Mid-Term Review of the UNDP-GEF project: Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management in Afghanistan (Biodiversity Project)

2014-2018

Final

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Basic Report Information

Project name:	Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management in Afghanistan (the Biodiversity Project)
Country:	Afghanistan
UNDP PIMS:	PIMS 5038
Project ID:	00088001
Duration:	27 April 2014 to 26 April 2019
GEF Operational Focal Areas:	<u>BD-1</u>: Improve Sustainability of Protected Areas (PAs) <u>LD-3</u>: Integrated landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape
ANDS Component:	Cross-cutting Issue to the three main pillars of ANDS
CPD Outcome:	<u>Outcome 3</u>: Economic growth is accelerated to reduce vulnerabilities and poverty, strengthen the resilience of the licit economy and reduce the illicit economy in its multiple dimensions.
UNDP Strategic Plan Outcome:	<u>Outcome 2</u>: Citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance. <u>Output 2.5</u>: Legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions enabled to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, in line with international conventions and national legislation.
Total Budget: GEF funding: UNDP funding: Unfunded Amount:	USD 7,441,819 USD 6,441,819 UNDP: USD 1,000,000 Nil
GEF Implementing Agency:	UNDP
Executing Agency:	Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
Supervising Institution:	National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA)
Execution Partner:	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL)
MTR dates:	Afghanistan Mission: 8-29 September 2017 Draft MTR report: 17 October 2017 Final MTR report: 3 December 2017
MTR Team:	Kris B. Prasada Rao, International Team Leader Abdul Rauf Meraj, National Team Expert

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The MTR team would like to thank all stakeholders for their support and the open and frank discussions of the Biodiversity Project, its achievements and the challenges faced. Moreover, the MTR team would like to express its gratitude to WCS Afghanistan and especially the field teams in Wakhan and Band-e-Amir for their hospitality and help and support in arranging the field visits.

The MTR was conducted by
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Acronyms

AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
APWA	Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Service
BACA	BACA Band-e Amir Community Association (now BACC)
BACC	Band-e-Amir Community Committee
BANP	Band-e-Amir National Park
BAPAC	Band-e-Amir Protected Area Committee
BPWR	Big Pamir Wildlife Reserve
CBD	United Nations Convention on Biodiversity
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CDC	Community Development Council
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMA	Central Management Authority (MAIL)
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
DAIL	Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, MAIL
EEP	Environmental Education Programme, WCS
ESSP	Environmental and Social Screening Procedure
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GERES	Group for the Environment, Renewable Energy and Solidarity
GSLEP	Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection Programme
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
IPAT	Interim Protected Area Tarzulamal (low-level regulation)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MTR	Mid-term Review
NEPA	National Environmental Protection Agency
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NGS	National Geographic Society
NP	National Park
NPASP	National Protected Area System Plan
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
NRM	Natural Resource Management
O1-3	Outcome 1-3
PA	Protected Area
PIR	Project Implementation Review
ProDoc	Project Document
PMU	Project Management Unit

PSC   Project Steering Committee
PPT   Peste des Petits Ruminants
R1-7   Recommendation 1-7
SDG   Sustainable Development Goal
SLM   Sustainable Land Management
SMART (indicators)   Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound
SMART (PA patrolling)   Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool
ToR   Terms of Reference
TRAC   Target Resources Assignments from Core
TWR   Teggermansu Wildlife Reserve
UN   United Nations
UNDP   United Nations Development Programme
UNEG   United Nations Evaluation Group
USAID   United States Agency for International Development
WaPAC   Wakhan Protected Area Committee
WCS   Wildlife Conservation Society
WFP   World Food Programme
WNP   Wakhan National Park
WPA   Wakhan Pamir Association
WR   Wildlife Reserve

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Project Information Table

1.   The table below provides basic information about the project.

Project Title	Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management in Afghanistan (the Biodiversity 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, Award # Proj. 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 • Land degradation	Midterm Review completion date:	12 December 2017
GEF Focal Area Strategic Objective:	• BD-1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Areas • LD-3: Integrated landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape	Planned project closing date:	26 April 2019
Trust Fund [indicate GEF TF, LDCF, SCCF, NPIF]:	GEF TF	If revised, proposed op. closing date:	N/A
Executing Agency/ Implementing Partner:	GEF Implementing Agency: UNDP Executing Agency: Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)		
Other execution partners:	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA)		
Project Financing	at CEO endorsement (US$)		at Midterm Review (US$)	
[1] GEF financing:		6,441,819		4,299,429
[2] UNDP contribution:		1,000,000		637,691
[3] Government:	NEPA (grant):	1,000,000	NEPA (grant):	1,000,000
	MAIL (grant):	18,000,000	MAIL (grant):	0
	MAIL (in kind):	6,000,000	MAIL (in kind):	6,000,000
	MRRD/NSP (grant):	10,000,000	MRRD/NSP (grant):	10,000,000
[4] Other partners:	WCS (grant):	300,000	WCS (grant):	360,800
	UNDP (grant):	2,000,000	UNDP (grant)	0
	AKF (grant):	15,000,000	AKF (grant):	0
5] Total co-financing:		53,300,000		17,998,491
PROJECT TOTAL COSTS:		59,741,819		22,935,611

1.2 Project Description (brief)

2. The Biodiversity Project aims to improve the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, while improving the livelihoods of communities through the promotion of sustainable natural resource management practices. The project seeks to strengthen the development of the protected area (PA) system in Afghanistan, through supporting the establishment of a legally recognised and institutionally capable PA authority, gazetting three new PAs (in Wakhan), operationalising the management of four PAs (three new PAs in Wakhan and Band-e-Amir National Park), as well as developing sustainable natural resource management (NRM)/sustainable lands management (SLM) (rangeland management) and livelihoods solutions. The project directly addresses GEF Focal Area Objectives BD-1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems and LD3: Integrated landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape. The objective is "*to establish a national system of protected areas to conserve biodiversity and mitigate land degradation pressures on habitats in key biodiversity areas, initially centered in Bamyan Province and the Wakhan corridor*". The project has the following three intended outcomes (shortened):

    *   Outcome 1 (O1): A National PA system is established with legal, planning, policy and institutional frameworks for expansion and management for the PA estate
    *   Outcome 2 (O2): Protected area coverage and protection status is improved to increase biodiversity representativeness and ecological resilience
    *   Outcome 3 (O3): Protected area management effectiveness and climate-resilient sustainable land management is enhanced to reduce threats to pilot PAs

1.3 Project Progress Summary

3. The Biodiversity Project is overall well-designed and provides a comprehensive approach, although the delineation between Outcome 2 (PA management) and Outcome 3 (SLM) is not entirely clear, and the project does not engage directly in managing and regulating grazing and livestock numbers, which are major drivers of land degradation and pressure on wildlife.

4. The centrepiece of Outcome 1, the establishment of Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Service (APWA) has become impossible due to the President's decision to not establish any new government agencies as well as disagreement between the National Environment Protection Agency (NEPA) and Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) on the mandate and responsibilities of APWA. Significant progress on Outcome 1 has only been made vis-à-vis strengthening the legal framework with new legislation being drafted.

5. Progress under Outcome 2 has been good; the PA estate expansion target had been achieved with the designation of three PAs in Wakhan. Progress has also been made in the management of PAs with governing bodies being in place and management plans drafted for Band-e-Amir National Park (BANP) and Wakhan National Park (WNP) and finalised and approved for Big Pamir Wildlife Reserve (BPWR) and Teggermansu Wildlife

reserve (TWR), although it is still not fully effective in BANP and management mechanisms in the new PAs are still at a nascent stage. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's (GIRoA) revenue generation from the national parks (NP) remains low in BANP (despite high and rapidly growing visitor numbers) and non-existent in WPN, mainly due to the current legislation with centralised GIRoA revenue management of GIRoA and uncertainty about whether the future PA management responsibility will stay with MAIL or be transferred to NEPA – and the related absence of mechanisms for sharing revenues with communities. Nonetheless, the draft BANP management plan contains provisions for enhancing revenue generation and sharing benefits with communities, but its approval has been significantly delayed and the fees specified are too low to generate sufficient revenues to cover BANP expenses let alone benefit sharing with communities. Moreover, while communities are engaged in PA management, their contribution is still significantly limited by capacity constraints.

6. Communities have been engaged in SLM related practices, such as predator-proof corrals, tree planting/watershed projects, passive solar houses, and solar cooking. These livelihoods activities have yielded tangible improvements for communities, such as reduced losses of livestock and reduced exposure, especially of women, to smoke from cooking and heating. However, the environmental awareness and understanding of the value of wildlife appears to remain low in communities. Moreover, the project has not been fully effective in engaging women in PA management and SLM.

7. An increase in the Marco Polo Sheep population has been achieved.

8. Project management has generally been efficient and ensured timely implementation (although spending on the outcomes is below budget targets – partially owing to lack of progress on APWA establishment) in a difficult context which has significantly affected implementation, where project sites especially in Wakhan are remote and difficult to access, and local stakeholder capacities are low. Monitoring and reporting has generally been good and captured most outcomes and impacts. However, the stakeholder engagement has been somewhat uneven, with good participation in some activities, especially related to planning and PA governance, but less so in SLM, where local government could be more engaged and community-engagement has been somewhat limited to CDCs with a more limited engagement of other community members. The project has made significant outreach efforts, but the environmental education has been somewhat superficial in WNP. It has proven difficult to mobilise and strategically use co-financing.

1.4 MTR ratings and achievement summary table

9. The table below provides a brief summary of the project achievements and ratings of the project performance. See Annex 3 for information on the rating scale applied.

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	Outcome 1 is unachievable due to change in context making it impossible to establish APWA. The delineation between Outcome 2 and Outcome 3 is unclear in results framework. No activities aim at managing

		and regulating grazing and livestock numbers, arguably the main drivers of land degradation. Otherwise, the project strategy is coherent and logical.
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: **MS** *(moderately satisfactory)*	- PA Regulations and Hunting Law drafted, approval pending. - APWA cannot be established in current context. - PA estate expanded with the designation of four PAs (WNP, BPWR, TWR) and the hectare target is achieved. - PA management operational but not yet fully effective in BANP. - PA management still nascent in the new PAs: WNP, BPWR, TWR. - Community engagement in PA co-management is significantly limited by capacity constraints. **Objective likely to be partly achieved**
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: **U** *(unsatisfactory)*	- National level capacity development stalled due to current uncertainty over mandate for PA management. - All four planned PAs have already been fully gazetted. - Government revenue generation is still low in BANP and non-existent in WPN (due to unresolved legislation/jurisdiction issues). **O1 unlikely to be achieved**
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: **S** *(satisfactory)*	- The planned four PAs are already gazetted, the entire Wakhan is declared a NP, and the hectare target has been achieved. - Management plans have been drafted for BANP and WNP, approval pending. Management plans are finalised and approved for BPWR and TWR. - Park Authority is in place for BANP. Park Authority not yet established for WNP (incl. BPWR and TWR) but is pending WNP management plan approval, but a ranger system is in place. - Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) score is improving for BANP but stagnant for WNP (incl. BPWR and TWR, which fall within WNP). **O2 likely to be at least partly achieved**
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: **MS** *(moderately satisfactory)*	- Marco Polo sheep population has increased. - No system yet in place for reinvesting tourism revenue in communities and revenues collected still too low for this (but communities benefit from providing services to tourists). - WPA and BACC capacities still low. - Environmental awareness and understanding still appears low. - Meaningful involvement of women in PA management remains limited. **O3 likely to be partly, but not fully, achieved**

| Project Implementation & Adaptive Management | S (satisfactory) | • Generally efficient project management and timely implementation (albeit spending being below target) in a difficult context where external factors have significantly affected implementation.
• Appropriate, but output-focused work plans, without reflections on the achievement of outcomes.
• In practice, little linkage to non-UNDP and non-WCS co-financing stated in ProDoc and PIRs.
• Monitoring captures most outcomes and impacts (but not fully gender aspects), but does not provide strategic implementation guidance, since progress on some key outcome/impact indicators are not reflected are only measured at completion.
• Stakeholder engagement uneven:
  • Local government engaged in some aspects but requesting more engagement in other aspects (affected by budget constraints, NEPA-MAIL PA mandate ambiguity, and security)
  • Community-engagement is somewhat limited to CDCs.
• Satisfactory reporting, but not fully capturing challenges.
• Significant effort paid to outreach, but EPP is somewhat superficial in WNP. |
| Sustainability | ML (moderately likely) | • Good progress has been made in establishing the legal framework to secure the project results.
• GIRoA capacity and proactive leadership are constraints, especially at sub-national level, is a challenge for sustainability.
• Community capacity constraints and low awareness remain major challenges for sustainability.
• Financial sustainability is not secured and depends on donor support. PA revenue generation is still low and GIRoA is financially constrained.
• The environmental threats to the project are localised, except climate change.
• Sustainability depends on post-project support from WCS, this is secured for WNP but not yet for BANP. |

1.5 Concise summary of conclusions

10. **Relevance**: The Biodiversity Project is addressing an important problem in Afghanistan, which is otherwise receiving little attention nationally and from the international community, namely the loss of globally significant biodiversity. At the same time, the project is helping GIRoA in implementing its policies and international commitments vis-à-vis wildlife conservation. However, the political context in Afghanistan has changed since the project was designed, and, the establishment of an independent APWA is now politically impossible and uncertainty of whether PA management will remain with MAIL or be assumed by NEPA makes it impossible to redesign the project's institutional strengthening at the national level.

11. **Effectiveness and impact**: Overall, good progress and results have been achieved in relation to the formulation of new PA and hunting related legislation, the gazetting of new

PAs, the formulation of PA management plans, and further strengthening governance and management institutions as the PA level – although capacities are still low. Moreover, while legal enforcement vis-à-vis illegal hunting and land-use is still not fully effective, the support for both MAIL rangers and the WCS ranger system have contributed to improved enforcement. SLM practices and other practices to reduce the pressure habitats and wildlife have been successfully promoted. Other targets appear overambitious compared to the current capacities, such as the high hectare targets for effective rangeland co-management and SLM and target for sharing PA revenue with communities when revenue generation remains low for BANP (despite a good revenue potential) and non-existent for WNP, mainly due to the current legislation with centralised GIRoA revenue management of GIRoA and uncertainty about the future PA management responsibility. The draft BANP management plan contains provisions for enhancing revenue generation and sharing benefits with communities, but its approval has been significantly delayed and the fees specified are too low to generate sufficient revenues to cover BANP expenses let alone benefit sharing with communities.

12. While stakeholder engagement has been good vis-à-vis PA governance, their engagement has in other areas been insufficient; GIRoA staff have only been engaged to a limited extent in research and SLM activities and sub-national staff would like to be more involved. The lack of clarity on PA management mandate is a major constraint as both MAIL and NEPA expect inclusion in activities, which increases costs (e.g. for per diem and transport) as opposed to having a single responsible institution, and at times it affects the proactive engagement of staff of both agencies in solving challenges. Moreover, due to insecurity, provincial GIRoA and WCS staff in Faizabad often cannot travel to WNP over land (but only by plane charter), which limits the scope for their engagement. There is also no mechanism for coordination between the MAIL and WCS ranger systems. The WCS rangers in WNP formally belong to WPA, but in practice they are managed by WCS with little WPA involvement. The engagement with communities has focused almost entirely on CDCs with the expectation that CDCs would inform their communities, but this does not always happen in practice and it is the impression of the MTR team from interviews that community-members generally have little knowledge about the project objectives and limited understanding of the importance of environmental and biodiversity conservation. The engagement of women has not been fully effective and while women are formally represented in BACC and WPA, their participation in decision-making remains ineffective. A major challenge for the project is how to balance the high demand for community-development interventions with the biodiversity conservation focus of the project; WCS is not a community-development NGO, but the provision of tangible livelihoods benefits is the only way to create community interest in the project.

13. It is too early to assess the project's impact on the environment and biodiversity. Early impacts on livelihoods have already emerged, such as reductions in the loss of livestock to predators, and a significant reduction in the exposure, especially of women, to hazardous smoke from the burning of wood and dung for cooking and heating. Moreover, it

appears that the project has helped preventing uncontrolled development and also contributed to reducing environmentally damaging behaviour of tourists in BANP.

14. **Efficiency**: Overall, project management has been efficient and WCS has ensured timely implementation of most activities and delivery of outputs in a very challenging context, where security concerns and remoteness makes it both expensive and very time consuming to reach project sites. WCS has ensured that research and monitoring oriented activities have been delivered at a high quality, and reporting is overall good. The long-term engagement of WCS with NEPA and MAIL and in the project areas is conducive to the delivery of the project, as the project builds on the results of earlier projects. WCS has been less effective in ensuring stakeholder engagement at the local level, and in enabling active participation of women and community-members outside the CDCs. The project has made significant outreach efforts, but the environmental education has been somewhat superficial in WNP. It has proven difficult to mobilise and strategically use co-financing.

15. **Sustainability**: Good progress has been made in establishing the legal framework to secure the project results, but institutional capacity constraints with GIRoA and often low community awareness remain major challenges for ensuring sustainability. Financial sustainability is also not secured and depends on continued donor support. Overall, sustainability depends on post-project support from WCS, this is secured for WNP but not yet for BANP. A more proactive engagement by GIRoA agencies is also required.

1.6 Recommendation Summary Table

16. Seven overall recommendations supported by specific key actions and indication of the responsible partners are presented in Chapter 5.2. With only one season left of the project, expectations must be realistic in terms of what can be done under the Biodiversity Project, but the MTR team has also found a number of important challenges to be addressed in the medium term (post-project) in order to achieve the expected impacts and ensuring sustainability of the results. The table below present the overall recommendation and a brief overview of the related project-specific short-term key actions.

17. See chapter 5.2 for the recommended strategic/post-project key actions; it should be noted that these strategic key actions to a large extent are recommended for GIRoA (MAIL, NEPA, MoF, BAPAC, Provincial Governor, Police), as well as for WCS and UNDP.

Rec #	Recommendation	Entity Responsible
A	O1: A National PA system is established with legal, planning, policy and institutional frameworks for expansion and management for the PA estate	
A.1 (R1)	Revise project outcomes, activities, indicators, assumptions, risks and budget allocations to make them more realistic and better reflect the current context. *Cancel all APWA-related outputs and indicators, add outputs for preparing a future PA expansion in the Bamyan Plateau and Ajar Valley, revise assumptions and risks and discuss with government partners at national and local levels.*	WCS UNDP

B	O2: Protected area coverage and protection status is improved to increase biodiversity representativeness and ecological resilience	
B.1 (R1)	See A.1 (R1) above. *Revise and restructure O2 and O3 so O2 focuses on PA management.*	WCS
B.2 (R2)	Enhance the involvement of GIRoA (MAIL/DAIL, NEPA) in project implementation. *Involve DAIL/PA staff in community activities, enhance the inclusion of project activities in MAIL/DAIL/NEPA annual work plans.*	WCS MAIL NEPA
B.3 (R3)	Adjust PA management and governance structures to address current bottlenecks. *Approve draft BANP Management Plan, establish three sub-committees under WPA, give women ranger the same status as their male counterparts.*	WCS MoF WPA MAIL
B.4 (R4)	Focus on enhancing the economic sustainability of PAs. *(a strategic/post-project recommendation.)*	WCS UNDP BAPAC
C	O3: Protected area management effectiveness and climate-resilient sustainable land management is enhanced to reduce threats to pilot PAs	
C.1 (R1)	See A.1/B.1 (R1) above. *Revise and restructure O2 and O3 so O3 focuses on community SLM.*	WCS
C.2 (R5)	Deepen the engagement with communities. *Enhance the EEP to improve the environmental understanding, consider focusing on selected "model" communities, prioritise interventions where WCS has a unique added value, include poverty criteria in demonstration site selection, strengthen the gender approach.*	WCS
C.3 (R6)	Promote community ownership and independence. *Make clear to communities that WCS can add more value by focusing on things communities cannot do themselves, ensure community contributions, condition community projects on replication commitments, discuss annual costs of predation on livestock with corral costs, report back to communities on GiROA's follow-up on reports on illegal activities.*	WCS
D	Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	
D.1 (R7)	Further enhance project management and staff capacities. *Ensure that WCS job descriptions and actual tasks match, ensure WCS staff do not work in areas where there is a conflict of interest, enhance technical capacity development for WCS field staff, report improvements in livelihoods (gender-disaggregated), include field visits in audits.*	WCS UNDP
E	Sustainability	
E.1 (R2)	See B2 (R2) above.	
E.2 (R4)	See B4 (R4) above.	
E.3 (R6)	See C3 (R6) above.	

4 Introduction

4.1 Purpose of the MTR and objectives

18. The assignment comprised a mid-term review (MTR) of the UNDP-GEF project *Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management in Afghanistan* (PIMS 5038), also called the *Biodiversity Project*. The objective of the MTR was to assess project implementation programmes progress.

4.2 MTR scope and methodology

19. The MTR reviewed: a) the progress towards, and likeliness of, achieving the intended results (the project's objectives and outcomes), b) the solidity and appropriateness of the project strategy, and c) the project's sustainability and associated risks. Based on the findings, the MTR has come up with implementable recommendations vis-à-vis the key challenges and shortcoming identified, in order to ensure the project will achieve the intended results before its completion and ensuring their longer-term sustainability.

20. A series of evaluative questions guided the MTR, see Annex 2. The MTR comprised three main phases: 1) inception and document review, 2) field mission to Afghanistan including stakeholder interviews and project site visits to Wakhan and Band-e-Amir/Bamyan, and 3) analysis and reporting.

