

# Terminal evaluation of the GEF-financed project

## Establishing **Integrated Models of Protected Areas** and their **Co-management** in **Afghanistan**



implemented in 2014 – 2019  
by UNDP Country Office in Afghanistan and  
executed by WCS in cooperation  
with NEPA and MAIL

Geneva – Kabul  
September 2019



EIMPA project ID 00088001  
Atlas Award ID 00076820  
PIMS #: 5038

GEF focal areas and strategic objectives:

Biodiversity – BD1 Improve Sustainability of Protected Areas

Land degradation / Integrated landscapes – LD3 Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape

The evaluation was carried out by Zoï Environment Network, a non-profit international environmental organisation in Geneva, Switzerland, in April – August 2019 under contract with UNDP country office in Afghanistan.

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## Acknowledgements

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Sincere appreciation is also expressed to the project partners, other organisations, communities and individuals who took time to provide their inputs to the evaluation.

## Disclaimer

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## Executive summary

|   |  |  |                            |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| <b>Project Title</b>  | Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management in Afghanistan (EIMPA project)                                      |  |                            |
| UNDP Project ID (PIMS #)  | PIMS 5038  | PIF Approval Date:   | 5 June 2012                |
| Project ID  | 00088001   | CEO Endorsement Date:  | 25 February 2014           |
| ATLAS Business Unit,<br>Aware # Project ID  | 00076820   | Project Document Signature Date:   | 27 April 2014              |
| Country   | Afghanistan  | Date Project Manager hired:  | 27 April 2014              |
| Region  | Asia   | Inception Workshop date:   | 28 August 2014             |
| Focal Area  | Biodiversity<br>Land Degradation   | Midterm Review completion date:  | 12 December 2017           |
| GEF Focal Area Strategic Objectives   | BD-1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Areas<br>LD-3: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape | Project closing date:  | 26 April 2019 <sup>a</sup> |
| Trust Fund  | GEF TF   | Terminal Evaluation completion date:   | 3 September 2019           |
| Executing Agency/<br>Implementing Partner   | GEF Implementing Agency: UNDP<br>Executing Agency: Wildlife Conservation Society   |  |                            |
| Other execution partners  | Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock<br>National Environmental Protection Agency  |  |                            |
| <b>Project Financing</b>  | At CEO endorsement (USD)   | At Completion / Terminal Evaluation (USD)  |                            |
| <b>[1] GEF financing <sup>b</sup></b>   | <b>6,441,819</b>   | <b>6,441,819</b>   |                            |
| [2] UNDP contribution <sup>b</sup><br>▪ Cash<br>▪ Grant   | 1,000,000<br>2,000,000   | 1,000,000 <sup>e</sup><br>2,000,000 <sup>e</sup>   |                            |
| [3] Government <sup>b</sup><br>▪ NEPA (grant)<br>▪ MAIL (grant)<br>▪ MAIL (in kind)<br>▪ MRRD/NSP (grant) | 1,000,000<br>18,000,000<br>6,000,000<br>10,000,000   | 1,000,000 <sup>f</sup><br>18,000,000 <sup>f</sup><br>6,000,000 <sup>f</sup><br>10,000,000 <sup>f</sup> |                            |
| [4] Other partners <sup>c</sup><br>▪ WCS (grant) <sup>d</sup>   | 300,000  | 803,005 <sup>e</sup>   |                            |
| <b>[5] Total co-financing <sup>c</sup></b>  | <b>38,300,000</b>  | <b>38,803,005</b>  |                            |
| <b>PROJECT TOTAL COSTS:</b>   | <b>44,741,819</b>  | <b>45,244,824</b>  |                            |

a This is the official end date of the project concluding five calendar years of its execution, and as such is also used as the cut-off point for the terminal evaluation. Project activities by WCS ended on 31 December 2018, but the project will operationally close in September 2019 and end in UNDP ATLAS on 26 April 2020.

b Data and estimates by UNDP country office.

c Not counted are the pledged contribution by USAID and AKF, additional funds raised with project support from UNDP Small Grants Programme, in-kind labour inputs from participating communities and much of UNDP staff time.

d Data and estimates by WCS.

e Investment mobilised (USD 3,803,005)

f Recurrent expenditures (USD 35,000,000)

The GEF-funded EIMPA Project has aimed at improving the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity in Afghanistan, while strengthening the livelihoods of communities through the promotion of sustainable natural resources and land management practices.

Specifically, The project sought to support the development of the protected area system in Afghanistan through strengthening the policy framework and institutional capacity of a national system for the effective management and expansion of protected areas; setting up ('gazetting') new protected areas in Wakhan (the Badakhshan province); operationalising the management of these areas and the Band-e Amir National Park in the Bamyan province; and developing sustainable natural-resource and land / rangeland management and livelihoods solutions within the respective areas.

The project directly addressed two strategic objectives of GEF Focal Area, namely BD1 (Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems), and LD3 (Integrated landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape).

The project has had the following intended outcomes, here updated following the revision of the project results framework after the mid-term review in 2017:

- Outcome 1: A national protected areas system is established with legal, planning, policy and institutional frameworks for expansion and management;
- Outcome 2: Protected area coverage and management effectiveness is improved to increase biodiversity representativeness and ecological resilience;
- Outcome 3: Conservation in the targeted protected areas is enhanced to reduce threats to key species and improve climate resilient livelihoods of the community.

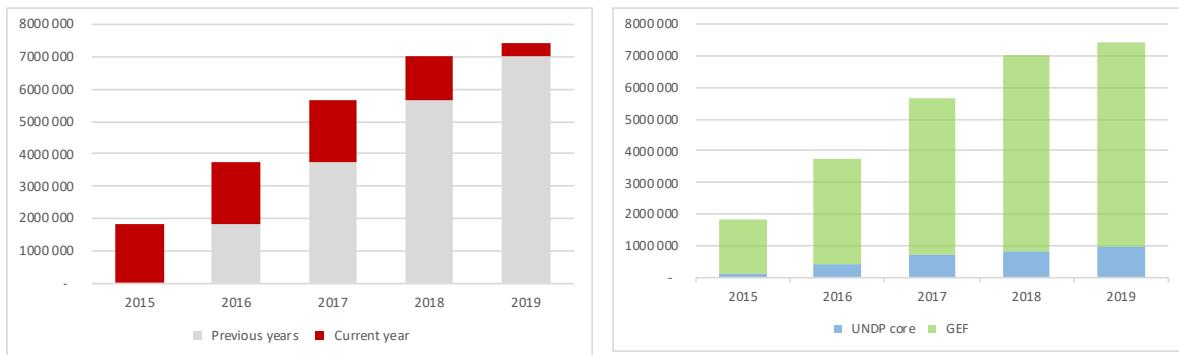
EIMPA project has been implemented by UNDP and executed by the Wildlife Conservation Society in close cooperation with the National Environmental Protection Agency and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock as national co-execution partners.

Throughout the lifetime of the project, executing partners carried out a wide range of activities at all levels: national through policy- support and capacity building; regional in the Bamyan and Badakhshan provinces; and local within the protected areas and their communities. Project interventions ranged from drafting policy documents and management plans to setting up the management of declared protected areas, supporting the ranger system, building the operational capacity of community institutions and their rangers, providing conservation awareness at all levels, propagating environmental education and developing livelihoods opportunities to communities, i.a. to motivate their conservation-oriented behaviour.

Following the mid-term review, some of the initially intended outcomes and the corresponding activities were realigned and project resources respectively reallocated following the principles of adaptive management.

The total project budget provided by GEF TF (USD 6.4 million) and from UNDP core resources (USD 1 million) was fully disbursed. According to UNDP record, the pledged USD 38.3 million co-financing was fully implemented too, with WCS exceeding its co-financing target by USD 0.5 million.

### Disbursement of EIMPA core project budget, USD



Source of data: UNDP

The terminal evaluation rates the overall project execution as **satisfactory**. Details of the rating per specific criteria as required by the terms of reference for the terminal evaluation are provided below.

| <b>Criterion</b>                              | <b>Rating</b>                  |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>1. Monitoring and evaluation</b>           |                                |
| Design at entry                               | <b>Satisfactory</b>            |
| Plan implementation                           | <b>Moderately satisfactory</b> |
| Overall quality                               | <b>Satisfactory</b>            |
| <b>2. Execution</b>                           |                                |
| Quality of UNDP implementation                | <b>Satisfactory</b>            |
| Quality of Execution – Implementing Partner   | <b>Satisfactory</b>            |
| Overall quality of implementation / execution | <b>Satisfactory</b>            |
| <b>3. Assessment of outcomes</b>              |                                |
| Relevance                                     | <b>Relevant</b>                |
| Effectiveness                                 | <b>Satisfactory</b>            |
| Efficiency                                    | <b>Satisfactory</b>            |
| Overall project outcome rating                | <b>Satisfactory</b>            |
| <b>4. Sustainability</b>                      |                                |
| Financial resources                           | <b>Moderately likely</b>       |
| Socio-political                               | <b>Moderately likely</b>       |
| Institutional framework and governance        | <b>Moderately likely</b>       |
| Environmental                                 | <b>Moderately likely</b>       |
| Overall likelihood of sustainability          | <b>Moderately likely</b>       |

EIMPA project was highly important for Afghanistan and the target regions in Bamyan and Badakhshan provinces, as in the current political and security context environmental and in particular conservation

work de-facto does not receive sufficiently high priority and there are not (m)any other similar initiatives in the country.

Through the project, highly significant results were achieved which can be considered game changers for Afghanistan's conservation policy and practice. Tangible impacts were achieved on communities' and people's lives and livelihoods in the target areas. Project activities and results are highly appreciated by all stakeholders and observers that have been interviewed virtually and in person, both nationally and locally. There are repeated calls to sustain operations and continue presence in project areas, although there are differing views on the exact kind of desired follow-up (from sustaining business-as-usual and small activities on the ground to moving to more strategic / technical backstopping of and advice to Government-led operations).

In response to the mid-term review, many improvements were made, in particular in the fields of awareness and addressing gender issues, as well as reorienting the project to take account of the current policy context. For reasons of timing, budget and external limitations, addressed to a lesser extent were economic and community development issues.

Not all results could be achieved fully or in time, in particular on the policy and the institutional level (laws, plans, community institutions), considering it is dependent on many factors that are outside project control. National conservation policy set-up still needs formalisation, and the sustainability of the regional / local level interventions partly remains challenging.

Nearly 30 issues and lessons learnt observed throughout the terminal evaluation and included in the conclusions relate to

- project design and execution,
- specific project interventions,
- the sustainability of project results, and
- external challenges.

The concluding chapter contains a summary of key observations, issues and lessons learnt, as well as

- 18 actionable recommendations for specific follow-up to EIMPA which in our view is still in the hands and within realistic reach of the Government of Afghanistan, UNDP and WCS, certainly given the limitations and the focus of available resources;
- advice for longer-term consideration, including strategic advice for the Government, UNDP and the international community for future directions of conservation and livelihoods development in Afghanistan as informed by EIMPA project; and
- advice for taking into account some of the specific lessons learnt from EIMPA and its evaluation in the design and implementation of other / similar projects in this domain.

## **Acronyms and abbreviations**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>AKDN</b>   | Aga Khan Development Network                             |
| <b>AKF</b>    | Aga Khan Foundation                                      |
| <b>APWA</b>   | Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Authority                 |
| <b>BACC</b>   | Band-e Amir Community Committee                          |
| <b>BANP</b>   | Band-e Amir National Park                                |
| <b>BAPAC</b>  | Band-e Amir Protected Area Committee                     |
| <b>BNS</b>    | Basic necessities survey                                 |
| <b>BPWR</b>   | Big Pamir Wildlife Reserve                               |
| <b>DAIL</b>   | Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock      |
| <b>EIMPA</b>  | Establishing Integrated Models of Protected Areas        |
| <b>EU</b>     | European Union   |
| <b>FAO</b>    | [United Nations] Food and Agriculture Organization       |
| <b>GEF</b>    | Global Environment Facility                              |
| <b>MAIL</b>   | Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock        |
| <b>MRRD</b>   | Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development         |
| <b>MTR</b>    | Mid-term review  |
| <b>NEPA</b>   | National Environmental Protection Agency                 |
| <b>NPASP</b>  | National Protected Areas System Plan                     |
| <b>NRM</b>    | Natural resource management                              |
| <b>NSP</b>    | National Solidarity Programme                            |
| <b>PA</b>     | Protected area   |
| <b>PIF</b>    | Project identification form                              |
| <b>PIMS</b>   | [UNDP-GEF] Project Information Management System         |
| <b>PMU</b>    | Project management unit                                  |
| <b>PPP</b>    | Public-private partnership                               |
| <b>PSC</b>    | Project Steering Committee                               |
| <b>SDG</b>    | Sustainable Development Goal                             |
| <b>SGP</b>    | Small Grant Programme                                    |
| <b>SLM</b>    | Sustainable Land Management                              |
| <b>TWR</b>    | Teggermansu Wildlife Reserve                             |
| <b>UNDP</b>   | United Nations Development Programme                     |
| <b>UNEP</b>   | United Nations Environment Programme [or UN Environment] |
| <b>USD</b>    | United States Dollar                                     |
| <b>WAPAC</b>  | Wakhan Protected Area Committee                          |
| <b>WCS</b>    | Wildlife Conservation Society                            |
| <b>WFP</b>    | World Food Programme                                     |
| <b>WNP</b>    | Wakhan National Park                                     |
| <b>WNPPAC</b> | Wakhan National Park Protected Area Committee            |

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# **1      Introduction**

## **1.1     Purpose of the evaluation**

In accordance with UNDP and GEF monitoring and evaluation policies and procedures, all full and medium-sized GEF financed projects implemented by UNDP are required to undergo a terminal evaluation upon completion of implementation. Consequently, this evaluation was commissioned by UNDP with the objectives to:

- a) Evaluate the expected and achieved accomplishments of the EIMPA project and critically examine the presumed causal chains, processes and attainments of results as well as the contextual factors that may enhance or impede the achievements of results;
- b) Provide feedback to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, other beneficiaries, UNDP and, as appropriate, the concerned partners and stakeholders, about the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and impact of the project;
- c) Ensure accountability of results to the project's donors, stakeholders and beneficiaries.

## **1.2     Scope and methodology**

The terminal evaluation of EIMPA project was conducted according to the established guidance, rules and procedures formulated in the *Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects* as well as other relevant documents<sup>1</sup>. In particular, and as specified in the terms of reference, it focussed on the outcomes, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of the project.

In the course of the evaluation, the evaluators used a mix of the available tools:

- review of available documentation;
- field visits to project operation regions – Band-e Amir National Park in the Bamyan province and the Wakhan National Park and the Ishkashim district in the Badakhshan province;
- Interviews with centrally- and locally-based project stakeholders.

26 April 2019, the official end date of the project, was chosen as the cut-off date for evaluating project outputs (please see the following chapter for details of the timing of project execution). After signing the evaluation contract on 29 April 2019, initial discussions with UNDP and WCS were held in early May 2019. The subsequent review of documentation provided by both organisations allowed to fine-tune the approach and the planning of the evaluation mission.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluation for Full-sized Projects, 2017; UNDP Evaluation Guidelines, 2019; GEF and Conservation Development Centre. Towards Enhancing the Impacts of Environmental Projects. ROtI handbook, 2009.

In planning the mission, the evaluation team put a particular focus on verifying the observations and key findings of the mid-term review conducted in late 2017, and on monitoring how the project responded to its recommendations, adapted the project implementation, planning and results in the remaining period of its operation (October 2017 – December 2018).

With this in mind and based on the available documentation, the matrix of evaluation questions provided in the terms of reference was revised and amended, *inter alia* by adding optional clarifying questions to UNDP, WCS, governmental stakeholders NEPA and MAIL, and community members and organisations.

Given that the mid-term review highlighted a certain lack of progress with respect to the gender dimension, the terminal evaluation put special emphasis on getting more reliable data on female participation in, and perspectives of, the project by utilizing access to community locations on the ground otherwise inaccessible to males (the local team leader for the terminal evaluation was a female).

Field missions to Bamyan and Wakhan undertaken in June – July 2019 included visits to the sites of project interventions such as livestock corrals, hydropower facilities, appended solar greenhouses, tree planting areas, business / handicraft development locations, conservation and tourism infrastructure, schools and outreach sites. During the mission the evaluators spoke to over 400 community members in 22 villages, and met provincial NEPA (in Bamyan) and DAIL offices (in Khandud village, Wakhan and in Bamyan city), district Government offices in Bamyan and Badakhshan, border and local police in Wakhan, DAIL and WCS rangers, BAPAC and BACC members in Bamyan, CDCs, locally-operating NGOs and local WCS teams (who also provided logistical support in both provinces).

In Kabul, meetings were held with Kabul-based project stakeholders NEPA and DAIL, international organisations not directly involved with EIMPA but active in the field of conservation and environmental policy (FAO, UNEP, the World Bank), and with WCS and UNDP for the presentation and validation of preliminary findings.

