

# Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah, its Natural Habitat and Associated Biota in the I. R. of Iran

Project Number IRA/00/G35

## Terminal Evaluation Report

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2009



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Frontispiece: A cheetah staling a mountain goat. Fragment of a drawing from a painter's sketchbook, Mughal, c 1625. Taken from: Divyabhanusinh. 2002. The end of the trail. Second edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York.

## Acronyms and abbreviations

| <i>Acronym</i> | <i>Meaning</i>                                                                |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| APM            | Assistant Project Manager                                                     |
| APR            | Annual Project Report                                                         |
| CACP           | Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project                                   |
| Cat SG         | IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group                                                 |
| CBO            | Community Based Organisation                                                  |
| CCF            | Cheetah Conservation Fund (Namibia-based NGO)                                 |
| CEESP          | (IUCN) Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy                |
| CENESTA        | Centre for Sustainable Development (Iranian NGO)                              |
| CM             | Collaborative Management                                                      |
| CTA            | Chief Technical Advisor                                                       |
| CR             | Critically Endangered (IUCN Red List category)                                |
| DoE            | Department of Environment                                                     |
| FRWO           | Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Organisation (Ministry of Jihad-e-Keshavarsi) |
| GEF            | Global Environment Facility                                                   |
| GIS            | Geographic Information System                                                 |
| GO             | Governmental Organisation                                                     |
| ICS            | Iranian Cheetah Society                                                       |
| IMT            | Inception Mission Team                                                        |
| IUCN           | World Conservation Union                                                      |
| LCMF           | Local Co-Management Facilitator                                               |
| LogFrame       | Logical framework                                                             |
| MSP            | Medium Size Project (of the GEF)                                              |
| MT             | Mentoring Team                                                                |
| MTE            | Mid-term Evaluation                                                           |
| NAP            | National Action Plan for the Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah              |
| NGO            | Non-governmental Organisation                                                 |
| NP             | National Park                                                                 |
| NPD            | National Project Director                                                     |
| NPM            | National Project Manager                                                      |
| PA             | Protected Area (of any category)                                              |
| PIMS           | Project Information Management System                                         |
| PIR            | Project Implementation Review                                                 |
| PRA            | Participatory Rural Appraisal                                                 |
| RBST           | Rapid Biological Survey Team                                                  |
| RS             | Remote Sensing                                                                |
| SC             | Steering Committee                                                            |
| SGP            | Small Grants Programme (of the GEF)                                           |
| SSC            | IUCN Species Survival Commission                                              |
| TE             | Terminal Evaluation (at the end of a UNDP/GEF project)                        |
| ToR            | Terms of Reference                                                            |
| UNDP           | United Nations Development Programme                                          |
| WCS            | Wildlife Conservation Society                                                 |
| WR             | Wildlife Refuge                                                               |

## Executive summary

This Terminal Evaluation TE of the project “Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah, Its Natural Habitat, and Associated Biota in the Islamic Republic of Iran” CACP was conducted during the period from 23 November to 7 December 2008 by a team of one international and one national consultant. The GEF Medium Size Project (MSP) was scheduled for four years. It started in 2001 and ended in spring 2009 after three extensions. The TE approach based on reviews of relevant reports and studies generated by the CACP, meetings with a range of stakeholders and visits to four of the five project implementation sites around the central Kavir desert. During the course of the mission, interim findings were presented to DOE and UNDP representatives.

The CACP is a difficult project to evaluate. First, it lasted more than seven instead of the initially planned four years. Second, it was undergoing considerable management fluctuations, with both the National Project Director (NPD) and the National Project Manager (NPM) changing four times each. Third, a serious dispute about one of the project outcomes and with the contracted agency, lasting for several years, has considerably obstructed project implementation and created deep mistrust among concerned parties, who were initially involved in the dispute. Fourth, the co-operation of the CACP with its most important scientific partner, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) suffered from delayed issuance of visas for WCS staff, and problems transferring technical equipment. Finally, some practical problems such as the fact that the CACP was using the Persian calendar for its every-day work including internal accounting, have posed an additional challenge to. We discovered some discrepancies in reporting which were obviously a consequence of errors in translation and conversion.