21. The MTR was based on a combination of direct consultations with Biodiversity Project stakeholders and secondary sources, e.g. project documentation.

22. Document review: Available project documentation was reviewed. See Annex 6 for details on the documents reviewed.

23. Stakeholder consultations: Stakeholders were consulted through in-person interviews, group discussions, and Skype meetings. See Annex 5 for a detailed list of stakeholders consulted.

24. Site inspections: Selected project site were visited to verify the project activities. See Annex 4 for the detailed mission programme.

4.3 Limitations

25. A number of limitations applied to the MTR.

- Security: While the security is good in the project areas (Wakhan and Band-e-Amir) and thus did not affect the site visits, it was not possible for the MTR team to visit regional-level stakeholders in Faizabad, due to the insecurity along the Faizabad-Ishkashim road.
- Due to remoteness and time constraints, the team was unable to visit the proposed wildlife reserves, nor the communities and project sites in Little Pamir and Big Pamir. However, six representatives from Little Pamir participated in meetings in Sarhad-e-Broghil, and Kyrgyz couple (man and woman) from Little Pamir was interviewed in Khandud. Moreover, one Kyrgyz from Big Pamir was briefly met in Gos Khun.

- The primary entry point to communities were CDC members and other leaders, with less possibility to meet the most marginalised community members. Nonetheless, a number of non-leaders were also interviewed.
- Some women were interviewed, but due to cultural sensitivities and often limited knowledge of Dari among Wakhi and Kyrgyz women, the number of women interviewed was significantly lower than the number of men.
- It is impossible to accurately establish the extent to which the co-finance stated in the ProDoc has materialised, since there is no specification of which projects and programmes the stated co-financing is related to (except for MRRD); hence the figures available are rough estimates provided by the UNDP Country Office, with the exception of the UNDP TRAC and WCS co-funding.

4.4 Structure of the MTR report

26. The MTR report is arranged in five main sections. Section 1 provides a short executive summary of the main features, findings, conclusions and main recommendations of the report. Section 2 provides a description of the purpose, scope and methodology of the MTR. Section 3 provides a description of the project context and the design of the project and its key features, modalities and stakeholders.

27. Section 4 presents the MTR findings vis-à-vis the project strategy, implementation progress and results, project implementation and management, and sustainability. Section 5 present the MTR conclusions vis-à-vis the internationally applied evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability; and the section also presents the detailed recommendations of the MTR. Further supportive information is provided in annexes.

5 Project Description, background and context

5.1 Development context

28. Unsustainable use of natural resources, which is driven by poverty and population growth, is causing widespread degradation of ecosystems in Afghanistan and is thereby threatening the countries biodiversity with several species declining and being under threat. The impacts of climate change further exacerbate the land degradation. Around 80% of the Afghan population depends on agriculture and livestock for their livelihoods and are thus dependent on the country's natural resource base for food security and incomes. Moreover, human-wildlife conflicts, poaching and illegal trade in wildlife products threatens the country's biodiversity, especially iconic flagship species such as snow leopards and Marco Polo sheep.

29. Decades of instability and conflict seriously hampered economic and social development and also stalled the development of a functional PA system. Prior to the period of conflict 14 PAs had been identified, but never officially gazetted. Currently, Band-e-Amir National Park is the only gazetted PA in Afghanistan.

30. The National Protected Area System Plan (NPASP) identifies 11 future PAs in addition to Band-e-Amir, and four additional possible PAs have been identified. Some of these are receiving support through donor projects, but most are unfunded and their current environmental status is unknown.

31. While significant efforts have been made to reconstruct Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the governance and institutional structures and capacities remain weak, and the legal framework insufficient, and hence the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) is presently unable to effectively conserve ecosystems and biodiversity.

32. Protected Areas (PAs) and sustainable land management are covered in the following law and policies, in order of importance/hierarchy: the Afghanistan Constitution, Environment Law (2007), Hunting and Wildlife Management Law (2000), Pasture Law (2000), Forest Law (2012), Land Management Law, Interim Protected Area Tarzulamal (IPAT), National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP – under the UN Convention on Biodiversity), and National Protected Area System Plan.

33. The Environment Law places the legal and regulatory responsibility for PAs under the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) – but the responsibility for the day-to-day management of PAs has been delegated to the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) under the 2009 Interim Protected Area Tarzulamal (IPAT). However, the IPAT has seemingly come to an end. At the design of the Biodiversity Project, it was under consideration to establish a separate Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Service (APWA) for the management of PAs, but this idea has been abandoned as President Ghani has decided that the Government should be trimmed and therefore no new Government agencies should be created, and since neither NEPA or MAIL are in favour of

this idea. It is currently not clear whether the management responsibility will fall under NEPA or remain with MAIL.

34. No other major socio-economic and environmental changes happened since the beginning of project implementation, except for a) a rapid increase in the annual number of domestic tourists visiting Band-e-Amir National Park (BANP), b) deteriorating security in Afghanistan, but not in Bamyan/BANP or Wakhan.

35. The Biodiversity Project is supporting GIRoA's own efforts in strengthening and expanding the PA system as outlined in the Environmental Law, for example by supporting the gazetting of new PAs in Wakhan. The project supports the further development of the national policy, planning and institutional framework for biodiversity conservation and PAs. It also aims at strengthening the institutional framework for PA management at the PA level, e.g. by supporting the elaboration of management plans for specific PAs and supporting the multi-stakeholder Protected Area Committees required by the Environment Law. The project is thus directly supporting the implementation of selected priority actions in Afghanistan's NBSAP, such as the development of a scientific inventory of flora and fauna, the establishment of priority PAs (Band-e-Amir and Wakhan), and the development of adequate legal instruments.

36. Moreover, through the engagement with communities inside the national park and the engagement of community rangers, the project is supporting the achievement of Outcome 3 of the UNDP Country Programme for Afghanistan: "*Economic growth is accelerated to reduce vulnerabilities and poverty, strengthen the resilience of the licit economy and reduce the illicit economy in its multiple dimensions*". It also contributes to Outcome 2 of UNDP's global Strategic Plan 2014-2017 (*Citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance*), especially vis-à-vis Output 2.5: "*Legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions enabled to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, in line with international conventions and national legislation*".

37. The Biodiversity Project responds directly to SDG 15 (Life on Land): "*Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*". Moreover, the project contributes to a number of other SDGs.

5.2 Project objective and outcomes

38. Afghanistan faces significant barriers to biodiversity conservation, watershed maintenance, and land productivity, such as a lack of a clear institutional and legal framework for protected areas (PAs), the near absence of a PA system with only two fully gazetted national parks (only one at the beginning of the Biodiversity Project), and limited PA management capacity.

39. The Biodiversity Project aims to improve the conservation of ecosystems and biodiver-

sity, while improving the livelihoods of communities through the promotion of sustainable natural resource management practices. Specifically, the project addresses institutional capacity and legal framework constraints vis-à-vis strengthening ecosystem conservation. The project thus seeks to strengthen and support the development of the protected area (PA) system in Afghanistan, through supporting the establishment of a legally recognised and institutionally capable PA authority, gazetting three new PAs (in Wakhan), operationalising the management of four PAs (the three new PAs in Wakhan and the existing Band-e-Amir National Park in Bamyan), as well as developing sustainable NRM/sustainable lands management (SLM) (rangeland management) and livelihoods solutions. The project directly addresses GEF Focal Area Objectives BD-1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems and LD3: Integrated landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape.

40. The project's overall goal is to *"contribute to the conservation of globally significant biodiversity and reduce the risks of land degradation in Afghanistan"*.

41. The objective is "*to establish a national system of protected areas to conserve biodiversity and mitigate land degradation pressures on habitats in key biodiversity areas, initially centered in Bamyan Province and the Wakhan corridor*". The project has three intended outcomes:
   - Outcome 1 (O1). A National PA system is established with legal, planning, policy and institutional frameworks for expansion and management for the PA estate in the country
   - Outcome 2 (O2). Protected area coverage and protection status is improved to increase biodiversity representativeness and ecological resilience
   - Outcome 3 (O3). Protected Area Management effectiveness and climate-resilient Sustainable Land Management (SLM) is enhanced to reduce threats to pilot PAs

5.3 Project timing and milestones

42. The Biodiversity Project started on 27 April 2014 and is scheduled for completion on 31 December 2018 and closing on 26 April 2019. An inception workshop was held on 28 August 2014. The ProDoc does not provide an implementation plan with milestones, it only provides baselines and end of project targets for the objective and outcome indicators. The annual work plans provide annual targets only for the outputs and activities.

5.4 Project budget

43. The Biodiversity Project is supported by the GEF5 Trust Fund with an allocation of USD 6.441m and USD 1m from UNDP (TRAC), complemented by co-financing from various other sources, i.e. the national budget from GIRoA (NEPA and MAIL) and a range of donor programmes and projects, see Chapter 6.3 for a breakdown of co-financing.
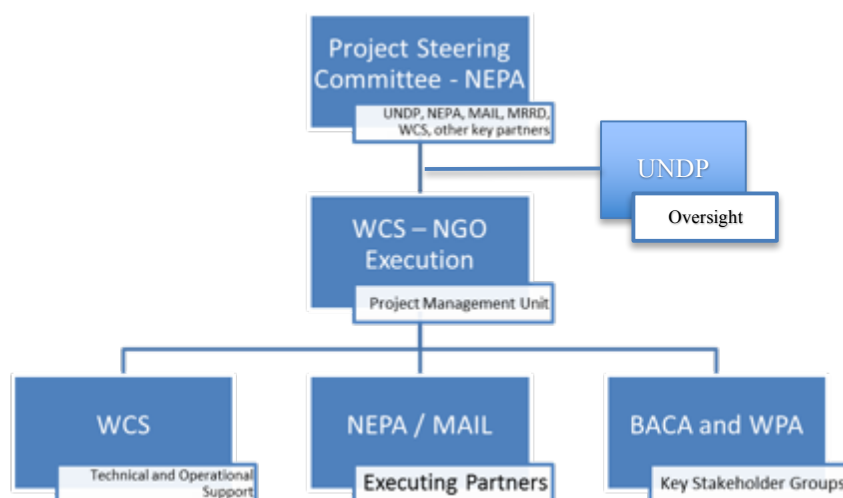
5.5 Project location and sites

44. The Biodiversity Project operates at three locations. Outcome 1 focuses on policy and institutional frameworks at the national level, i.e. with the activities mainly taking place in cooperation with MAIL and NEPA headquarters in Kabul. Outcome 2 and Outcome 3 focus at the PA level, i.e. with activities mainly being implemented within the Band-e-

Amir and Wakhan National Park as well as with provincial authorities (mainly Governor's Office, DAIL, NEPA) in Bamyan and Badakshan Provinces, and with district and PA authorities in (mainly Governor's Office, DAIL, BANP Park Authority) Wakhan and Yakawlang Districts, and CBOs (WPA and BACC) and communities within the national parks.

45. <u>Band-e-Amir National Park</u> (BANP) in Yakawlang District, Bamyan Province. BANP is the first national park (NP) in Afghanistan, and was gazetted and had its first management plan in place before the Biodiversity Project commenced. BANP covers approx. 600 km2 and is located in the Central Highlands of Afghanistan, and its main purpose is to protect the integrity of the Band-e-Amir travertine lakes, arguably are the most unique geological feature in Afghanistan and a major tourist attraction, but also to protect biodiversity.

46. BANP is bordered to the North by the Bamyan Plateau (also known as the Northern Plateau), a remote highland plateau supporting important biodiversity and possibly being the last habitat in Afghanistan for persian leopard. While the Bamyan Plateau is not formally a covered by the Biodiversity Project, some support has been provided to establish a community ranger system and to create wildlife conservation awareness. The Bamyan Plateau is bordering to the north the Ajar Valley, which GIRoA is planning to declare a NP.

47. <u>Wakhan National Park</u> (WNP) incl. Big Pamir and Teggermansu Wildlife Reserves in Wakhan District, Badakhshan Province. The Wakhan corridor in Northeast Afghanistan is the second, largest and newest NP in Afghanistan. Covering an area of approx. 11,000 km2, it is dominated by the high mountains, high valleys and glaciers. It also contains two strict Wildlife Reserves. It is the last remaining habitat for snow leopard and Marco Polo sheep in Afghanistan, and also supports populations of ibex, urial, brown bears, and wolves.

5.6 Project implementation arrangements and stakeholders

48. The figure below depicts the management setup for the biodiversity project.

49. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) is responsible for oversight of project implementation, and approves the annual work plans and budgets as well as any major changes in the project plans; the PSC meets annually. The PSC is chaired by NEPA and comprises representatives from MAIL, MRRD, UNDP, and WCS. The ProDoc also mentions USAID, UNEP, BACC, WPA, MRRD, MoI, and MoF as possible PSC members, but this has not materialised.

50. UNDP is the GEF Implementing Agency for the project. The Afghanistan Country Office (CO) oversees day-to-day operations, whereas the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Adviser in the Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau provides strategic oversight. UNDP is responsible for 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.

51. WCS is the GEF Executing Agency for the project, under UNDP's NGO execution modality. WCS manages day-to-day project implementation in cooperation with NEPA; the Project Management Unit (PMU) is with WCS. The PMU comprises an international Project Manager/Chief Technical Adviser and an Afghan WCS Country Manager, who are supported by other WCS technical experts. WCS has since 2006 been the principal technical wildlife conservation and PA partner of GIRoA (NEPA and MAIL). WCS has also facilitated the creation of the Band-e-Amir Protected Area Committee and the Wakhan Pamir Association.

52. NEPA is responsible for environmental policy, regulation and enforcement and thus has the ultimate control over the gazetting and development of PAs. Hence, NEPA is a project execution partner and the GIRoA agency responsible for supervision of the project. NEPA is implementing project activities together with WCS, and NEPA is chairing the PSC.

53. MAIL is designated as the Central Management Authority (CMA) for PAs through a joint NEPA-MAIL agreement and has the day-to-day management and administration responsibility for PAs. MAIL is thus the other project execution partner, implementing project activities together with WCS.

54. Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Service (APWA) was intended to be established with support from the project as a permanent, separate institution for managing the PAs. However, it has proven impossible to establish a new institution, and other options are being considered.

55. Protected Area Committees (PAC): Band-e-Amir Protected Area Committee (BAPAC) and Wakhan Protected Area Committee (WaPAC) comprise representatives of all local communities, provincial government officials, and representatives of the CMA. Their mandate is to guide PA management, whereas the ultimate decision-making rests with NEPA and MAIL. BAPAC existed prior to the project, but WaPAC is yet to be established once

the WNP management plan has been approved. New PACs were in the ProDoc envisaged to be formed for the Teggermansu and Big Pamir Wildlife Reserves with support from the project, but with the establishment of WNP, they will fall under WaPAC and not have their own PACs.

56. <u>Band-e-Amir Community Council (BACC, formerly BACA) and Wakhan Pamir Association (WPA)</u> are key stakeholders of the project. These community organisations are established to engage in PA management and benefit sharing on behalf of the communities in, and adjacent to, PA. The two associations represent communities in the PACs. They are in the project responsible for the implementation of community-related field activities, i.e. organising communities, training them on SLM with support from the PMU and the PA management teams. They also assist NEPA and MAIL in PA identification, demarcation, and management planning and implementation. They monitor income-generating activities and ensure equitable distribution of benefits among community members.

57. <u>Community members</u> are managing the natural resources in their area, which they utilize for their livelihoods. They are through their CDCs, CDC clusters, BACC and WPA participating in PA planning, monitoring and management and engage in SLM and income-generating activities.

58. <u>The private sector</u> was intended to be engaged in developing tourism services in and around the PAs to enable tourism-related revenue generation, as well as creating job opportunities for the communities. However, the private sector involvement has been limited (see Chapter 6.3).

59. <u>NGOs and agencies</u> are according to the ProDoc intended to be involved as partners in relation to conservation agriculture and nurseries. However, such partnerships appear not to have been formed (see Chapter 6.3).

6 Findings

6.1 Project strategy

60. As described in Chapter 3.1, the project is directly supporting national biodiversity as well as land management priorities and policies. The SLM engagement and pursuit of community co-management and benefits is also supportive of national rural development and poverty reduction aspirations. The project design also appears to be well in line with stakeholder views and no stakeholders expressed any major reservations about the project design. During the project preparation, the project proposal was presented to government stakeholders at central and local level as well as community organisations. Field trips were carried out and two national workshops held as well as several meetings with stakeholders.

61. While not explicitly described in the ProDoc, the Biodiversity Project builds on a long-term engagement of WCS with NEPA and MAIL in the two project sites. As such, it builds on the results and lessons from earlier, USAID funded, projects and is a logical continuation of ongoing processes, such as strengthening institutions set up with WCS support, i.e. BAPAD, BACC, and WPA. The process will not end with the Biodiversity Project, and WCS envisages a continued presence in Afghanistan and in the project sites. The approaches and SLM practices promoted are tested through previous projects in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

62. The project strategy and rationale (see the project theory of change in Annex 11) as outlined in the ProDoc and results framework is overall coherent and logical, in terms of the links from outcomes to objective and goal. Overall, the linkage from outputs and activities to the outcomes is logical and generally comprehensive. However, there appears to be one significant gap; Outcome 3 does not have any activities related to managing and regulating grazing and livestock numbers, which arguably are the main underlying factors causing land degradation and human-wildlife conflicts – and such regulation could also contribute to improving livestock health.

63. Outcome 1 and the associated outputs and underlying activities are generally clearly delineated, with the possible exception of Output 1.4 and its activities, which seem more related to knowledge management and communication than to the PA legal and institutional framework, and thus also related to the engagement with both Government staff and communities under Outcomes 2 and 3. The major issue with Outcome 1 is not its inherent logic, but the fact that the political context has changed and it has become impossible to establish APWA.

64. The boundaries between Outcome 2 and 3 are not clearly delineated and overlapping; both have some elements targeting GIRoA and other elements targeting communities, and the M&E system under output 3.1 is more closely related to the management plans established under Outcome 2 than to the community economic and livelihoods activities under Output 3.3 and 3.4. Similarly, Activity 3.1.4 on lessons sharing appears more closely related to the knowledge management activities under output 1.4. To address

the overlaps between the two outcomes, the WCS project team is de-facto viewing Outcome 2 as focusing on strengthening PA management and Outcome 3 as dealing with community-based SLM. However, this pragmatic and practical interpretation has not been translated into formal revisions of the results framework and reporting. But at the same time, these logical inconsistencies appear not to affect implementation negatively.

65. The assumptions are generally relevant and have proven to be in place, but most assumptions identified are reality conditions the project to a significant can extent influence, such as *"continued collaboration with key partners"* and *"collaborative relationships with communities maintained"*. A more comprehensive identification of assumptions would have been useful, for example, no assumptions were made regarding the economic potential for generating PA revenues and community incomes, nor regarding the willingness of law enforcement authorities to follow up on illegal practices reported.

66. While the *"deterioration of security in pilot areas"* is a major risk for most projects in Afghanistan, this is less of an issue in Wakhan and Bamyan, although it does significantly affect access to the areas and travel/transport costs and the ability to engage the provincial government in WNP – and the risk is 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"* has unfortunately been the reality, albeit somewhat in a different form than considered in the ProDoc; a major challenge for Outcome 1 is the realisation that APWA cannot be established and uncertainty regarding whether PA management will be taken over by NEPA or remain with MAIL. The identification of climate change as a risk for Outcome 3 is very appropriate. However, some of the stipulated risks are not truly risks, e.g. *"lack of local technical capacity"* is in reality one of the key areas the project seeks to change. The risks in the results framework and risk log are partly, but not fully aligned.

67. The objective and outcome indicators are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound). The indicators to some extent capture the economic benefits for communities (but seemingly not for households), but other livelihoods impacts observed by the MTR team such as health benefits, reduced workload, reduced loss of livestock assets (see Chapter 4.2) are not captured, nor are the livelihoods indicators gender disaggregated. There is one gender indicator on the female representation in BACC and WPA, but they only capture the number of women members, not whether their participation is meaningful. The indicators are presented in the results table in Chapter 4.2.

68. Outcome 3 and Output 3.2 explicitly emphasise that the SLM practices promoted will be climate resilient. Output 3.1 is planning to monitor ecosystem-climate change interlinkages. Moreover, the background chapter contains a section on climate change risks for biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. It was also envisaged to build the capacity of APWA vis-à-vis climate risk management. Some of the SLM practices promoted do contribute to enhancing climate resilience, i.e. the tree planting activities, solar cookers and passive solar houses all reduce the need for firewood and thereby the pressure on the

vegetation, but climate-proofing seems not to be taken significantly into consideration in their planning, e.g. in relation to protecting trees planted in alluvial fans from flash floods caused by glacier melt. Nonetheless, glacier retreat is being assessed by the project, thereby contributing to the knowledge base on the impacts of climate change.