In undertaking the evaluation, information and data contained were compared and cross-referenced based on the various complementary sources. These included work plans, progress reports, PIRs, steering committee records and tracking tools for analysing progress of activities and the delivery of tangible results, and combined delivery and audit reports together with summary financial records provided by UNDP for analysing the financial performance. Equally important was triangulation between the views of project stakeholders at different governance levels (local communities vs. regional bodies vs. national authorities vs. international organisations) or among different institutions at similar levels (e.g. the views of different governmental agencies did not always coincide). The evaluation team has done its best to reflect in the report the commonalities as well as differences in responses.

Apart from logistical difficulties in carrying out the filed mission as was originally planned, the evaluation team did not face considerable constraints in the course of the evaluation process. Once again, we express gratitude to all stakeholders, and in particular, UNDP and WCS, for contributing to that.

### **1.3 Structure of the evaluation report**

With slight modifications, the evaluation report follows the generic outline suggested in the terms of reference, and includes an executive summary (above), the description of the project and its development

context, the findings of the terminal evaluation with respect to project design, implementation and results, and the concluding section with main impressions, lessons learned, issues and recommendations for further work in this domain on the strategic and the practical levels as informed by EIMPA experience.

Annexes include the terms of reference for the evaluation, the consultant agreement form, the detailed itinerary of the field mission, the list of interviewed persons, the list of reviewed documents, the revised and amended matrix of evaluation questions used during the interviews, and the assessment of project response to the recommendations of the mid-term review.

Photos taken during the field mission were not included in the report, but cloud access was provided for further use.

## **2 Project description and development context**

### **2.1 Project start and duration**

EIMPA project started on 27 April 2014 and formally completed on 26 April 2019. It is worthwhile to note that project activities by WCS ended on 31 December 2018, while due to outstanding administrative tasks (which include this terminal evaluation and the audit of 2019 expenses) the project will operationally close in August 2019 and end in UNDP ATLAS on 26 April 2020.

The project was supported by the GEF-5 Trust Fund with an allocation of USD 6.441 million, and co-financed by UNDP (including USD 1 million in cash) and other partners.

### **2.2 Problems and development objectives that the project sought to address**

The EIMPA Project aimed to improve the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity in key biodiversity areas in Afghanistan, while improving the livelihoods of communities through the promotion of sustainable natural resource management practices. Specifically, the project addressed institutional capacity and legal framework constraints vis-à-vis strengthening ecosystem conservation.

Directly responding to GEF Focal Area Objectives BD1 (Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems) and LD3 (Integrated landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape), the project was designed to strengthen the system of protected areas in Afghanistan by establishing a sound policy and institutional framework for their effective management; declaring (“gazetting”) three new protected areas in Wakhan; operationalizing the management in four protected areas, including the Band-e Amir National Park; and developing replicable solutions for sustainable livelihood and rangeland management.

The project was intended to support the National Protected Area System Plan by making a major contribution towards the achievement of its long-term objective, taking critical first steps in this regard and building strong foundations for the future. The three intended project outcomes that directly addressed barriers to sustainable ecosystem management were:

- 1) A national protected areas system is established with legal, planning, policy and institutional frameworks for expansion and management for the PA estate in the country;
- 2) Protected area coverage and management effectiveness is improved to increase biodiversity representativeness and ecological resilience, and;
- 3) Conservation in the targeted protected areas is enhanced to reduce threats to key species and improve climate resilient livelihoods of the community.

### **2.3 Main stakeholders**

UNDP is the GEF implementing agency for the project, which was implemented through an NGO partner WCS. UNDP's Afghanistan country office oversaw project operations, whereas UNDP-GEF regional

technical adviser in the Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau (Bangkok) provided strategic advice and oversight. UNDP has been responsible for quality assurance, including financial and audit services, financial oversight, ensuring compliance with UNDP/GEF procedures, ensuring timely and compliant reporting to GEF, facilitating learning and sharing with other GEF projects, contracting external reviews and evaluations (including the current one).

WCS, has been the principal technical wildlife-conservation partner of the Government of Afghanistan since 2016, and was the GEF executing agency for the project under UNDP's "NGO execution" modality. Consequently, WCS managed day-to-day project implementation and hosted the Project Management Unit. The PMU comprised of an international project manager / chief technical adviser and a locally-recruited national project coordinator, who were supported by other international and local WCS technical experts as well as WCS administration.

NEPA, responsible for national environmental policy, regulation and enforcement as well as having a function of a GEF focal point, was a project execution partner and the governmental agency responsible for the supervision of the project. In this capacity, NEPA also co-chaired with UNDP the Project Steering Committee.

The other project execution partner, MAIL is the designated Central Management Authority for protected areas in Afghanistan according to a NEPA-MAIL agreement, and has day-to-day responsibilities for their management and administration. Both NEPA and MAIL partnered with WCS to bring additional benefits to project's activities.

Protected area committees comprise representatives of all local communities, provincial government officials, and representatives of community management associations. Their mandate is to guide the management of protected areas, whereas the ultimate decision-making rests with NEPA and MAIL. BAPAC in the Band-e Amir National Park was established with the help of WCS already prior to the project, and took active role in project activities; whereas WaPAC in the Wakhan National Park was to be established once the WNP management plan is approved – which did not happen during the lifetime of the project.<sup>2</sup>

Band-e Amir Community Council (BACC, formerly BACA) and Wakhan Pamir Association (WPA), also established with WCS help prior to the start of EIMPA, were key stakeholders too. These community organisations are meant to engage in management of, and benefit sharing from, protected areas on behalf of their communities located within or adjacent to the respective protected areas. Community councils represent their communities in the respective PACs. In the project, these organisations were responsible for the implementation of community-related field activities with support from the PMU and the management of protected areas. They also assisted NEPA and MAIL in the identification and demarcation of new protected areas, their management planning and implementation. In addition the community councils monitor income-generating activities and are to ensure equitable distribution of benefits among community members. Underlying community entities include Community Development Councils (CDCs) and CDC clusters.

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to WaPAC, new PACs were also envisaged to be formed with project support for the Teggermansu and Big Pamir Wildlife Reserves. However it was later decided that with the establishment of WNP they were all to fall under the Wakhan National Park Protected Area Committee (WNPPAC) defined in the WPN management plan.

## **2.4      Expected project results and baseline indicators**

At the national level EIMPA was to support the development of conservation laws, policies and institutions. Initially, Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Authority (APWA) was intended to be established with support from the project as a permanent, separate institution for managing protected areas. However, for a number of reasons outside of the control of the project<sup>3</sup>, establishing such a new institution proved impossible. Thus following the 2017 mid-term review this and several other related results were removed from the project results framework.

On the provincial level the expected results of EIMPA included the expansion of the protected area system by facilitating the creation and management of the Big Pamir and Teggermansu Wildlife Reserves and the Wakhan National Park; supporting the operation of BANP; and building successful and replicable co-management models in project's protected areas.

Baselines for the selected indicators were established at the onset of the project, partially based on data collected in project target regions through long-term presence and previous activities of WCS there. However, due to the comprehensive studies required, for some indicators (e.g. those of rangeland health), baselines were only made available 1–2 years after project start.

Table 2.1 below presents the details of EIMPA expected results expressed as indicators and targets, based on the final version of the project results framework revised and adopted following 2017 mid-term review. The table further presents the status of attaining the targets by the end of the project as reported in WCS project closure report, commented and rated by the evaluation team.

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<sup>3</sup> Following elections in 2014, the new Government introduced a moratorium on new governmental institutions. Besides, relatively central to APWA question of the management of revenues from protected areas was not resolved; nor was the distribution of roles in the conservation domain between NEPA and MAIL.

**Table 2.1 EIMPA final strategic results framework with baselines and the status at project closure**

| Indicators   | Baseline  | Target   | Status at closure and comments  |
|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Objective Establish protected areas system to conserve biodiversity and mitigate land degradation, initially centred in Bamyan and Wakhan</b>         |   |  |   |
| Increase in institutional capacity   | MAIL-NEPA/BACC/WPA: 42% /24% /24%   | 55% / 35% / 35%  | 60% / 40% / 40%: <b>Achieved</b>  |
| Coverage of managed protected areas estate   | 60,616 ha   | 1,155,682 ha   | 1,155,682 ha declared, staff partially present, 3* of 4 management plans approved: <b>Partially achieved</b>  |
| Area of rangeland effectively co-managed.  | 60,616 ha   | 1,169,647 ha   | 1,238,902 ha, including 20% of the Bamyan Plateau under partial management. Management is not fully operational: <b>Partially achieved</b>  |
| <b>Outcome 1 National protected areas system legal &amp; policy frameworks strengthened</b>  |   |  |   |
| Number of laws / regulations relating to protected areas approved  | 0   | 2  | Laws and regulations fully drafted, not yet formally approved by the Government: <b>Partially achieved</b>  |
| Number of strategy / operations plans developed and implemented  | 0   | 1  | Successful contribution to the Protected Areas chapter of the NRM strategy: <b>Achieved</b>   |
| <b>Outcome 2 Protected areas coverage and management effectiveness is improved to increase biodiversity representativeness and ecological resilience</b> |   |  |   |
| Co-management legislation adopted  | 0   | 1  | <b>Not achieved</b>   |
| Rangeland habitat condition within protected areas core zones  | BANP (2016):<br>Erosion 94% moderate to high<br>Intensive Grazing 70%<br>Shrub Harvesting Impact 53%<br>WNP (2016):<br>Erosion 72% moderate to high<br>Intensive Grazing 88%<br>Shrub Harvesting Impact 25% | No statistically significant deterioration from baseline | BANP on target for erosion and shrub harvesting, under target for grazing (drought situation in 2017-2018); WNP on target for grazing and shrub harvesting, under target for erosion<br><b>Partially achieved</b> |
| Number of protected area management plans being implemented  | 1   | 4  | Implemented in BPWR and TWR, revised for BANP*, not yet approved for WNP: <b>Partially achieved</b>   |
| Number / coverage of protected areas   | 1 area - 60,616 ha  | 4 areas - 1,155,682 ha                                   | 4 areas - 1,155,682 ha: <b>Achieved</b>   |
| Protected areas METT score   | Band-e Amir / Wakhan: 60.6% / 53.8%   | 70% / 70%  | 76% / 68%: <b>Partially achieved</b>  |
| Extent of new hillside farming in Lalmi and control (Non-Lalmi) indicator areas of BANP  | Lalmi area 2,091 ha (2016)<br>Non-Lalmi area = 2,839 ha (2016)  | No increase<br>No decrease                               | No increase in Lalmi areas<br>0.38% decrease in non-Lalmi area<br><b>Partially achieved</b>   |

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| Strategy and plans put in place for expansion of protected areas connecting BANP to Bamyan Plateau  | No strategy document<br>No community INRM institution<br>No METT baseline for Bamyan Plateau | Document prepared INRM institution and capacities established<br>METT baseline (if appl.) | Document written and shared with NEPA<br>Community discussions initiated, rangers trained<br>METT baseline not appl. (institution not created)<br><b>Partially achieved</b> |
| <b>Outcome 3 Conservation in targeted protected areas enhanced to reduce threats to key species and improve climate resilient livelihoods</b> |  |   |   |
| Status of snow leopard monitoring   | Basic programme  | Comprehensive programme   | Population and threats monitored efficiently, conservation actions implemented: <b>Achieved</b>   |
| Number of Marco Polo sheep in the Big Pamir   | 340 (+/- 122) in 2015  | 340 (+/- 122)   | 422 (+/-137) according to 2017 data (early snowfall disrupted the census in 2018): <b>Achieved</b>  |
| Number of hectares under sustainable land management  | 0  | 1,169,647   | 1,155,682 ha of landscape with operating or drafted management plans: <b>Partially achieved</b>   |
| Plant cover (mean vegetation cover) in target areas   | BANP 20% (5-32%) in 2016<br>WNP 29% (2%-100%) in 2016  | No Change   | BANP 19% (insignificant decrease in 2018), WNP 24% (significant decrease i.e. due to drought in 2017-2018): <b>Partially achieved</b>                                       |
| Community soc.-ec. well-being indices   | BANP: 41.27% in 2015<br>WNP: 60.88% in 2016  | 15% increase  | 39.4% (insignificant decrease in 2018) / 66.6% increase but well below 15% in 2018): <b>Not achieved</b> <sup>4</sup>   |
| Female participation in SLM and PACs  | BACC / WPA: 0 % / 12.5%  | >20%  | 17% / 18%: <b>Achieved</b> <sup>5</sup>   |
| Proportion of protected areas tourism revenue returned to communities   | 0%   | 30%   | 0% (no agreement on revenue sharing at Government level): <b>Not achieved</b>   |

\* The 2<sup>nd</sup> BANP Management Plan was approved in May 2019, after the cut-off date for the terminal evaluation.

It was however signed-off by BAPAC before the end of the project.

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<sup>4</sup> The increase of 15% was however anticipated to happen between 2014 and 2018, whereas the baseline for Wakhan could only be determined in 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Values of this indicator increase from 0 to 100% in steps of 6-7% (depending on the number of members in PAC). For this reason, the difference between the achieved 17–18% and the >20% target is in effect insignificant and the target is considered as achieved.

### **3 Findings**

#### **3.1 Project design and formulation**

EIMPA project directly supported national biodiversity as well as land management priorities and policies, and the overall design of the project appears to have been well in line with both the prevailing national policies and the views of the different stakeholders. No interviewed stakeholder expressed significant reservations about it. However, as considerable time has passed since project initiation, and people and institutions engaged with the project at the beginning have changed, it is natural that some of them see the optimal design of the project differently from how it was seen five years ago.

The initial project design was evaluated at length during 2017 mid-term review. This terminal evaluation largely endorses its conclusions and focusses below on the details of particular importance, additional views expressed during interviews, and changes in project design undertaken in October 2017 – December 2018 following mid-term review recommendations.

#### **Project results framework: outputs, outcomes and indicators**

The project strategy and rationale as outlined in the project document and the results framework were overall coherent and logical in terms of the links between outcomes, objectives and the project's overall goal. The linkages between outcomes, their indicators and the respective project activities were logical and generally comprehensive too.

The objective and outcome indicators used in the results framework were generally SMART,<sup>6</sup> and captured many of the important project results in particular in the conservation domain. However, as was also noted by the mid-term review, other impacts such as health benefits, reduced workload, reduced loss of livestock assets, positive impact on damage from natural disasters, improved awareness in communities were not well captured by the results framework.<sup>7</sup> Apart from female representation in PAC, livelihoods indicators were not gender-specific / disaggregated.<sup>8</sup>

By the time of the mid-term review it became obvious that for political reasons the initially envisaged (under Outcome 1) establishment of a specialised Afghanistan Park and Wildlife Authority was not possible. Consequently the review recommended removing the respective targets and reallocating resources from Outcome 1 to other outcomes, as was consequently done. The mid-term review also noted certain overlaps between Outcomes 2 and 3, and recommended restructuring them to bring clarity and more distinctive focus. The resulting results framework, approved by the Project Steering Committee, was thus made more practical, attainable and logically consistent (cf. Table 1.1).

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<sup>6</sup> Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound

<sup>7</sup> To a certain degree such benefits were however regularly reported on by WCS, albeit in a qualitative form, in project progress reports.

<sup>8</sup> Yet BNS household surveys that integrate information relative to family cells gathered information on the composition of these households, including number of women. They also gathered data about the number of women vs. men responding to the survey. Gender-disaggregated impact was also systematically reported for awareness, education, workshop and outreach activities.

In the opinion of the terminal evaluation team, some of the project-result targets may have been overambitious in terms of what could be realistically achieved in the difficult institutional context of Afghanistan, and especially after it became clear that the target of establishing APWA was not attainable. This concerns, e.g., targets for the number of approved laws, regulations and management plans, but also improved socio-economic well-being of affected communities and generating of revenues from protected areas, as all of these were partly dependent on the anticipated institutional changes. The target of establishing a community institution in the Bamyan Plateau may also have been too ambitious given how late this target was introduced (see Monitoring and Evaluation below).

High ambitions could be justified by WCS's relatively long and successful experience with national conservation policy prior to the project, as well as by the reasonable expectation that the initially envisaged establishment of APWA would greatly facilitate the attainment of expected policy (and economic) results. It is also in any case commendable to see the bar set high in order to motivate stronger performance, as without daring not much can be achieved.<sup>9</sup> However this also necessarily calls for a stricter judgement of project performance.

In our view, the targets which were even only implicitly linked to the intended streamlining of institutional framework through the establishment of APWA should have been relaxed, similarly to how explicit APWA-related results were removed from the logical framework. Even though to some degree their achievement should have been and indeed was still possible due to the continued engagement with conservation of both NEPA and MAIL, uncertainties about how such responsibilities were to be shared undoubtedly made attainment of these targets much more difficult than anticipated.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, given the key role of community institutions in ensuring the long-term sustainability of results after project end, the quantitative targets for the increase of the institutional capacity of community councils may not have been ambitious enough.