The goal of the project was formulated as “Secure the conservation of the Asiatic cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*) in the I. R. of Iran and the related complex of rare and endangered wild species and their natural habitats with the support and collaboration of local communities”. Under this goal four project outcomes (objectives) were defined: (1) Better understanding of crucial biotic territories for the Asiatic cheetah and related species in the I.R. of Iran, and enhanced knowledge of cheetah population dynamics, behaviour and survival factors. (2) Improved management of the crucial biotic territories by governmental and non-governmental entities with relevant interests and concerns (stakeholders) in order to rehabilitate over-grazed habitat and ensure better protection for cheetahs and their prey. (3) Enhanced and sustained well being of the human communities living within or in proximity of such natural habitats. (4) Enhanced awareness and support of the government and civil society of the I.R. of Iran on relevant issues and concerns, in particular regarding the prevention of non-habitat-related threats to the Asiatic cheetah (e.g. illegal hunting and killing of cheetah and related species) among most relevant groups (local peri-desert communities, nomadic herders, hunters, youth).

One of the most important project achievements is the high level of awareness among DoE staff (including park administration and guards) as well as among media representatives and the Iranian population. The work in schools and the production of educational materials have led to increasing awareness of and support from the Ministry of Education. There can be no doubt that the CACP has successfully propagated cheetah conservation in Iran and that the project itself is considered positive and important. Further achievements have been: (1) Sur-

veys of good cheetah habitats (partly including the species distribution areas beyond the five CACP sites) and its most important prey have been carried out. (2) Improved management (protection) of the remaining cheetah areas, as an emergency activity, started immediately and was implemented successfully during the initial years of the project. (3) New protected areas were created or existing ones upgraded soon after the beginning of CACP, and (4) 32 new guards were hired according to a well-defined selection system which granted a certain advantage to local candidates. These guards were educated in “physical protection” and survey techniques in several training workshops. These measures have allowed to at least stop the further decline of the cheetah population. It is assumed that the cheetah population has even increased in recent years, but the neither the initial baseline information nor the newest population estimates are reliable enough to assess this assumption.

The initial Project Document (proposal) lacked almost completely information regarding the methods or procedures to be applied to reach the goal and objectives, and not surprisingly, one of the main shortcomings was that the expected outcomes were too ambitious and unrealistic regarding the time and means available (funding, organisational structure and capacity). Considering the low level of knowledge at the start of the project and the obvious constraints when working in a huge and remote area as central Iran, it was unlikely to reach these objectives. As a consequence of over-ambitious expectations and considerable management problems in the course of the implementation of the CACP, all four Outcomes have been fulfilled only partially. The implementation and adaptive management of the CACP was hampered by the lack of a LogFrame. A LogFrame was expected as an outcome of the Inception Mission, an appropriate inception mission and workshop never took place. The organisational structure of the project was too complicated, and several of the designated mechanisms or positions were never implemented or did not work properly. The CACP management was understaffed, under-equipped and lacking in important capacities during protracted periods of project implementation. The absence of functioning supportive mechanisms (e. g. Steering Committee or Chief Technical Advisor) left some important duties with regard to management and monitoring of the CACP unfulfilled. The project was lacking a proper communication concept what led to sometimes confusing and scanty information and a feeble communication between project partners.

The lack of consistency in the project management and changing priorities also led to the failure of establishing a reliable monitoring system for cheetah and prey populations, an indispensable instrument for the continued and long-term evaluation of the success of the CACP activities. Testing of field methods, training of guards, data analyses and reporting of monitoring results were discontinued after an initial phase with promising progress.

Lessons learned are summarized in Chapter 7. The CACP as a GEF MSP has clearly contributed to saving the Asiatic cheetah from extinction. It has, however, not achieved several of the aims pointed out in the Project Document. Considering the following five aspects from the first phase of CACP implementation may help to improve the efficiency of the project:

(1) The evaluation process would be more effective if a team of evaluators combining different requisite skills would have been identified and recruited at the beginning of the project and would have supervised the CACP throughout the implementation phase. Such an independent team of evaluators could possibly integrate the function of the Steering Committee

and the Mentoring Team, two institutions foreseen in the Project Document but never properly implemented.