69. The ProDoc mentions that "*Gender-equitable participation in all aspects of the project will contribute to the strength of sustainable solutions".* Gender issues and the intention to engage women and women's groups are mentioned in several places of the ProDoc, notably in relation to a number of outputs (1.1, 1.2, 3.4) and activities (1.3.1, 1.4.2, 3.4.4), e.g. to ensure gender is addressed in APWA policies, procedures, plans and staffing strategies and to generate income opportunities for women (e.g. selling handicrafts for women), and targeting women-led CBOs when possible. It is also stated that CDCs, BACC and WPA have "*a significant mix of genders*", enabling the promotion of activities directly benefitting women – and that project staff will "*constantly monitor gender representation and local power dynamics among project beneficiaries to ensure that women, children and the most vulnerable members of communities are fully engaged in project interventions and have equal access to project benefits".* However, as described above, the outcome indicators are only to a very limited extent gender-sensitive. Nonetheless, at the output and activity levels, information on beneficiaries is gender segregated in PIRs and progress reports, and a dedicated gender section describe activities and outputs targeting women.

6.2 Progress towards results

70. A detailed overview of the progress and results vis-à-vis the objective and outcome indicators and the likelihood of the project achieving its end-of-project targets is presented table in Annex 12 provides.

71. **The objective**, "*to establish a national system of PAs to conserve biodiversity and mitigate land degradation pressures on habitats in key biodiversity areas…*", will most likely be partly achieved with less than 1.5 years and only one season remaining of the project. On one hand, the target for increasing the area under protection has already been met with the establishment of WNP (as well as BPWR and TWR inside WNP) – but on the other hand, it has proven impossible to establish APWA. In terms of effective rangeland co-management, the current status is significantly below target. But, the target of 1,169,647 ha is extremely large and it appears unrealistic when considering: a) the difficult terrain and inaccessibility of much of WNP (a major constraint for the project as well as PA management in general), b) the significant capacity constraints of GIRoA agencies at provincial and district levels, and c) the capacity constraints of CBOs and communities.

72. The progress towards achieving the objective is rated as **moderately satisfactory**.

73. **Outcome 1**, "*a National PA system is established with legal, planning, policy and institutional frameworks…*", cannot be achieved, although good progress has been made on legislation and policy with the Draft Hunting Law and PA Regulation. The reason Outcome 1 cannot be achieved is due to the decision of the President that no new GIRoA

institutions should be established, which together with both NEPA and MAIL opposing the idea is rendering the establishment of APWA impossible – and at the same time, it is unclear whether the responsibility for PA management will remain with MAIL or transferred to NEPA. Hence, the context is currently not conducive for a meaningful engagement of the project in the development of national institutional frameworks and no progress has been made on the APWA-related indicators. The future responsibility for PA management may be clarified within the next 3-6 months, but even in such case, there would be insufficient time left of the project to achieve Outcome 1.

74. Nonetheless, some support has been provided for enhancing the capacity of GIRoA at the national level, such as the establishment of a NEPA web portal for storing and displaying statistical and geospatial data on biodiversity, PAs, vegetation cover and pollution. NEPA has also received guidance on implementing the Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Protection Programme (GSLEP) and reporting to the secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). 130 police officers were trained on Afghanistan's environment laws and CITES obligations.

75. The project seeks to create environmental and wildlife conservation awareness. This has been done at the national level through inputs to various events in Kabul, such as the World Environment Week, World Earth Day, Migratory Birds Day and the International Day of Biological Diversity, but also through supporting MAIL in its two annual Agricultural Fairs. At the community-level, awareness creation is especially through the WCS environmental education programme (EEP). EEP is centred around a) an environment day held at each school as an awareness raising events with the entire community invited (annually in WNP, twice annually in BANP), and b) "junior rangers" at each school who volunteer to collect litter before school ceremonies and events, do micro-irrigation projects at schools and discuss wildlife with community members. Cleaning campaigns have also been carried out under EEP. Moreover, in BANP an annual environmental training day is held for teachers in each school as well as campaigns with students and rangers targeting tourists. The EEP is somewhat shallow in WNP (e.g. isolated one-day awareness events as opposed to a more comprehensive engagement), and its messaging tends to be simplistic to provide an understanding on ecosystem-livelihoods interlinkages and climate change. A major challenge is that the EEP attempts to reach all schools and villages, of which some are remote, which makes it difficult to engage more deeply due to staff and financial limitations. Awareness creation also takes place through project staff discussions with CDC leaderships.

76. It is the impression of the MTR team from interviews that environmental awareness and understanding low in communities, who for the most part only see the value of wildlife as a means to attract tourism-based income opportunities and as a way to attract livelihoods support from WCS. There is little understanding of the relevance of ecosystems for their livelihoods more broadly.

77. The progress towards achieving the Outcome 1 is rated as **unsatisfactory**.

78. **Outcome 2**, "*Protected area coverage and protection status is improved…*", is likely to be achieved, either fully or partly. Firstly, the three planned PAs in Wakhan have been officially gazetted with facilitation support from the project. Moreover, draft management plans have been prepared for BANP and WNP (for BANP it is the second management plan, the first plan ended in 2014), and finalised and approved for BPWR and TWR. Moreover, an operational Park Authority under DAIL and a governance body are in place for BANP. While this is not yet fully the case for the PAs in Wakhan, DAIL does now have a ranger team in place.

79. Moreover, riparian vegetation has been rehabilitated and fenced below Band-e-Haibat and tourist infrastructure (e.g. gazebos, pathways and trails, fences, dust bins, signboards, and a tourist centre) have been constructed to control tourist movement and behaviour. Tourist facilities have been significantly enhanced; which contributes to controlling the movements of a large number of tourists and preventing damaging behaviour.

80. In Wakhan, the PAs are newly established and tangible changes as in BANP are not yet in place. Moreover, the context is very different from BANP, with a rugged terrain and difficult accessibility, and unlike BANP, the tourism is at a much lower level and mainly comprising Western adventure/eco-tourists. Hence, emphasis of the project vis-à-vis the governance and management of WNP is much more focused on wildlife conservation.

81. WCS has its own community ranger system in place in Wakhan which is addition to (but predates) the DAIL ranger system. Formally, the community rangers belong under BACC and WPA, but in reality, the rangers are employed and managed by WCS and the involvement of the CBOs in the ranger programme appears limited. The DAIL and WCS two systems currently run in parallel with no formalised linkages, a challenge in this regard is frequent changes in the DAIL ranger staffing and leadership. WCS has also established a community ranger system in the Bamyan Plateau, which is not gazetted as a PA and thus does not have any DAIL rangers. WCS has provided training for both DAIL and WCS rangers and also helped DAIL with development of annual operational plans and with refurbishing the BANP ranger station. In 2016, the project facilitated joint patrols with local police in BANP, which removed 31 falcon traps, confiscated five trucks of illegally harvested shrubs, and released 43 birds.

82. However, the achievement of the results under Outcome 2 – and PA management more largely – is facing some significant barriers. Despite high numbers of tourists visiting BANP, the revenue collected remains low and only a modest contribution to the costs of managing the park, and there is thus currently very little scope for investing part of the revenues for community-benefits. The new BANP management plan contains provisions for increasing revenues (revised fees and new modalities for fee collection), but has still not been approved, 1.5 years after its submission for approval, due to two reasons; a) the ambiguity on the mandates of NEPA and MAIL vis-à-vis PA management, and b) the centralised revenue management system in Afghanistan, which currently has no formal

provisions for ring-fencing PA revenue for investment in the PA system. The fees specified in the plan are too low to generate sufficient revenues to cover BANP expenses let alone benefit sharing with communities. Discussions are ongoing with the Ministry of Finance (MoF) on how to ring-fence the revenue, and WCS has consistently engaged in discussions with BAPAC members and GIRoA at central level to facilitate solutions to the issues related to PA revenue management. Till now this has been handled by having the revenue from entrance fees and small-scale business concessions collected by Yakawlang Municipality. For 2017, BAPAC agreed that all entrance fee revenues will be spent on upgrading the footpath network in BANP, but it is less clear how the concession fees are spent. And under the current model, the revenue collection and spending is controlled by the Municipality, not by the Park Authority.

83. Moreover, there are challenges for the community and government ranger systems (DAIL and WCS). Community rangers sometimes find it difficult to report illegal activities committed by people in their communities – so it appears that they do not always address or report the issues found. Conversion of grazing land on slopes to rain-fed farming remains a threat to the rangeland and the lakes. It is also difficult for unarmed ranger to stop armed poachers. The rangers do not have the authority to issue fines or arrest culprits themselves, but when illegal activities are reported to authorities, they often do not take any action – and poaching is reportedly sometimes done by influential individuals, incl. GIRoA staff (e.g. police or army official) from outside the area, making it difficult to handle for community rangers. Moreover, the rangers are not engaged to patrol during winter, the season where much of the poaching takes place. In BANP, the effectiveness of the DAIL ranger system has been significantly hampered by short term contracts, where most rangers are replaced every year, making it impossible to effectively build up a professional ranger team of experienced rangers and a professional ranger supervisor. WCS has emphasised to MAIL that rangers should be retained rather than replaced annually. The Park Authority has now requested to MAIL that a) the current ranger ream is retained for next year, and b) the rangers are all put on the tashkil as permanent staff.

84. The progress towards achieving the Outcome 2 is rated as **satisfactory**.

85. **Outcome 3**, "*PA management effectiveness and climate-resilient SLM…*", is likely to be partly, but not fully, achieved. Up-to-date data is currently not available for some of the outcome targets, but the others are unlikely to be met.

86. WCS is engaged in wildlife monitoring under the project, for example with ungulate surveys, camera traps and collaring of snow leopards in Wakhan and camera traps in the Bamyan Plateau. Other research is also being carried out in WNP and BANP, e.g. on glaciers, land use and degradation. However, little attempt appears to have been made to involve MAIL/DAIL and NEPA in this and facilitate a takeover of these functions in the medium-long term. An increased in the Marco Polo sheep population is reported by the project.

87. The Biodiversity Project has promoted improved practices for SLM, for reducing the pressure on natural resources and for reducing human-wildlife conflicts.

- Construction of 34 predator-proof communal corrals (for 930 households in 29 villages) and predator proofing 497 household corrals in WNP.
- Livestock vaccinations in WNP: 7428 sheep and goats PPT vaccinated, 2159 dewormed.
- Tree planting/watershed protection in WNP and BANP, to provide construction materials and firewood to communities and thereby reduce the pressure on the natural vegetation. More than 300,000 trees have been planted, covering 395 households in WNP and 711 families in BANP. WCS is not the only NGO planting trees in WNP, tree planting/watersheds is also a major activity of the Rupani Foundation and AKF.
- Provision of 82 demonstration passive solar houses in each of the 14 villages in BANP.
- Provision of 364 solar cookers in BANP; (all households in BANP now have solar cookers due to the Biodiversity Project and the predecessor project funded by USAID).
- Creation of income-generating opportunities for a small number of women. In BANP, the women committee if BACC has been supported with the construction of four handicraft shops for women. In WNP, ten women were trained in ranger uniform making and were paid to supply WCS rangers with uniforms.
- Provision of income-generating opportunities for men as community rangers.

88. The project has supported capacity development for BACC and WPA, the two CBOs established to facilitate community engagement in SLM, sustainable tourism as well as PA management. For example, WCS has provided them with training on proposal writing and facilitated their access to support from the GEF small grants scheme, e.g. for EP to set up a tourist centre in Ishkashim.

89. However, the scope for achieving the intended results under Outcome 3 – and ensuring community interest and engaged in wildlife conservation more largely – is significantly affected by low capacities in the communities. As described for Outcome 1, the environmental awareness in communities remains very low, and a general low level of education and literacy is a challenge for awareness raising. The interest and commitment of communities is closely related to the immediate economic benefits they see, such as the community ranger jobs created and community-development activities. Illiteracy and low education is in particular a limitation for women, which together with cultural norms is significantly limiting their ability to engage in CBO and PA management. A related problem is that while the communities are represented in BAPAC (and in the future WaPAC) through BACC, WPA and CDC heads their ability to engage meaningfully in PA governance is very limited.

90. In BANP, a major challenge is inter-community and intra-community conflicts, where some community members find that local leaders are using their positions to direct benefits towards their own communities and families. The extent to which such concerns are valid is unclear to the MTR team, but the disputes themselves are creating challenges for the WCS team, as it is based within the community with the highest level of

tensions.

91. Unlike the high rate of replication of passive solar houses in BANP, communities in Wakhan are rarely replicating the SLM practices promoted by WCS. For example, while loss of livestock to wolves is a significant problem for the communities, there is no replication of predator-proof communal corrals, and replication of the predator-proof household corrals appears localised in a few, proactive communities. Communities often claim they cannot afford the materials for corrals, despite the fact that they sometimes invest in development projects costlier than corrals (e.g. a community culture centre in Gos Khun village), and the economic loss due to predation appears to be significantly higher than the costs of a corral. The reasons appear to be a combination of low levels of education and a dependency syndrome created by NGOs working in Wakhan. WCS has also to some extent contributed to creating dependency, e.g. in some cases community were paid for their labour with food through the WFP Food for Work programme, instead of requiring that the labour was a community contribution; in one case, a corral was constructed in an unsuited location, which would probably not have happened had the communities not been paid for their work.

92. The Community demand for community development project much higher than what WCS has the capacity to deliver, and WCS is not an expert in development. At the same time, socio-economic benefits are critical for ensuring community interest in biodiversity conservation. Moreover, WCS' level of engagement in Wakhan has declined under the Biodiversity Project compared to the previous USAID-funded project which had a significantly larger budget – this, combined with alleged un-kept promises made by some WCS staff for development projects made before the Biodiversity Project, has not gone unnoticed by communities in Wakhan and has affected their perception of WCS.

93. It has proven difficult to engage women in the project, especially in relation to PA governance and CBO leadership – women are formally represented in both BACC and WPA committees and boards (albeit in significantly small numbers than men), but their actual influence and proactive participation appears limited, and the CBOs remain male dominated. At one point, WCS had engaged four woman rangers in BANP working in the vicinity of the lakes, but when the BANP ranger system was transferred to DAIL, the jobs of the women rangers were reclassified as cleaners, and while some of their tasks appear to remain the same, this reclassification clearly had a negative impact on their status.

94. Transport and travel is both very costly and very time consuming to work in Wakhan, due the large area, the rugged terrain, poor road infrastructure, and inaccessibility of large areas during the winter period. For example, it takes several days of hiking or horseback riding to reach Little Pamir or Big Pamir. Access thus poses a major challenge for both the implementation of Outcome 2 and Outcome 3, as well as for PA management in general. The issue is significantly exacerbated by insecurity in Zebak, making road travel to Faizabad difficult, so that travel to Wakhan can only be done by plane (e.g. chartered plane) or via Tajikistan. These challenges put major limitations on how

far project funds reach as well as the extent to which the project team can engage with especially the Kyrgyz communities in Little and Big Pamir. While BANP is generally accessible, the adjacent Bamyan Plateau is remote.

95. **Some tangible environmental and livelihoods impacts** have already been achieved by the project.

96. Reportedly the hunting ban associated with the PA designation has according to stakeholders led to a significant decline in hunting, and while the effectiveness of the DAIL and WCS community ranger systems appear somewhat modest in this respect, it is also probable that it does have a preventive effect and there are (albeit few) examples of ranger intervening and preventing illegal practices.

97. Due to the zoning in the management plans and governance of BAPAC, uncontrolled development (e.g. hotels and shops on problematic locations) has been avoided to a good extent (but not fully) in BANP, despite a rapid growth in tourist numbers from around 3,000 visitors prior to the gazetting in 2009 to around 200,000 in 2017. For example, the use of motor boats has been prevented. Moreover, the rehabilitation of the riparian vegetation below Band-e-Haibat has already provided an improved habitat for birds and frogs.

98. The tourist infrastructure and the rangers in BANP help controlling the movement of the large number of tourists and thereby reduces the environmental damages caused by large seasonal tourism. The challenge in BANP is to strike a balance between conservation priorities and the recreational importance of the area, but so far, a good balance appears to be in place.

99. The predator-proof corrals in WNP have reduced the predation on livestock (no predation happens inside the improved corrals) especially by wolves and to a lesser extent by snow leopards, which in turn help reducing human-wildlife conflict and thereby the risk of wolves and snow leopards being shot. However, the current number of corrals are far from meeting the demand and wolf-predation remains a large problem and the replication of predator-proof corrals remains limited, as they require a significant investment in purchasing and transporting materials. It remains an open question whether the ban on hunting has led to an increase in predation on livestock, as is the extent to which such an effect is fully off-set by the predator-proof corrals constructed. It is also unknown whether the access to predator-proof corrals lead to an increased number of livestock and thereby increased pressure on grazing lands.

100. The vaccinations provided have improved the health and reduce the mortality of livestock, and it is fair to assume that this also reduces the risk of disease transmission between livestock and wild animal (ungulates) as well as the productivity of the livestock.

101. The passive solar houses, the solar cookers have reduced the need for firewood and thereby the pressure on the natural vegetation in BANP, and also reduced the time

spent on gathering firewood. The tree planting will also contribute to this once the trees become more mature.

102. A significant added benefit of the passive solar houses and especially the solar cookers is the reduction of indoor smoke and the associated health hazard. The solar cookers in particular have meant that approx. 1,800 women and girls are not exposed to smoke in the kitchen and associated health benefits, positively impacting on the health of every woman in BANP. Indeed, while not an objective of the project in its own right, it is arguably the far most significant contribution the project has made to improving the lives of women.

103. There has been widespread replication of the passive solar houses; the vast majority of the houses seen by the MTR had installed passive solar houses, testifying to their positive impact in people's lives.

104. Moreover, the MTR visited a family who had repaired and improved their solar cooker at their own expense.

105. However, the extent to which the SLM practices introduced are leading to an increased resilience to climate change as intended is unclear – but it as probable that the reduced need for firewood and the contribution it makes to a healthier ecosystem also enhances the ecosystem resilience to climate change and derived hazards such as landslides.

106. The use of community rangers is providing job opportunities for community-members. And a small number of women have also been provided with income opportunities by the project. But the WCS community ranger jobs and the sales of ranger uniforms remain dependent on project resources.

107. The progress towards achieving the Outcome 3 is rated as **moderately satisfactory**.

6.3 Project implementation and adaptive management

108. **Management Arrangements**: the PSC is meeting annually and provides guidance for the project implementation, but it only comprises UNDP, NEPA, MAIL and WCS, and no representatives from the two project sites participate regularly.

109. The Afghan context is a difficult one to implement in. Like all projects in Afghanistan, the project is negatively affected by insecurity in different ways, even though the project sites are not directly affected by insecurity. Firstly, security incidents can, and have, caused delays, such as affecting movement in Kabul. Secondly, due to insecurity it is impossible to drive between Kabul and the project sites, so transport of staff and equipment is mainly done by air, and for a period it was very difficult to access WNP due to a suspension of flights so that WNP could only be accessed via Tajikistan. Moreover, it is difficult to find qualified international experts willing to visit Afghanistan, which for example caused a major delay of the provision of the training on the SMART ranger patrolling monitoring system.

110. Moreover, the challenges are further exacerbated by remoteness and rough terrain, especially in WNP (but also the Bamyan Plateau), making it both time consuming and expensive to carry out wildlife monitoring and community work. This, combined with the fact that the project operates in the field for 8 months in a year due to harsh winters as a major constraint for the implementation of field activities.

111. Overall, WCS has carried out project management and implementation efficiently in a difficult context, with delivery generally being on time and delays mainly being due to external factors (see below).

112. However, there have been some shortcomings related to staff management. For example, some field staff members are not working according to their job descriptions, but primarily carrying out a different set of tasks, making roles and responsibilities unclear and causing some uncertainty. Secondly, the ability to engage with community women is affected by the fact that most positions are filled by men – indeed, in the only field positions filled by women are those as EEP officers, which are women recruited from the communities. In Wakhan, a challenge for the ranger programme is that the WCS community ranger salaries are significantly lower than those of the DAIL rangers (although they reportedly also work fewer days), which has created some disappointment among rangers. On the positive side, some former WCS rangers taken up positions as DAIL rangers (and WCS has encouraged this), thereby contributing to strengthening the DAIL ranger system. Another staff-related issue is that one professional WCS staff member who is also a community-member from BANP has constructed a hotel in an area, which the BAPAC finds should be a green space. However, the hotel does not appear to be in direct conflict with the BANP management plans, and WCS has rightfully assumed the position that the legality issue should be handled by the provincial authorities. However, the staff member's hotel is conflicting with the mandate of WCS and it has to some extent negatively affected WCS' reputation among BAPAC members. Moreover, after the hotel was constructed, another community-members began constructing a hotel in the green space, although this construction was stopped by the authorities. The is also a potential risk of community conflicts associated with the construction in the green space.

113. At project design, the UNDP Environmental and Social Screening Procedure (ESSP) was applied and the ESSP established that no further review was required. Risk logs are reported on in the annual and quarterly progress reports submitted to UNDP and to a lesser extent in the PIRs, but the risks identified in the results framework and in the progress report risk logs are only partly aligned and only four of the eight risks in the risk log in the ProDoc are monitored. The table below depicts the four risks monitored and an assessment of the project mitigation measures – the measures taken are generally appropriate, but not fully sufficient in relation to handling asymmetric power and gender relations.