We also question the effectiveness of quantitative targets on the state of natural ecosystems and species (such as vegetation cover, rangeland conditions, or wildlife population counts) as reliable measures of project performance. The high natural variability of such conditions, exacerbated by the unfolding effects on climate change (e.g., strong nation-wide drought in 2018), makes the short duration of the project period insufficient for making direct conclusions about the impact of the project on natural ecosystems. Much longer time-series would be required to derive reliable conclusions of this kind. This said, indirect conclusions based on the available short time-series nonetheless point to positive impact, or at least do not allow to conclude otherwise.

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<sup>9</sup> "I've long admired the Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, founder of logotherapy/existential analysis, a meaning-centred approach to psychotherapy. A Holocaust survivor, he is familiar to many as the author of *Man's Search for Meaning*. Dr. Frankl loved heights. He was a mountain climber and, starting late in his life, a pilot. According to biographer Anna S. Redsand, he liked to include experiences from both climbing and flying in his lectures. In one such lecture, she writes, he explained how, in a crosswind, a pilot must aim the plane not at his goal but beyond it. «He said that it was like this with human beings. If we expect something higher of ourselves, we will reach what we are actually capable of. If we aim only for what we are capable of, we are likely to achieve beneath our abilities»" Brown, R. E. and MacKay, L. *Addiction Is the Symptom: Heal the Cause and Prevent Relapse with 12 Steps That Really Work*. Algorithm Books, 2015

<sup>10</sup> One Government department commented that the project should not be blamed for not having the drafted regulations or plans approved, since this is essentially the task of the Government.

The mid-term review noted a significant gap in that Outcome 3 did not have any elements explicitly related to managing and regulating grazing and livestock numbers, which arguably are the main underlying factors causing land degradation and human-wildlife conflicts. While we agree that such activities are barely visible on the indicator level, and this is an omission in the initial log-frame design, we note that de-facto restrictions on livestock are essential parts of protected area management plans developed with the help of the project<sup>11</sup>. The project has also made significant efforts in promoting community-level activities to reduce other pressures on land and natural vegetation, such as reducing the collection of firewood,<sup>12</sup> limiting / restricting hillside farming, and indeed planting trees.<sup>13</sup>

### **Assumptions and risks**

As noted in the mid-term review, the assumptions made at project onset were generally relevant and proved to be in place, although some of them may have rather been reality conditions the project could influence to a certain degree, such as “continued collaboration with key partners” and “collaborative relationships with communities maintained”. As it became evident through project implementation, more comprehensive identification of assumptions would have been useful, for example, in the field of economic and enforcement policies: no assumptions were made regarding the economic potential for generating and redistributing revenues from protected areas and community incomes; nor regarding conditions for the sustainability of local businesses; nor about the willingness of law enforcement authorities to follow up on reported illegal practices.

While the “deterioration of security in pilot areas” is a major risk for most projects in Afghanistan, this was and is less of an issue in Wakhan and Bamyan, although it does significantly affect access to the regions, travel / transport costs, and the ability to engage the provincial government in WNP. This risk was also largely a repetition of the assumption that “the security situation will remain as it is or slightly degrade but not in the pilot areas”. However, the identified risk that “political gridlock delays decisions on laws and regulations” unfortunately turned true, albeit somewhat in a different form than considered in the project document. The identification of climate change as a risk for Outcome 3 was very appropriate, especially towards the end of the project.

Risk logs were reported by WCS in the annual and quarterly progress reports and to a lesser extent in the PIRs, although the risks identified in the results framework and in risk logs were only partly aligned, and only four of the eight risks in the risk log in the project document were monitored. The mitigation measures taken by the project were generally appropriate, though not always fully sufficient in relation to handling asymmetric power and gender relations.

### **Lessons from other relevant projects incorporated into project design**

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<sup>11</sup> Livestock being the key source of livelihoods, its regulation indeed remains a challenge and will require continued attention in future, not least through interacting with other development actors who sometimes support livestock-based economies without sufficient consideration of rangeland conservation. The subletting rights for rangelands require attention too, as currently these are poorly regulated and in-principle allow access to sensitive land for external actors with much higher livestock numbers than the indigenous population.

<sup>12</sup> Some communities in Bamyan reported 50% decrease in their firewood collection due to the installation of appended solar greenhouses.

<sup>13</sup> In Bamyan, WCS assessed the rate of the overall survival of trees planted in 2016–2018 at 74%.

The project was built on a long-term engagement of WCS with NEPA and MAIL, both in two project regions and at the national level. In particular results and lessons from earlier, USAID-funded, projects were important, and EIMPA was a logical continuation of the then ongoing processes such as strengthening community institutions set up with WCS support (BAPAC, BACC, and WPA). The sustainable land management approaches and practices used in EIMPA were tested and promoted through previous projects too: e.g., the extensive experience with appended solar greenhouses in Bamyan of French NGO GERES was instrumental in shaping and informing WCS approach to this activity.

### **Planned stakeholder participation and management arrangements**

During project preparation, the proposal was presented to governmental stakeholders at the central and local levels as well as to community organisations. Field trips were carried out and two national workshops held, as well as several meetings with stakeholders. Governmental stakeholders were assigned significant roles in project implementation, both on the policy level (indispensable for developing and endorsing policy documents, management plans and similar) and in the field.

Community councils and CDCs, as well as Protected Areas Committees which included both the latter and local government offices and departments, were important local stakeholders for endorsing, guiding and monitoring project activities on the ground. Communities themselves and their members were to be involved in project steering to a much lesser extent, but were key beneficiaries of much of project support – and provisions were indeed made to consult and maintain contact with communities before and while rolling out respective activities.

The Project Steering Committee, co-chaired by NEPA and UNDP and comprising representatives from MAIL, MRRD, UNDP, and WCS, was responsible for oversight of project implementation and approved the annual work plans and budgets as well as any major changes in project plans. The PSC met annually and provided guidance for project implementation. Representatives from the two project regions did not regularly participate in PSC meetings.

### **Replication approach**

The National Protected Areas System Plan outlines a range of sites in Afghanistan's with conservation potential, in order to reach the national target of conserving 10% of Afghanistan surface by 2030 as formulated in the Natural Resource Management Strategy. Creating and managing such areas requires management models, some of which have been developed and tested through EIMPA, and thus can be replicated throughout the country<sup>14</sup>.

At the community level, apart from simple forms of support such as providing solar cookers that were delivered *en masse*, it was quite clear that the project would only be able to undertake 'seed' interventions in business development, corral construction, the installation of appended solar

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<sup>14</sup> Prior to EIMPA, Band-e Amir National Park was the only protected area in the country. Now, in addition to 3 areas declared with the help of the project, and the Bamyan Plateau to be declared soon, several more areas were or are being set-up following these examples, including Kol-e-Heshmat Khan near (in) Kabul and Shah Fuladi regional park in Bamyan.

greenhouses or tree planting. Such examples, if successful and found attractive by communities, would then be followed up using additional resources of other processes or even communities themselves. One of the recommendations of the mid-term review was to further promote community ownership and independence, including imposing condition to community on their commitment to replicate (e.g. when WCS constructs a corral, the community should be asked to build a second corral).

Whereas it seems to have been somewhat difficult in such particular cases, to a considerable degree the initial expectation has proven true. With respect to appended solar greenhouses the terminal evaluation team witnessed high degree of commitment from at least some of the communities to invest their own resources.<sup>15</sup> Some other interviewed communities are however still waiting for external players to provide these and other livelihood benefits.<sup>16</sup>

### **UNDP comparative advantage**

As, beyond security, Afghanistan peoples' major concerns remain linked to their economic well-being, UNDP is well positioned to combine conservation work with economic motivation through developing livelihood solutions at the same time serving environmental purpose.

UNDP is strongly connected with the governmental system including its top-level management, and is therefore able to bring the environmental rational to authorities which would otherwise not see it as high priority. This concerns not only top financial and economic development authorities, but also, e.g. national police which is partially dependent on UNDP's support and is therefore, attentive to it

As the coordinator of the UN system-wide cooperation, UNDP is also in a key position to enlist cooperation and inputs of other UN agencies, such as FAO, UNEP and the World Bank which would be especially helpful in the aftermath of the project to help sustain EIMPA results and ensure continued support to activities in the conservation domain altogether.

Finally, UNDP is well placed to secure funds for a follow-up project, as is evident through the successful initiation of GEF-6 Snow Leopard conservation project in Wakhan.

### **Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector**

The Government of Afghanistan has been strongly involved with both project design and implementation. Consequently project work and results have been well aligned with governmental priorities, policies and future plans in the conservation domain. The co-financing commitment of the Government also testifies to the fact that key governmental players (NEPA, MAIL, MRRD) have seen project operations as relevant and well aligned with their own actions, as the evaluation team has also witnessed in the field.

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<sup>15</sup> One community in Bamyan stated that they would always find money for new plastic for solar greenhouses themselves – the area is very windy and plastic often gets destroyed – as the houses are very important for people, and in general.

<sup>16</sup> Communities often claim they cannot afford materials for corrals or appended solar greenhouses or buying the services of professional carpenters.

### **3.2 Project implementation**

#### **Adaptive management**

The evaluation did not identify particular issues with adapting the management and implementation of the project to evolving circumstances. As an example, the details of specific interventions on the local level (tree planting, appended greenhouses) were all based on continuous dialogue discussions with communities, who in-turn were generally very appreciative of being asked what they wanted<sup>17</sup>. A few initially unforeseen interventions, such as the introduction of female rangers and addressing solid waste management in BANP<sup>18</sup>, came directly out of consultations with communities and / or BAPAC. One village in Bamyan reported that the project accepted the idea of changing material for appended greenhouses from imported to locally-produced (and also cheaper and stronger), which was both appreciated and allowed for more houses to be constructed.

Considerable flexibility was shown in project response to mid-term review recommendations. In particular, as was witnessed by the evaluation team, the strengthening of public awareness activities and gender focus allowed to considerably improve awareness of the public and in particular school students and women during the last 14 months of the project.

One governmental office commented that the mistake of pursuing the essentially political goal of establishing APWA could have been noticed earlier than at the time of mid-term review. This could have saved time and resources by focusing its attention on conservation policy rather than attempting to change the institutional set-up. It however remains unclear whether the respective indications were sufficient at the time to change the course of the project.

A comment was also made about a certain lack of project flexibility in response to requests made in 2017 by governmental stakeholders through the mid-term review to re-design certain project activities – which was admittedly quite late in the project cycle.

#### **Partnership arrangements**

In principle, the key relevant stakeholders were involved in project design and implementation on all levels: national, provincial and local. As already noted in the mid-term review, the project has made concerted efforts to involve stakeholders in decision-making and in enhancing their capacities. NEPA and MAIL were part of the PSC. Their provincial and district offices as well as community representatives from BACC, WPA, CDCs and CDC clusters have been actively involved in gathering information and feeding the development of protected areas management plans. The District Governor's office and its Education Department in Wakhan was involved in conducting environment days at schools, and both district and provincial DAILs and NEPA offices have been involved in afforestation / watershed activities as well as in livestock vaccination campaigns in WNP.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Even though some are not happy with the criteria for appended solar greenhouses (selection by floor and windows size). There were similar issues in some villages with criteria for tree planting (suitable land, water, ability to protect the plants), however most decisions were still made collectively or by lottery and thus accepted as fair.

<sup>18</sup> Waste management activities in BANP were carried out primarily with complementary UNDP SGP funding.

<sup>19</sup> Vaccination also involved central-level collaboration with the veterinary office of MAIL and close involvement of the private sector (e.g. paraveterinary workers).

Many interviewed governmental offices expressed strong satisfaction with their engagement in project activities. At the same time others did note that they would have liked to be more involved in certain aspects of the project, including wildlife surveys and work at the community level. One governmental office questioned the “NGO execution” mode in principle, i.a. for perceived high overhead, suggesting that it is best to be avoided in future GEF projects. Lack of international exchange of experience within the project, especially for governmental employees working at the operational levels (e.g. park rangers), was mentioned too.

At the same time it is to be noted that the lack of clarity about the distribution of responsibilities between NEPA and MAIL for the management of protected areas<sup>20</sup> was among factors limiting governmental involvement, as including both agencies in project activities would significantly increase costs as opposed to would-have-been APWA staff. At times this uncertainty also hindered the proactive engagement of both agencies, while due to high work load and a plethora of other responsibilities in particular local governmental offices were not always able to respond to invitations to take part in particular project activities.

Several interviewed stakeholders commented on still weak cooperation from the side of the police, which as a rule is comparatively less interested in typically-small environmental cases as opposed to other types of crime, and which has little legal basis for punishing poachers in the absence of the Wildlife and Hunting Law, revised protected areas regulation or other strong legal acts in force. Positive signs are however the recent decision by the Governor of Bamyan to set up a police checkpoint next to a ranger station, as well as police’s increased attention to illegal expansion of rain-fed hillside fields and to hunting reported by rangers and communities, including the growing number of poaching-prosecution cases for in Wakhan.<sup>21</sup>

WCS has been instrumental in the establishment of BACC and WPA as a means for enhancing community-engagement in conservation and land management, and the project has supported their further capacity development. Inter alia, BACC and WPA received training in preparing project proposals for UNDP Small Grants Programme, as a consequence many of their applications turned out successful and thus added funds and value to EIMPA activities and results. As discussed above, BACC, WPA, CDCs and the communities themselves have been strongly involved in the selection of project demonstration sites, e.g. for tree planting, appended solar greenhouses and predator-proof corrals.

Despite considerable effort, it has proven challenging to engage women in the project. Women are formally represented in both BACC and WPA committees, where their representation has improved since the start of the project to almost targeted 20%. As the mid-term review commented on the modest engagement of the project with women, in 2017-2018 WCS stepped up efforts in this respect. It also reported a positive change in females’ attitude and interest.<sup>22</sup> Interviews in community meetings conducted by the evaluation team also testify to the fact that females within project regions are currently

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<sup>20</sup> The evaluation mission was informed by both NEPA and MAIL that an in-principle agreement was recently reached between the two agencies, to the effect that NEPA will focus on policy and monitoring aspects of nature conservation, while MAIL will remain to be responsible for day-to-day management of protected areas. This agreement is not yet formalized e.g. in the framework of the Wildlife and Hunting Law and revised protected areas regulation.

<sup>21</sup> Through the project WCS also trained 130 police officers on Afghanistan’s environment laws and obligations under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

<sup>22</sup> With initially low female interest in ranger jobs in Bamyan, the current interest is much stronger. Similar observation was made by the evaluation team.

well aware of, an interested in, project activities, and are not shy to express their opinions.<sup>23</sup> Women meetings in the frame of an awareness campaign on wild carnivores across the Wakhan Valley are seen by communities as one of the project's big achievements. Some interviewed women in both Bamyan and Wakhan however still complained that they were not invited to project-related community meetings with WCS staff (which they would have otherwise attended). In one village in Bamyan interviewed women commented that the meeting was scheduled at an inconvenient time (in the evening, when women tend to be busy at home).

There were two particular issues with female engagement, which, being essentially success stories, still require follow-up beyond project lifetime. At one point, at the community initiative (see above), WCS engaged four female rangers in BANP working in the vicinity of the lakes. This was a pioneering move, which strongly raised BANP profile and attracted attention of numerous national and international media.<sup>24</sup> However after the ranger system was transferred to MAIL, these jobs were reclassified as cleaners, while some of the tasks remained the same and not different from those of seasonal MAIL rangers. The reclassification has clearly had a negative impact on the females' status. Although MAIL was several times approached by WCS and UNDP with requests to rectify the situation, it is yet to be resolved.

In the central village of Jarubkashan in BANP, the project supported the construction of five (women-only) market stalls, with rights to trade distributed among all the 9 CDCs (14 villages) of the area. Initially very popular, the stalls were widely used for selling goods and services (i.a. hosting one and only female tailor workshop in the area). However, after a while, other (male) traders illegally installed their improvised stalls in front of those constructed by the project, which greatly reduced the flow of customers and made women trade unprofitable. At the moment the only remaining female trade in the village takes place at illegal locations in a different part of the park (and without paying the annual state tax of AFG 1000 ~ USD 12,0). Village authorities would like to move trade back, but for the moment the stalls remain unused.

With regard to participation of development partners, not all organisations that were initially intended to be invited to participate in project steering (e.g. UNEP, AKF), or that would potentially be relevant for such role (e.g. USAID), were in fact not much or at all engaged with the project. Stronger cooperation with some of them could have strengthened opportunities for follow-up – and may indeed still be pursued.

