

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

DATE: 12 DECEMBER 2017

[BIODIVERSITY PROJECT (ESTABLISHING INTEGRATED MODELS FOR PROTECTED AREAS AND THEIR CO-MANAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN)]

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Prepared by: | Ahmad Jamshed Khoshbeen | Position: | Programme Analyst | Unit: | L&R Unit |
| Cleared by: | Laura Rio | Position: | Head of L&R Unit | Unit: | L&R Unit |
| Approved By: | Napoleon Navarro | Position: | Sr. Deputy Country Director | Unit: | Front Office |
| Input into and update in ERC: | Hashmatullah Waisy | Position: | Programme Associate | Unit: | PSRT |

Midterm Review recommendation 1. Revise project outcomes, activities, indicators, assumptions, risks and budget allocations to make them more realistic and better reflect the current context. (Relevant for Outcome 1, Outcome 2 and Outcome 3)

Management response: The management acknowledges that there is a need to revise project outcomes, activities, indicators, assumptions, risks and budget allocations due to the fact that outcome 1 of the project cannot be achieved and the MTR recommendation is to replace the outcome 1 with addition of new PA.

| Key action(s) | Time frame | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking ¹ | |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|--|---------------------|
| | | | Comments | Status ² |
| R1.1: Cancel all APWA-related outputs and indicators and rephrase Outcome 1 accordingly. | 31 January 2018 | UNDP WCS | UNDP-WCS has revised the results framework and submitted for approval of UNDP/GEF. | Ongoing |
| R1.2: Add outputs for preparing a future PA expansion linked to BANP and covering the Bamyan Plateau and Ajar Valley (see Annex 10). | 31 January 2018 | WCS | UNDP-WCS has revised the results framework and submitted for approval of UNDP/GEF. | Ongoing |
| R1.3: Revise and restructure Outcome 2 and Outcome 3 and 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. | 31 January 2018 | WCS | UNDP-WCS has revised the results framework and submitted for approval of UNDP/GEF. | Ongoing |
| R1.4: Analyze 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. | 31 January 2018 | WCS | UNDP-WCS has revised the results framework and submitted for approval of UNDP/GEF. | Ongoing |

Midterm Review recommendation 2. Enhance the involvement of GRCoA (MAIL/DAIL, NEPA) in project implementation. (Relevant for Outcome 2 and Sustainability)

¹ If the MTR is uploaded to the ERC, the status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

² Status of Implementation: Completed, Partially Completed, Pending.

Management response: The project acknowledges and agrees to the need of GTRCA involvement in project implementation. While this has been addressed to an extent till now, especially in soft project activities (trainings, reports, management plans, etc.), there are challenges to doing so in physical activities on the ground. Mainly due to the fact that MAIL and NEPA have limited presence in the two parks.

| Key action(s) | Time frame | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking ³ | |
|--|-------------------|--|---|---------------------|
| | | | Comments | Status ⁴ |
| R2.1: Involve DAHL (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. | 30 September 2018 | WCS MAIL, DAHL, Park Authority | WCS will involve DAHL and NEPA more (especially in BANP) in project activities such as surveys and work with communities. | |
| R2.2: Strengthen/enhance the inclusion of Biodiversity Project activities in MAIL/DAHL and NEPA annual work plans, especially at provincial and district levels. | 31 March 2018 | MAIL, NEPA | MAIL and NEPA will work with WCS to add the project activities in their annual work planning. This will be done during MAIL and NEPA annual work planning exercise scheduled for early 2018. | |
| R2.3: Create closer linkages between the MAIL and WCS ranger systems (especially in WNP) with a view towards full integration. | 31 December 2018 | WCS MAIL | This will be communicated to MAIL for further action. Moreover, WCS will advocate for this through steering committee. The way forward will be agreed upon after the steering committee meeting. | |
| R2.4: Once there is clarity on the future responsibility for PA management, train NEPA and/or DAHL staff at the PA level. | 31 December 2018 | WCS (MAIL) (NEPA) | This will be communicated to WCS. An action plan and list of trainings will be developed. The delivery of the training will be dependent on the availability of funds and the clarity of PA responsibility. | |
| R2.5: Engage more with police and justice at the provincial and district levels to enhance awareness and promote better enforcement. | 31 December 2018 | WCS NEPA | WCS and NEPA will communicate this at central level as well as at local level within the outreach and coordination activities. | |

³ If the MTR is uploaded to the ERIC, the status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERIC).