Risk	Project mitigation measures	MTR assessment
Deterioration in security	- Choice of low-risk sites	Important risk to manage. Measures are appropriate and

	- Close contact with security agencies & communities - Regular review of internal measures/procedures	sufficient and similar to those of other international NGOs.
Lack of GIRoA support (priority given to economic and infrastructure development)	Mobilisation of government project partners (NEPA/MAIL) to advocate for PA management and SLM as a policy priority.	Important risk to manage. Measures are appropriate, advocacy and awareness creation are the only realistic mitigation options.
Delays with legislation	- Project designed to identify most expedient means of processing legislation - Majority of activities are not legislation dependent.	Relevant risk (policies developed yet to be adopted). Mitigation measures appropriate (legislation delays have not hampered implementation).
Asymmetric power and gender relations	- Strengthening of community NRM institutions (BACC & WPA), which have transparent/democratic processes that limit ability of local elites to dominate decision-making. - Reinforcement of women's voices in community decision-making through increased representation in BACA and WPA. - Monitoring of benefit sharing & engagement by project staff.	Important risk. Mitigation measures not fully sufficient, BACC and WPA strengthening does not guarantee that women or vulnerable people have a real influence (women's actual influence is limited, even they are formally represented).

114. UNDP's rules and procedures are complex and were initially a challenge for WCS, but WCS was in the early stages of the project very proactive in engaging with UNDP to obtain clarity on the requirements. UNDP Afghanistan has been very forthcoming and supported WCS in terms of providing some training for WCS staff on UNDP regulations, and also by showing flexibility and ensuring that practical solutions, which are in line with both UNDP and WCS requirements and procedures, have been found. Overall, while UNDP rules and regulations are complicated, UNDP Afghanistan has embraced a pragmatic and results-oriented approach, thereby avoiding that the rules and regulations became bottlenecks to implementation.

115. While the project operates in the safest parts of Afghanistan, the cooperation with WCS has still enabled UNDP to reach some of the most remote and underserved communities in Afghanistan. UNDP cannot operate directly in Wakhan due to its internal security protocols.

116. **Work planning**: Implementation of activities and deliveries of outputs has to a good extent been in line with the ProDoc, work plans and the project implementation period. In 2015 and 2016, around 80% of the planned activities were implemented while a number of outcome targets are unlikely to be achieved, the reasons for this are not major implementation inefficiencies, but mainly external factors (see Chapter 4.2).

117. The work plans are aligned with the ProDoc and results framework, but they are also

primarily activity and output focused, rather than being results-based/outcome ori-ented. No outcome milestones are available for the outcomes, only end-of-project tar-gets, so the ProDoc appears mainly as having provided guidance at the activity and out-put levels. It is noted that no revisions have been made to the results framework, alt-hough a) Outcome 1 and its outputs and activities to a large extent hinges on the estab-lishment of APWA, which is unfeasible, and b) the delineation between Outcome 2 and 3 is blurry. Nonetheless, WCS has prepared a planning outline based on the outputs and indicators in the ProDoc as a practical guide to implementation; this document contains some adjustments to the project activities.

118. **Finance and co-finance**: WCS prepares two financial reports, one following the UNDP-GEF format, which is submitted to UNDP and one for the WCS headquarters. Audits are carried out annually. These reports are prepared by the financial manager in Kabul and approved by senior management. The Financial Officers in the field offices prepare their financial reports in excel format, which are submitted to the Kabul office, as are all origi-nal invoices. However, the Finance Manager only rarely visits the field offices to verify the expenses.

119. For expenses, payment requests are submitted in advance by staff members (usually by the Logistics Officer), and are approved by the Finance Officers, Field Managers and sometimes also by International Technical Advisors (unless they are outside Afghani-stan). Purchases above USD 100 require three quotations (as per UNDP rules), but in re-mote villages (mainly WNP) it is not always feasible to get three quotes in advance, and in such cases purchases are made without quotations.

120. External audits are carried out annually. All audit reports are unqualified albeit with some recommendations for improvements, which WCS has responded to. However, the Auditors have never visited the field offices to verify the expenses reported.

121. The budgets and annual work plans are output-based, but the financial statements from the UNDP ATLAS system are not, although they are arranged by outcome. The budget was revised in March 2015; the main changes were: a) a significant reduction of the allo-cation for Outcome 1 (GEF and UNDP funds), b) an increase in the GEF allocation for Outcome 2 and a corresponding decrease in the UNDP allocation leaving the total Out-come2 (allocation largely unchanged); and 3) a significant increase in the UNDP alloca-tion for project management costs. Annex 13 provides detailed information about the budget allocations and revisions.

122. The cumulative spending for all three outcomes and project management is generally 10-20% below the cumulative budget for the first three years in the ProDoc (see figure below and Annex 13). Moreover, the spending rate declined in project year 3 compared to previous years. Spending under Outcome 1 is still 32% below budget even after the allocation was reduced, due to the inability to establish APWA and the prevailing uncer-tainty about the mandate for PA management, which have stalled implementation of nation-level capacity building activities (see Chapter 6.2).

123. As can be seen from Annex 13, approximately 62% of the spending has taken place in Kabul, with 18% spent in Bamyan (BANP) and the remaining 20% spent in Wakhan (WNP, BPWR, TWR). While it is not surprising that most of the Outcome 1 and project management spending is in Kabul, it is more surprising most of the Outcome 2 and especially Outcome 3 spending is in Kabul, considering that these two components have a strong PA focus, and Outcome 3 focuses on community projects. One reason for this is reportedly that all travel costs to and from the field are incurred in Kabul; since travel to the field is by plane and sometimes require plane chartering, this is a major expense for the project. The spending in Wakhan and Bamyan is at a similar level, reflecting that on one hand operation costs are higher in Wakhan due to distances and remoteness, but on the other hand, there were several infrastructure projects in BANP.

Cumulative Disbursements

Legend:
- General Ledger (GL) Expenditures
- Approved Budget (Atlas)
- Approved Budget (ProDoc)

Highcharts.com

124. Overall, the implementation appears cost-effective, when considering the context in which the project is implemented. However, the general insecurity as well as the remote location and rough terrain in WNP (and the Bamyan Plateau) is making implementation expensive, as the transport of staff and equipment is mainly done by air, and in Wakhan it is often necessary to charter planes or rent pack animals for transportation of materials, In Kabul, security provisions are expensive, as they are for all organisations. Special security measures are generally not required in the project sites.

125. It is impossible to accurately establish the extent to which the co-finance stated in the ProDoc has materialised, since there is no specification of which projects and programmes the stated co-financing is related to (except for MRRD); hence the figures available are estimates provided by the UNDP Country Office, with the exception of the UNDP TRAC and WCS co-funding. However, it is apparent that the co-financing realised is significantly lower than the co-financing expected, See the table below for a detailed overview of the co-financing. NEPA and MAIL are clearly providing co-financing for the project, e.g. for their staff time. WCS' contribution is larger than expected: WCS has mobilised support for community labour from the WFP Food for Work programme, funding

for snow leopard conservation from National Geographic Society, and for ungulate con-servation from Fondation Segré. Moreover, the project has been able to mobilise UNDP-GEF small-grant funds for BACC and WPA projects. WCS has attempted to mobilise fur-ther co-financing from different donors, but so far this has not resulted in tangible com-mitments.

126. However, the link to the co-financing specified in the ProDoc and mentioned in the PIRs and progress reports (presented in the table below) is unclear and seems to be limited; for example, no evidence has been found of any implementation or systematic coordi-nation linkages with MRRD and AKF. One reason for the limited connection is that the definition of co-financing for project formulation is not requesting a direct link per se, but simply referring to other engagement in the same locations and topical areas. None-theless, a shortcoming in the ProDoc is that while it mentions the institution providing the co-financing, there is no reference as to which programmes the co-financing is de-rived from.

127. The Biodiversity Project builds on processes, results and experiences achieved under two USAID-funded projects (USD 24.8m) implemented by WCS in 2006-2014, which also focused on wildlife conservation and PA management in Band-e-Amir and Wakhan. These projects comprised components similar to the outcomes of the Biodiversity pro-ject, namely: a) strengthening institutional capacity; b) developing participatory land-use planning and NRM; c) promoting PA co-management and ecotourism; and d) providing livelihoods and economic opportunities for communities.

Sources of co-financing	Name of co-financier	Type of co-financing	Amount confirmed at CEO endorsement (US$)	Actual amount contributed at stage of MTR (US$)	Actual % of expected amount
NGO	WCS	Grant	300,000	360,800	120%
National Government	NEPA	Grant	1,000,000	1,000,000	100%
GEF/UN Agency	UNDP	Grant	2,000,000	0	0%
GEF/UN Agency	UNDP	Cash	1,000,000	637,691	64%
National Government	MAIL	Grant	18,000,000	0	0%
National Government	MAIL	In-Kind	6,000,000	6,000,000	100%
NGO	AKF	Grant	15,000,000	0	0%
National Government	MRRD (NSP)	Grant	10,000,000	10,000,000	100%
		TOTAL	**53,300,000**	**17,998,491**	**33%**

128. **Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems**: Baselines have generally been estab-lished and the indicators at objective and outcome levels are being monitored, although those requiring more comprehensive studies understandably are only measured at baseline (some of the baselines were only available 1-2 years of project start, due to the comprehensive studies required) and again at end of project; hence, while these indica-tors are useful for measuring impact, they are less so as tools for guiding project imple-

mentation. WCS has an officer employed to specifically handle monitoring and reporting. The monitoring data is duly reported in PIRs and progress reports (albeit with a few omissions), but there is no evidence of data leading to specific follow-up or adaptation of the project implementation and management.

129. The ProDoc and results framework do not provide output-level indicators. Nonetheless, annual output indicators were introduced in the 2016 and 2017 annual work plans and reported against in the annual and quarterly progress reports submitted to UNDP.

130. The monitoring appears not to draw significantly on national systems, but rather on data collection carried out by WCS – seemingly because GIRoA does not have adequate systems in place, e.g. for monitoring wildlife and biodiversity protected areas. Indeed, it is rather the project that generates monitoring data and informs GIRoA, e.g. with wildlife population data. 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 of PAs and PA management plans, but there appears not to have been real effort to involve the stakeholders in project monitoring, but rather a reliance on WCS staff and also international experts when it comes to data in wildlife and on land management.

131. As described in Chapter 4.1, the livelihoods- and the inclusion-related indicators are not gender aggregated, nor are they capturing data related to vulnerable groups.

132. It is not possible from the budget in the ProDoc or the financial reports in ATLAS to establish the financial allocation for M&E, but the annual work plans show that funds have been allocated for the MTR under the project management heading, whereas significant resources for surveys related to wildlife/biodiversity, SLM and livelihoods have been allocated under Outcome 3.

133. **Stakeholder engagement**: The project has in many ways made concerted efforts to involve stakeholders in decision-making and in enhancing their capacities. NEPA and MAIL are part of the PSC, although the PSC only meets once a year. Stakeholders from both government agencies at the provincial and district levels as well as community representatives form BACC, WPA, CDCs and CDC clusters have been actively involved in gathering information and data feeding the development of PA management plans. BACC, WPA and CDCs have been involved in the selection of project demonstration sites, e.g. for tree planting, passive solar houses and predator-proof corrals. WCS has been instrumental in the establishment of BACC and WPA as a means for enhancing community-engagement in PA management and SLM, and the Biodiversity Project has supported their further capacity development. Moreover, the District Governor's office is involved in the EPP, e.g. the conducing of environment days at schools in WNP, and both district and provincial DAIL have been involved in afforestation/watershed activities in WNP as well as in livestock vaccination campaigns.

134. However, stakeholders, especially from local government (DAIL, NEPA in Bamyan), have

seemingly not been sufficiently involved in certain aspects of the project, and they would like to be more involved. For example, local government staff are not involved in the scientific work or some of the community SLM projects implemented (i.e. corrals, solar passive houses, solar cookers), and the Park Authority in BANP would like to be involved in SLM activities as a means to enhance their connection with communities. The lack of clarity on PA management mandate is a major constraint vis-à-vis GIRoA involvement, as both MAIL and NEPA expect inclusion in activities, which increases costs (e.g. for per diem and transport) as opposed to having a single responsible institution, and at times it affects the proactive engagement of staff of both agencies in solving challenges. Moreover, due to insecurity, provincial GIRoA and WCS staff in Faizabad often cannot travel to WNP over land (but only by plane charter), which limits the scope for their engagement.

135. There is no formal linkage or coordination between the MAIL and WCS ranger systems in WNP. Moreover, while the WCS ranger system in WNP formally falls under WPA, in practice their involvement is limited and the ranger are managed (and paid) by WCS.

136. The reasons behind the sometimes-insufficient involvement of GIRoA appear to be three-fold: a) insufficient efforts from WCS to bring in government on some types of activities, b) a certain lack of a proactive drive from local government agencies, and c) that both NEPA and MAIL have PAs as part of their mandate, which has led to duplication, delays in achieving consensus and in some cases a reluctance to take lead on solving problems but referring the problem to the other institution.

137. A major factor affecting GIRoA engagement in WNP is accessibility. Due to insecurity on the Faizabad-Ishkashim road, it is difficult and expensive to involve provincial-level GoIRA in project activities in WNP (i.e. the Provincial Governor, DAIL, NEPA) and it also poses a limitation on ability of WCS to engage in dialogue with provincial authorities. Moreover, while DAIL is present in WNP (Khandud), financial and staffing constraints significantly limits their ability to reach all parts of a very large district with a rugged terrain and few roads.

138. Moreover, the ambiguities over the PA mandate and lack of clear jurisdiction is a major challenge for project implementation, as is often makes it unclear whether to engage NEPA or MAIL/DAIL in a given activity, and sometimes added to project costs and implementation pace, due to the need to involve staff from two, not just one, agency. This ambiguity has also contributed to the lengthy and delayed approval of the draft BANP management plan – the draft plan was submitted 1.5 years ago, but is still not approved.

139. The engagement with communities is entirely dependent on CDC leadership with the assumption that CDCs will communicate the project messages effectively to community members. However, this does not always happen, and the general picture is that community members often have limited environmental awareness and limited understanding of the objectives of the Biodiversity Project (see Chapter 4.2). While the CDCs are the

appropriate entry point to communities, only limited effort (other than EEP environ-ment days) is currently made to engage directly with other parts of the communities, such as vulnerable households and women; whereas experience of development NGOs show that such engagement is possible (with agreement with CDCs). For example, in the selection of households for the demonstration of passive solar houses or tree plots, only construction criteria were applied, whereas no socio-economic criteria were specified to ensure that the poorest and vulnerable households were given preference in the selec-tion done by BACC.

140. Moreover, while the project has promoted gender equity, e.g. by supporting some liveli-hoods activities for a small number of women and promoting gender awareness and the inclusion of women in the leadership of BACC and WPA, the efforts to engage directly with women have overall been modest, although there has been a good engagement of the BACC Women's Committee (e.g. in establishment of the five women's shops) – and in practice role of women in BACC and WPA leadership remains modest – as does the overall interest of BACC and WPA leadership in ensuring women's participation. A fur-ther challenge to this is that the capacities of community women are often low.

141. A general problem for engaging stakeholders at all levels is that environmental sustaina-bility is not given a high priority in Afghanistan, where GIRoA, donors and the public at-tention is mainly focused on security, rule of law, governance, economic development and infrastructure. Overall, there is an insufficient understanding of how environmental degradation is linked to poverty, conflict and criminal activities, and how environmental sustainability can contribute to economic development and conflict resolution.

142. The private sector has only been engaged to a limited extent in the project, compared to the aspirations in the ProDoc. When it comes to economic activities and tourist incomes, the focus has been on community-based income generation, e.g. through the WPA tour-ist information centre being constructed in Ishkashim. Moreover, NEPA is cautious about engaging with the private sector, due to the risk that it could displace the growing community-based small-scale tourist enterprises in BANP and thus negatively impact on the local economy of communities. In WNP, private companies offer tours for foreign tourists, but with only 100-150 visitors annually the scope for engagement has been lim-ited, although the companies participated in a tourism workshop in 2017.

143. The intended engagement of other NGOs has been less than planned in the ProDoc, since there has been limited scope for promoting conservation agriculture. Nonetheless, GERES (Group for the Environment, Renewable Energy and Solidarity) has provided technical advice and guidance on the promotion of passive solar houses in BANP.

144. **Reporting**: The annual PIR and annual and quarterly progress reports present an ac-count of implementation progress against the indicators, outputs and activities deliv-ered, risk management, and performance assessments of both the Project Manager and the UNDP Programme Office. Implementation challenges and especially more strategic concerns are also covered, but somewhat to a lesser extent. Lessons learned seem not

fully captured and reported; there are brief, single-paragraph, sections on lessons learned in the annual and quarterly progress reports, but most lessons captured relate to practical/logistics issues (e.g. lessons vis-à-vis timing needs due to seasonality, logistics and field presence challenges, coordination with UNDP) – whereas only one lesson is captured vis-à-vis technical aspects and approaches (the need for additional effort to ensure women's participation in public consultations on management plans). While most important challenges are captured in PIRs and progress reports, the issue with the WCS staff member's hotel in BANP is not reflected in PIRs, although grievances should be reported.

145. **Communications**: The Biodiversity Project engages proactively in communication and awareness raising through different channels. Communication meetings are held regularly by WCS staff with key stakeholders, such as GIRoA and national and subnational level and CDCs. However, community stakeholders are still not fully aware about the project objectives.

146. The project has invested considerable efforts in awareness raising, often in cooperation with NEPA and MAIL, at various environmental events (see Chapter 4.2), but also through the production of awareness raising materials in Dari, for the use at both local and national level and through the WCS website (https://afghanistan.wcs.org/). The EEP aims at enhancing environmental awareness at community level, but has so far not been fully effective in doing so and community awareness remains low (see Chapter 4.2). Moreover, an awareness workshop on MEAs and illegal trade in wildlife and plant products has been held at the national level for police and customs officers. WCS has also engaged with media in Afghanistan and internationally to communicate about the project and create awareness, and scientific articles have also been published.

147. **Project implementation and adaptive managemen**t is rated as **satisfactory**, see the table below for a detailed explanation of the rating.

	Status	Rating*
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	• Generally efficient project management, which has ensured generally timely implementation in a difficult context (albeit with some issues related to staff management and spending below target), except when external circumstances prevented this. Good cooperation between WCS and UNDP to ensure compliance with rules and regulations. • Appropriate, but output-focused work plans, without reflections on the achievement of outcomes. • Overall, good financial management (unqualified audits) and cost-effectiveness, but contextual challenges make the project expensive. In practice, little linkage to non-UNDP and non-WCS co-financing stated in ProDoc and PIRs.	Satisfactory (S)

• Monitoring captures most outcomes and impacts, but seems not to have been used for strategic guidance for implementation. The monitoring does not sufficiently capture gender aspects, and stakeholder involvement in monitoring is limited.
• Stakeholder engagement uneven:
   • Local government engaged in some aspects but requesting more engagement in other aspects (affected by budget constraints, NEPA-MAIL PA mandate ambiguity, and security)
   • Community-engagement is somewhat limited to CDCs.
• Overall good reporting, but challenges somewhat superficially covered.
• Significant effort paid to outreach and communication, but EPP is somewhat superficial.	

*See Annex 3 for the rating scale applied

6.4 Sustainability

148. **Risk management**: As describe in Chapter 4.1 and 4.3, relevant important risks for the project have been identified, and some, but not all, are being monitored and briefly reported on in the annual and quarterly progress reports and measures are in place to mitigate them. For most of the risks, realistic estimates of their probability and intensity have been made. See the table below for a full overview of the risks identified, their estimated probability and intensity, whether they are monitored, and the assessment of the risk management system of the MTR team. The key risks have been identified, the MTR team has not found any major risks, which have not been identified by the project.

Risks in risk log	Risks in results framework	Probability (P)	Intensity (I)	Monitored in progress report	MTR assessment
Deterioration in security	Objective: Increased insecurity and fighting, O2 and O3: Decreasing security situation in pilot areas	Likely	Medium	X	Important risk, estimate of P and I realistic.
Organisation conflicts		Unlikely	High		Important risk, NEPA and MAIL disagreement on future PA responsibility has hampered O1 achievement. P underestimated, I estimate realistic. This risk should be monitored
International conflicts (ENP)		Unlikely	High		Unlikely risk, estimate of P and I realistic.

Lack of GIRoA support (priority given to economic and infrastructure development)		Un-likely	Me-dium	X	Important risk, P appears underestimated (not all parts of GIRoA give priority to wildlife protection), I estimate realistic.
Delays with legislation	O1: Political grid-lock delays decisions on laws and regulations	Very likely	Me-dium	X	Important risk, estimate of P and I realistic – e.g. BANP management plan approval delayed.
Mining conflicts	O2: Conflicts with mining	Moder-ately likely	Me-dium		Relevant risk, estimate of P and I realistic.
Massive prolonged droughts		Moder-ately likely	Low		Relevant risk, estimate of P and I realistic.
Asymmetric power and gender relations		Moder-ately likely	Me-dium	X	Important risk, P underestimated, estimate of I realistic.
	Objective: Political crisis O2: Political crisis following elections				Potentially relevant risk, but unlikely to have a major impact other than causing delays.
	O2: Warlords				Appears not an important risk in the project areas.
	O3: Lack of local technical capacity				Not a risk, a gap the project seeks to address
	O3: Lack of engagement by communities				A risk (since environmental awareness is low), but one that can be addressed through proper stakeholder involvement.
	O3: Climate change impacts				Important risk, but for the medium-long term.

149. **Financial risks to sustainability**: Financial sustainability remains a challenge that will need to be solved in the coming years. Currently, the revenues generated through entrance fees and concession fees in BANP are very low and unable to cover the costs. No system is currently in place for revenue generation in WNP, and the revenue potential of WNP is much lower than of BANP. Moreover, there is not yet a system in place for ring-fencing PA revenues for the management of, and investments in, the PA system – but this is likely to materialise at least in part in the near future.