## Project finance

In the course of the project, WCS regularly prepared two financial reports: one following UNDP-GEF format, and one for WCS headquarters. Unqualified audits with recommendations for improvements were carried out annually by examining financial documentation available in Kabul.<sup>25</sup> The evaluation team finds that sufficient financial controls were put in place to allow project management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and to allow for the timely flow of funds for payments.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the evaluation did not find evidence of departure from due diligence in the management of funds.

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<sup>23</sup> On quite a few occasions males in community meetings also commented on recently much strengthened women rights and their understanding: "Women now have all the power. They would not even drink tea with us men. Before they would not go out of the village, now they go to Bamyan and have TV. They know their rights!"

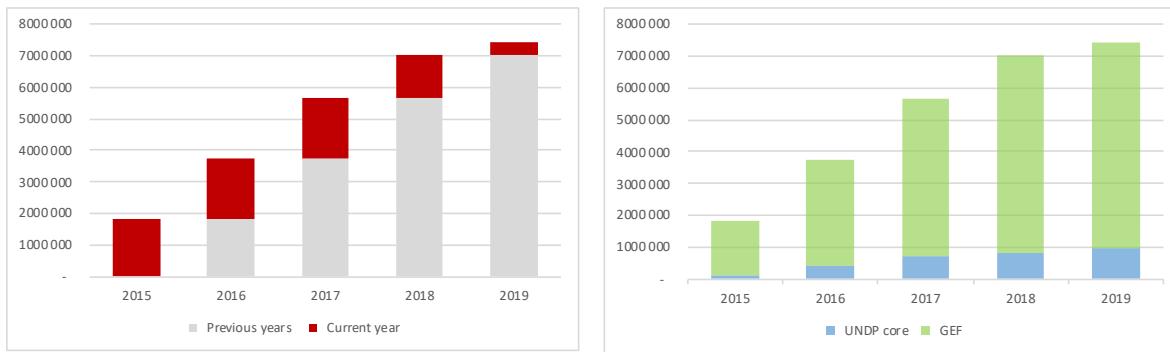
<sup>24</sup> There are only few other countries in the world where women rangers exist.

<sup>25</sup> The 2019 audit is yet to be carried out after the completion of the terminal evaluation.

<sup>26</sup> The initial disbursement delay was caused by the later than anticipated start of the project in 2014.

Taking into account part of the budget still reserved for remaining UNDP-managed activities in 2019, the entire budget of the project has been spent, with some delays in comparison with the initial planning but well in line with the overall budget allocation and its revision approved by the PSC (Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1).

**Figure 3.1 EIMPA total cumulative expenditures, USD**



Source of data: UNDP

**Table 3.1 EIMPA project budget and expenditures per activity, USD**

|                    | TOTAL<br>budget  | EXPENDITURES     |                  |                  |                  |                |                  |  |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|--|
|                    |                  | 2015             | 2016             | 2017             | 2018             | 2019           |                  |  |
| Activity 1         | <b>1 555 999</b> | 248 801          | 208 903          | 246 243          | 228 200          | 73 930         | <b>1 006 076</b> |  |
| Activity 2         | <b>2 522 490</b> | 703 530          | 690 833          | 646 212          | 452 260          | 100 244        | <b>2 593 079</b> |  |
| Activity 3         | <b>2 971 030</b> | 703 206          | 778 106          | 772 023          | 630 732          | 127 089        | <b>3 011 156</b> |  |
| Activity 4         | <b>392 300</b>   | 169 769          | 223 118          | 266 579          | 26 896           | 145 144        | <b>831 507</b>   |  |
| <b>Total GEF</b>   | <b>6 441 819</b> | <b>1 712 281</b> | <b>1 592 837</b> | <b>1 649 746</b> | <b>1 194 914</b> | <b>292 041</b> | <b>6 441 819</b> |  |
| <b>Total UNDP</b>  | <b>1 000 000</b> | <b>113 025</b>   | <b>308 123</b>   | <b>281 311</b>   | <b>143 174</b>   | <b>154 366</b> | <b>1 000 000</b> |  |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b> | <b>7 441 819</b> | <b>1 825 306</b> | <b>1 900 960</b> | <b>1 931 057</b> | <b>1 338 089</b> | <b>446 407</b> | <b>7 441 819</b> |  |

Source: UNDP country office in Afghanistan

Overall, the implementation can be rated cost-effective when considering the context in which the project operated: both the overall situation and general insecurity in Afghanistan (including in Kabul where WCS Afghanistan head office is located), and difficult access to project regions in particular to and within Wakhan where the transport of staff and equipment is mainly done by air, sometimes via adjacent Tajikistan and by renting large numbers of pack animals.

It is impossible to accurately establish the extent to which the co-finance stated in the project document has materialised, and no tools, requirements or methodological support are available from GEF to enable or even motivate precise monitoring of co-financing. Yet the available estimates indicate that the

anticipated USD 38.3 million co-financing was provided in its entirety, whereas WCS was even able to leverage ca. USD 500,000 above its pledged amount of USD 300,000.

**Table 3.2 Pledged and disbursed co-financing, USD**

| Project co-financing      | At endorsement    | At completion / terminal evaluation | Investment mobilised | Recurrent expenditures |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| UNDP (cash)               | 1,000,000         | 1,000,000                           | 1,000,000            |                        |
| UNDP (grant)              | 2,000,000         | 2,000,000                           | 2,000,000            |                        |
| NEPA (grant)              | 1,000,000         | 1,000,000                           |                      | 1,000,000              |
| MAIL (grant)              | 18,000,000        | 18,000,000                          |                      | 18,000,000             |
| MAIL (in kind)            | 6,000,000         | 6,000,000                           |                      | 6,000,000              |
| MRRD/NSP (grant)          | 10,000,000        | 10,000,000                          |                      | 10,000,000             |
| WCS (grant)               | 300,000           | 803,005                             | 803,005              |                        |
| <b>Total co-financing</b> | <b>38,300,000</b> | <b>38,803,005</b>                   | <b>3,803,005</b>     | <b>35,000,000</b>      |

Estimates by UNDP country office in Afghanistan (WCS contribution is estimated by WCS); not counted are pledged contribution by USAID and AKF, additional funds raised from UNDP Small Grants Programme, in-kind labour inputs from participating communities and UNDP staff time.

The terminal evaluation team somewhat disagrees with the statement in the mid-term review about, in practice, little linkage of project activities to non-UNDP and non-WCS co-financing stated. Whereas not all co-financed activities are easy to specifically identify and directly link to EIMPA work, at least government-financed activities for nature conservation, practical management of protected areas (including, park offices, ranger teams etc.), massive investments in tourism infrastructure have beyond doubt contributed to achieving project objectives, complementing, enhancing and sustaining project results.

It is also worthwhile mentioning that neither the initially anticipated co-financing nor the available estimates included the pledged contribution of estimated USD 50 million from USAID, the additional resources de-facto leveraged from UNDP Small Grants Programme, or in-kind contributions from the communities e.g. in the form of free labour for planting trees, constructing appended solar greenhouses or corrals,<sup>27</sup> as well as much of UNDP staff time.

### **Monitoring and evaluation: design at entry and implementation**

As discussed in section 3.1 above, project result indicators at objective and outcome levels were set in the project result framework at project onset, and partially revised in 2017 based on the findings and recommendations of the mid-term review. Baselines were established where possible, although some of them could only be established 1-2 years after project start.

As mentioned above, the socio-economic data to be collected for monitoring lacked gender disaggregation, and many of the actual side benefits / impacts of the project were never monitored –

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<sup>27</sup> The labourer cost of corral-construction in Autumn 2014 was however covered through the Food for Work programme of WFP.

which however has more to do with the design of the results framework and its targets than with monitoring and evaluation design per se. It is however worthwhile mentioning that expanding the results and targets in these directions would have implied considerable additional costs for monitoring their achievement, which would be prohibitive given the available budget.

Responsibilities for monitoring were clearly articulated in project design, and WCS had a monitoring and reporting officer for performing these tasks. Mid-term and terminal evaluations were planned and budgeted as customary for GEF project implementation. Overall the evaluation team rates project monitoring and evaluation design as *satisfactory*.

The established indicators were monitored throughout project implementation, and monitoring data were reported in PIRs and progress reports presented to and discussed at project steering committee meetings. The evaluation team did not find evidence of untimely or irregular reporting, and considers its quality sufficient.

Project monitoring appears to not have drawn significantly on national systems, but rather on data collected by WCS – obviously because the Government, as confirmed in the terminal evaluation interviews, still does not have adequate systems in place, e.g. for monitoring wildlife and biodiversity protected areas. Indeed, it is rather the project that generated monitoring data and informed the Government, e.g. with wildlife population data. The Government (or for that matter any other party) however still lacks capacity – or ingenuity – to make systematic use of and promote the exchange of such data among the various state and non-state actors.<sup>28</sup>

Consequently, the project has provided NEPA and MAIL with training related to gathering biodiversity data, and involved both government and community stakeholders in gathering data for the establishment and management of protected areas, but the hands-on involvement of governmental stakeholders in field monitoring appears to have been limited. One government department commented on the lack of the transfer of technical expertise to make such monitoring sustainable in the future.

Progress monitoring results reported in PIRs were promptly used to guide corrective and follow-up actions. For instance PIR 2017 states that the project team addressed the comments of PIR 2016 in completing all the baseline assessments and analysis and conducting a gender assessment with a focus on the role of women in natural resource management and conservation, with gender results reported and discussed in the PIR itself. PIR self-evaluation ratings of the attainment of development objectives and project implementation were consistent with the findings of the mid-term review and the terminal evaluation, in all cases ranging between moderately satisfactory and satisfactory.

The mid-term evaluation was a critical tool to help guide the project's reorientation in view of apparent difficulties with achieving some of the initially intended results. The review came out with a set of practical and, in our view, largely highly relevant, recommendations, most of which were duly considered by the project management team. The significant flaw with the mid-term review was however its timing: undertaken in late 2017, when three quarters of project funds had already been spent (cf. Fig. 3.1), and given the field-dependent nature of the project, it only left slightly more than one year and one field season to fully implement the recommendations. This was clearly insufficient for some of the recommended responses (including e.g. newly started activities for the Bamyan Plateau), and, despite the high quality of the mid-term review, its late timing is partially responsible for the project not achieving

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<sup>28</sup> E.g. data of vegetation surveys in Bamyan performed independently by WCS and AKF.

some of its (revised) targets. The implementation of monitoring and evaluation plan is rated as [moderately satisfactory](#).

Overall the monitoring and evaluation component of the project can be rated as [satisfactory](#).

#### **UNDP and Implementing Partner implementation / execution, coordination, and operational issues**

The terminal evaluation team endorses the conclusions of the mid-term review concerning the generally efficient and timely implementation / execution of EIMPA project. WCS has carried out the project efficiently and with dedication in a difficult context, with delivery generally being comprehensive, on time, and delays mainly being due to external factors.

Despite the known complexity of UNDP's rules and procedures, WCS did not report or manifest serious compliance challenges, and both organisations made an extra effort to seek and provide the necessary clarifications, support and operational flexibility.

While the project operated in the safest parts of Afghanistan in terms of the impacts of the ongoing armed confrontation, cooperation with WCS has still enabled UNDP to reach some of the most remote and underserved communities in Afghanistan including Wakhan, where UNDP cannot directly operate at all due to security limitations.

Engagement with NEPA and MAIL has been consistent, strong, productive and mutually appreciated, although not without challenges discussed above (i.a. engagement in field activities and transfer of technical expertise still insufficient in view of some partners).

Several operational issues observed during the mid-term review, such as the discrepancy between terms of reference and the actual tasks of some WCS staff members in Wakhan; the conflict of interest with a WCS staff member in Bamyan; the lack of WCS female staff in the field – have obviously been rectified and in our view did not in the end affect the overall delivery of project results.

As discussed above, overall project monitoring captured most outcomes and impacts, while the reporting was timely and generally [satisfactory](#).<sup>29</sup>

Outreach has been an inherent element of the project, and major efforts were made in that direction at both the national level (regular contributions to special events, fairs, meetings and campaigns) and the local level (in particular through schools and meetings with communities). The results of this work as witnessed by the terminal evaluation team, although not directly captured by project monitoring, are nonetheless very positive.

Especially given the context of Afghanistan, hardly comparable to many other contexts in which development assistance operates, we rate both the implementation of the project by UNDP and its execution by WCS as [satisfactory](#).

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<sup>29</sup> To note, however, that both narrative and financial final project reporting took some time, so that project closure reports only became available in the middle of the terminal evaluation period.

### **3.3 Project results**

#### **Overall results**

The rating of project results is primarily based on the indicators and targets selected for the project objective in the project results framework (Table 2.1).

Out of three indicators, target for one was achieved above expectations: management capacities of NEPA / MAIL and the two community councils as measured by METT scores increased, respectively, from 42 and 24 to 60 and 40 percent. One could question the actual meaning of METT scores, and communities in both project regions still expressed certain level of dissent with respect to the lack of transparency of councils' operations. Yet it is unquestionable that the council's capacities have strongly benefited from project support, and in particular have grown in terms of attracting, managing and using external funds which is extremely important for the future sustainability of both the institutions and the co-management of the respective protected areas.

The quantitative targets for land area protected and rangeland area co-managed have been achieved (and the indicator is above target for rangelands thanks to initially unforeseen project activities in the Bamyan Plateau). We would however argue that both targets are only partially reached.

Even though all 4 protected areas have been declared as planned, and management plans for all of them have been drafted, the plan for the largest Wakhan National Park still lacks official approval / signature from the Government<sup>30</sup>, while the revision of the management plan for Band-e Amir National Park was only approved in May 2019.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, even if management tools were largely in place, and two of the three officially approved plans in Wakhan will eventually be included into WNP – so that part of the latter can already be considered under proper management regime – so far only part of the territory declared as protected can be considered as fully managed.

The same applies for the effective co-management of rangelands. Although the respective areas are declared protected and many on-the-ground activities have taken place to support and enforce the protection status (i.a. work with communities, rangers, citizens), in the absence of full coverage by approved and operational management plans co-management cannot be judged entirely effective.

#### **Relevance**

The project addressed the conservation of nationally and globally significant nature, an important political priority in Afghanistan and worldwide, in practice often under-appreciated in the overall policy context. Increasing the understanding of the importance of these issues at all levels was an important element of the project, so was building practical mechanisms for putting conservation policies in action. At the same time the project helped the Government in implementing its policies and international commitments vis-

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<sup>30</sup> Fifteen governmental rangers, placed in Wakhan in the course of the project, are also fewer than 36 required by the draft management plan for Wakhan National Park. Current capacities in Big Pamir (6 rangers) and Teggermansu (3 rangers) areas are also lower than those required by management plans in force (respectively, 11 and 7 rangers).

<sup>31</sup> At the level of official sign-off in Kabul, while approval from BAPAC was obtained earlier and within the time-span of the project.

à-vis wildlife conservation. In synergy with the above, the project also addressed the needs of rural development, improving people's livelihoods in particular in vulnerable regions, and reducing poverty.

The project objectives, well in line with UNDP's Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 and its 'signature solutions', directly related to two of the six focus areas of UNDP country programming in Afghanistan: environment and creating sustainable livelihoods. It has also mainstreamed in its activities a strong focus on gender equality and addressing gender gap; contributed to democratic governance by empowering community- and stakeholder sensitive inclusive institutions for conservation management; and to the strengthening the rule of law by advancing Afghanistan's legal framework, its implementation and enforcement.

Similarly, the project is well in line with the focus of GEF programming for Afghanistan on critical biodiversity, land degradation and climate change.

Project objectives directly respond to Sustainable Development Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss, in particular its targets (shortened) to

- ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands;
- ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity;
- take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species;
- take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna;
- integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning.

The project directly or indirectly contributed also to SDGs (1) No Poverty, (3) Good Health and Well-being, (4) Quality Education, (5) Gender Equality, (7) Affordable and Clean Energy, (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth, (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities, (12) Responsible Consumption and Production, (13) Climate Action, and (16) Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

We concur the project as highly [relevant](#).

### **Effectiveness and efficiency**

While some stakeholders questioned in the interviews the efficiency of NGO execution mode in principle, others appreciated inherent NGO's proactiveness. In the view of the terminal evaluation team, the choice of this mode was sufficiently justified at the time of project development and, despite obviously higher overhead costs, still offers numerous advantages such as high dedication and commitment of NGO implementing partners, their strong technical and field capacities, implementation and financial flexibility, and direct access to international experience and expertise. Moving to other alternative execution modes in the future is the question of political will and the ability of the Government to ensure institutional sustainability of project results in the longer term (see below).

With the well-established and functional execution and sufficient flexibility shown on all sides, overall reasonably costs-efficient implementation in the difficult context of Afghanistan, we rate project efficiency as **satisfactory**.

Even though not all formally set targets were attained (see above), objectively highly important results were achieved on the policy / institutional and the local / livelihood / ecosystem levels, and are obviously highly appreciated by most if not all interviewed project stakeholders. A number of issues, some of which were admittedly difficult to anticipate, nonetheless limited eventual project success. We judge project effectiveness as **satisfactory**.