⁴ Status of Implementation: Completed, Partially Completed, Pending

Midterm Review recommendation 3. Adjust PA management and governance structures to address current bottlenecks. (Relevant for Outcome 2)

Management response: The project management acknowledges that PA management and governance structures need to be adjusted, however, this is entirely out of the Project's influence. The approval and endorsement of management plans are lengthy processes and out of project's controls.

| Key action(s) | Time frame | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking ⁵ | |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|--|---------------------|
| | | | Comments | Status ⁶ |
| R3.1: Approve/endorse the draft BANP Management Plan (stakeholders should discuss whether to finalize the management plan even if revenue management mechanisms have still not been clarified). | 30 September 2018 | MoF | MoF is part of the steering committee. The project will work with MoF through steering committee for finalization of BANP management plan. | |
| R3.2: Gave women rangers in BANP the same status and title as their male colleagues (they should not be "cleaners"). | 31 March 2018 | MAIL | MAIL will work with its partners supporting PAs in annual work planning sessions to ensure this recommendation is applied. | |
| R3.3: Establish three subcommittees under WPA (for Big Panir, Little Panir, and Wakhan Valley) that meet more frequently than WPA. | 30 June 2018 | WCS WPA | WCS will work with WPA and local government to identify the best mechanism for ensuring increased participation of WPA members in all three regions of WNP (Wakhan Valley, Big & Little Panirs). | |
| R3.4: Professionalize 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. | 31 December 2018 | MAIL MoF | The recommendation will be communicated to MAIL and MoF through steering committee meeting. A way forward will be agreed upon the presentation of recommendation. | |
| R3.5: Ensure rangers are operating/patrolling during winter. | 31 December 2018 | WCS MAIL | The recommendation will be communicated to MAIL through steering committee meeting. A way forward will be agreed upon the presentation of recommendation. | |
| R3.6: Establish a designated Park Authority for WNP (like for BANP). | 31 December 2018 | MAIL NEPA | The recommendation will be communicated to MAIL and NEPA through steering committee meeting. A way forward will be agreed upon the presentation of recommendation. | |
| R3.7: Set up a permanent police outpost in BANP. | 31 December 2018 | Governor MoI | The recommendation will be communicated to governor and MoI through provincial bilateral meetings. | |

⁵ If the MTR is uploaded to the FRC, the status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

⁶ Status of Implementation: Completed, Partially Completed, Pending.

| Midterm Review recommendation 4. Focus on enhancing the economic sustainability of PAs. (Relevant for Outcome 2 and Sustainability) | | | | |
|--|------------------|--------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Management response: The project acknowledges the need to enhance the economic sustainability of PAs. The project outcome 1 (the establishment of Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Authority) was aiming to work on this issue. Now that APWA cannot be established, this is out of project influence and control. Having said that, the project partner, NEPA has worked with Ministry of Finance and President's office to address this issue. The result of it is that MOF has agreed to reimburse the revenue collected in PAs back to communities through the government already established mechanisms. | | | | |
| Key action(s) | Time frame | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking ⁷ | |
| | | | Comments | Status ⁸ |
| R4.1: Analyze/map the economy in BANNP and WNP, incl. a) the tourist economy; b) the agriculture and livestock economy; and c) how the concession fees collected are spent in BANNP – consider engaging international consultants. | 31 December 2018 | NEPA MAIL Governor | The recommendation will be communicated to the responsible parties in steering committee meeting. A way forward will be agreed upon the presentation of recommendation. | |
| R4.2: Use the analysis/mapping of the BANNP economy for revising the entrance fees and concession fees in the draft BANNP Management Plan. | 31 December 2018 | NEPA MAIL BAPAC | The recommendation will be communicated to the responsible parties in steering committee meeting. A way forward will be agreed upon the presentation of recommendation. | |
| R4.3: Provide GIROA (incl. MoF) with opportunities to learn from international best practice for NP revenue management (e.g. international consultants, peer exchange). | 31 December 2018 | WCS | The recommendation will be communicated to the responsible parties in steering committee meeting. A way forward will be agreed upon the presentation of recommendation. | |
| R4.4: Establish a strategy for how NP revenue can be used as an incentive for eco-friendly livelihoods in BANNP with a preference given to more remote and disadvantaged communities. | 31 December 2018 | MAIL NEPA BAPAC | The recommendation will be communicated to the responsible parties in steering committee meeting. A way forward will be agreed upon the presentation of recommendation. | |
| 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). | 31 December 2018 | MAIL NEPA MoF | The recommendation will be communicated to the responsible parties in steering committee meeting. A way forward will be agreed upon the presentation of recommendation. | |

⁷ If the MTR is uploaded to the ERG, the status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

⁸ Status of Implementation: Completed, Partially Completed, Pending.