150. GIRoA (MAIL) is allocating resources for the PA system, incl. staff salaries. However, the allocation does not fully meet the needs and is insufficient for also assuming the costs currently covered by the project, such as community ranger systems, monitoring and research activities, and capacity building for GIRoA staff and communities. Moreover, the current tax-base of GIRoA is far below GIRoA's running and investment costs, and GIRoA is to a large extent dependent on support from international donors to be able to deliver basic services to its citizens.

151. Similarly, community resources can only be mobilised for interventions that create direct livelihoods benefits for the communities – and even in such cases, it can be a challenge to mobilise community resources, as evidenced by the limited replication of the predator-proof corrals. Moreover, the scope for mobilising private sector investment is limited, especially in WNP.

152. Hence, the sustainability and further development of the process and systems initiated or supported by the Biodiversity Project will in the short to medium term depend on continued donor support. The upcoming UNDP-GEF Snow Leopard Project ensures the continuity in WNP in the coming years, but for BANP (as well as the Bamyan Plateau), future support for continuation and consolidation is less certain. WCS is actively seeking to mobilise funding for continuation in BANP and is in dialogue with donors, but it has proven a challenge to mobilise funding for biodiversity and environmental protection in Afghanistan, since most donors (as well as GIRoA) are giving higher priority to economic development, governance and rule of law. Nonetheless, WCS has so far been able to mobilise some additional co-funding for the Biodiversity Project from the GEF Small Grants Programme (USD 174,220), WFP Food for work Programme (USD 39,500), National Geographic Society (USD 34,800), and Fondation Segré (EUR 245,700, corresponding to USD 286,327). While NEPA and MAIL have been very supportive of WCS's mobilisation of co-funding, they have not been proactive in mobilising further funds.

153. Nonetheless, while the financial sustainability is a challenge and currently depending on further donor support, there is scope for enhancing the financial sustainability in the medium-term. The most promising option is probably to increase revenue generation in BANP by increasing entry fees and concession fees (the draft BANP management plan contains provisions for this), while also developing a system for ring-fencing PA revenues. With 200,000 annual visitors and a rapidly growing trend, BANP may even have the potential of generating sufficient revenues to subsidise the management of other PAs. While the potential is less in WNP, a system of visitor entry fees and concession fees from tour operators could be developed in the future.

154. **Socio-economic risks to sustainability**: Both NEPA and MAIL are showing a genuine ownership of the project especially at the national level, but their current engagement in the project is not sufficient to ensure that they can take over all aspects of the project. Other parts of GIRoA, such as law enforcement appears less committed as evidenced by the lack of action on reported environmental/wildlife crime. Moreover, the current and previous Provincial Governors have been supportive of the project. However, unlike NEPA, both MAIL and the Governor's Offices do not have PA management as their core mandates, so their support to a large extent hinges on the personal interests of their leaderships, so there is a risk that this could change in the future.

155. However, community ownership is less strong; they are strongly committed to elements that create livelihoods benefits such as SLM measures and the potential for tourism-based incomes, but their environmental awareness and interest in environmental protection more broadly remains low. Hence, if the number of tourists visiting the national

parks decrease, e.g. due to deteriorating security in Afghanistan, then there is a real risk that the communities will lose interest in biodiversity conservation. Similarly, the environmental awareness of the general public in Afghanistan remains low.

156. Uncontrolled economic development and vested interests are other threats to the project's sustainability. For example, a new road to Mazar-e-Sharif is under construction through the Bamyan Plateau and BANP, which is likely to disturb the wildlife and increase hunting. Also in BANP, the growing number of tourists and increasing demand for services can lead to uncontrolled development of e.g. hotels and increased pollution threats to the lakes. So far, hotel investments in BANP are mainly done by community-members, but there is also a risk that outsiders will seek to invest in the area.

157. **Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability**: The legal and policy framework in Afghanistan is supportive and conducive for the project, but still needs further development – and the project has contributed to strengthening the legislative framework. However, the institutional framework is not fully supportive, the lack of clarity in whether NEPA or MAIL will have the mandate for PA management and the capacity constraints of both institutions especially at the sub-national level are major challenges for the long-term sustainability of the processes established by the Project. BACC and WPA remain insufficiently strong to operate effectively. Overall, there is a dependency from both GIRoA and community institutions on WCS. The transfer of technical knowledge to national and local stakeholders has been good in some areas but less so in other areas (see Chapter 4.2 and 4.3). The existence of PA management plans and multi-stakeholder PACs (BAPAC, WaPAC yet to be established) ensures a certain degree of transparency and accountability. Overall, the project has benefitted from the support of senior and high-level champions in NEPA, MAIL and the Governor's Offices, but the ability to mobilise champions at the community-level has been more modest due to the limited engagement beyond the CDCs.

158. **Environmental risks to sustainability**: the project is focusing on enhancing ecosystem integrity, e.g. through the introduction of management plans and SLM measures and is thus reducing environmental risks. Nonetheless, there are some environmental threats to both the ecosystem integrity and wildlife populations, to livelihoods and to investments made by the project. Climate change may in the future disrupt hydrological flows and the grazing for both wild animals and livestock. Moreover, floods and droughts could destroy the watershed projects, and earthquakes could damage the predator-proof corrals – but these threats are localised and unlikely to affect the project results more broadly.

	Status	Rating*
Sustainability	• Good progress has been made in establishing the legal framework to secure the project results. • GIRoA capacity and proactive leadership are constraints, especially at sub-national level, is a challenge for sustainability.	Moderately likely (ML)

	• Institutional capacity constraints and low community awareness remain major challenges. • Financial sustainability is not secured and depends on donor support. PA revenue generation is still low and GIRoA is financially constrained. • The environmental threats to the project are localised, except climate change. • Sustainability depends on post-project support from WCS, this is secured for WNP but not yet for BANP.	
*See Annex 3 for the rating scale applied		

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

159. **Relevance**: The Biodiversity Project is addressing an important problem in Afghanistan, which is otherwise receiving little attention nationally and from the international community, namely habitat destruction and the loss of globally significant biodiversity (such as snow leopards and Marco Polo sheep). At the same time, the project is helping GIRoA in implementing its policies and aspirations vis-à-vis wildlife conservation and establishing a PA network and thereby meeting its obligations under international biodiversity conventions. The approach taken by the project is comprehensive, as it addresses legal gaps, institutional constraints at national and sub-national levels and also involves local communities in PA management and SLM.

160. However, the political context in Afghanistan has changed since the project was designed, and the backbone of Outcome 1, the establishment of an independent APWA is now politically impossible since the President has decided that no new GIRoA institutions should be established, and neither NEPA nor MAIL support the idea of establishing an independent agency. Moreover, due to continued uncertainty of whether PA management will remain with MAIL or be assumed by NEPA is currently making it impossible to redesign and tailor the project's institutional strengthening at the national level. Moreover, while the project as described above has a comprehensive approach to PA management, it is noticeable that it does not contain provisions for engaging directly in addressing the issue of livestock pressure on grazing lands, which is a major driver of environmental degradation and human-wildlife conflicts.

161. **Effectiveness and impact**: Overall, good progress and results have been achieved in relation to the formulation of new PA and hunting related legislation, the gazetting of new PAs in Wakhan (WNP, BPWR, TWR), the formulation of PA management plans, and further strengthening governance and management institutions as the PA level – although capacities are still low and community representatives are not yet fully able to engage in PA governance in a meaningful way. Moreover, while legal enforcement vis-à-vis illegal hunting and land-use is still not fully effective, the support for both MAIL rangers and the WCS ranger system have contributed to improved enforcement. Moreover, SLM practices and other practices to reduce the pressure habitats and wildlife have been successfully promoted.

162. However, targets related to institutional strengthening at the national level cannot be reached due to the uncertainty about the future responsibility for PA management. Other targets appear overambitious compared to the current capacities, such as the high hectare targets for effective rangeland co-management and SLM and target for sharing PA revenue with communities in a situation where revenue generation remains low for BANP (despite large numbers of visitors) and non-existent for the recently gazetted WNP. The draft BANP management plan contains provisions for enhancing revenue generation and sharing benefits with communities, but it approval has been significantly delayed.

163. Moreover, while stakeholder engagement in the project has generally been good vis-à-vis PA governance incl. the development of management plans, their engagement has in other areas been insufficient; for example, GIRoA staff at the sub-national level have only been engaged to a limited extent in research and SLM activities – and there is a general interest among GIRoA staff at the sub-national level to be more engaged. The lack of clarity on PA management mandate is a major constraint as both MAIL and NEPA expect inclusion in activities, which increases costs (e.g. for per diem and transport) as opposed to having a single responsible institution, and has at times affected the proactive engagement of staff of both agencies in solving challenges. Moreover, due to insecurity, provincial GIRoA and WCS staff in Faizabad often cannot travel to WNP over land (but only by plane charter), which limits the scope for their engagement. There is also no mechanism for coordination between the DAIL and WCS ranger systems in WNP. Moreover, while the WCS rangers in WNP formally belong to WPA, in practice they are managed by WCS with little WPA involvement.

164. Similarly, the engagement with communities has been focusing almost entirely on CDCs (except for the EEP awareness activities) with the expectation that CDCs would inform their communities, but in practice not all CDCs have informed their constituencies, who generally have little knowledge about the project objectives and limited environmental awareness and understanding of the importance of environmental and biodiversity conservation. Similarly, the engagement of women has not been fully effective, although income generating opportunities have been provided for a small number of women. Women's participation in BACC and WPA has been promoted, but while women are formally represented, their actual participation remains ineffective. Moreover, while there has been a very high level of replication of passive solar houses, the replication of other practices, such as predator-proof corrals, has been low (albeit with some replication of household corrals) – making it difficult to achieve the very ambitious SLM targets of the project. A major challenge for the project is how to balance the high demand for community-development interventions with the biodiversity conservation focus of the project; WCS is not a community-development NGO, but at the same time, the provision of tangible livelihoods benefits is the only way to create community interest in, and ownership of, the project.

165. It is too early to assess the project's impact on the environment, habitats and wildlife – but the SLM activities are contributing to reducing pressure on wild plant resources (by reducing the demand for firewood with solar cookers and passive solar houses and increasing the supply through tree planting) and contributing to less wild life conflicts, and the legal designation of PAs, the management plans and rangers are also addressing illegal and unsustainable hunting and land-use practices, even if not full effective. Early impacts on livelihoods have already emerged, such as reductions in the loss of livestock to predators on Wakhan (where communities have been provided with predator-proof corrals), and a significant reduction in the exposure, especially of women, to hazardous smoke from the burning of wood and dung for cooking and heating (as a result of the distribution of solar cookers and introduction of passive solar houses). The project has

also provided income opportunities for a small number of people, but some of these incomes are project dependent (e.g. ranger salaries). Moreover, it appears that the project through the management plan, the ranger systems, awareness raising activities, and tourist infrastructure has helped preventing uncontrolled development and also contributed to reducing environmentally damaging behaviour of tourists in BANP.

166. **Efficiency**: Overall, project management has been efficient and WCS has ensured timely implementation of most activities and delivery of outputs in a very challenging context, where security concerns and remoteness makes it both expensive and very time consuming to reach the project sites, especially in upper Wakhan, Big Pamir and Little Pamir (and also in the Bamyan Plateau). Moreover, WCS has ensured that research and monitoring oriented activities have been delivered at a high quality, and reporting is overall good, albeit with some room for further improvement. The long-term engagement of WCS with NEPA and MAIL and in the project areas is conducive to the delivery of the project, as the project builds on, and further expands, the results of earlier projects.

167. However, as described under effectiveness, WCS has been less effective in ensuring stakeholder engagement at the local level, and in enabling active participation of women and community-members outside the CDCs. The project has made significant outreach efforts, but the environmental education has been somewhat superficial in WNP. Moreover, it has proven difficult to mobilise co-financing and in practice the links to the co-financing referred to in the ProDoc and PIRs has been limited.

168. **Sustainability**: Good progress has been made in establishing the legal framework to secure the project results, but institutional capacity constraints with GIRoA and low community awareness remain major challenges for ensuring sustainability. A more proactive engagement from GIRoA agencies is also needed, e.g. at the PA level. Financial sustainability is also not secured and depends on continued donor support. Overall, sustainability depends on continued support from WCS beyond the Biodiversity Project; this is secured for WNP through the UNDP-GEF Snow Leopard Project but not yet for BANP.

7.2 Recommendations

169. Seven overall recommendations supported by specific key actions and indication of the responsible partners are presented below. However, with only one season left of the project, expectations must be realistic in terms of what can be done under the Biodiversity Project, but the MTR team has also found a number of important challenges to be addressed in the medium term (post-project) in order to achieve the expected impacts and ensuring sustainability of the results. Hence, two types of key actions are provided: a) specific "project" immediate actions for the remaining implementation of the Biodiversity Project, and b) "strategic" actions, which are medium-term actions for ensuring impact and sustainability, but are beyond the scope of the Biodiversity Project itself – and which in the case of WCS and UNDP would depend on the availability of grant funding.

Recommendation 1 (R1): Adjust/revise project outcomes, activities, indicators, assumptions, risks and budget allocations to make them achievable, more realistic and better reflect the current context.			
Relevant for: Outcome 1, Outcome 2 and Outcome 3			
Responsible entities: WCS, UNDP			

Key actions	**Responsi-ble**	**Time-frame**	
		Project	Strate-gic
R1.1: Cancel all APWA-related outputs and indicators and rephrase Outcome 1 accordingly.	UNDP WCS	X	
R1.2: 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 (see Annex 10).	WCS	X	
R1.3: 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	X	
R1.4: 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	X	

Recommendation 2 (R2): Enhance the involvement of GIRoA (MAIL/DAIL, NEPA) in project implementation.			
Relevant for: Outcome 2 and Sustainability			
Responsible entities: WCS, MAIL (incl. DAIL, Park Authority), NEPA			

Key actions	**Responsi-ble**	**Time-frame**	
		Project	Strate-gic
R2.1: 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 MAIL DAIL Park Authority	X	
R2.2: Strengthen/enhance the inclusion of Biodiversity Project activities in MAIL/DAIL and NEPA annual work plans, especially at provincial and district levels.	MAIL NEPA	X	
R2.3: Create closer linkages between the MAIL and WCS ranger systems (especially in WNP) with a view towards full integration.	WCS MAIL		X
R2.4: Once there is clarity on the future responsibility for PA management, train NEPA and/or DAIL staff at the PA level.	WCS (MAIL) (NEPA)		X
R2.5: 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 NEPA		X

Recommendation 3 (R3): Adjust PA management and governance structures to address current bottlenecks.			
Relevant for: Outcome 2			
Responsible entities: WCS, MoF, MAIL, NEPA, WPA, Police, Governor			

Key actions	Responsible	Time-frame	
		Project	Strategic
R3.1: 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	X	
R3.2: Give women rangers in BANP the same status and title as their male colleagues (they should not be "cleaners").	MAIL	X	
R3.3: Establish three subcommittees under WPA (for Big Pamir, Little Pamir, and Wakhan Valley) that meet more frequently than WPA.	WCS WPA	X	
R3.4: 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 MoF		X
R3.5: Ensure rangers are operating/patrolling during winter.	WCS MAIL		X
R3.6: Establish a designated Park Authority for WNP (like for BANP).	MAIL NEPA		X
R3.7: Set up a permanent police outpost in BANP.	Governor MoI		X

Recommendation 4: Focus on enhancing the economic sustainability of PAs.			
Relevant for: Outcome 2 and Sustainability			
Responsible entities: WCS, UNDP, BAPAC, MAIL, NEPA, MoF			

Key actions	Responsible	Time-frame	
		Project	Strategic
R4.1: Analyse/map the economy in BANP and WNP, incl. a) the tourist economy, b) the agriculture and livestock economy, and c) how the concession fees collected are spent in BANP – consider engaging international consultants or cooperating with international organisations.	NEPA MAIL Governor		X
R4.2: Use the analysis/mapping of the BANP economy for revising the entrance fees and concession fees in the draft BANP Management Plan.	NEPA MAIL BAPAC		X
R4.3: Provide GIRoA (incl. MoF) with opportunities to learn from international best practice for NP revenue management (e.g. international consultants, peer exchange).	WCS		X
R4.4: 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 NEPA BAPAC		X

R4.5: Establish and implement a system, which ensures that NP revenues are ring-fenced for investment in PA protection, management and development (e.g. separate PA account at MoF, revenue management at PA level).	MAIL NEPA MoF		X

Recommendation 5 (R5): Deepen the engagement with communities.

Relevant for: Outcome 3

Responsible entities: WCS, UNDP

Key actions	Responsible	Time-frame	
		Project	Strategic
R5.1: Expand and deepen the EEP to promote a better understanding of: a) ecosystems, b) how environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity 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	X	
R5.2: 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	X	
R5.3: 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	X	
R5.4: Include poverty and social criteria in the selection of households for demonstration projects.	WCS	X	
R5.5: Develop a stronger gender approach and increase efforts to involve women in project activities.	WCS	X	
R5.6: 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		X
R5.7: 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 UNDP		X

Recommendation 6 (R6): Promote community ownership and independence.

Relevant for: Outcome 3 and Sustainability

Responsible entities: WCS, MAIL, NEPA

Key actions	Responsible	Time-frame	
		Project	Strategic
R6.1: 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	X	

Key actions	Responsible	Project	Strategic
R6.2: 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	X	
R6.3: Condition community projects on replication commitments (e.g. when WCS constructs a corral, the community could be requested build a second corral).	WCS	X	
R6.4: 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	X	
R6.5: 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 MAIL NEPA	X	
R6.6: 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		X
R6.7: Assess alleged un-kept promises made earlier to communities in Wakhan and come up with a strategy for re-establishing WCS's reputation.	WCS		X
R6.8: 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		X
R 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		X

Recommendation 7 (R7): Further enhance project management and staff capacities.
Relevant for: Project implementation and adaptive management
Responsible entities: WCS, UNDP

Key actions	Responsi-ble	Time-frame	
		Project	Strate-gic
R7.1: Review staff job descriptions/ToR and the tasks they actually carry out and ensure they match.	WCS	X	
R7.2: 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	X	
R7.3: 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	WCS	X	

how healthy ecosystems can enhance resilience, and d) gender. Options include training and exchanges visits between the two field teams.			
R7.4: 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	X	
R7.5: Expand the scope of external audits to include field visits and verification of costs and expenses.	UNDP	X	
R7.6: Improve the gender balance internally in WCS (by employing more women for technical positions).	WCS		X
R7.7: Enhance the winter presence (e.g. to conduct meetings with communities and to ensure that WCS rangers are active during winter).	WCS		X

Annex 1: MTR ToR (excluding ToR annexes)

Section 3: Terms of Reference (TOR)

A. *Mid-Term Review of the UNDP-GEF Project (PIMS 5038: Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management in Afghanistan) (biodiversity project) and collection of data for the preparatory phase of the GEF project Conservation of Snow Leopards and their Critical Ecosystem in Afghanistan (Snow Leopard Project)*

B. *Project Description*

UNDP Global Mission Statement:
UNDP is the UN's global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with national counterparts on their own solutions to global and national development challenges.

UNDP Afghanistan Mission Statement:
UNDP supports stabilization, state-building, governance and development priorities in Afghanistan. UNDP support, in partnership with the Government, the United Nations system, the donor community and other development stakeholders, has contributed to institutional development efforts leading to positive impact on the lives of Afghan citizens. Over the years UNDP support has spanned such milestone efforts as the adoption of the Constitution; Presidential, Parliamentary and Provincial Council elections; institutional development through capacity-building to the legislative, the judicial and executive arms of the state, and key ministries, Government agencies and commissions at the national and subnational levels. UNDP has played a key role in the management of the Law and Order Trust Fund, which supports the Government in developing and maintaining the national police force and in efforts to stabilize the internal security environment.

UNDP Livelihoods and Resilience Unit:
The UNDP Livelihoods and Resilience Unit supports the government of Afghanistan to create livelihood opportunities and reduce poverty, especially among the most vulnerable groups. It works work with businesses to create jobs and economic growth, and with government to build infrastructure, link rural areas to markets and develop new forms of employment, including in the sustainable mining sector.
Since most people depend on the land for an income, the Unit works on livelihoods is closely linked with efforts to protect the environment, bring sustainable energy to rural areas, and prepare for natural disasters. The Unit supports the government to mobilize resources from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) that finances environment projects focusing on climate change and adaption, climate change induced risks, land degradation and biodiversity focal areas.

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Project Context
1. The Biodiversity project:

The UNDP-GEF Project (PIMS 5038: Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management in Afghanistan), Hereinafter called the Biodiversity Project, with financing from the GEF has been designed to strengthen the Protected Area (PA) system by creating a legally and institutionally empowered PA authority, gazetting three new protected areas (total 1,098,190 ha), operationalizing management at four PA sites, and developing replicable sustainable livelihood and rangeland management solutions. The project will support the National Protected Area System Plan by making a major contribution towards achievement of its long-term objective, taking critical first steps in this regard and building strong foundations for the future. The project has three outcomes that directly address barriers to sustainable ecosystem management:

- o A National PA system is established with legal, planning, policy and institutional frameworks for expansion and management for the PA estate in the country;
- o Protected area coverage and protection status is improved to increase biodiversity representativeness and ecological resilience, and;
- o Management effectiveness is enhanced within existing and new Protected Areas and climate resilient SLM applied to reduce threats in and around PAs.