### **Country ownership**

Key governmental stakeholders NEPA and MAIL, the interviewed Governor's offices, community institutions and communities themselves all strongly testified to the importance of the project and its results, and to the willingness to sustain them in the future. Even though their capacities to do that are still uneven and their preferred strategies differ (see Sustainability below), the ownership of project results by these institutions is clearly strong.

The project operated at the core of national conservation policy, including the respective law-making, and conservation practice in the field, well in line and coordinated with the existing national conservation policy, legislation and practice. There are very clear links between project results and the continued conservation mandates of various governmental and other actors. The draft legislation, once adopted, will make central part of the corpus of Afghanistan's conservation and environmental law. The management models for protected areas, developed and operationalised through the project, are not only being put into practice (although in the case of WNP with delay beyond the project lifetime), but will serve as models – positive or otherwise – for other future parts of the national systems of protected areas. All in all, project results seem well mainstreamed into national conservation policies and practices and will continue to play a role in years to come.

### **Mainstreaming**

As discussed in the relevance section above, beyond conservation, the project has successfully mainstreamed other UNDP priorities such as gender and women's empowerment, poverty alleviation, capacity development, improved governance and rule of law, prevention of and recovery from natural disasters, and has contributed to achieving a significant number of SDGs.

As such the project has been a good example of an integrated approach to conservation issues: both making use of a wide array of existing solutions and mechanisms, from improving legislative and institutional frameworks to capacity building, education and awareness-raising at all levels; and creating impacts and benefits far beyond conservation (see impact section below).

Gender has received particular attention, especially based on the specific recommendations of the mid-term review, and admirable and widely appreciated results were achieved in this respect with a strong potential for project, governmental and community-level follow-up.

## Sustainability

Sustainability may be among the more challenging dimensions of assessing EIMPA results. While their sustainability outlook is overall good and we rate it as [moderately likely](#), in order to be achieved in reality will require targeted follow-up – which we discuss below as well as in the recommendations section.

### *Financial sustainability*

About half of governmental stakeholders interviewed during the terminal evaluation are confident that project results can easily be sustained in the most advanced BANP without further hands-on support from the international community. They rather prefer in the future more technically- and strategy-oriented international assistance, the later aimed at developing improved management models and approaches addressing fundamental issues that could not have been dealt with by EIMPA (land ownership, location of settlements within protected areas, business and investment models for managing and further developing them etc.). For less developed regions such as Wakhan and, in particular, the Bamyan Plateau where minimal investments have so far been made, a clear need is seen on the contrary to continue on-the-ground international support. This is partially ensured through the follow-up snow leopard conservation project in Wakhan, financed by GEF-6 and to be implemented by UNDP and WCS,<sup>32</sup> and the EU-funded project on climate resilience in the Amu Darya river basin implemented by a consortium of WCS, AKF and GIZ, which covers Wakhan and the northern part of the Bamyan Plateau.<sup>33</sup>

Other interviewed national and local governmental stakeholders and observers, community organisations and members however see gaps in governmental capacities to fully follow up in BANP that will be difficult to fill without continued international engagement; something for which no provisions have been made at the moment. Among EIMPA activities in need of further non-governmental / international involvement, as mentioned by local actors, are continued tree planting, support to rangers, and awareness work at schools. All governmental departments in Bamyan are eager to sustain and expand EIMPA results, but some of them agree too that without external assistance that may be quite difficult. (And all of them agree that the Government alone will not have sufficient resources to extend protection to the Bamyan Plateau).

Generation and management of revenues from protected areas is still a major issue threatening long-term financial sustainability of project results. Contrary to initial expectations, it has not been so far possible to find a redistribution modality for revenues that would be acceptable for both the central Government (notably the Ministry of Finance) and the local communities. At the moment, all the revenues generated at the BANP main entrance gate are supposed to go to the consolidated state budget rather than to be returned and redistributed locally. The current solution of channelling BANP revenues to district authorities is a temporary compromise.<sup>34</sup> Local communities also economically benefit from tourism in other ways, by providing services and selling products to tourists.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Conservation of Snow Leopards and their Critical Ecosystem in Afghanistan.

<sup>33</sup> Addressing Climate Change in Afghanistan through sustainable energy and ecosystem management.

<sup>34</sup> According to UNDP, the Ministry of Finance has however in-principle agreed that at least 50% of revenues from protected areas should go back to communities.

<sup>35</sup> Some grievances were however expressed by community members in Jarubkashan (Bamyan) about lack of opportunities to offer services like boat renting. Respondents in Wakhan commented that it is mostly Ishkashim (entry gate) and Sarhad-e Broghil (entry point to Little Pamir) that benefit from tourism-related income.

In a larger context the issue of revenues from tourism also relates to longer-term choice of financial and business models for the economic sustainability of protected areas. Some governmental stakeholders suggest that opportunities for private investments are available, and public-private partnerships and inter-sectoral integrated solutions could be explored, while at the same time cautioning against uncontrolled “rush to tourism” which in the long-term may be dangerous for protected areas, their wildlife and vegetation. Balance economic interests of external private investors against those of local communities may not be straightforward either.

Furthermore there is also a question of how much revenues tourism can bring at all. While the number of visitors to BANP exploded three-fold to ca. 200,000 a year in the course of the project, gate entrance fees are low and revenues from them are relatively small. Further growth of tourist numbers is limited by security situation on the way between Bamyan and Kabul (though it can be further boosted after the opening in a few years of the north-south corridor highway linking Bamyan city to Mazar-e Sharif). In the impoverished and sparsely populated Wakhan, the number of tourists recently grew to several hundred a year. According to WCS estimates, this already contributes to the region’s economy an annual value comparable to 10-12% of the value of sheep and goat population summering in Western Big Pamir. Yet without resolving security of access to Wakhan, or radically changing revenue-generation models (e.g., by boosting international eco-tourism or considering highly profitable but equally controversial trophy hunting), tourism revenues in Wakhan are unlikely to grow much further in the near future.

Financial sustainability rating: [moderately likely](#)

#### *Socio-economic sustainability*

As discussed above, in the overall socio-economic context of Afghanistan nature conservation does not have the highest priority. Consequently there exists a realistic risk that conservation planning and activities will tend to be given less attention at various governance levels. This said, all levels express consistent interest in sustaining Afghanistan nature, and at least in this sense it is likely that conservation will stay on the political and thus socio-economic agendas. Regional authorities in particular see the value of preserving and sustainably managing local nature.

Somewhat contrary to what was noted by the mid-term review, and at least partially, exactly due to post-review interventions, the evaluation team found community awareness in Bamyan and especially Wakhan relatively good too, although gaps certainly still exist for instance and notably in understanding cost vs. benefits of environmental conservation. Young people / school students and women seem to be the most receptive, and in particular in Bamyan the context is conducive for awareness raising with active media and NGOs. Numerous examples have been observed of awareness spreading by example (e.g. for planted trees or solar greenhouses, if one person does it, others tend to follow). As discussed above, at least some communities expressed their intention to keep maintaining at their own cost what was provided through EIMPA of follow-up projects such as UNDP SGP.

At the same time, in many communities there is still a high degree of reliance on continued support from NGOs, including WCS which in some places is seen as the preferred provider of all kinds of facilities and services far beyond those linked to conservation (this stretches to demands for water, electricity and even agricultural facilities<sup>36</sup>). Even with respect to continued conservation-related support the expectations in

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<sup>36</sup> One community in Bamyan persistently asked for a poultry farm to be provided by WCS.

some interviewed communities are quite high, and may be quite difficult to meet without the continued engagement of WCS (which for the time being is ensured in the north of the Bamyan Plateau and the west part of Saighan and Kahmard districts of the Bamyan Province, but not in BANP) or other NGOs. Some more specific issues identified above, e.g. conditions for female business development and returning the status to female rangers in BANP, will in any case require follow-up in order to establish a sustainable modus operandi.

Socio-economic sustainability rating: **moderately likely**

#### *Sustainability of the institutional and governance framework*

Because many of project results are closely linked to governmental and local activities (see above), a large part of them will be automatically sustained by these actors taking over the respective responsibilities. This relates to further development of policy and legal documents, such as the finalization and approval of the Wildlife and Hunting Law, revised protected areas regulation and the WNP management plan; the on-site day-to-day management and further development of the established protected areas; and further improvement of certain conservation practices, livelihoods and living conditions within communities located in and in the vicinity of the protected areas which were the focus of the project.

An earlier identified risk to institutional sustainability from the unclarity of conservation mandates of NEPA and MAIL had been partially resolved de facto, however is yet to be addressed on the formal level.

Finally, significant institutional and governance uncertainties are associated with the further development of Afghanistan's overall political framework following the forthcoming presidential elections as well the Afghan peace process stalled in September 2019.

Institutional sustainability rating: **moderately likely**

#### *Environmental sustainability*

As the project was designed to contribute to improved environmental sustainability of Afghanistan and the target regions, its own results will themselves partially help secure the sustainability of interventions. Besides the discussed above uncertainties with the financial and institutional future which may be insufficiently strong to contain negative developments within the project target areas, the most significant larger-scale risks to environmental sustainability come from climate change and infrastructural development.

As was particularly evidenced in the recent years, the effects of climate change accelerate both in Afghanistan and worldwide and may jeopardise project results even if they are environmentally sustainable in the past and current climatic conditions. A follow-up project to further build climate resilience in the Amu Darya is a welcome response to this challenge at least in part of the project area.

An example of infrastructural development that can jeopardise the environmental sustainability of project results is the North-South corridor motorway through the Bamyan Plateau and BANP, and similar developments are not to be excluded in other areas as well as in neighbouring countries affecting

Afghanistan. To minimise the negative effects, rigorous environmental safeguards will need to be applied and maintained by the Government as well as by international investors behind the development projects.

Environmental sustainability rating: **moderately likely**

## **Impact**

As discussed above, the project has made a notable difference by mitigating pressures on natural ecosystems and strengthening safeguards for their protection, nationally and within project regions, by:

- advancing conservation policy instruments and the Government's environmental engagement;
- helping establish management modalities for specific protected areas;
- putting in place, strengthening and supporting ranger capacities there;
- successfully restricting hunting, collection of mountain shrub and hill-side farming and proposing alternative / mitigating livelihood and business solutions there;
- significantly raising the level of environmental awareness in protected areas and nationally.

The extent to which these measures have actually improved the environmental situation are, as in most cases, difficult to assess. The project has been just one of many factors influencing the state of ecosystems and species. Thus separating the 'signal' of project impact from the 'noise' of the natural and climate-induced variability of ecosystem parameters over the short period of project time such impact could have been practically monitored is not an easy task. This is coupled with technical difficulties of collecting reliable data for some parameters such as wildlife population numbers. Yet the so far available indicators of vegetation, rangeland and wildlife conditions (Table 2.1) as well as anecdotal evidence (i.a. good status of plants around lakes in BANP, more frequent sighting of wild ungulates and wolves on the Bamyan Plateau and in Wakhan) indicate that the situation has generally improved or at least did not deteriorate vis-à-vis the baseline. However and if ever, reliable conclusions about the project's end impact can only be made once data are collected over a protracted period of time.

As was already noticed during the mid-term review and discussed above, some of the tangible impacts of the project, especially in the socio-economic domain, were not systematically monitored through the project result framework, yet they existed and were appreciated by project beneficiaries.<sup>37</sup> These include:

- non-environmental benefits and improved comfort from the provision of trees for planting, as well as from motivating people to continue some of this work on a larger scale at their own cost;
- new economic / business opportunities brought to people (in particular women), households, communities and community institutions;
- reduced exposure to poor indoor air quality thanks to solar cookers;
- economy of time previously spent to collect firewood and to secure livestock from predators;
- stronger protection against mudflows;
- improved management of solid waste;

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<sup>37</sup> At community meetings in both provinces people were able and willing to list numerous benefits of appended solar houses, planted trees and other EIMPA livelihoods interventions.

- stronger environmental motivation and knowledge among schoolchildren and teachers, with fertile ground for further environmental education work in communities.

The project and its results are well known, understood and appreciated, which is an additional indication of EIMPA's strong impact on the ground.

## **4 Conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations**

This concluding chapter presents a condensed overview of issues as they became apparent throughout the terminal evaluation. While most of the statements in this chapter reflect the analysis above, for some of the highlighted issues and recommendations the background analysis could not be elaborated in sufficient detail due to the limited size and the specified structure of the report. In such cases the evaluation team is ready to make itself available for further information and clarification.

### **4.1 Overall impressions and conclusions**

EIMPA project was highly important for Afghanistan and the target regions in Bamyan and Badakhshan provinces, as in the current political and security context environmental and in particular conservation work de-facto does not receive sufficient priority and there are not (m)any other similar initiatives.

Through the project, highly significant results were achieved which can be considered game changers for Afghanistan's conservation policy and practice. Tangible impacts were achieved on communities' and people's lives and livelihoods in the target areas. Project activities and results are highly appreciated by virtually all interviewed stakeholders and observers, both nationally and locally. There are repeated calls to sustain operations and continue presence in project areas, although there are differing views on the exact kind of desired follow-up (from sustaining business-as-usual and small activities on the ground to moving to more strategic / technical backstopping of and advice to Government-led operations).

In response to the mid-term review, many improvements were made, in particular in the fields of public awareness and addressing gender issues, as well as reorienting the project to take account of the current policy context. For reasons of timing, budget and external limitations, addressed to a lesser extent were economic and community development issues.

Not all results could be achieved fully or in time, in particular on the policy and the institutional level (laws, plans, community institutions), partially due to reasons outside of project control. National conservation policy set-up still needs to formalise, and the sustainability on the regional / local level partly remains challenging. The compulsory criteria rating as required from the terminal evaluation is summarised below.

**Table 4.1 Evaluation criteria and their rating**

| <b>Criterion</b>                              | <b>Rating</b>           |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1. Monitoring and evaluation                  |                         |
| Design at entry                               | Satisfactory            |
| Plan implementation                           | Moderately satisfactory |
| Overall quality                               | Satisfactory            |
| 2. Execution                                  |                         |
| Quality of UNDP implementation                | Satisfactory            |
| Quality of Execution – Implementing Partner   | Satisfactory            |
| Overall quality of implementation / execution | Satisfactory            |

| 3. Assessment of outcomes              |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Relevance                              | Relevant          |
| Effectiveness                          | Satisfactory      |
| Efficiency                             | Satisfactory      |
| Overall project outcome rating         | Satisfactory      |
| 4. Sustainability                      |                   |
| Financial resources                    | Moderately likely |
| Socio-political                        | Moderately likely |
| Institutional framework and governance | Moderately likely |
| Environmental                          | Moderately likely |
| Overall likelihood of sustainability   | Moderately likely |

## 4.2 Overview of key issues and lessons learnt

### Project design and execution

- a) While overall project design has been effective, the importance of broader policy context for some of the planned interventions (APWA and policy work) was underestimated. Consequently, some of the adopted targets were overambitious. Provisions for the Government's engagement and transfer of technical expertise may not have been fully sufficient.
- b) Whereas in our opinion the project cost, duration and execution modality were adequate for the purpose and the circumstances, they were nonetheless challenged by some of the stakeholders.
- c) It is difficult in practice to effectively estimate, monitor and use co-financing. While some of the inputs may be overestimated, others though very real do not get accounted for at all. The main purpose of estimating co-financing seems to be to justify and successfully obtain the allocation of GEF grant resources, and there is overall lack of guidance, precision and follow-up requirements for addressing it.
- d) Non-environmental and other side benefits of the project (e.g., for health, comfort, workload, waste, livestock, disasters) seems under-accounted, as they were not made part of the initial project results framework.
- e) Due to the late timing of the mid-term review, it proved difficult to fully integrate some of its findings in revised project planning and operations.

### Specific interventions

- f) A number of policy outputs (laws, plans) were delayed due to the policy / institutional context outside or project control, although one stakeholder commented on the insufficient quality of technical inputs that caused delays too.

- g) The established and / or strengthened community institutions function and have become important players in conservation. They are, however, not always perceived as efficient, unbiased and transparent by their respective communities.
- h) Participation of police in conservation is important and improving, but has not been as strong as desired and necessary.
- i) Awareness in the communities has been strengthened and seems good, still higher in Wakhan than in Bamyan. Yet overall there is still limited understanding of environmental costs-benefits to induce sufficient behaviour change, especially if on-the-ground interventions cease or are scaled-down.
- j) Technical criteria for choosing households for community-level interventions (tree plantation, appended solar greenhouses in Bamyan) still and understandably prevail over social and poverty criteria.
- k) Sometimes not enough technical advice to, follow-up or at least monitoring with, communities has been provided to capitalise on and fully sustain smaller-scale project interventions (e.g. planted trees, corrals)
- l) Women issues were widely addressed (rangers, business and handicraft, training, membership in PACs), but it was not always possible to make solutions sustainable.
- m) Due to the local culture / lack of demand and weak presence of foreign tourists, the existing tourism information centres and similar infrastructure are underused for their initial purpose in both Bamyan and Wakhan.<sup>38</sup>
- n) Despite the large amount of useful data generated by the project there is limited exchange of them outside the project, including their provision to external parties.<sup>39</sup> At the national scale, NEPA biodiversity portal has been developed but is still off-line.