Midterm Review recommendation 5. Deepen the engagement with communities (Relevant for Outcome 3)

Management response: The management acknowledges further need to engage more with the local communities. The project IP is working in the areas since 2007 but still the involvement can be improved. It is worth noting that there are challenges to this mainly in Wakhan PA. The Wakhan PA is quite large and access to some communities is problematic due to the remoteness and rough terrain in the area.

| Key action(s) | Time frame | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking ⁹ | |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|---|----------------------|
| | | | Comments | Status ¹⁰ |
| 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. | 30 September 2018 | WCS | WCS will revise and edit their EEP program in order to focus on fewer key communities & schools while using a more comprehensive and participatory approach. | |
| 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. | 30 September 2018 | WCS | WCS to identify the model communities and produce knowledge material based on these communities. | |
| R5.3: Prioritize 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). | 30 September 2018 | WCS | This will be added to the livelihood intervention selection criteria. However, there will be limitations considering only 1 year of the project is left with limited livelihood activities. | |
| R5.4: Include poverty and social criteria in the selection of households for demonstration projects. | 31 March 2018 | WCS | The household selection criteria will be revised to include the poverty and social criteria. | |
| R5.5: Develop a stronger gender approach and increase efforts to involve women in project activities. | 31 March 2018 | WCS | Gender guidelines are to be established and/or improved to promote women engagement in project activities. | |
| R5.6: Agree with CDCs to also work directly with other parts of the community, e.g. by working with "champions" for community mobilization and by holding community meetings during winter (when all people are in the village). | 31 December 2018 | WCS | This will be communicated to CDCs and WCS will ensure in their future plans to incorporate this to the level possible. This is a strategic recommendation and can go beyond project timeline. | |
| 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. | 31 December 2018 | WCS UNDP | WCS and UNDP to look for opportunities. UNDP/GEF SGP can be explored as entry points. This is a strategic recommendation and can go beyond project timeline. | |

⁹ If the MTR is uploaded to the FIRC, the status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

¹⁰ Status of Implementation: Completed, Partially Completed, Pending.

| Midterm Review recommendation 6. Promote community ownership and independence. (Relevant for Outcome 3 and Sustainability) | | | | |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|--|----------------------|
| Management response: The management acknowledges the need to promote community ownership and independence and will consider further measures to ensure this. The project agrees to prioritize the communities who have replicated the project work as incentives. However, it is worth noting that since only one year of project is left, not all the recommendations can be achieved. This is merely due to the fact that this recommendation requires changing the behavior of people which might not be possible in one year timeframe. | | | | |
| Key action(s) | Time frame | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking ¹¹ | |
| | | | Comments | Status ¹² |
| 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. | 30 September 2018 | WCS | WCS will work with field staff to ensure this message is communicated to communities in all field work. The community work will also be revisited so that community contribution is ensured. | |
| R6.2: Ensure that community contributions are part of all community projects (e.g. in the form of labor, provision of materials, transport). Stop paying communities for non-specialized labor inputs to community projects, as this should be their own contribution. | 30 September 2018 | WCS | This would be hard to accomplish as stated above. Nevertheless, the efforts will be started and will be followed up with upcoming projects. | |
| R6.3: Condition community projects on replication commitments (e.g. when WCS constructs a corral, the community could be requested build a second corral). | 30 September 2018 | WCS | This would be hard to accomplish as stated above. Nevertheless, the efforts will be started and will be followed up with upcoming projects. | |
| 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. | 31 March 2018 | WCS | WCS to conduct a quick analysis using proxy indicators to estimate such cost analyses. | |
| R6.5: When communities report poaching and other illegal activities to WCS or GIRA, report back to communities on the action taken by GIRA and WCS to address the activities reported. | 30 September 2018 | WCS MALT, NEPA | The responsible parties will develop a mechanism to report back to communities on action taken. However, this will be limited by factors such as remoteness of communities. | |
| R6.6: Establish incentive mechanisms that reward communities for taking initiative and doing things on their own – e.g. by focusing support on more responsive communities. | 31 December 2018 | WCS | This will be communicated to MALT and NEPA through steering committee meeting. A possible outline of such mechanisms will be prepared. This is a strategic recommendation and its implementation may go beyond the project timeline. | |
| R6.7: Assess alleged un-kept promises made earlier to communities in Wakhani and come up with a strategy for re-establishing WCS's reputation. | 31 December 2018 | WCS | WCS to try to establish what sort of un-kept promises are alleged to have been made. If substantiated will clarify for the communities the reason/justification behind such un-kept promises. Moreover, the WCS staff will be reminded not to make any promises that are outside WCS and | |