Project results will include the creation of a centralized parks and wildlife agency, increasing the protected area system by a further 1,098,190 ha by facilitating the creation of the Big Pamir and Teggermansu Wildlife Reserves and the Wakhan Conservation Area, and building successful and replicable PA and SLM co-management models.

A copy of the project document which provides more information about the project can be found at the following link:

https://www.thegef.org/project/establishing-integrated-models-protected-areas-and-their-co-management

The project has a duration of 5 years and has been planned to last from Jan 2014 to Dec 2018. The half way point in the project was June 2016 and in accordance with UNDP and GEF requirements, the project should have been mid-term reviewed in 2016, but due to low delivery it was decided to undertake a mandatory mid-term review (MTR) during April to June 2017.

The total budget of this UNDP GEF project is US$7,441,819 including one million from UNDP Core fund.

2. The Snow Leopard Conservation Project:

Afghanistan encompasses the far western range extent of the snow leopard's distribution in Asia. The snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) is the top predator of Asia's great mountain ranges and is listed Endangered (C1) on the IUCN Red List. Snow leopard population has been estimated to have declined by at least 20% over the past 16 years with the wild population currently estimated to be between 4,500 and 7,500 individuals and declining. Threats include poaching for the fur and for the traditional medicine trades, capture for the pet trade, retaliatory killing by livestock herders, and loss of their prey – primarily wild mountain sheep and goats – from over-hunting. Included within Afghanistan's range is the Wakhan Corridor – recently designated as Wakhan National Park - which is also the "corner" of Asia's great mountains, and is globally important as a corridor connecting snow leopard ranges in the east such as the Pamirs, Karakorams, and Himalayas with the Altais, Kunluns, Tien Shans and other ranges to the north. The Wakhan region therefore, is identified as a global priority Snow Leopard Conservation Unit and recognized as one of

the 20 critical snow leopard landscapes by the Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Program (GSLEP) in 2013.

To conserve this critical landscape, the Government of Afghanistan has requested assistance from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through UNDP for the preparation of a full-sized project on **"Conservation of Snow Leopards and their critical ecosystem in Afghanistan".** The project aims to strengthen conservation of the snow leopard and its critical ecosystem in Afghanistan through a holistic and sustainable landscape approach that addresses existing and emerging threats. This project seeks to address major threats to snow leopard survival in Afghanistan, while implementing priority snow leopard conservation activities identified in the national strategy and action plan, that will be realized through two interrelated components: 1) Illegal take and trade of snow leopards and human-wildlife conflict are reduced through greater community involvement; and 2) Landscape approach to conservation of snow leopards and their ecosystem that takes into account drivers of forest loss, degradation and climate change impacts.

C. *Scope of Services, Expected Outputs and Target Completion*

Objective of the Assignment:
The assignment consists of two tasks: a. The **Mid-Term Review (MTR)** for the Biodiversity project; b. the field data collection from Wakhan District for the **Project Preparation of Snow Leopard Conservation Project (PPG)**.

Scope of Work for MTR:
The Mid-Term Review will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects for extended descriptions.

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made to set the project on-track to help achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy, its risks to sustainability and make recommendations on how to improve the project over the remainder of its lifetime. Since both project target areas (Wakhan, Badakhshan and Band-e-Amir, Bamyan) are in-accessible and located in remote areas, the MTR is being assigned to a 3rd party evaluation firm.

MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY
The MTR must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The Team Leader will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy, the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, project progress reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review). The Team Leader will also interview all relevant stakeholders including all parties who have been contracted by the project or participate in meetings and discussions with the project.

The MTR will review the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach[1] ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders. The MTR team will need to explain in detail their methods for quality assurance and control and the options for triangulation of data in order to make sure that the data collected is valid and accurate.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR[2] Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to: UNDP Afghanistan, UNDP Bangkok regional Hub, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), Ministry to Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), key experts and all consultants in the subject area who have been hired by the project, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CSOs, etc.

The final MTR report should describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

i. Project Strategy

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document;
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects for further guidelines;
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:
- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary;

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[1] For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results, 05 Nov 2013.
[2] For more stakeholder engagement in the M&E process, see the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results, Chapter 3, pg. 93.

- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis;
- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects; colour code progress in a "traffic light system" based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as "Not on target to be achieved" (red). (Results Framework included as Annex 1)

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:
- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review;
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project;
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:
- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement;
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement;
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

Work Planning:
- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved;
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance:
- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions;

- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions;
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:
- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

Stakeholder Engagement:
- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

Reporting:
- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board;
- Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated PIRs, if applicable?);
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications:
- Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?);
- For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.

iv. Sustainability
- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why;

- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

- What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

- Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

- Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?

Conclusions & Recommendations

The Team Leader for the MTR will include a section of the report setting out the MTR's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.[3]

Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention to improve the project hat are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. See the Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects for guidance on a recommendation table.

The MTR Team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

Ratings

The MTR Team will include its ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in a MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for (Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management in Afghanistan PIMS#5038

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	

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[3] Alternatively, MTR conclusions may be integrated into the body of the report.

Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Etc.	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

Scope of works for Project Preparation of Snow Leopard Conservation Project (PPG)

The Firm will work closely with the PPG team for the Snow Leopard to collect the field data from Wakhan district that will feed into project document. The PPG team will provide data collection tools to the firm. The firm will collect the data and submit it to the Snow Leopard team to analyze and summarize. The project location is remote and inaccessible, therefore, the firm elaborate the methods for quality assurance and data validation in the proposal. The firm, under guidance of UNDP, will undertake assessments of:

- The capacity of community rangers, PA managers and other stakeholders to identify gaps in inter alia gaps law enforcement, community engagement and combatting of illegal wildlife trade;
- Knowledge and awareness of local communities relating to poaching and illegal trade in wildlife products;
- Human-snow leopard conflict; and
- Land use.

D. *Expected Outputs, Deliverables and Timelines:*

The following key deliverables are expected from this assignment:

Deliverables/Outputs	Inputs	Payments
Deliverable 1: Submission and Acceptance of MTR Inception Report: MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review;	No later than 1 week after signing the contract,	**10%**
Deliverable 2: Submission and Acceptance of Initial Findings: Initial Findings presented on the last day of the Mission; End of	End of 5th week after signing the contract	**40%**

MTR mission; The data collected from the field for Snow Leopard PPG will be provided to the PPG team;		
Deliverable 3: Submission and Acceptance of Draft Final Report: Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes; Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission;	End of 7th week after signing the contract	**20%**
Deliverable 4: Submission and Acceptance of Final Report: Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report; Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft;	End of 9th week after signing the contract	**30%**
Total		**100%**

E. *Institutional Arrangement*

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is UNDP Afghanistan. The commissioning unit will contract the a 3rd party evaluation company, through this RFP process, who will be responsible to carry out the aforementioned tasks. The Contractor will be responsible for all logistical services including facility, personnel, support and security services.

F. *Duration of the Work*

The total duration of the MTR will be 45 working days over a time period of 9 weeks from signing of the contract. The tentative assignment for both tasks is as follows:

TIMEFRAME	ACTIVITY
1st week after signing the Contract	Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report within 2 weeks of start of assignment Telephone Interviews with key project stakeholders Teleconference call with Project Manager, and UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor on Ecosystem & Biodiversity (Bangkok Regional Hub)
End of 5th Week	Mission to Afghanistan to conduct meetings and interviews with Project stakeholders including governmental and non-governmental organizations and communities at national-level in Kabul and at project target areas in Wakhan and Bamyan.
End of 7th Week	Analyzed the data and present Draft MTR submitted to UNDP Afghanistan, Project Manager and UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub

End of 8th Week	Detailed comment to the draft MTR report sent to the MTR Team by Governmental representatives, UNDP, Project Manager, and UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub. Conference Call on the Draft MTR with the MTR Team and UNDP
End of 9th Week	Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report Finalization of MTR report following all revised comments

Options for site visits should be provided in the Inception Report, following discussions with UNDP Afghanistan, and the Project Manager. Also, all relevant costs should be included in the financial proposal form. UNDP shall not provide any land or air transportation services to the contractor.

G. Location of Work

The field data collection for PPG will be conducted in Wakhan District of Badakhshan. For the MTR, field data will be collected from Kabul, Wakhan District of Badakhshan and Bamyan.

H. Qualifications of the Successful Service Provider at Various Levels

- A successful proposer must have minimum 5 years of previous experience in the field of evaluation; working experience in Afghanistan is an added advantage;
  - Please provide a narrative of your organization's history and describe previous experience along with organization's location, length of time in business, experience with evaluations;
  - Submit a valid business registration document of the company along with previous registration document which dates back to 5 year or older;
  - Provide copies of your previous contracts including the scope of work for at least TWO similar projects within the last 5 years along with Value of the contract, Duration of assignment, Project owner name, address and contact details; Cumulative yearly contract value of such previous work should be more than or equal to USD 100,000.
- A successful proposer shall provide technical proposal ensuring that they understand and meet the technical requirements of the assignment, able to conduct the works within the stipulated deadline, according to required quality;
- A successful bidder shall provide CVs of their key personnel who meet the minimum qualification and experience requirement;

The Contractor or their Key personnel must not have had participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation of the above-mentioned Biodiversity project (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project's related activities.

Position	General Qualifications and Experience
Key Professional Staff	
International Team Leader	**Academic Qualifications:** Master's degree in in fields related to Environment, Natural resources, or other closely related field from an accredited college or university. **Experience:** • Minimum 7 years of relevant experience

Position	General Qualifications and Experience
	- Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies - Experience in undertaking evaluations for UNDP or for GEF - Experience working in former Asian Countries (incl. Afghanistan) - Experience working in Afghanistan - Experience working in Afghanistan (in the area of Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management) - Work experience related to Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management in any country - Work experience related specifically to mobilizing investment for Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management projects - Excellent communication and analytical skills; **Language:** - Excellent written and oral English skills a necessary requirement
National Team Expert	**Academic Qualifications:** Bachelor's degree in in fields related to Environment, Natural resources, or other closely related field from an accredited college or university. **Experience:** - Minimum 5 years of relevant experience - Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies - Experience in undertaking evaluations for UNDP or for GEF - Experience working in the area of Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management) - Work experience related specifically to mobilizing investment for Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management projects - Excellent communication and analytical skills; **Language:** Excellent written and oral English skills a necessary requirement

I. PRICE PROPOSAL AND SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

The contractor shall submit a price proposal as below:

1. Daily Fee – The contractor shall propose a daily fee for each team member which should be inclusive of professional fees, local communication costs and insurance (inclusive of medical evacuation) and the number of working days for each team member.

2. Travel & Visa – The contractor shall propose an estimated lump sum for home-Kabul-home travel and Afghanistan visa expenses for international team members.

The total contract price, inclusive of the above elements, shall be converted into a lump sum contract and payments under the contract shall be made on submission and acceptance of deliverables under the contract in accordance with the above-mentioned schedule of payment.

J. Criteria for Selecting the Best Offer

Combined Scoring method – where the qualifications and methodology will be weighted a maximum of 70%, and combined with the price offer which will be weighted a maximum of 30%;

K. *Annexes to the TOR*

Annex 1 - Biodiversity Project document: https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/project_documents/1-22-14_-_Rev_Prodoc.pdf
Annex 2 - UNDP-GEF MTR Report Audit Trail Template.
ANNEX B - Guidelines on Contents for the Midterm Review Report
ANNEX E - MTR Ratings

Annex 2: MTR evaluative matrix

No.	Evaluative questions	Indicators/criteria	Data sources	Methodology
		Project Strategy		
Project Design				
1.	Are the assumptions identified in the ProDoc relevant and comprehensive?	• Valitidy of assumptions in ProDoc • Completeness/gaps in assumptions in ProDoc	• ProDoc • Progress reports/PIRs • NEPA staff • MAIL staff • WCS staff	• Document review • Interviews
2.	Is the project building on and enhancing results and lessons from other, especially earlier projects supporting PA establishment?	• Continuity in support provided for for PA establishment • Continuation and refinement approaches initiated under earlier projects.	• ProDoc • Progress reports/PIRs • NEPA staff • MAIL staff • WCS staff • UNDP staff • Communities	• Document review • Interviews • Field visits
3.	Is the project concept in line with the national priorities for biodiversity conservation and development?	• Alignment with NEPA, MAIL, and GIRoA strategies and policies • Progress in/feasibility of policy and institutional reforms vis-à-vis project design	• NEPA, MAIL, GIRoA strategies (e.g. NPPs) • ProDoc • NEPA staff • MAIL staff • UNDP staff	• Document review • Interviews
4.	Were the perspectives of stakeholders and decision-makers taken adequately into account in the project design?	• Stakeholders were consulted during design and work plan development • Stakeholders find that the project responds to their priorities and views	• ProDoc • Progress Reports/PIRs • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • Community organisations • Community members	• Document review • Interviews • Field visits
5.	Is gender (including women's vulnerability) adequately mainstreamed and addressed in the project design?	• Plans for addressing gender issues and inclusion of women included in ProDoc • Gender disaggregated indicators and baseline data	• ProDoc • Progress Reports/PIRs • NEPA staff (HQ and local)	• Document review • Interviews • Guidance in Annex 9 of

No.	Evaluative questions	Indicators/criteria	Data sources	Methodology
			• MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff • Community organisations • Community members	*Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*
	Is the project design taking the future impacts of climate change into consideration?	• Climate risks have been identified and taken into consideration in the planning of project activities	• Progress reports/PIRs • WCS staff • Community members	• Document review • Interviews • Field visits
6.	Is the rationale/theory of change (ToC) consistent and are the project outputs and activities sufficient and comprehensive vis-à-vis the intended outcomes?	• Major gaps in activities design vis-à-vis intended results • Areas of limited progress	• ProDoc • Progress Reports/PIRs • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff • Community organisations • Community members	• Document review • Interviews • Field visits
Results Framework/Logframe				
7.	Are the project indicators and targets SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) and adequately capturing results (outcomes, impacts)?	Outcome and impact indicators are in place and monitored	• ProDoc • Progress reports/PIRs • Monitoring/indicator tracking tools • WCS staff	• Document review • Interviews • Field visits
8.	Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?	• Changes were made to the logframe during implementation to address shortcomings • Level of progress on delivery of outcomes and objectives	• ProDoc • Progress reports/PIRs • Products and publications • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff • UNDP staff • Community organisations • Community members	• Document review • Interviews • Field visits
9.	Are there any benefits of the project, which are not reflected in the logframe or captured by the indicators and in the progress reporting?	Presence of unexpected positive outcomes and impacts	• Progress reports/PIRs • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff • UNDP staff	• Document review • Interviews • Field visits

No.	Evaluative questions	Indicators/criteria	Data sources	Methodology
			• Community organisations • Community members	
10.	Is the project monitoring adequately capturing gender aspects (including vulnerability) and the effect on women?	Availability of gender disaggregated data for indicators and baseline	• ProDoc • Progress Reports/PIRs • Monitoring/indicator tracking tools • WCS staff	• Document review • Interviews
	Progress Towards Results			
	Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis			
11.	What has been the progress against the outcome and objective indicators (in the logframe)?	Indicator achievement versus milestones and targets (mid-term and completion)	• ProDoc • Progress Reports/PIRs • Monitoring/indicator tracking tools	• Document review • Use the *Progress Towards Results Matrix* and follow the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*
12.	What is the current status compared to the baseline scenario?	Current status compared to baseline	• GEF tracking tool at baseline and mid-term	• Document review
	Has the project changed patterns of human-wildlife conflict (positively and negatively)?	• Project interventions have improved the protection of livestock from predation • The hunting ban has not led to increased predation on livestock	• Progress reports/PIRs • WCS staff • Community members	• Document review • Interviews • Field visits

	How has the project impacted on vulnerability and human security (positive and negative impacts)?	• Economic security: Employment and income opportunities created or lost
		• Food (and economic) security: Livestock and agricultural productivity increased/decreased
		• Environmental security:
		  o Environmental degradation reduced
		  o Vulnerability to natural disasters reduced
			• Progress reports/PIRs
			• MAIL staff (local)
			• WCS staff
			• Community members
				• Document review
				• Interviews
				• Field visits

No.	Evaluative questions	Indicators/criteria	Data sources	Methodology

		o Enhanced resilience to the impacts of climate change
		• Community security:
		   o The project has engaged women and contributed to reducing their vulnerability
		   o The project addressed community-level conflicts		

13.	What are the main barriers affecting the ability to achieving the intended results (outcomes and impacts)?	Stakeholders can identify major obstacles that hamper the delivery of results that are significantly below target	• Progress reports/PIRs • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff • UNDP staff • Community organisations • Community members	• Document review • Interviews • Field visits
14.	What are the main successes and achievements of the project, and how can they be expanded?	• Outcomes and results, which are at or above targets • Stakeholders can identify important results which are not reflected in the log-frame • Stakeholders can identify the main enablers for the results that have been significantly achieved	• Progress reports/PIRs • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff • UNDP staff • Community organisations • Community members	• Document review • Interviews • Field visits
	Project Implementation and Adaptive Management			
	Management Arrangements			
15. 16.	How effective and efficient has project management and execution by WCS, NEPA and MAIL been?	• Changes been made and their effectiveness • Clarity of responsibilities and reporting lines • Transparency and timeliness of decision-making	• Progress reports/PIRs • PSC meeting minutes • WCS staff • NEPA staff • MAIL staff • UNDP staff	• Document review • Interviews
17.	How effective has UNDP been at providing support and guidance to WCS, NEPA and MAIL?	• Clarity of the guidance provided • Responsiveness to requests	• WCS staff • NEPA staff • MAIL staff	• Interviews

No.	Evaluative questions	Indicators/criteria	Data sources	Methodology
			• UNDP staff	
	Is the cooperation with WCS enabling UNDP to reach insecure areas in Afghanistan?	• WCS is operating in areas, which UNDP cannot operate in directly	• WCS staff • UNDP staff	• Interviews
	Are UNDP rules and regulations conducive for project implementation?	• UNDP rules and regulations have enabled WCS to implement the project in a flexible manner, responding to emerging needs and changes in the context • UNDP rules and regulations have not created significant barriers to implementation	• WCS staff • UNDP staff	• Interviews
Work Planning				
18.	Has implementation been timely?	• Occurrence of delays in start-up and implementation • Justification/reason for delays • Activity implementation status vs milestones and plans	• ProDoc • Work plans and budgets • Progress reports/PIRs • WCS staff	• Document review • Interviews
19.	Are work-planning processes results-based?	Work plans contain clear milestones vis-à-vis outcomes	Work plans and budgets	• Document review
20.	Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.	• The logframe has been reviewed • Alignment between logframe and work plans	• ProDoc • Work plans and budgets • WCS staff	• Document review • Interviews
Finance and Co-finance				
21. 22.	Are the activities implemented in a cost-effective manner?	• Use of implementing partners and stakeholders own resources and capacities • Costs of a sample of expenses • Appropriateness of changes to fund allocations and budget revisions	• Financial statements • Work plans and budgets • Audit reports • Progress reports/PIRs • WCS staff	• Document review • Interviews

No.	Evaluative questions	Indicators/criteria	Data sources	Methodology
23.	Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?	• Audit findings on the financial management and expenditures are unqualified • Budgets are clear and easy to understand • Budgets are output based	• Work plans and budgets • Audit reports • WCS staff • UNDP staff	• Document review • Interviews
24.	Is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project?	• Co-financing builds on existing processes and priorities of the partners • Regular meetings with co-financing partners regularly to align financing priorities and work plans	• Financial statements • Work plans and budgets • Progress reports/PIRs • NEPA staff • MAIL staff • WCS staff • UNDP staff	• Document review • Interviews • Fill out *co-financing monitoring table*
Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems				
25.	Is the monitoring system appropriate and effective?	• Necessary information on outputs, outcomes and impact is provided • Key partners are involved in monitoring • The monitoring system is aligned with and utilising national systems • Existing information is utilised when available	• Monitoring/indicator tracking tools • Progress reports/PIRs • Baseline information • NEPA staff • MAIL staff • WCS staff • Community organisations	• Document review • Interviews
26.	Is the financial allocation and management M&E budget sufficient and appropriate?	• Sufficiency of the resources allocated to M&E • Adequacy of the management of the resources allocated to M&E	• Financial statements • Work plans and budgets • WCS staff	• Document review • Interviews
Stakeholder Engagement				
27. 28. 29.	Are stakeholders sufficiently involved and supportive of the project?	• Existence of necessary and appropriate partnerships with stakeholders • Local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project	• Progress reports/PIRs • PSC meeting minutes • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff • UNDP staff	• Document review • Interviews • Field visits

No.	Evaluative questions	Indicators/criteria	Data sources	Methodology
		• Stakeholders have an active role in project decision-making • Contribution of stakeholder involvement and public awareness towards the achievement of project objectives	• Community organisations • Community members	
Reporting				
30. 31. 32.	Is the reporting sufficient, appropriate and adding value to project delivery?	• Reporting of adaptive management changes by the PMU to the PSC • Fulfilment of GEF reporting requirement and rating of PIRs • Documentation, sharing and use of lessons learned	• Progress reports/PIRs • PSC meeting minutes • NEPA staff • MAIL staff • WCS staff • UNDP staff	• Document review • Interviews
Communications				
33.	Is internal project communication with stakeholders effective?	• Regularity and clarity of communication • Level of inclusion of key there key stakeholders in communication • Existence of feedback mechanisms for communication received • Contribution of communication with stakeholders to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and their investment in the sustainability of project results	• Progress reports/PIRs • PSC meeting minutes • Products and publications • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff • UNDP staff • Community organisations • Community members	• Document review • Interviews
34. 35.	Is external project communication effective in terms of raising awareness?	• External communication channels, such as a website, presence on social media • Outreach and public awareness campaigns	• Progress reports/PIRs • PSC meeting minutes • Products and publications • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff • UNDP staff • Community organisations • Community members	• Document review • Interviews
Sustainability				

No.	Evaluative questions	Indicators/criteria	Data sources	Methodology
36.	Is an adequate risk management system in place?	• Relevance, importance and comprehensiveness of the risks identified and accuracy the risk rating	• ProDoc • PIRs • Risk log from ATLAS Risk Management Module • WCS staff • UNDP staff	• Document review • Interviews
Financial risks to sustainability				
37.	Are sufficient financial resources likely to be in place to finance the post-project continuation of the results achieved and systems and process put in place?	• Post-project availability of sufficient GIRoA (NEPA, MAIL) resources • Ability of income-generating activities established to generate sufficient funding • Likelihood of attracting private sector resources • Presence of ongoing or planned other projects that will support the post-project continuation of processes	• Progress reports/PIRs • PSC meeting minutes • NEPA staff • MAIL staff • WCS staff • UNDP staff • Community organisations • Community members	• Document review • Interviews
Socio-economic risks to sustainability				
38.	Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes?	• Level of stakeholder awareness, ownership and commitment to post-project continuation • Level of public awareness and support to the long-term objectives of the project • Presence of vested interests that work against the project objectives • Extent to which the PMU is documenting lessons and sharing with partners to promote upscaling and replication	• Progress reports/PIRs • PSC meeting minutes • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff • UNDP staff • Community organisations • Community members	• Document review • Interviews
Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability				
39.	Is the institutional and governance framework conducive for, and supportive of, post-project continuation of the results achieved, processes initiated, and systems put in place?	• Supportiveness of the legal framework • Appropriateness, supportiveness and capacity of institutions and governance structures	• Progress reports/PIRs • PSC meeting minutes • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff	• Document review • Interviews

No.	Evaluative questions	Indicators/criteria	Data sources	Methodology
		• Presence of adequate systems/mechanisms for accountability and transparency • Existence of mechanisms for transfer of technical knowledge	• UNDP staff • Community organisations • Community members	
Environmental risks to sustainability				
40.	Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?	• Likeliness of natural hazards (drought, floods, earthquakes) destroying SLM investments and practices • Anticipated future impacts of climate change	• Progress reports/PIRs • PSC meeting minutes • NEPA staff (HQ and local) • MAIL staff (HQ and local) • WCS staff • UNDP staff • Community organisations • Community members	• Document review • Interviews
The numbering corresponds to the bullet points in the ToR				

Annex 3: Ratings scales

Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as "good practice".
5	Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as "good practice".
5	Satisfactory (S)	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.