### **Sustainability of project results**

- o) As discussed, there are different views on the exact nature of follow-up that is needed: from sustaining small activities on the ground to more strategic / technical support to the Government.
- p) At the moment there is a very different level of external engagement for following-up project activities in Wakhan (much stronger) vs. Bamyan.
- q) Despite impressive growth of tourist numbers in BANP, tourism potential in both Bamyan and Wakhan remains limited in the current security context, and will remain so unless new formats are found or security situation radically improves.
- r) Compensation mechanisms for perceived ‘sacrifices’ made by communities in favour of conservation (e.g. restricting hunting, rainfed farming etc.) are largely lacking or lack clear explanation,<sup>40</sup> which either way causes very real grievances among community members.

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<sup>38</sup> Yet WPA is successfully renting the facility to AKF, thus generating revenues to support WPA its operation.

<sup>39</sup> In the course of the project two WCS Afghan staff were sent to the USA for PhD studies, and are to publish EIMPA ecological and social data in the following years. Ideally this would be complemented by commonly accessible online databases systematically storing respective data for common use.

<sup>40</sup> Rainfed agriculture is banned in Afghanistan per governmental decision (not enforced) to support resilient rangeland ecosystems necessary for extensive livestock production.

- s) It may be time to explore new international funding options and synergies which are available, e.g., with the World Bank, FAO and UNEP.

### **Significant future challenges**

- t) The distribution of responsibilities between NEPA and MAIL over conservation policy and practice, even though in-principle agreed, lacks a formal basis and legal codification, thus limiting the effectiveness of attempts to further develop and support conservation institutions.
- u) The political instability and uncertainties associated with the forthcoming presidential elections and the security and peace negotiation process at large create a very difficult context for environmental policy. Among other things, imminent changes and lack of stability in administration are likely at all levels, in addition an eventual peace settlement will trigger large-scale people's movement (e.g. return of refugees to Bamyan).<sup>41</sup>
- v) China's Belt and Road Initiative provides a welcome boost to underdeveloped infrastructure, at the same time threatening biodiversity and ecosystems if environmental safeguards are not rigorously applied. The North-South corridor motorway construction through the Bamyan Plateau and BANP, presents a potential environmental challenge.
- w) Global and regional climate change remains a challenge that will need to be addressed for the years to come.

### **4.3 Recommendations and follow-up to reinforce EIMPA results**

The recommendations below (table 4.2) address specific follow-up to EIMPA which in our view would be appropriate to complete its mission and reinforce its benefits. Despite the fact that project activities have been completed, such follow up is still within realistic reach of the Government of Afghanistan, the local communities, UNDP and WCS.

The suggested concrete actions by UNDP and WCS are divided between communicating the recommendations to the national, provincial or local actors, and directly facilitating the implementation of some of the recommendations within the resources available through ongoing or planned activities in project areas as well as nationally.

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<sup>41</sup> This is already happening due to the US-Iran crisis.

**Table 4.2 Actionable recommendations to reinforce EIMPA results**

**RECOMMENDATION 1.** UNDP to COMMUNICATE ADVICE to national and local stakeholders

- 1.1 Adopt pending legislation and protected areas management plans
- 1.2 Declare the Bamyan Plateau a protected area <sup>a</sup>
- 1.3 Fully implement outstanding *WCS recommendations for BANP management after 2018* <sup>a b</sup>
- 1.4 Address status of women rangers and female business opportunities in BANP <sup>a</sup>

**RECOMMENDATION 2.** UNDP to COMMUNICATE ADVICE to national and local stakeholders;  
WCS to FACILITATE ACTION within the limits of available resources \*

- 2.1 Continue minimal monitoring of the sustainability of project's community interventions and follow-up on the ground in EIMPA target regions <sup>a</sup>
- 2.2 Establish a functional PAC in Wakhan National Park <sup>a b</sup>
- 2.3 Revisit procedures and practices at PACs and improve quality of community participation <sup>b</sup>
- 2.4 Further improve gender balance at PACs <sup>a b</sup>
- 2.5 Extend systematic environmental training to teachers and younger-grades' students <sup>a</sup>
- 2.6 Extend the 'junior ranger' programme from Wakhan to Bamyan <sup>a</sup>
- 2.7 Focus on the awareness of environmental costs vs. benefits among local communities <sup>a</sup>

**ECOMMENDATION 3.** UNDP to COMMUNICATE ADVICE to national and local stakeholders;  
UNDP and WCS to FACILITATE ACTION within the limits of available resources \*

- 3.1 Fund-raise for follow-up implementation in BANP and for the establishment and management of the new protected area in the Bamyan Plateau <sup>a</sup>
- 3.2 Professionalise MAIL ranger system (put rangers and professional ranger supervisors on the *tashkil*) and consider continued international support to it <sup>a</sup>
- 3.3 Strengthen engagement with police for nature conservation <sup>a</sup>
- 3.4 Ensure financial transparency and compliance of community councils and their leadership <sup>b</sup>
- 3.5 Ensure full archiving of EIMPA project documentation with NEPA as GEF FP in Afghanistan <sup>a</sup>

a Recommendations to national and provincial governments

b Recommendations to local communities within EIMPA target regions

\* To be facilitated through ongoing or planned activities (WCS – within continuing projects in target regions)

#### **4.4 Advice for longer-term consideration**

These recommendations do not require immediate action and follow-up. Derived from lessons learnt from EIMPA and its evaluation, and once communicated to the Government and the donor community, they however can be useful for future conservation work in Afghanistan.

Strategic-level advice for the Government, UNDP and the international donor community at large (table 4.3) is meant to inform future directions of conservation and livelihoods development in Afghanistan.

**Table 4.3 Strategic advice in the context of nature conservation in Afghanistan**

|  |
|--|
| Formalise NEPA-MAIL roles in conservation policy and management of protected areas   |
| Facilitate NEPA's unimpeded access to protected areas for the effective implementation of its conservation policy mandates such as monitoring, assessment and reporting                        |
| Clarify within the Government system the role of NEPA as GEF focal point   |
| Improve visibility / branding of the role of the Government in GEF (and other international) projects  |
| Develop stronger capacities at MAIL for working on livelihoods and community-based management issues   |
| Fully address in the conservation context issues such as land ownership, zoning and resettlements needs, business and investment models (e.g. public-private partnerships) for protected areas |
| Explore alternative sources of tourism revenues (e.g. international eco-tourism, trophy hunting in Wakhan)   |
| Explore schemes for biodiversity valuation, incentives / income compensation for communities to address grievances due to conservation-related limitations on the use of natural resources     |
| Formalise the mechanism for returning tourism revenues to protected-area communities   |
| Strengthen conservation-focussed partnerships with mainstream development organisations and hand-over to them community development issues within protected areas                              |
| Further explore synergies to advance the cause of conservation with the World Bank, UN, bilateral support programmes and through international climate-change commitments                      |

Specific advice based on lessons learnt from EIMPA and its evaluation (table 4.4), in our view, can be helpful for the design and implementation of other or similar projects in the conservation-development domain in future, in particular in Afghanistan but also beyond (for instance, in larger Central Asia).

**Table 4.4      Specific advice for the design of other or similar projects**

|  |
|--|
| Fully integrate execution with NEPA and MAIL / their local offices (aim at unified task force solutions for specific activities), involve their staff in project and training, regularly exchange work plans |
| Provide more flexibility in response to governmental partners  |
| Be very clear in managing community expectations, especially with 'seed' interventions (i.a. clearly explain that conservation projects do not run community institutions and development at large)          |
| Strengthen and sustain replication commitments of communities (corrals, greenhouses, afforestation)  |
| Strengthen technical advice to and follow-up with communities, leave behind written or graphical guidance materials for how to sustain and expand results (corrals, greenhouses, afforestation)              |
| Resolve contradictions between economic and socio-economic criteria for selection of sites / households for project interventions, and make them fully inclusive   |
| Put emphasis on directly consulting communities, including women, in advance of interventions  |
| Ensure the continuity of business conditions vs. one-off interventions supporting the development of specific businesses   |
| Increase the use of female staff and community members, better educated / trained community members, and local Government professionals in community relations and training                                  |
| Ensure international cross-fertilization of practices for lower-level / operational governmental staff (e.g., rangers)   |
| Further strengthen focus on women education (specific as well as general) and consider women-only approaches in awareness and livelihood activities to promote gender equity                                 |
| Promote proactive attitude of the staff of tourism centres, use graphical language on signboards   |
| Consider increasing the use of TV and social media in awareness programmes   |

## Annex A Consultant agreement form

### Evaluators:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

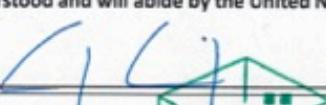
### Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form<sup>4</sup>

#### Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Name of Consultant: Zoi Environment Network

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): same

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed at Geneva on 25.04.19 Signature: 

Zoi Environment Network



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CH-1219 Châtelaine  
Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel. +41 22 917 83 42  
[www.zoinet.org](http://www.zoinet.org)

## Annex B Itinerary of the field mission

| Date          | Location / Meeting  |
|---------------|---|
| <b>WAKHAN</b> |   |
| 24 June       | Ishkashim tourism centre  |
| 25 June       | Qala-e Panja community<br>District Governor's Office<br>DAIL Wakhan office  |
| 26 June       | WCS Wakhan office, education team<br>WCS Wakhan office, management team<br>Qala-e Panja, micro-hydropower plant<br>Qala-e Panja school<br>Community rangers |
| 27 June       | Qala-e Panja community<br>Kipkot school<br>Keret school<br>Keret community<br>Kuzget community  |
| 28 June       | Snow leopard rangers<br>Pak community<br>Pakuay community<br>Ishmorgh community   |
| 29 June       | Qala-e Panja, Border Police<br>Local Police station<br>Khandud school<br>Yamit community  |
| 30 June       | Pigish school<br>Wergund Payan community<br>Shakhwar-e Payan Community  |
| <b>BAMYAN</b> |   |
| 4 July        | WCS Bamyan office   |
| 5 July        | BACC chair and members<br>Jarukushan community, rangers and business owners<br>Sabzil community<br>Governor Office  |

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 6 July       | ADKN regional office<br>NEPA Bamyan office<br>DAIL Bamyan office<br>Catholic Relief Service          |
| 7 July       | Kopruk school<br>Kopruk community<br>Khakdaw community<br>Deh Behood community<br>Zardgiah community |
| 8 July       | Shahid Mahmoodi school<br>Dewkhana and Kotak community<br>Gomaw community                            |
| 9 July       | Koykanak school<br>Koykanak community<br>Sharistan community   |
| <b>KABUL</b> |  |
| 3 July       | WCS head office in Afghanistan   |
| 10 July      | World Bank office in Afghanistan   |
| 11 July      | MAIL headquarters<br>UN FAO country office in Afghanistan<br>UNDP country office in Afghanistan      |
| 14 July      | NEPA headquarters  |
| 15 July      | WCS head office in Afghanistan (validation meeting)  |
| 16 July      | UNDP and WCS (debriefing and presentation of findings)   |
| <b>SKYPE</b> |  |
| 29 April     | WCS head office, UNDP country office in Afghanistan  |
| 18 June      | UNDP country office in Afghanistan, UNDP regional adviser in Bangkok                                 |
| 22 July      | WCS Richard Paley (former head of head office and EIMPA project manager)                             |

## Annex C List of interviewed persons

| WAKHAN                                |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| OFFICES                               |   |
| WCS Wakhan office                     | Khuroosh Sahel, Wakhan Team Leader<br>Asli Gul, Environment Education Program Officer<br>Sosan Gul, Environment Education Program Officer<br>Mohammad Ibrahim Abrar, Field Projects Manager<br>Ali Madad Rajabi, One Health Specialist<br>Salahudin, NRM officer and pre-ranger officer<br>Sorosh Poya-Faryabi, Conservation Officer (WCS head office)<br>Stephane Ostrowski, Senior Technical Adviser of Inner Asia region |
| DAIL Wakhan office                    | Mohammad Nazari, Agriculture Manager  |
| Governor Office                       | Atiqullah Sedeqi, Wakhan Acting Governor  |
| Ishkashim Tourism Center              | Mola Nazar Paiwand, AKF Administration Manager  |
| Border Police<br>Qala-e Panja station | Naqibullah, Commander, head of Border Police station<br>Border Policemen  |
| Local Police post                     | Gul Agha, Commander<br>Naqibullah, Head of Ideological department<br>Chupan Shou, Policeman   |
| COMMUNITIES *                         |   |
| Ishmorgh                              | Jam Ghul, head of CDC<br>Jamila, deputy head of CDC<br>Community members (20 males and 19 females)  |
| Keret                                 | Community members (10 males and 10 females)<br>Community ranger<br>School principal, teachers, students, junior rangers   |
| Khandud                               | Acting school principal, teachers, students, junior rangers   |
| Kipkot                                | Acting school principal, teachers, students, junior rangers   |
| Kuzget                                | Community members (5 males and 3 females)<br>Snow leopard rangers   |
| Pak                                   | Mohammad Hashem, head of CDC<br>Bibi Asli, deputy head of CDC<br>Community members (24 males and 20 females)  |
| Pakuay                                | Azade, deputy head of CDC<br>Community members (17 males and 15 females)  |
| Pigish                                | School principal, teachers, students, junior rangers  |

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Qala-e Panja             | Enayatullah, Head of CDC<br>Community members (33 males and 7 females)<br>Shah Ismaeil, religious leader, and his family<br>School principal, school and kindergarten teachers<br>Community rangers of Qala-e-Panja, Sarkand, Pak CDCs |
| Shakhwar-e Payan         | Nowruz, Head of CDC<br>Community members (17 Males and 15 females)   |
| Wergund Payan            | Shirin Khan, CDC treasurer<br>Raihan, Member of disctrict Women council<br>Community members (23 males and 2 females)  |
| Yamit                    | Niyaz Ali, Head of CDC<br>Community members (3 males, 1 female)<br>Snow leopard rangers  |
| <b>BAMYAN</b>            |  |
| <b>OFFICES</b>           |  |
| WCS Bamyan office        | Mohammad Ibrahim Abrar: Field Projects Manager<br>Fatema Baqiri, Logistic Assistant and pre-education assistant<br>Dad Ali Faqiri, Field Support Officer   |
| NEPA Bamyan office       | Mohammad Ibrahim Dadfar, Director  |
| DAIL Bamyan office       | Wahab Mohammadi, Director  |
| BACC                     | Taher Shah, Head of BACC<br>Amene, Deputy Head of BACC<br>Sayed Mohammad: head of Sabzil CDC   |
| Governor office          | Latifa Mohseni, Social Affairs Deputy Governor   |
| ADKN regional office     | Ghaib Ali Mir Haidar, NRM-ICM Regional Coordinator<br>Qasem Khan, Project Officer  |
| Catholic Relief Services | Hossein Jafari, IT and administration  |
| <b>COMMUNITIES *</b>     |  |
| Deh Behdoon              | Head of cluster / WCS ranger   |
| Dewkhana and Kotak       | Shah Hussain Ahmad, head of CDC<br>Community members (4 males, 4 females)  |
| Gomaw                    | Community members (1 male, 6 females)  |
| Jarubkashan              | Business owners and community members (1 male, 5 females)<br>Rangers from the Park office  |
| Khakdaw                  | Ali Hussain, head of CDC<br>Halima, deputy head of CDC<br>Community members (5 males and 6 females)  |

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Kopruk          | Sayed Ewaz: head of CDC<br>Heads of clusters and CDC members (6 males)<br>School principal, teachers, students  |
| Koykanak        | Qorban Ali, deputy head of CDC and member of BAPAC<br>Community members (9 males and 10 females i.a. 3 BAPAC members)<br>Acting school principal, teachers, students  |
| Sabzil          | Sayed Mohammad, head of CDC<br>Community members (5 males and 11 females)   |
| Shahid Mahmoodi | School principal, teachers, students  |
| Sharistan       | Community members (8 males)   |
| Zardgiah        | Community members (1 male and 3 females)  |
| <b>KABUL</b>    |   |
| WCS             | Qais Sahar, National Programme Coordinator<br>Mujtaba Bashari, EIMPA project manager<br>Sorosh Poya-Faryabi, Conservation Officer<br>Zabihullah Ejlasi, Administration and Finance Director<br>Aili Kang, Executive Continental Director<br>Richard Paley (by skype), former National Programme Coordinator |
| UNDP            | Ahmad Jamshed Khoshbeen, Programme Analyst<br>Laura Rio, Chief Section, Livelihoods and Resilience Unit<br>Tashi Dorji (by skype), UNDP GEF Technical Advisor<br>Mohammad Salim, Programme Analyst<br>Justine Davis, Planning, monitoring and Reporting Specialist  |
| MAIL            | Mohamamd Rafi Qazizada, General Director for NRM  |
| NEPA            | Ezatullah Sediqi, Technical Deputy General Director<br>Jalaludin Naseri, National Heritage Protection Director<br>Shafiq Soltani, IT director   |
| UN FAO          | Mohammad Ajmal Rahimy, GEF National Project Manager   |
| World Bank      | Abdul Azim Doosti, DRM and Climate Change unit<br>Mohammad Arif Rasuli, NRM Officer<br>National consultants   |

\* Communities are listed in alphabetic order. Names and details of people met in communities are available on request (last names are usually not available for the participants of community meetings).