¹¹ If the MTR is uploaded to the IIRC, the status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

¹² Status of Implementation: Completed, Partially Completed, Pending.

| | | | | | |
|--|------------------|-----|---|---|--|
| R6.8: Engage in a dialogue and coordination with other NGOs working in Wakhlan 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. | 31 December 2018 | WCS | WCS to initiate some contacts with other NGOs but the available NGOs specially in Wakhlan are limited. WCS to prepare a list of NGOs that would be suitable partners. This is a strategic recommendation and its implementation may go beyond the project timeline. | projects' capacities. This is a strategic recommendation and its implementation may go beyond the project timeline. | |
| R6.9: 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. | 31 December 2018 | WCS | The community contribution policy would be revisited and communicated to communities as well as partners like WFP. This is a strategic recommendation and its implementation may go beyond the project timeline. | | |

Midterm Review recommendation 7. Further enhance project management and staff capacities. (Relevant for Project implementation and adaptive management)

Management response: The management agrees with the findings of the MTR and will focus on implementation of the recommendations given. The management has already taken steps to address the issue of WCS field staff capacity building in next year's workplans.

| Key action(s) | Time frame | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking ¹³ | | Status ¹⁴ |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|---|--|----------------------|
| | | | Comments | | |
| R7.1: Review staff job descriptions/ToR and the tasks they actually carry out and ensure they match. | 31 December 2017 | WCS | WCS will review the TORs and job descriptions of all staff as the 2018 annual work planning exercise | | Ongoing. |
| 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. | 31 December 2017 | WCS | WCS to include a conflict of interest clause in all contracts. Necessary actions need to be taken if any staff member is found to have any conflict of interest. | | Ongoing. |
| 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 how healthy ecosystems can enhance resilience, and d) gender. Options include training and exchanges visits between the two field teams | 30 September 2018 | WCS | WCS will plan technical capacity building sessions for all field staff over the winter. Moreover, such sessions will be held in the field during the field season by central teams. | | Ongoing. |
| R7.4: Make sure that the monitoring and reporting duty capture and present livelihood impacts (e.g. reduction in respiratory disease, reduced workloads, reduced livestock loss), including non-monetary impacts, in a gender | 31 January 2018 | WCS | WCS to review their reporting mechanisms and communicate this recommendation to all project staff. Moreover, some proxy indicators will be developed to measure such indirect impacts of the project. | | |

¹³ If the MTR is uploaded to the ERG, the status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

¹⁴ Status of Implementation: Completed, Partially Completed, Pending.

| | | | | | |
|--|------------------|------|---|--|--|
| disaggregated manner – they should not be treated only as outcomes, but as impacts in their own right. | | | | | |
| R7.5: Expand the scope of external audits to include field visits and verification of costs and expenses. | 31 January 2018 | UNDP | UNDP to extend the scope of the external audits to field visits. | | |
| R7.6: Improve the gender balance internally in WCS (by employing more women for technical positions). | 31 December 2018 | WCS | WCS will review their HR and recruitment policies to encourage female to apply. However, the project's remote locations pose a challenge for implementation of this recommendation. | | |
| R7.7: Enhance the winter presence (e.g. to conduct meetings with communities) and to ensure that WCS rangers are active during winter. | 31 December 2018 | WCS | WCS will review its winter operations policy to assess the feasibility under future grants of maintaining some form of ranger presence over that period. This is a strategic recommendation, and its implementation may carry over to after project timeline. | | |