Ratings for Sustainability: (one overall rating)		
4	Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the project's closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
3	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review
2	Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
1	Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

Annex 4: Mission itinerary

Overall programme			
Date	**Day**	**Location**	**Activity**
7 Sep	Thu	Travel Copenhagen-Kabul	
8 Sep	Fri		
9 Sep	Sat	Kabul	Security lock down – Martyr's Day
10 Sep	Sun		Briefing meeting with UNDP, WCS
11 Sep	Mon		Meeting MAIL
12 Sep	Tue		Meeting NEPA, WCS
13 Sep	Wed	Wakhan	Meetings and visits: project field team, local government, community organisations, communities, field activities, village activities
14 Sep	Thu		
15 Sep	Fri		
16 Sep	Sat		Gathering data for the Snow Leopard Project
17 Sep	Sun		
18 Sep	Mon		
19 Sep	Tue		
20 Sep	Wed		
21 Sep	Thu		
22 Sep	Fri		
23 Sep	Sat	Bamyan	Meetings with DAIL, NEPA
24 Sep	Sun	Band-e-Amir	Meetings and visits: project field team, local government, community organisations, communities, village activities
25 Sep	Mon		
26 Sep	Tue	Kabul	Meeting UNDP
27 Sep	Wed		Meeting MAIL, WCS
28 Sep	Thu		Debriefing meeting with UNDP, WCS
29 Sep	Fri	Travel Kabul-Copenhagen	

Wakhan			
Date	**Day**	**Location**	**Activity**
13/Sep	Wed	Ishkashim	Arrival in Ishkashim, departure for Wakhan
		Qazideh	CDC members: • Said Bek, Head • Daoda Khadar, member, previous head
			Haqim, police officer
			Hafiat Khan, Tourist Guide, community member
14/Sep	Thu	Khandud	Kyrgyz husband and wife, Little Pamir
			Muhammad Gul Parviz Community Affairs Manager, District Governor's Office
			Qurban Mohammad Nazari, Agriculture Manager, DAIL, District Governor's Office
			Ishaq Pamirzad, Ranger Supervisor, DAIL, District Governor's Office
			Rezhanullah, Recruitment Officer, District Police, Khandud
			Predator-proof communal corral
			Watershed project
15/Sep	Fri	Qala-e Panja	Mr XXX, Border Police
			Mr XXX, Border Police
			Shah Ismail Religious leader of Wakhan)
			Visiting WCS snow leopard team camp in Sarkand Valley • Dr. Ali, Science and Conservation Officer • Aziz Bek, Snow Leopard Ranger • Ayaan Bek, Snow Leopard Ranger • Karmal, Snow Leopard Ranger • Ayub, Community ranger of Qala-e-Panja

Date	Day	Location	Activity
			• Ali Dad, Community Ranger of Sarkand
16/Sep	Sat	Sarhad-e-Brogal	Abdul Haq – Little Pamir
			Abdul-ud-din – Seh Kay Village – Little Pamir
			Haji Roshan – Qara Jelgha Village – Little Pamir
			Abdul Had – Little Pamir
			Darya boy – Ich Kely – Little Pamir
			Ganji Boy – Irghayel Village - Little Pamir
17/Sep	Sun		Ghazal Sahee, Education Manager, District Governor's Office
			Dewana Bek, Head of CDC – Sarhad-e-Brogal
			Ms. Mayeem, WPA member – Sarhad-e-Brogal
			Toraan Khaybarzada, Arbab, Sarhad-e-Broghal
18/Sep	Mon		
19/Sep	Tue	Kret Village	Kheyal Bek, traditional village head, Kret Village
			Ms. Haajar, CDC Head's wife of Kret Village
			Ms. Negaar, Tailor
			Bakh Shah, Community Ranger from Kret
		Kizget Village	Safar Ali, Ex-Head of Kizget CDC
			Rahmat Bek, Kizget Resident
			Predator-proof household corral
			Predator-proof communal corral
			Watershed project
20/Sep	Wed	Guz Khon	Amanullah Qara boy – Big Pamir
			Safdar, Deputy Head of Guz khon CDC
			Baaz Mohammad, Member of Guz Khon CDC
			Ayub Alavi, WCS M&E Officer
21/Sep	Thur	Qala-e-Panja	Abdul Rahman, Head of Qala-e-Panja CDC
			Naqibullah, Field Manager, WCS
			Ismail, Finance officer, WCS
			Ms. Asli Gul, Environment Education Program Officer, WCS
			Ms. Sosan Gul, Environment Education Program Assistant, WCS
			Amruddin, Logistics and liaison officer, WCS
22/Sep	Friday	Qazideh	Said Rahimuddin, Chairman, WPA
23/Sep	Sat	Ishkashim	Travel from Ishkashim to Bamyan

Bamyan			
Date	Day	Location	Activity
23/Sep	Sun	Bamyan	Arrival in Bamyan
			Mr Mohammadi, Director, DAIL
			NEPA: • Mohammad Ibrahim Dadfar, Director • Abas Hekmat, Monitoring Manager • Mohammad Sharif Poya, National Heritage Protection Officer
24/Sep	Mon	Band-e-Amir	Travel to Band-e-Amir
			WCS: • Mohammad Ibrahim Abrar, Team Manager • Nasratullah Jahid, Science and Conservation Officer • Mirza Hussain, Conservation Officer • Ms Sediqa Hussaini, Environmental Education Programme Officer • Rahmatullah Ahmadi, BACC Liaison Officer • Said Jalal Jafari, Tourism Development Assistant
			Band-e Amir Community Association board: • Taher Shah, Chairman

			• Shahusain, Spokesman
			• Ms Amina, Deputy Chair, Head of Women's Committee
			• Jafari, board member, former Chairman
25/Sep			Community Members:
			Ms Hawa (women handicraft seller in Jarubkashan)
			Mosa, tree plantation owner from Dehabkhana village
			Mohammad, passive solar house owner in Jarubkashan village
			Ms Roqia, solar cooker owner in Jarubkashan village
			Park Office:
			• Mohammad Amani, Protected Area Manager
			• Mr Ali Yawar, Park Officer
			• Mr Sultan, Park ranger
			Drive to Bamyan
26/Sep	Tue	Bamyan	Travel to Kabul

Annex 5: Persons interviewed

UNDP
- Laura Rio (Afghanistan Country Office)
- Ahmad Jamshed Khoshbeen (Programme Analyst, Afghanistan Country Office)
- Edrees Bahadur (Programme Finance Officer, Afghanistan Country Office)
- Tashi Dorji (Regional Technical Adviser – Ecosystem & Biodiversity, Bangkok Regional Hub)

WCS
- Dr Richard Paley (Project Manager)
- Qais Sahar (National Project Coordinator)
- Zabiullah Ejlasi (Finance Manager)
- Dr Arif Rahimi (Admin/HR/Procurement Manager)
- Ayub Alavi (M&E Officer)

Wakhan Team:
- Sayed Naqibullah Mostafawi (Team manager)
- David Bradfield (PA Management Advisor)
- Mohammad Ismail Tawhid (Finance Officer)
- Dr. Ali (Science and Conservation Officer)
- Amruddin (Logistics and Liaison officer)
- Ms Asli Gul (Environment Education Program Officer)
- Ms Sosan Gul (Environment Education Program Assistant)
- Aziz Bek (WCS Snow Leopard Ranger)
- Ayaan Bek (WCS Snow Leopard Ranger)
- Karmal (WCS Snow Leopard Ranger)
- Ayub (WCS community ranger of Qala-e-Panja)
- Ali Dad (WCS community Ranger of Sarkand)
- Bakh Shah (WCS community Ranger of Kret)

Bamyan Team:
- Mohammad Ibrahim Abrar (Team Manager)
- Albertus Driescher (Techical Advisor)
- Nasratullah Jahid (Science and Conservation Officer)
- Mirza Hussain (Conservation Officer)
- Ms Sediqa Hussaini (Environmental Education Programme Officer)
- Rahmatullah Ahmadi (BACC Liaison Officer)
- Said Jalal Jafari (Tourism Development Assistant)

NEPA
- H.E. Prince Mostapha Zaher (Director General & GEF Focal Point)
- Abdul Wali Modaqiq, (Deputy Director General).
- Ibrahim Dadfar (Director, Bamyan Province)
- Abas Hekmat (Monitoring Manager, Bamyan Province)
- Mohammad Sharif Poya (National Heritage Protection Officer, Bamyan Province)

MAIL

- Mohammad Rafi Qazizada, (Director General, General Directorate of NRM)
- Sayed Rahman Ziarmal, (Protected Areas Director, PA Directorate)
- Ahmad Zia Mirzada, (Protected Area Surveys and Studies General Manager, PA Directorate)
- Mohammadi (Director, DAIL, Bamyan Province)
- Ali Yawar (Warden, BANP Park Authority)
- Mohammad Amani (Protected Area Manager, BANP Park Authority)
- Sultan (Community Ranger, BANP Park Authority)

District Governor's Office, Wakhan
- Mohammad Gul Parviz (Community Affairs Manager, District Governor's Office)
- Ghazal Saiee (Education Manager, District Governor's Office)
- Qurban Mohammad Nazari (Agriculture Manager, DAIL, District Governor's Office)
- Ishaq Pamirzad (Government ranger supervisor, DAIL, District Governor's Office)

District Police, Wakhan
- Rezhanullah (Recruitment Officer, District Police, Khandud)
- Haqim, Police Officer (Qazideh village)

Border Police, Wakhan
- Mr XXX (Border Police)
- Mr XXX (Border Police)

WPA
- Mr Sayed Rahimuddin (Chairman)
- Ms Mayeem (member, Sarhad-e-Brughal)

BACC
- Taher Shah (Chairman)
- Shahusain (Spokesman)
- Ms Amina (Deputy Chairperson, Head of Women's Committee of BACC)
- Jafari (board member, Former Chairman)

Communities, Wakhan
- Shah Ismail (religious leader)
- Abdul Haq (Kyrgyz Representative from little Pamir)
- Abdul-ud-din (Kyrgyz Representative from little Pamir)
- Haji Roshan (Kyrgyz Representative from little Pamir)
- Abdul Had (Kyrgyz Representative from little Pamir)
- Darya boy (Kyrgyz Representative from little Pamir)
- Ganje Boy (Kyrgyz Representative from little Pamir)
- Amanullah Qara Boy (Kyrgyz from Big Pamir)
- Kyrgyz husband and wife, (Little Pamir – met in Khandud)
- Kheyal Bek (Head of tribe – traditional Head of village, Kret)
- Ms Haajar (wife of head of CDC of Kret)
- Ms Negaar (Tailor, Kret)
- Safar Ali (Ex-head of CDC, Kizget)
- Rahmat Bek (Kizget Residence)

- Safdar (Deputy Head of Guz Khon CDC)
- Baaz Mohammad (Member of Guz Khon CDC)
- Abdul Rahman (Head of Qala-e-Panja CDC)
- Dewana Bek (Head of Sarhad-e-Brogal CDC)
- Toraan Khaybarzada (Arbab Village Head, Sarhad-e-Broghal)
- Said Bek (Head of CDC, Qazideh)
- Daoda Khadar (CDC member, previous Head, Qazideh)
- Hafiat Khan (Tourist Guide, Qazideh)
- Abdul Rahman (Head of Qala-e-Panja CDC)

Communities, Band-e-Amir
- Ms Hawa (women handicraft seller in Jarubkashan)
- Mosa (tree plantation owner from Dehabkhana village)
- Mohammad (passive solar house in Jarubkashan village)
- Ms Roqia (solar cooker in Jarubkashan village)

Annex 6: Documents reviewed

1. Projdct design related documents:
    1. Project Document, 2014
    2. Request for CEO Endorsement, GEF, Feb 2014
    3. GEF Planning outline: Project Goal, Objective, Outcomes and Outputs/Activities, WCS Afghanistan, Nov-2014
2. Project Implementation Review (PIR)-to GEF
    1. 2016
        1. 5038-Biodiversity-2016 PIR Report
    2. 2017
        1. 5038-Biodiversity-2017 PIR Report
3. Project Progress reports-to UNDP
    1. 2014
        1. Annual Report for Y2014-Establishing Integrated Models for Protected areas and their Co-management in Afghanistan
    2. 2015
        1. Annual Report for Y2015-Establishing Integrated Models for Protected areas and their Co-management in Afghanistan
        2. Q1Y15 Progress Report
    3. 2016
        1. Annual Report for Y2016-Establishing Integrated Models for Protected areas and their Co-management in Afghanistan
    4. 2017
        1. Q1Y17 Progress Report
        2. Q2Y17 Progress Report
4. Annual workplans
    1. Annual Work Plan 2016
    2. Annual Work Plan_2017_Approved
    3. Final WCS AWP 2015
5. Financial reports
    1. Combined Delivery Report by activity Jan-Dec 2015, UNDP 22 Feb 2016
    2. Combined Delivery Report by activity Jan-Dec 2016, UNDP, 1 Mar 2017
    3. Combined Delivery Report by activity Jan-Jun 2017, UNDP, 17 Aug 2017
    4. EIMPA, 30 Aug 2017
6. Audit reports
    4. Auditor Report for year 2015
    5. Auditor Report year 2016
7. PSC minutes
    6. BDLD PSC meeting minutes 04Dec16
    7. BDLD PSC Meeting minutes 16Dec15
8. Ecological studies and baselines:
    1. Bamyan:
        1. Bamyan Willife and Camera traps
        2. BANP Tourism

1. Tourist demographic survey report in BANP-2016
2. Tourist demography database_2015
3. مجموع توریستها ی سال 1395
3. BANP-Lalmi
    1. Dry land farming (lalmi) in BANP-2016
    2. Dry land farming (lalmi) in BANP-Dari-2017
4. BNS for BANP
    1. Band-e-Amir_BNS Database
    2. BNS Raw Data
    3. BNS_Bam_WellBeingIIndex_Analysis_Stephane_27Nov15
    4. Pasroya_BNS Database_Outside
5. Livestock-Ailoqs in BANP
    1. Livestock & ailoq surveys in BANP-2016
    2. Raw data of livestock & ailaq report
6. Rangeland Study
    1. Band_e_Amir_Report_highres
    2. Band_e_Amir_Report_lowres
    3. Protocol_satellite_data_usage_oct_2016
    4. Zandler_june_approach_outline
    5. Zandler_preliminary_short_report_sept_2016
2. Wakhan:
    1. Glacier monitoring data
        1. Glaciers_2016
        2. Glaciers_2016
    2. Livestock Monitoring
        1. Autumn Livestock Survey report-2015
        2. Autumn Livestock Survey report-2016-2017
        3. FMD Vaccination
        4. livestock census in BP-2015
        5. Livestock census_Big Pamir-2015
        6. Livestock_summer_grazing
        7. Livestock_winter_grazing
        8. Mapping livestock grazing in WNP-2016
        9. Spring Livestock Survey 2016-2017
        10. Spring Livestock Survey-2015
        11. Wakhan Livestock Predation Survey-2016
        12. Wakhi Livestock Death and Predation -2016
    3. Rangeland Studies
        1. chinese_short_report_sept_2016
        2. no_title_chinese_short_report_sept_2016
        3. Protocol_satellite_data_usage_oct_2016
        4. Wakhan_Report_highres-2016
        5. Wakhan_Report_lowres-2016
        6. Wakhan_report-2016
        7. Zandler_june_approach-2016

    4. Snow Leopard monitoring
        1. Identification of individual snow leopards-2015
        2. SL modelling brief report
        3. SL_Habitat_Modelling_presentation
        4. Snow Leopard collaring data
    5. Wild Ungulate Monitoring
        1. Initial data_Wild Ungulate Survey in Wakhan, 2015
        2. MPS SURVEY DATA-2015
        3. MPS Survey in Wakhan-2015
        4. PPt_Wild Ungulate Survey in Wakhan-2015
        5. Wild Ungulate Group Size-2015
    6. WNP Tourism
        1. Tourism Data-2016
9. Products and Publications
    1. 2014
        1. BPWR Management Plan
    2. 2014
        1. Afghanistan Woment Rangers
        2. Autumn Livestock Survey report_Ali_Final
        3. BANP - Operational Plan - 2015
        4. BPWR and TWR - Operational Plans - 2015
        5. International Snow Leopard Day in Afghanistan-2016
        6. Livestock_Count_BP_autumn_2015
        7. MPS Survey in Wakhan-Final
        8. Nation Input Document (NID) for Snow Leopard Conservation in Afghanistan (Bishkek) 1st Dec. 2015
        9. Persian leopard camera-trapping in Bamyan Pleatu-2015
        10. Prot.Wild.Spp.Afgh Booklet
        11. Public Awareness Materials
        12. Ranger Manual
        13. Report on TV and radion round table
        14. Report_Ulamas_Train
        15. SL Habitat Modelling
        16. SL modelling final raddendum
        17. Snow Lepard_camera trap work
        18. Spring Livestock Survey-2015
        19. Summary results from the Bamyan Plateau aerial reconnaissance survey
        20. Tourist demographic survey report in BANP during 2015_Final_01.06.16
        21. Ungulate group size-Ostrowski&Strindberg (2015)
        22. WCS M&E manual
        23. WCS M&E Presentation
        24. wcs-af_m&e-manual_25jan2015
        25. Wild Ungulate Survey in Wakhan-2015
        26. Women tailor training-2015
    3. 2016

1. 1-2016-002
2. Ag-Fair Report 2016_TEO
3. Autumn Livestock Survey report_2016_3 April 2017
4. BANP Operational Plan 2016
5. Dry land farming (lalmi) in BANP_English_Final
6. EEP Bamyan-DARI- 2016
7. Joint patrol in BANP-DARI
8. Livestock & ailoq surveys in BANP_English_Final
9. Livestock & ailoq surveys in BANP-2016
10. Persian leopard CT in Bamyan Plateau-2016
11. Ranger training 2016 BANP&NP_final_English
12. Ranger Training Report-Bamyan 2016
13. Report on Ailaqs settlements of BANP-2016
14. Report on EEP in Wakhan-2016
15. Spring Livestock Survey 2016_FINAL_Feb2017
16. Summary report on WNP BNS-2016
17. Tracking a Collared Snow Leopard in the Afghan Pamirs-2016
18. Training materials on environmental, NRM, protected areas asnd wildlife conservation
19. Wakhan Livestock Predation Survey-2016
20. Watershed (tree planting) in WNP-2015

4. 2017
   1. Children Story Book
   2. Livestock counts in Big Pamir of Wakhan
   3. Onehealth Global Report Wakhan
   4. Police and Customs Train Report-2017

10. National Natural Resource Management (2017 – 2021) Islamic Republic of Afghanistan – Ministry of Agriculture, irrigation and livestock
11. Khoshbeen, Ahmad Jamshed. Field Monitoring Mission Report of Bamyan Province – Establishing Integrated Models of Protected Areas in Afghanistan, UNDP, 12-16 July 2017
12. GEF Tracking tools
    1. Baseline, 2014
    2. Mid-term, Aug 2017
13. Biodiversity Assessment with Summary Assessment of Climate Vulnerability and other Environmental Threats and Opportunities to Inform USAID/Afghanistan Program Design, Feb 2017
14. Suggestion and Response letter on Revenue Sharing for BANP, 2016
15. Development Sustained by Nature Band-e-Amir National Park, UNDP Afghanistan, Feb 2016
16. Women Rangers
    1. Goal 5 – Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls, UNDP, 2016
    2. http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/ourwork/environmentadnenergy/successstories/FemaleRangers.html http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2015/05/afghanistan-women-rangers- 150512124254885.html https://www.theguardian.com/environment/blog/2013/dec/31/women-rangers-

afghanistan-band-e-amir-conservation http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/presscenter/IntheNews/AfghanistansWomenRangers.html

Annex 7: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form

United Nations Evaluation Group Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

Evaluation Consultants Agreement Form

To be signed by all consultants as individuals (not by or on behalf of a consultancy company) before a contract can be issued.