## **Annex D List of reviewed documents**

### **ANNUAL PROJECT WORKPLANS**

Annual work plan 2014  
Annual work plan 2015  
Annual work plan 2016  
  
Annual work plan 2017  
    Human resources plan 2017  
    Procurement plan 2017  
  
Annual work plan 2018  
    Human resources plan 2018  
    Procurement plan 2018  
  
Annual work plan 2019  
    Procurement plan 2019

### **ANNUAL AND QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORTS**

Annual progress report 2014  
Annual progress report 2015  
Annual progress report 2016  
  
Annual progress report 2017  
    Quarterly progress report 1 2017  
    Quarterly progress report 2 2017  
    Quarterly progress report 3 2017  
  
Annual progress report 2018  
    Quarterly progress report 1 2018  
    Quarterly progress report 2 2018  
    Quarterly progress report 3 2018  
  
Draft project closure report

### **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEWS**

Project implementation review 2016  
Project implementation review 2017  
Project implementation review 2018

### **UNDP TRACKING TOOLS**

Baseline  
Mid-term  
Final

## **PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Project steering committee minutes 2015  
Project steering committee minutes 2016  
Project steering committee minutes 2018

## **COMBINED DELIVERY REPORTS**

Combined delivery report by activity 2015  
Combined delivery report by activity 2016  
Combined delivery report by activity 2017  
Combined delivery report by activity 2018  
Budget vs expenditure analysis 2014 - 2018

## **AUDITOR REPORTS**

Auditor Report 2016  
Auditor Report 2017  
Auditor Report 2018

## **CO-FINANCING PLEDGES**

AKDN  
MAIL  
MRRD  
NEPA  
USAID  
UNDP  
WCS

## **STUDIES AND BASELINE DATA**

### Bamyan Plateau studies

- Summary results from the Bamyan Plateau aerial reconnaissance survey
- Persian leopard camera trapping 2015
- Ornithological Survey of Bamyan Plateau 2018

### Band-e-Amir National Park dry land farming (lami)

- Dry land farming 2016
- Dry land farming 2017

### Band-e-Amir National Park rangeland study

- Outline of the approach
- Protocol of satellite data usage
- Preliminary report 2016
- Final report 2018

### Band-e-Amir National Park tourism

- Tourist demography database 2015

- Tourist demographic survey 2016
- سال ی توریستها مجموع c. 1395
- Bamyan Ecotourism Report 2017

#### Bamyan Livestock-ailoqs

- Livestock & ailoo surveys in the Band-e-Amir National Park 2016
- Result of Livestock count in BANP 2017

#### Wakhan glacier monitoring data 2016

#### Snow leopard monitoring in Wakhan

- Initial data of wild ungulate survey in Wakhan 2015
- Identification of individual snow leopards 2015
- Snow leopard modelling brief report
- Snow leopard habitat modelling presentation
- Tracking a collared snow leopard in the Afghan Pamirs 2016
- Wild ungulate monitoring in Wakhan
- Marco Polo sheep survey in Wakhan 2015
- Wild ungulate survey in Wakhan 2015
- Wild ungulate survey in Wakhan presentation 2015
- Wild ungulate group size 2015

#### Rangeland Studies in Wakhan

- Approach
- Protocol of satellite data usage
- Wakhan report 2016

#### Wakhan livestock monitoring

- Livestock census Big Pamir 2015
- Spring livestock survey 2015
- Spring livestock survey 2016
- Spring livestock survey 2017
- Autumn livestock survey 2015
- Autumn livestock survey 2016
- Autumn livestock survey 2017
- Mapping livestock grazing in the Wakhan Natural Park 2016
- Wakhan livestock predation survey 2016
- FMD Vaccination
- Livestock summer grazing
- Livestock winter grazing

#### WNP tourist numbers 2015 – 2018

#### Basic Necessities Survey

- Bamyan BNS report 2018
- Wakhan BNS report 2018

## **POLICY DOCUMENTS, OTHER PRODUCTS AND PUBLICATIONS**

2014

- BPWR Management Plan
- Teggermansu WR Management Plan
- Afghanistan's Wildlife Brochure

2015

- BANP, BPWR and TWR Operational Plans 2015
- Nation Input Document for Snow Leopard
- Protected Wildlife Species of Afghanistan Booklet
- Report on TV and radio round table
- Afghanistan Women Rangers
- Ranger Manual
- WCS M&E manual
- WCS M&E presentation
- Report Ulamas Training
- Women tailor training 2015
- International Snow Leopard Day in Afghanistan

2016

- BANP Operational Plan 2016
- International Snow Leopard Day in Afghanistan 2016
- Ag-Fair Report 2016
- EEP Bamyan Dari 2016
- Report on EEP in Wakhan 2016
- Joint patrol in BANP Dari
- Watershed (tree planting) in WNP 2015
- Ranger training 2016 BANP & NP
- Ranger Training Report Bamyan 2016
- Training materials on environmental, NRM, protected areas and wildlife conservation

2017

- Children Story Book
- Onehealth Global Report Wakhan
- Police and Customs Training Report 2017

2018

- Anti-poaching awareness in Wakhan National Park
- Women Conservation Awareness in Wakhan National Park
- WNP Corridor Poster
- Wakhan National Park Protected Area Committee, Progress Report
- Report on illegal hunting activities in winter 2017-2018 in Wakhan National Park
- A workshop on law enforcement and illegal hunting of wildlife in Sarhad-e Broghil area, WNP
- WNP Management Plan
- BANP Management Plan 2016 – 2020

2019

- WCS recommendations for Band-e-Amir National Park (BANP) management after 2018

## Annex E     Matrix of evaluation questions

| EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS AND CRITERIA  | WHO IS TO BE INTERVIEWED – AND OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL CLARIFYING QUESTIONS |   |  |  |
|--|---|---|--|--|
|  | UNDP  | WCS   | MAIL-NEPA  | Communities  |
| Are the assumptions identified in the ProDoc relevant and comprehensive?<br><br>▪ Validity of assumptions<br>▪ Completeness / gaps in assumptions  |   | •   | •  |  |
| Is the project building on and enhancing results and lessons from other, especially earlier projects supporting PA establishment?<br><br>▪ Continuity in support for PA establishment<br>▪ Continuation and refinement of approaches from earlier projects                 | •   | ▪ To what extent have international best practices been used in project design? | ▪ What preceding projects supported PA establishment? (UNDP, WCS, UNEP, other)<br>▪ What were the relevant lessons learnt?<br>▪ Have those lessons been considered in project design?  | ▪ Have there been problems conveyed to the project staff but not considered in project design. (For example, the right time / place for tree planting, corral construction etc.) |
| Is the project concept in line with the national priorities for biodiversity conservation and development?<br><br>▪ Alignment with NEPA, MAIL, and GoIRA strategies and policies<br>▪ Progress in/feasibility of policy and institutional reforms vis-à-vis project design | •   | •   | ▪ Have new national laws, strategies, policies been introduced or modified since the start of the project confirming the relevance of its initial concept?<br>▪ Are there any plans/ outlook for such development in the future?<br>▪ What are Afghanistan's SDG or similar policy priorities in the relevant domains? |  |

|  |  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Were the perspectives of stakeholders and decision-makers taken adequately into account in the project design?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stakeholders were consulted during design and work plan development</li> <li>▪ Stakeholders find that the project responds to their priorities and views</li> </ul> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Did the WCS annually check community needs to adjust planning?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have governmental stakeholders been engaged in project design?</li> <li>▪ Were their ideas/concerns taken into account? (e.g., with regard to APWA establishment, management planning, the design of practical activities)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How much were the following concerns, project elements and activities driven by the needs of local stakeholders? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PA management planning</li> <li>- hunting / killing protected species</li> <li>- livestock predation</li> <li>- harvesting shrubs</li> <li>- providing fuel vs. tree planting</li> <li>- income-generating business</li> <li>- solar panels</li> <li>- site selection (criteria)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Was project design flexible to allow adapting to changing priorities?</li> </ul> |
| <p>Is gender (including women's vulnerability) adequately mainstreamed and addressed in the project design?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plans for addressing gender issues and inclusion of women</li> <li>▪ Gender disaggregated indicators and baseline data</li> </ul>   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Is the project design taking the future impacts of climate change into consideration?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Climate risks identified and taken into consideration in project planning</li> </ul>   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have there been project activities specifically (or indirectly) related to climate change?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>   |

|   |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Is the theory of change consistent and are project outputs and activities sufficient and comprehensive vis-à-vis the intended outcomes...?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Major gaps in activities design vis-à- vis intended results</li> <li>▪ Areas of limited progress</li> </ul>                  |   | • | •  | •  |
| <p>Are the project indicators and targets SMART and adequately capturing results (outcomes, impacts)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outcome and impact indicators are in place and monitored</li> </ul>  |   | • |  |  |
| <p>Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Changes made to the logframe during implementation to address shortcomings</li> <li>▪ Level of progress on delivery of outcomes and objectives</li> </ul> | • | • | •  | •  |
| <p>Are there any benefits of the project, which are not reflected in the logframe or captured by the indicators and in the progress reporting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Presence of unexpected positive outcomes and impacts</li> </ul>   | • | • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can gazetting of Kol-e-Heshmat Khan be considered an unintended project benefit?</li> <li>▪ Have new rules, frameworks, policies been indirectly triggered by the project?</li> <li>▪ Is SLM made a policy priority? If so, how?</li> <li>▪ What is it the benefit of a tourist centre in Ishkashim?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are the additional benefits of? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Management plans</li> <li>- Tree planting</li> <li>- Livestock, protected species, dry land farming, rangeland surveys</li> <li>- Construction, solar cooking</li> <li>- Providing facilities in BANP and on the Bamyan Plateau</li> <li>- Awareness raising</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

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| <p>Is the project monitoring adequately capturing gender aspects (including vulnerability) and the effect on women?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Availability of gender disaggregated data for indicators and baseline</li> </ul> |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Did female rangers participate in meetings as decision-maker?</li> <li>▪ Did community women participate in project training and activities?</li> </ul>   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent were community women engaged in decision-making or implementing the project</li> </ul>  |
| <p>What has been the progress against the outcome and objective indicators?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Indicator achievement versus milestones and targets</li> </ul>   | • | •  |   |   |
| <p>What is the current status compared to the baseline scenario?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Current status compared to baseline</li> </ul>  |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have all APWA-related outputs been cancelled, and outputs for PA expansion in the Bamyan Plateau and Ajar Valley added?</li> <li>▪ Is the responsibility for PA Management Plans now with NEPA or MAIL? What has been done to develop national level capacities? How successfully?</li> <li>▪ Have the Wakhan Protected Area Committee and three sub-committees under WPA been established?</li> <li>▪ What has been done on Bamyan Plateau PA and its community INRM?</li> <li>▪ The latest (2017-18) BANP visitor numbers?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are management plans of BANP, WNP approved and fully effective? Since when? If not, when are they expected to be?</li> <li>▪ Are the approved TWR and BPWR management plans fully effective?</li> <li>▪ Are official boundaries of new PAs established and available?</li> <li>▪ Are drafted PA Regulations and Hunting Law approved? If so, when? If not, when are they expected to be?</li> <li>▪ Are NRM strategy document, co-management provisions incl. PA Regulation finalised?</li> <li>▪ What is the status of PA revenue generation and of mechanisms for sharing revenues with communities?</li> <li>▪ What is the status of NEPA biodiversity web portal;</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have the interviewed households been surveyed by the project? Did some vulnerable households not receive support from project (if so, why not)?</li> </ul> |

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|   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What were environmental education activities and their results? Did they help implement the project (examples)?</li> <li>▪ Was there a need for training rangers by international experts? Did it happen?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ expanded list of protected species?</li> <li>▪ Has DAIL staff received training? What were the benefits?</li> <li>▪ Have the project assisted the development of annual ranger operational plans?</li> </ul>  |   |
| Has the project changed patterns of human-wildlife conflict (positively and negatively)?          |  |   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project interventions have improved the protection of livestock from predation</li> <li>▪ The hunting ban has not led to increased predation on livestock</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have hunting laws, police and rangers capacities, awareness-raising, winter patrolling contributed to reduced human-wildlife conflict? How?</li> </ul> |
| How has the project impacted on vulnerability and human security (positive and negative impacts)? |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What were the selection criteria of participating households? (Were poverty and social criteria taken into account?)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have there been changes in the levels of crime, human security, vulnerability since the start of the project? Due to the project?</li> <li>▪ How do communities understand the relevance of ecosystems and biodiversity for their livelihoods?</li> <li>▪ Did project-organised training help with awareness raising (examples)?</li> </ul> |   |

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| What are the main barriers affecting the ability to achieving the intended results (outcomes and impacts)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stakeholders identify obstacles that hamper the delivery of results</li> </ul>   | • | ▪ What were the challenges to raising community awareness? | •  | ▪ What are the barriers to replicating some of the project tangible results (e.g., as predator-proof communal corrals)?   |
| What are the main successes and achievements of the project, and how can they be expanded? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outcomes and results at or above targets</li> <li>▪ Stakeholders can identify important results which are not reflected in the logframe</li> <li>▪ Stakeholders identify enablers for the results that have been significantly achieved</li> </ul> | • | •  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have project activities to protect biodiversity and land been sufficient?</li> <li>▪ What other activities could have been done under this project or can be done as a follow-up, e.g. to manage rangelands and livestock?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are the communities satisfied with the tangible project results (corrals, solar energy etc.); do they need more?</li> <li>▪ Are the communities aware of annual cost of predation on livestock vs. corral cost?</li> </ul> |
| <b>Management Arrangements</b>   |   |  |  |   |

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| How effective and efficient has project management and execution by WCS, NEPA and MAIL been?<br><br>■ Changes made and their effectiveness<br>■ Clarity of responsibilities and reporting lines<br>■ Transparency and timeliness of decision-making | • | • | • |  |
| How effective has UNDP been at providing support and guidance to WCS, NEPA and MAIL?<br><br>■ Clarity of the guidance provided<br>■ Responsiveness to requests  | • | • | • |  |
| Is the cooperation with WCS enabling UNDP to reach insecure areas in Afghanistan?<br><br>■ WCS is operating in areas, in which UNDP cannot operate directly   | • | • |   |  |
| Are UNDP rules and regulations conducive for project implementation?<br><br>■ UNDP rules enabled flexibility to respond to emerging needs / changes   | • | • |   |  |

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| Has implementation been timely?<br><br>▪ Occurrence of delays in start-up and implementation<br>▪ Justification/reason for delays<br>▪ Activity implementation status vs milestones and plans  |  | • |   |  |
| Are work-planning processes results-based?<br><br>▪ Work plans contain clear milestones vis-à-vis outcomes   |  |   |   |  |
| Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start<br><br>▪ The logframe has been revised<br>▪ Alignment with work plans                                  |  | • |   |  |
| Are the activities implemented in a cost-effective manner?<br><br>▪ Use of partners and stakeholder's own resources and capacities<br>▪ Costs of a sample of expenses<br>▪ Appropriateness of changes to fund allocations and budget revisions |  | • | ▪ What have been NEPA and MAIL in-kind contributions (staff salary, per diem, transportation etc.)? |  |

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| <p>Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Audit findings on the financial management and expenditures are unqualified</li> <li>▪ Budgets are clear and easy to understand</li> <li>▪ Budgets are output-based</li> </ul>                                      | • | •   |  |  |
| <p>Is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Co-financing builds on existing processes and priorities of partners</li> <li>▪ Regular meetings with co-financing partners to align priorities and plans</li> </ul>  | • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What was the scale / volume of actual co-financing by the end of the project?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How much was the actual co-financing and how was it used?</li> <li>▪ Are there outputs or documentary evidence of that?</li> <li>▪ Why was some of the initially declared co-financing never provided?</li> </ul> |  |
| <p>Is the monitoring system appropriate and effective?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Necessary information on outputs, outcomes and impact is provided</li> <li>▪ Key partners are involved in monitoring</li> <li>▪ The monitoring system is aligned with and utilising national systems</li> <li>▪ Existing information is utilised</li> </ul> |   | •   | •  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have community members or CDCs been interviewed by the M&amp;N team?</li> <li>▪ If so, has the feedback been considered in adapting project planning and implementation?</li> </ul> |

