary organisations that would implement small grants programmes and engage directly with civil society organisations to build their capacities on the ground.

As of today, we have a portfolio of 185 open projects with 129 different partners. We intend to shift towards a deeper engagement with a smaller number of partners. This will entail looking at some combination of shifting to programme-level funding with trusted long-term partners, supporting fewer projects, delegating the management of small grants to other organisations, and adopting other measures that will help us concentrate our efforts to have the greatest impact. This will take place over a transition period of a couple of years rather than happening overnight, and will enable us to focus more time and attention on ensuring the impact of our funding, as well as on convening, capacity building, and providing technical and/or organisational support to our partners. On a more prosaic note, we take note of the need to make our templates more user-friendly and will convene some of our partners to help us do this.

Due to our long-standing engagement in our three priority regions, the breadth of work we fund and the diversity of partners we work with, MAVA is in a unique position in terms of the perspective that we have of conservation across our programmes. We recognise that we could do more to extract and share lessons learned and to capitalise on this unique perspective. We will work on how to do this most effectively.

Like any funder, MAVA is preoccupied with ensuring that we achieve maximum impact with our funding and will leave a lasting legacy. Our everyday actions focus on this. At the same time, we recognise the need to do more in ensuring that we are able to track impact and measure the success of our portfolio of projects. We will look more at these issues in the course of 2014.

The 2013 review, along with the helpful inputs received from our partners, has been an integral part of MAVA's ongoing process to ensure that we are as effective as we can be and are achieving maximum conservation impact. I hope that this quick summary gives a good flavour of the changes that we foresee at MAVA. I look forward to working hand-in-hand with our partners to secure lasting conservation results.

Réponse de la Directrice générale de la MAVA à l'évaluation institutionnelle et programmatique de la MAVA 2013

Avant toute chose, je voudrais remercier tous nos partenaires et amis qui ont pris le temps de contribuer à cette évaluation. Vos commentaires nous ont aidés à comprendre ce qui fonctionne bien et ce que nous devons améliorer. Nous notons avec plaisir que les changements mis en œuvre suite à notre dernière évaluation externe en 2010 sont en général appréciés par nos partenaires. Ces changements ont eu l'effet escompté : plus de clarté et de structure dans notre travail, plus de valeur ajoutée pour nos partenaires, sans pour autant perdre le fameux « esprit MAVA », cultivé par notre fondateur Luc Hoffmann et par son fils André, notre président depuis 2010. Je tiens également à exprimer ma reconnaissance et mes remerciements envers l'équipe de la MAVA pour la mise en œuvre des changements que nous avons entrepris depuis 2010. Le retour positif que nous recevons aujourd'hui doit en grande partie être attribué à son engagement sans faille pour le remaniement de la fondation.

Les points essentiels de l'évaluation peuvent être résumés comme suit : « La MAVA va très bien. Faites encore plus de tout ce que vous faites déjà et endossez encore quelques rôles supplémentaires. » Ce message a provoqué des discussions approfondies au sein de la MAVA sur ce que notre rôle, ou nos rôles, devraient être et, de manière encore plus importante, ce qu'ils ne devraient pas être. Nous sommes arrivés à la conclusion que nous devons maintenir notre engagement en tant que bailleur de fonds et « défenseur » de la conservation de la biodiversité, sans pour autant avoir l'intention de devenir nous-mêmes opérationnels. Nous continuerons d'œuvrer par l'intermédiaire de partenaires que nous soutiendrons financièrement et techniquement. Nous ne nous voyons pas jouer le rôle consistant à influencer directement les politiques, si ce n'est via nos partenaires. De la même manière, nous n'interviendrons pas directement auprès des acteurs afin d'influer les priorités de conservation, mais nos choix de financements pourront avoir un impact fort sur celles-ci.

Nous nous engageons à demeurer flexibles dans notre manière de travailler avec nos partenaires ainsi que pendant toute la période d'exécution des projets que nous soutenons afin d'obtenir les meilleurs résultats. Nous sommes convaincus qu'un des legs les plus importants que nous pouvons laisser derrière nous est une communauté dynamique d'organisations de la conservation fortes, compétentes et interconnectées. Par conséquent, nous prévoyons de renforcer notre approche en matière de développement des capacités afin d'assurer l'atteinte de cette vision dans chacune de nos régions. Etant donné la petite taille de notre équipe, nous pourrions éventuellement travailler avec des organisations intermédiaires qui gèreraient les programmes de petites subventions et interviendraient directement avec les organisations de la société civile afin de développer leurs capacités sur le terrain.

A ce jour, nous avons un portefeuille de 185 projets en cours avec 129 partenaires différents. Nous avons l'intention de renforcer notre engagement avec un nombre plus restreint de partenaires. Nous nous pencherons sur diverses alternatives, pouvant éventuellement être combinées entre-elles, telles que le financement au niveau programmatique de partenaires de confiance et de longue date, le financement de moins de projets, la délégation de la gestion des petites subventions à d'autres organisations, et la mise en place d'autres mesures nous permettant de concentrer nos efforts afin de maximiser les impacts. Au lieu d'introduire ces changements du jour au lendemain, nous les intégrerons sur une période transitoire de quelques années. Ceci nous permettra de concentrer notre temps et notre attention à ce que nos financements produisent l'impact voulu, à réunir les acteurs de la conservation, à développer les capacités et à fournir le soutien technique et/ou organisationnel nécessaire à nos partenaires. Sur une note plus prosaïque, nous prenons note du

besoin de rendre nos formulaires plus conviviaux et rassemblerons quelques partenaires pour nous aider dans cette tâche.

En raison de notre engagement de longue date dans nos trois régions prioritaires, de l'envergure des activités que nous soutenons et de la diversité des partenaires avec lesquels nous œuvrons, la MAVA dispose d'une perspective unique sur la conservation. Nous sommes conscients que nous pourrions davantage extraire et partager les enseignements que nous tirons, et mieux les valoriser. Nous nous efforcerons de trouver une solution efficace à cet aspect.

Comme tout bailleur de fonds, une des préoccupations de la MAVA est de veiller à ce que nos financements aient un impact maximum et constituent un legs durable. Chaque jour, cette préoccupation est au centre de nos activités. Nous reconnaissons également le besoin d'améliorer la manière dont nous suivons l'impact et mesurons le succès de notre portefeuille de projets. Nous nous pencherons plus en détail sur ces sujets en 2014.

Cette évaluation 2013, ainsi que les contributions utiles reçues de nos partenaires, forment une partie intégrante du processus dans lequel la MAVA s'est engagée afin d'améliorer notre efficacité et de maximiser la portée de nos actions. J'espère que ce résumé donne une image claire des changements prévus à la MAVA. Je me réjouis de travailler main dans la main avec nos partenaires afin d'assurer des résultats durables pour la conservation.