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

Name of Consultant: Kris B. Prasada Rao

Name of Consultancy Organisation: PEMconsult A/S

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

Signed at Frederiksberg on 23 August 2017

Signature:

Annex 8: Signed MTR final report clearance form

Annex 9: Pictures from the field

Snow Leopard Rangers in Sarkand Valley

Horseback meeting with Kyrgyz From Big Pamir

Meeting with community Member in Kret Village

Traditional Local Corral on the left – WCS Corral on the right

Women shops in Band-e-Amir

Watershed/tree planting project in Wakhan

Passive solar house in Band-e-Amir

Solar cooker in Band-e-Amir

Tree planting project in Band-e-Amir

Annex 10: Draft concept for expansion into the Bamyan Plateau (prepared by WCS Afghanistan)

Background & Justification for re-orientation of Component 1 towards supporting the development of the Bamyan Plateau as a future protected area

1. *Conservation importance*

The Bamyan plateau is approximately 4,051 Km2 in size. It is a relatively intact wilderness area covered by high-altitude grasslands, some remnant juniper woodland and numerous deep gorges, which transect the landscape. It supports a number of important species for conservation e.g. Persian leopard, lynx, Pallas' cat, wild cat, urial and ibex, as well as grey wolf, red fox and the small mammals and rodents on which they feed. Within its northern boundary is an area called the Ajar Valley in the 1970s was one of the most important royal hunting areas. It also functions as one of the catchment areas for the Amu-Darya River basin, which is crucially important for the livelihoods of millions of Afghans and people from neighbouring countries to the north.

2. *Threats*

Though the landscape is relatively pristine and the human population density extremely low, some parts have been intensively grazed for centuries, so there is a threat to the wild ungulates posed by competition with domestic livestock. In addition, some areas of rangeland are under pressure from grazing and shrub collection (for heating fuel and winter fodder). Equally serious is the threat from illegal hunting and bird trapping which targets species such as urial, ibex and saker falcon in particular. A recent development which has serious implications in particular for hunting pressure is the building of a new highway from Mazar-e Sharif to Bamyan City, which will transect the plateau and indeed the existing Band-e Amir National Park (BANP). Though it is unlikely that this road will encourage large scale migration to the area, because of the paucity of livelihood options, it will definitely increase accessibility for hunting and general disturbance of wildlife.

3. *Action baseline*

Though not currently a specified target area of the 'Establishing integrated models for protected areas & their co-management in Afghanistan' project (EIMPA), the Bamyan Plateau does constitute an important buffer zone for BANP, which is one of the focal landscapes. For that reason, the project has been able to justify allocation of funds, albeit limited, towards conservation activities in the Plateau. These have included small-scale camera trap surveys to record presence/absence of species, establishing of community ranger teams for monitoring wildlife and illegal activity, and liaison with local authorities to facilitate their intervention in law enforcement. There has been some awareness-raising and outreach conducted by the EIMPA project and a local NGO (LSO) conducting work under a UNDP SGP grant.

4. *Reasons for establishing as a PA*

The following reasons support the near-future establishment of the Bamyan Plateau as a protected area:

− It is one of the largest relatively intact wilderness areas in Afghanistan, which also serves as an important water catchment area.
− It supports depleted populations of important species which, given the extent of remaining habitat in good condition, could recover under proper conservation management.
− The area has considerable national tourism potential, building on the success of Band-e Amir National Park, but offering a different more wilderness-orientated experience.
− Current threats though significant are manageable, given adequate resources for intervention.
− Formal designation would enable more effective mitigation of the threats posed by construction of the highway from Mazar to Bamyan.
− National level agencies with the mandate for biodiversity conservation are already considering the area as future sites for PA designation (the Ajar Valley was identified as a Priority I area in the National Protected Area System Plan of 2010).
− The Bamyan provincial government has indicated a strong interest in putting the area forward for PA designation and a number of local communities have expressed interest too.
− There is potential funding from a variety of sources GEF6, EU and GEF7 which might come on line in 2018-19 which could further support the process of establishing the Plateau as a protected area.

5. *Priority activities for EIMPA to conduct in 2018*

Should it be decided to re-orientate EIMPA project resources towards the Bamyan Plateau for the final year, it is clearly not feasible to fully establish it as a new protected area in that time frame. However, it would be possible to lay a solid foundation for establishment, which could then be completed under the potential funding referred to in Section 4 above. The priority activities for 2018 would include:

− Continued strengthening (in terms of technical and operational capacity) of the community ranger teams, including upgrading the ranger post in Deh Behbud as a meeting and training facility for them.
− Expansion of the education and outreach programme for communities within and adjacent to the park and relevant local authorities
− Implementation of a more comprehensive and systematic survey programme to confirm the ecological value of the area and gather baseline socio-economic data.
− Initial steps to establish a local community-based NRM institution to represent the communities of the Plateau.
− Initiating of a tree plantation programme to provide an alternative source of fuel wood to shrub collection.
− Drafting of a short document for government partners, which provides justification for the near-term designation of the Bamyan Plateau as a protected area.

Annex 11: Project Theory of Change (as per results framework in ProDoc)

Outputs

1.1: APWA established and has the legal and institutional support to plan, implement, monitor and expand PAs in collaboration with local authorities and communities as required under the NPASP

1.2: Strategic, operating and long-term financial sustainability plans in place for APWA and the PAS.

1.3: APWA has adequate infrastructure, personnel, budget allocation, and technical/managerial capacity to be fully operational and increasingly effective

1.4: Strengthened communication capacity at national, provincial and local levels that places APWA as a central institution capable of inter-sectorial coordination for PAs and biodiversity

2.1: Clear procedures regarding establishment and gazetting of new PAs are in place and effective

2.2: PA management plans are written and accepted for the Wakhan Conservation Area and the Teggermansu Wildlife Reserve in preparation for gazetting and formal establishment

2.3: Teggermansu Wildlife Reserve and the Wakhan Conservation Area are gazetted

2.4: Sound PA management is implemented for the 4 pilot PAs through co-management structures

3.1: Long-term M&E systems are in place for PA management, targeted species and ecosystems

3.2: SLM plans integrated into PA co-management

3.3: SLM pilot projects in community managed protected areas

3.4: Improved sustainable livelihoods through revenue generating activities, access to financing, and organizational support

Outcomes

Risk: Political gridlock delays decisions on laws and regulations

O1: A National PA system established with legal, planning, policy and institutional frameworks for expansion and management for the PA estate

Assumption: Continued support of GoIRA and absence of major conflict escalation

Risk:
- Conflicts with mining, warlords, decreasing security
- Post-election political crisis make pilot areas inaccessible

O2: PA coverage and protection status improved to increase biodiversity representativeness and ecological resilience

Assumption: Continued status quo and collaboration with key partners incl. NEPA, MAIL, BACA and WPA

Risks:
- Deterioration of security in pilot areas
- Lack of local technical capacity
- Lack of engagement by communities
- Climate change impacts

O3: PA management effectiveness and climate-resilient SLM is enhanced to reduce threats to pilot PAs

Assumptions:
- Collaborative relationships with communities maintained
- Initial successes increase community and individual interest

Intermediate state

Risk:
- Increased insecurity and fighting
- Political crisis

A national system of PAs to conserve biodiversity and mitigate land degradation pressures on habitats in key biodiversity areas established, initially centered in Bamyan and Wakhan

Assumptions:
- The security situation will remain as it is or slightly degrade but not in the pilot areas
- Elections will be relatively uneventful and not cause a major political crisis

Impact

Globally significant biodiversity conserved and risks of land degradation reduced

Annex 12: Progress Towards Results Matrix (achievement of outcomes against end-of-project targets)

Project Strategy	Indicator	Baseline level	Level in 2017 PIR	End-of-Project Target	Mid-term Level & Assessment*	Achievement Rating	Justification for Rating

Objective: to establish a national system of PAs to conserve biodiversity and mitigate land degradation pressures on habitats in key biodiversity areas, initially centered in Bamyan Province and the Wakhan corridor	Operational status of APWA.	Nil	Nil	Established, funded, effective. TORs for all key posts.	APWA politically impossible to establish.	**Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**	• APWA cannot be established
							• PA estate expanded with the designation of WNP, BPWR, TWR
							• PA management:
							  o Not yet fully effective in BANP
							  o Nascent in WNP, BPWR, TWR
							  o Community engagement in co-management significantly limited by capacity constraints
							Objective likely to be partly achieved

	Coverage of managed PA estate.	60,616 ha	1,155,682 ha	1,155,682 ha	Target achieved, but management not effective yet.		
	Area of PA and rangeland effectively co-managed.	60,616 ha	157,097 ha	1,169,647 ha	Target unlikely to be achieved, considering BACC, WPA and community capacities. Target appears overambitious compared to project resources and timeframe.		
O1: A National PA system is established with legal, planning, policy and institutional frameworks for expansion and management	Number of laws/regulations relating to PAs approved.	0	0 – Draft Hunting Law and PA Regulation under review	2	Target likely to be achieved, depending on pace of GIROA's approval.	**Unsatisfactory (U)**	• Good progress on PA and wildlife legislation • APWA cannot be established • Future responsibility for PA management (MAIL or NEPA) remains undetermined • Revenue generation remains low in BANP and non-existent in WPN.
	Number of strategic/operational plans developed & implemented by APWA.	0	0 APWA not yet established.	1	APWA politically impossible to establish.		
	APWA effectiveness *(Increase in UNDP Capacity Scorecard for APWA)*	MAIL/NEPA 42%	Not measured – APWA not yet established.	APWA 60%	APWA politically impossible to establish.		

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for the PA estate in the country	PA system revenue *(Increase in UNDP Financial Sustainability Scorecard incl. increased revenues from PA tourism)*	9.62%	To be measured at project end.	30%	Revenues in BANP low (approx. USD 15,000 in 2017) but increasing, none collected in WPN. Increase in BANP will largely depend on approval of new BANP management plan before the 2018 seaons.		**O1 impossible to achieve – except for the approval of draft legislation**
O2: Protected area coverage and protection status is improved to increase biodiversity representativeness and ecological resilience	Co-management legislation adopted.	0	0 Provisions governing co-management incl. in draft PA Regulation.	1	Likely to be achieved, depending on pace of GIROA's approval.	**Satisfactory (S)**	• Planned PAs already gazetted • Management plans drafted for BANP and WNP, finalised and approved for BPWR and TWR • Operational NP authority and governance body in place for BANP, but not fully for WPN, BPWR, TWR • METT score improving for BANP but stagnant for BPWR (not measured for WNP and TWR) **O2 likely to be at least partly achieved**
	Rangeland habitat condition within PA core zones.	To be determined from baseline studies.	Baseline from BANP survey plots: 94% moderate to high erosion 70% intensively grazed 53% impacted by shrub harvesting.	To be determined from baseline studies.	Premature to assess, baseline data is recent and the only data available. Target scheduled to be set at next PSC meeting.		
	Number of PA management plans being implemented.	1	3 (WNP management plan under review by GIRoA).	4	New BANP plan not yet approved, (old expired), WNP plan drafted and udner review, BPWR and TWR plans finalised and approved.		
	Number and coverage (ha) of PA areas: BANP BPWR TWR WNP Total	1 PA 60,616 0 0 0 60,161	4 PAs 60,616 57,664 24,851 1,095,066 1,155,682	4 PAs 60,616 57,664 24,851 1,095,066 1,155,682	Target achieved with designation of WPN, TWR, BPWR.		
	PA effectiveness (METT score) for:				Target achieved for BANP, but no progress for WNP (incl.		

	BANP WNP incl BPWR, TWR	60.6% 53.8%	73.5% 53.1%	70% 70%	BPWR and TWR, which fall within WNP)..		
	Extent of new hillside farming in BANP	To be determined from baseline studies.	Baseline studies completed in late 2016. To be measured again at project end.	No increase on baseline	Rangers try to prevent it, but new hillside farming a challenge, unlikely to be fully stopped before completion.		
O3: Protected Area Management effectiveness and climate-resilient Sustainable Land Management (SLM) is enhanced to reduce threats to pilot PAs	Status of snow leopard monitoring	Basic monitoring program in place	Completed. Advanced monitoring program in place.	Comprehensive ecological monitoring program functional	WCS monitoring and snow leopard rangers active, provisions for GIRoA takeover will be developed under upcoming GEF Snow Leopard Project.	**Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**	• Improvements in status of wildlife populations reported • Communities engaged in SLM related practices, e.g.: predator-proof corrals, tree planting, passive solar houses, solar cooking, but far below hectare target which appears unrealistic • No system in place for reinvesting tourism revenue in communities and revenues still too low for this (but communities benefit from providing services to tourists) • WPA and BACC capacities still low • Environmental awareness and understanding still very low
	Increase in population number for Marco Polo Sheep in Big Pamir	172 females	538 animals (95% confidence) (not reported in 2017 PIR).	250 females	Marco Polo sheep target has been met. Hunting is now prohibited by law and rangers seek to enforce the law. Reportedly, hunting and poaching has reduced.		
	Number of Hectares put under SLM regime	0 ha	157,097 ha	1,169,647 ha	Target unlikely to be achieved – appears overambitious compared to project resources and timeframe. Management plans likely to be approved for both NPs, but the capacity to implement them appears insufficient. Various SLM practices and practices to reduce pressure on natural resources (not all measurable in ha) have been promoted and are appreciated by communities – who replicate some, but not all, practices, mainly in BANP.		

Percentage increase in plant density in target areas	To be determined from baseline studies.	• BANP: mean vegetation cover = 20% (5-32%). • WNP: mean vegetation cover = 29% (2%-100%). (not reported in 2017 PIR).	25%	Impossible to assess, no up-to-date data available.		• Meaningful involvement of women in PA management remains limited **O3 likely to be partly, but not fully, achieved**
Annual community income from conservation/PA management BANP WNP	To be determined from baseline studies.	Baseline well-being indices established. 41.27% 60.88%	25% increase on baseline	Premature to assess, baseline data is recent and the only data available. But communities earn on tourism services. And the practices introduced have livelihood benefits.		
Community association capacity score: BACC WPA	 24% 24%	To be measured at project end.	 35% 35%	Impossible to assess, no up-to-date data available. But BACC and WPA capacities remain low.		
Female participation in village SLM and PA management committees BACC WPA	 0% 12.5%	 20% 20%	All PA co-management bodies >20% 20% 20%	The actual influence of women members appears limited (although BACC Women's Committee is active), and will be difficult to change within the remaining project period. Figures in 2017 PIR do not correspond to current committee membership: BACC 25%, WPA 36%.		
Proportion of PA tourism revenue returned to local communities rather than retained by government	0%	Revenue sharing mechanism implementation pending finalisation of PA regulation.	30%	No revenue sharing. Revenue in BANP still too low for meaningful sharing (approx. USD 15,000 annually).		

					No revenue collected in WNP. The main reasons are unre-solved GIRoA legislative and jurisdiction issues re. revenue management and PA manage-ment mandate.		

*Colour code:	Target achieved
	Target likely to be achieved
	Target achievement unlikely or impossible
	Insufficient data

Annex 13: Budget and expenditures

Budget and spending – project years 1-3 (May 2015 – April 2017)

SOF/Outcome/Atlas Activity	Donor	Total Budget in ProDoc	Total budget revised	Allocated budget year 1-3	Expenditure by 30 Apr 2017	Variance	Cumulative delivery rate	Over-all delivery rate
			(a)	(b)	(c)	(b) - (c)	(c) /(b)	(c) / (a)
Outcome 1: National PA system establishment	UNDP	191,080	97,228	54,728	39,413	15,315	72%	41%
	GEF	1,364,919	929,209	653,709	440,934	212,775	67%	47%
	Total	**1,555,999**	**1,026,436**	**708,436**	**480,347**	**228,090**	**68%**	**47%**
Outcome 2: PA protection and management	UNDP	98,200	185,687	100,908	89,439	11,469	89%	48%
	GEF	2,424,290	2,370,350	1,332,350	1,396,190	-63,840	105%	59%
	Total	**2,522,490**	**2,556,036**	**1,433,257**	**1,485,628**	**-52,371**	**104%**	**58%**
Outcome3: Sustainable land management	UNDP	633,720	193,262	125,999	103,467	22,532	82%	54%
	GEF	2,337,310	2,835,508	1,608,890	1,488,191	120,699	92%	52%
	Total	**2,971,030**	**3,028,770**	**1,734,889**	**1,591,658**	**143,231**	**92%**	**53%**
Project Management	UNDP	77,000	523,824	309,872	289,735	20,137	94%	55%
	GEF	315,300	306,753	179,747	160,696	19,051	89%	52%
	Total	**392,300**	**830,577**	**489,619**	**450,431**	**39,188**	**92%**	**54%**
Total Project	UNDP (04000)	1,000,000	1,000,001	591,506	522,054	69,452	88%	52%
	GEF (62000)	6,441,819	6,441,819	3,774,695	3,486,010	288,685	92%	54%
	Total	**7,441,819**	**7,441,819**	**4,366,201**	**4,008,064**	**358,137**	**92%**	**54%**

Budget and spending – spending by 30 October 2017, budget for project years 1-4 (May 2015 – April 2018)

SOF/Outcome/Atlas Activity	Donor	Total Budget in ProDoc	Total budget revised	Allocated budget year 1-3	Expenditure by 30 Oct 2017	Variance	Cumulative delivery rate	Over-all delivery rate
			(a)	(b)	(c)	(b) - (c)	(c) /(b)	(c) / (a)
Outcome 1: National PA system establishment	UNDP	191,080	97,228	78,228	45,538	32,690	58%	47%
	GEF	1,364,919	929,209	860,209	537,570	322,638	62%	58%
	Total	**1,555,999**	**1,026,436**	**938,436**	**583,108**	**355,328**	**62%**	**57%**
Outcome 2: PA protection and management	UNDP	98,200	185,687	154,687	115,649	39,038	75%	62%
	GEF	2,424,290	2,370,350	1,956,850	1,712,137	244,713	87%	72%
	Total	**2,522,490**	**2,556,036**	**2,111,536**	**1,827,785**	**283,751**	**87%**	**72%**
Outcome3: Sustainable land management	UNDP	633,720	193,262	181,262	115,443	65,819	64%	60%
	GEF	2,337,310	2,835,508	2,357,890	1,887,280	470,610	80%	67%
	Total	**2,971,030**	**3,028,770**	**2,539,152**	**2,002,723**	**536,429**	**79%**	**66%**
Project Management	UNDP	77,000	523,824	456,273	361,061	95,212	79%	69%
	GEF	315,300	306,753	258,747	162,442	96,305	63%	53%

SOF/Outcome/Atlas Activity	Donor	Total Budget in ProDoc	Total budget revised	Allocated budget year 1-3	Expenditure by 30 Oct 2017	Variance	Cumulative delivery rate	Overall delivery rate
			(a)	*(b)*	*(c)*	*(b) - (c)*	*(c) /(b)*	*(c) / (a)*
	Total	**392,300**	**830,577**	715,020	523,503	191,517	73%	63%
Total Project	UNDP (04000)	1,000,000	1,000,001	870,449	637,691	232,758	73%	64%
	GEF (62000)	6,441,819	6,441,819	5,433,695	4,299,429	1,134,267	79%	67%
	Total	**7,441,819**	**7,441,819**	6,304,144	4,937,120	1,367,024	78%	66%

Spending by province/PA by 1 June 2017

Outcome	Kabul	Bamyan/BANP	Wakhan/WNP, BPWR, TWR	Total
Outcome 1: National PA system establishment	382,669	75,638	75,457	533,765
Outcome 2: PA protection and management	903,299	373,857	364,582	1,641,738
Outcome3: Sustainable land management	1,007,393	340,373	419,538	1,767,304
Project Management	458,474	32,118	21,842	512,434
Total	**2,751,834**	**821,986**	**881,419**	**4,455,240**

Annex 14: Audit trail from received comments on draft MTR report

The response of the MTR team to all comments received on the draft report from project stakeholders are logged in an audit trail table, see the separate Word document.

Annex 15: Relevant midterm tracking tools

The MTR team has reviewed the mid-term tracking tools filled by WCS and UNDP, see separate Excel files.