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| Is the financial allocation and management M&E budget sufficient and appropriate?<br><br>▪ Sufficiency of resources for M&E<br>▪ Adequacy of their management  |   | •   |   |   |
| Are stakeholders sufficiently involved and supportive of the project?<br><br>▪ Necessary and appropriate partnerships with stakeholders<br>▪ Government stakeholders support the objectives of the project<br>▪ Stakeholders have an active role in project decision-making<br>▪ Stakeholder involvement and public awareness contribute to achieving objectives | • | ▪ Which NGOs or private entities have been engaged in the project (such as GERES)?<br>▪ Did WCS establish partnerships with development NGOs? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Were project activities included in MAIL/DAIL and NEPA annual work plans, especially at the provincial and district levels?</li> <li>▪ Has sub-national level staff of NEPA and DAIL been engaged, and to what extent? (e.g. did they attend project meetings?)</li> <li>▪ Were their concerns sufficiently considered?</li> <li>▪ How much were DAIL staff/NAPA (BANP park authority) involved in community-level activities?</li> <li>▪ How do MAIL and WCS ranger systems work together?</li> <li>▪ Does MAIL have rangeland, natural-resource management plans (examples)?</li> <li>▪ Are there other NRM projects? What has been their interaction with EIMPA?</li> <li>▪ To what extent has the police been involved in patrolling and law enforcement?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent have community members been engaged in the project (from PA governance to field activities), e.g. as opposed to CDC-only involvement</li> <li>▪ To what extent did communities contribute to project activities through materials, labour etc.?</li> <li>▪ How much do they feel responsible for the project and its results?</li> <li>▪ Did CDC help raise communities' awareness of project matters? Did they share with the communities project training materials?</li> </ul> |

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| <p>Is the reporting sufficient, appropriate and adding value to project delivery?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reporting of adaptive management changes by the PMU to the PSC</li> <li>▪ Fulfilment of GEF reporting requirement and rating of PIRs</li> <li>▪ Documentation, sharing and use of lessons learned</li> </ul>             | • | • | • |  |
| <p>Is internal project communication with stakeholders effective?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regularity and clarity of communication</li> <li>▪ Level of inclusion of key stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Existence of feedback mechanisms</li> <li>▪ Stakeholder awareness of project and investment in sustainability of results</li> </ul> | • | • | • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Did WCS report back to communities on the official follow-up to reports of illegal activities?</li> </ul> |
| <p>Is external project communication effective in terms of raising awareness?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ External communication channels (website, social media)</li> <li>▪ Outreach / awareness campaigns</li> </ul>   | • | • | • | •  |

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| Is an adequate risk management system in place?<br><br>▪ Relevance, importance and comprehensiveness of identified risks, accuracy of risk rating   | • | •   |   |   |
| Are sufficient financial resources likely to be in place to finance the post-project continuation of the results, systems and processes?<br><br>▪ Post-project availability of sufficient state resources<br>▪ Ability of income-generating activities to generate sufficient funding<br>▪ Likelihood of attracting private sector<br>▪ Ongoing or planned other projects to support continuation | • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do visitors to BANP pay entrance fee? Are revenues sufficient to cover expenses?</li> <li>▪ Who collects the revenue? How are the concession fees spent?</li> <li>▪ Is there a system / strategy for revenue management and ring-fencing for investment?</li> <li>▪ Are there follow-up project for BANP in view?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Did MAIL analyse / map the economy in BANP and WNP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) tourist economy,</li> <li>b) the agriculture and livestock economy,</li> <li>c) how the concession fees are spent in BANP?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Are there potential / enabling conditions for cross-border tourism in Wakhan?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How strong is the continuity of income-generations jobs?</li> <li>▪ What are the benefits of handicraft and dairy business in BANP?</li> <li>▪ Are women able to continue the business?</li> </ul>   |
| Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes?<br><br>▪ Stakeholder ownership and commitment to continuation<br>▪ Public awareness and support to project long-term objectives<br>▪ Presence of vested interests that work against project objectives<br>▪ Documenting and sharing lessons to promote upscaling /replication                     | • | •   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent has uncontrolled development been avoided, e.g., in and around BANP?</li> <li>▪ How strong are security risks to future sustainability of project results (in particular in Wakhan)?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Does CDC leadership use positions to their benefit?</li> <li>▪ Do community rangers report illegal activities committed by people in their communities?</li> <li>▪ If they report offenders, do the authorities take action?</li> <li>▪ Who is primarily responsible for poaching? If offenders are influential individuals, what are rangers' typical actions?</li> </ul> |

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| <p>Is the institutional and governance framework conducive for, and supportive of, post-project continuation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Supportiveness of the legal framework</li> <li>▪ Appropriateness, supportiveness and capacity of institutions</li> <li>▪ Adequate mechanisms for accountability and transparency</li> <li>▪ Knowledge transfer mechanisms</li> </ul> | • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How many WCS staff were there in the Wakhan team? What were their tasks (specially, field staff)?</li> <li>▪ How many WCS, DAIL and community rangers (under BACC and WPA) are in Wakhan?</li> <li>▪ What is the potential for conservation impact and cooperation in Wakhan across the border?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How does the ranger system operate? Mechanism for coordination between MAIL and WCS?</li> <li>▪ What will happen to DAIL rangers if Wakhan Park Authority is put in place?</li> <li>▪ Are there DAIL rangers on Bamyan Plateau?</li> <li>▪ Are all rangers in one tashkil as permanent staff?</li> </ul> | •  |
| <p>Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Likeliness of natural hazards destroying investments</li> <li>▪ Anticipated climate impacts</li> </ul>  | • | •   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have project investments been made in vulnerable areas?</li> <li>▪ What percent of the planted trees has so far survived?</li> </ul>  |
| <p>What have been the project's environmental impacts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Indirect measure of impacts as project-reduced pressure on, or improved protection of, the environment and biodiversity</li> <li>▪ Direct measure of impact as the actual change in the state of the environment, biodiversity and ecosystems due to project interventions</li> </ul>       | • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Latest (change) data and their interpretation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- livestock loss to predators</li> <li>- hillside farming</li> <li>- state of valuable species and habitats</li> <li>- plant cover / density</li> <li>- indoor air pollution</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ What measures / activities have been taken to reduce grazing pressure from growing livestock numbers?</li> </ul> | •   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Did predator-proof communal corrals help reduce the killing of protected species?</li> <li>▪ Did predator-proof corrals lead to an increased number of livestock? If so, did this increase grazing pressure?</li> </ul> |

## Annex F Project response to the recommendations of the mid-term review

| Mid-term review recommendations   | Who                       | Recommended actions |                       |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
|   |                           | Short-term          | Long-term             |
| 1 Adjust/review project outcomes, activities, indicators, assumptions, risks and budget allocations to make them achievable, more realistic and better reflect the current context  |                           |                     |                       |
| 1.1 Cancel all APWA-related outputs and indicators and rephrase Outcome 1 accordingly   | UNDP<br>WCS               | Done                |                       |
| 1.2 Expand the geographical coverage of the project by including the preparation of a future PA expansion linked to BANP and covering the Bamyan Plateau and Ajar Valley  | WCS                       | Done                |                       |
| 1.3 Restructure Outcome 2 and Outcome 3 and adjust the related outputs/activities to ensure a clearer delineation between the two: Outcome 2 should focus on PA management and governance (institutions), Outcome 3 should focus on community SLM | WCS                       | Done                |                       |
| 1.4 Analyse the assumptions and risks and make them more accurate and comprehensive for the current context. Discuss revised assumptions with government partners at national and local levels  | WCS                       | Done                |                       |
| 2 Enhance the involvement of the Government (MAIL/DAIL, NEPA) in project implementation   |                           |                     |                       |
| 2.1 Involve DAIL (e.g. BANP Park Authority) staff more proactively in community activities as a means to strengthen their relationship with communities and to build their capacities   | WCS<br>MAIL<br>DAIL<br>PA | Partially           |                       |
| 2.2 Strengthen/enhance the inclusion of Biodiversity Project activities in MAIL/DAIL and NEPA annual work plans, especially at provincial and district levels   | MAIL<br>NEPA              | Not done            |                       |
| 2.3 Create closer linkages between the MAIL and WCS ranger systems (especially in WNP) with a view towards full integration   | WCS<br>MAIL               |                     | Not done <sup>1</sup> |
| 2.4 Once there is clarity on the future responsibility for PA management, train NEPA and/or DAIL staff at the PA level  | WCS<br>(MAIL)<br>(NEPA)   |                     | N/A                   |
| 2.5 Engage more with police and justice at the provincial and district levels to enhance awareness and promote better enforcement of the laws, rules and regulations for environmental protection in the PAs                                      | WCS<br>NEPA               |                     | Partially             |
| 3 Adjust PA management and governance structures to address current bottlenecks.  |                           |                     |                       |
| 3.1 Approve/endorse the draft BANP Management Plan (stakeholders should discuss whether to finalise the management plan even if revenue management mechanisms have still not been clarified)  | MoF                       | Done post-project   |                       |
| 3.2 Give women rangers in BANP the same status and title as their male colleagues (they should not be “cleaners”)   | MAIL                      | Not done            |                       |

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| 3.3 Establish three subcommittees under WPA (for Big Pamir, Little Pamir, and Wakhan Valley) that meet more frequently than WPA   | WCS<br>WPA            | Not done <sup>1,2</sup> |                       |
| 3.4 Professionalise DAIL ranger system: a) put all rangers on the tashkil, and b) employ professional ranger supervisors, which are not from the communities, on the tashkil  | MAIL<br>MoF           |                         | Not done              |
| 3.5 Ensure rangers are operating / patrolling during winter   | WCS<br>MAIL           |                         | Done                  |
| 3.6 Establish a designated Park Authority for WNP (like for BANP)   | MAIL<br>NEPA          |                         | Pending M. Plan       |
| 3.7 Set up a permanent police outpost in BANP   | Gov'r<br>MoInt        |                         | In progress           |
| <b>4 Focus on enhancing the economic sustainability of PAs</b>  |                       |                         |                       |
| 4.1 Analyse/map the economy in BANP and WNP, incl. a) tourist economy, b) agriculture and livestock economy, and c) how concession fees collected are spent in BANP – consider engaging international consultants or cooperating with international organisations   | NEPA<br>MAIL<br>Gov'r |                         | Not done              |
| 4.2 Use the analysis/mapping of the BANP economy for revising the entrance fees and concession fees in the draft BANP Management Plan   | NEPA<br>MAIL<br>BAPAC |                         | Not done              |
| 4.3 Provide GIRoA (incl. MoF) with opportunities to learn from international best practice for NP revenue management (e.g. international consultants, peer exchange)  | WCS                   |                         | Not done <sup>2</sup> |
| 4.4 Establish a strategy for how NP revenue can be used as an incentive for eco-friendly livelihoods in BANP, with a preference given to more remote and disadvantaged communities  | MAIL<br>NEPA<br>BAPAC |                         | Not done              |
| 4.5 Establish and implement a system which ensures that NP revenues are ringfenced for PA protection, management and development (e.g. separate PA account at MoF, revenue management at PA level)  | MAIL<br>NEPA<br>MoF   |                         | Not done              |
| <b>5 Deepen the engagement with communities</b>   |                       |                         |                       |
| 5.1 Expand and deepen the EEP to promote a better understanding of: a) ecosystems, b) how environmental degradation and loss of bio- diversity affects human lives, and c) climate change risks, adaptation and how healthy ecosystems can enhance resilience. Focus on fewer schools and communities (in priority areas and where there is good responsiveness), especially in WNP, to develop a model for a deeper engagement | WCS                   | Done                    |                       |
| 5.2 Consider focusing on selected “model” communities – e.g. communities which show a high degree of responsiveness or communities with direct contact with wildlife. These can later be used as examples for other communities and community mobilisers  | WCS                   | Partially               |                       |
| 5.3 Prioritise livelihoods interventions, where WCS has a unique added value (e.g. predator-proof corrals) over intervention types also implemented by other NGOs (e.g. tree planting in Wakhan).   | WCS                   | Partially <sup>3</sup>  |                       |

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| 5.4 Include poverty and social criteria in the selection of households for demonstration projects  | WCS                 | Not done <sup>2,3</sup> |                       |
| 5.5 Develop a stronger gender approach and increase efforts to involve women in project activities   | WCS                 | Done                    |                       |
| 5.6 Agree with CDCs to also work directly with other parts of the community, e.g. by working with “champions” for community mobilisation and by holding community meetings during winter (when all people are in the village).   | WCS                 | Not done <sup>1</sup>   |                       |
| 5.7 Form a WCS-development NGO strategic partnership joint implementation providing a comprehensive (area-based) package linking environmental protection and livelihoods, building on the unique strengths and added value of each partner                              | WCS<br>UNDP         |                         | Partially             |
| <b>6 Promote community ownership and independence</b>  |                     |                         |                       |
| 6.1 Make clear to communities that WCS cannot cover everything but only provide examples and the more the communities do themselves, the more WCS can add value by focusing on things the communities truly cannot do themselves.  | WCS                 | Partially               |                       |
| 6.2 Ensure that community contributions are part of all community projects (e.g. in the form of labour, provision of materials, transport). Stop paying communities for non-specialised labour inputs to community projects, as this should be their own contribution    | WCS                 | Partially               |                       |
| 6.3 Condition community projects on replication commitments (e.g. when WCS constructs a corral, the community could be requested build a second corral)  | WCS                 | Partially               |                       |
| 6.4 Calculate the annual financial costs of losing livestock to predators at village level in WNP and compare with the costs of establishing predator-proof corrals – and use findings in community discussions on the value of investing their own resources in corrals | WCS                 | Partially <sup>2</sup>  |                       |
| 6.5 When communities report poaching and other illegal activities to WCS or GIRoA, report back to communities on the action taken by GIRoA and WCS to address the activities reported  | WCS<br>MAIL<br>NEPA | Not done <sup>3</sup>   |                       |
| 6.6 Establish inventive mechanisms that reward communities for taking initiative and doing things on their own – e.g. by focusing support on more responsive communities   | WCS                 |                         | Not done <sup>2</sup> |
| 6.7 Assess alleged un-kept promises made earlier to communities in Wakhan and come up with a strategy for re-establishing WCS's reputation   | WCS                 |                         | Done <sup>3</sup>     |
| 6.8 Engage in a dialogue and coordination with other NGOs working in Wakhan to reach an agreement on how NGOs can empower communities and counter donor/NGO dependency, e.g. by agreeing on the need for community contributions   | WCS                 |                         | Partially             |
| 6.9 Put as a condition for any support provided to communities with WFP Food for Work that the communities themselves contribute to other community-development or environmental protection interventions  | WCS                 |                         | N/A <sup>3</sup>      |

| 7 Further enhance project management and staff capacities  |      |           |                       |
|--|------|-----------|-----------------------|
| 7.1 Review staff job descriptions/ToR and the tasks they actually carry out and ensure they match  | WCS  | Done      |                       |
| 7.2 Ensure that staff do not have any conflict of interest between their personal investments and the mandate/role of WCS. If there is a conflict of interest, change the staff member's tasks and/or work location as appropriate and ensure they do not have access to information that in any way could serve their personal interests. Communicate this to relevant partners | WCS  | Done      |                       |
| 7.3 Enhance technical capacity development for WCS field staff, especially those recruited in the communities, e.g. vis-à-vis: a) ecosystem services, b) how environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity affects human lives, c) climate change risks and adaptation and how healthy ecosystems can enhance resilience, and d) gender                                     | WCS  | Partially |                       |
| 7.4 Make sure that the monitoring and reporting duly capture and present livelihood impacts (e.g. reduction in respiratory disease, reduced workloads, reduced livestock loss), including non-monetary impacts, in a gender disaggregated manner – they should not be treated only as outcomes, but as impacts in their own right  | WCS  | Partially |                       |
| 7.5 Expand the scope of external audits to include field visits and verification of costs and expenses   | UNDP | Not done  | *                     |
| 7.6 Improve the gender balance internally in WCS (by employing more women for technical positions)   | WCS  |           | Not done <sup>2</sup> |
| 7.7 Enhance winter presence (e.g. conduct meetings with communities and ensure that WCS rangers are active during winter)  | WCS  |           | Done                  |

\* WCS provided detailed explanations of why certain actions were not done or done partially due to:

- 1 insufficient capacity of project partners
- 2 limited project time remaining after the mid-term review
- 3 unclear value of the recommendation or misunderstanding by the mid-term review team

Additional abbreviations used in the table:

GIRoA Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Gov'r Governor Office

MoF Ministry of Finance

MoInt Ministry of Interior

PA Park Authority

ToR Terms of Reference