(2) The objectives of the CACP and the expected results went far beyond the possibilities of a MSP. In this first phase of the CACP, it would have been more realistic to concentrate on (a) improved legal protection of sites and law enforcement, (b) a robust monitoring system for cheetahs and their prey, and (c) an information and public awareness campaign.

(3) For a MSP with an expected duration of four years, the CACP had an overly complex organisational structure. For the continuation of the CACP, we recommend to design an organisational structure that is more straightforward, flexible and efficient, allowing an adaptive management and serving mainly the implementation of the project activities and collaboration between project partners.

(4) Field survey and monitoring of cheetah and prey populations must be improved. Necessary steps for an effective monitoring include (1) further testing and adaptation of scientifically robust methods, (2) continuous training of field staff, (3) education of data analysts, and (4) consistent reporting.

(5) Improved and consistent reporting is needed also for exchanging information among CACP partners (or to inform external evaluators). In order to present the CACP to the global conservation community and to further develop capacities in wildlife research and conservation in Iran, we also recommend aiming for publications in international scientific journals. Producing scientific reports and publications provides a useful control with regard to the performance of the project.



Male Asiatic cheetah in “Semi Captive-Breeding and Rsearch Centrer of Iranian Cheetah in Miandasht protected area.

## Introduction

In historic times, the Asiatic cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus venaticus* was widespread across the Indian subcontinent and Central and South-west Asia including Iran. Cheetah distribution has continuously declined until its range was reduced to the arid regions of central Iran. In the late 1990s, the population was believed to be only 50–100 [29, 30] or less than 60 [18] individuals. In January 1998 Peter Jackson, chairman of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, visited cheetah habitats in Iran and discussed with officials of the Department of Environment (DoE) the need to launch a conservation programme. As a result of these discussions, a UNDP/GEF project was conceived and later developed in conjunction with the DoE entitled “Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah, Its Natural Habitat, and Associated Biota in the Islamic Republic of Iran”. The CACP signed on 10 September 2001 and started without delay on 11 September 2001, designed as a Medium Size Project (MSP) scheduled for four years. It was extended three times and ended in spring 2009.

UNDP and GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policies and procedures require that all projects with long-term implementation period must undergo a terminal evaluation (TE) at the end of the project, addressing four objectives [31]: (i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts, (ii) to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements; (iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and (iv) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned. The terminal evaluation should provide a comprehensive and systematic report on the performance of the project by assessing its design (addressed in chapter 2 of this report), process of implementation (addressed in chapter 3 of this report), and achievements according to the objectives and any other results (addressed in chapter 4 of this report). Furthermore, the terminal evaluation has four complementary purposes: to promote accountability and transparency, and to assess and disclose levels of project accomplishments (addressed in chapter 5 of this report); to provide feedback on issues that are recurrent across the portfolio and need attention, and on improvements regarding previously identified issues (addressed in chapter 6 of this report); to contribute to the GEF Evaluation Office databases for aggregation, analysis and reporting on effectiveness of GEF operations in achieving global environmental benefits and on the quality of monitoring and evaluation across the GEF system (addressed in chapter 6 of this report); and to synthesise lessons that may help improve the selection, design and implementation of future GEF activities (addressed in Chapter 7 of this report).

For this terminal evaluation, Urs Breitenmoser (team leader) visited Iran from 23 November to 7 December 2008. From 25 November to 3 December, Urs Breitenmoser and Afshin Alizadeh (national evaluator) visited four out of the five CACP implementation sites around the central Kavir desert (Fig. 1.; for detailed itinerary see Annex I). The mission returned to Tehran on 3 December 2008, and held a meeting at the UNDP office, as well as several meetings at the DoE Headquarter, and interviews with the former NPM, Mr H. Ziaie, and the initially appointed and the present NPM, Mr A. Jourabchian. On 6 December 2008, the mission presented a preliminary oral report about its initial impressions and assessments to DoE and UNDP representatives at the DoE headquarter in Tehran. The report was compiled in January 2009, based on field notes and on the references listed in chapter 8. List of documents, num-

bers in square brackets in the text refer to this list of documents. Names in square brackets refer to statements made by the individuals interviewed as per the list of Annex I.

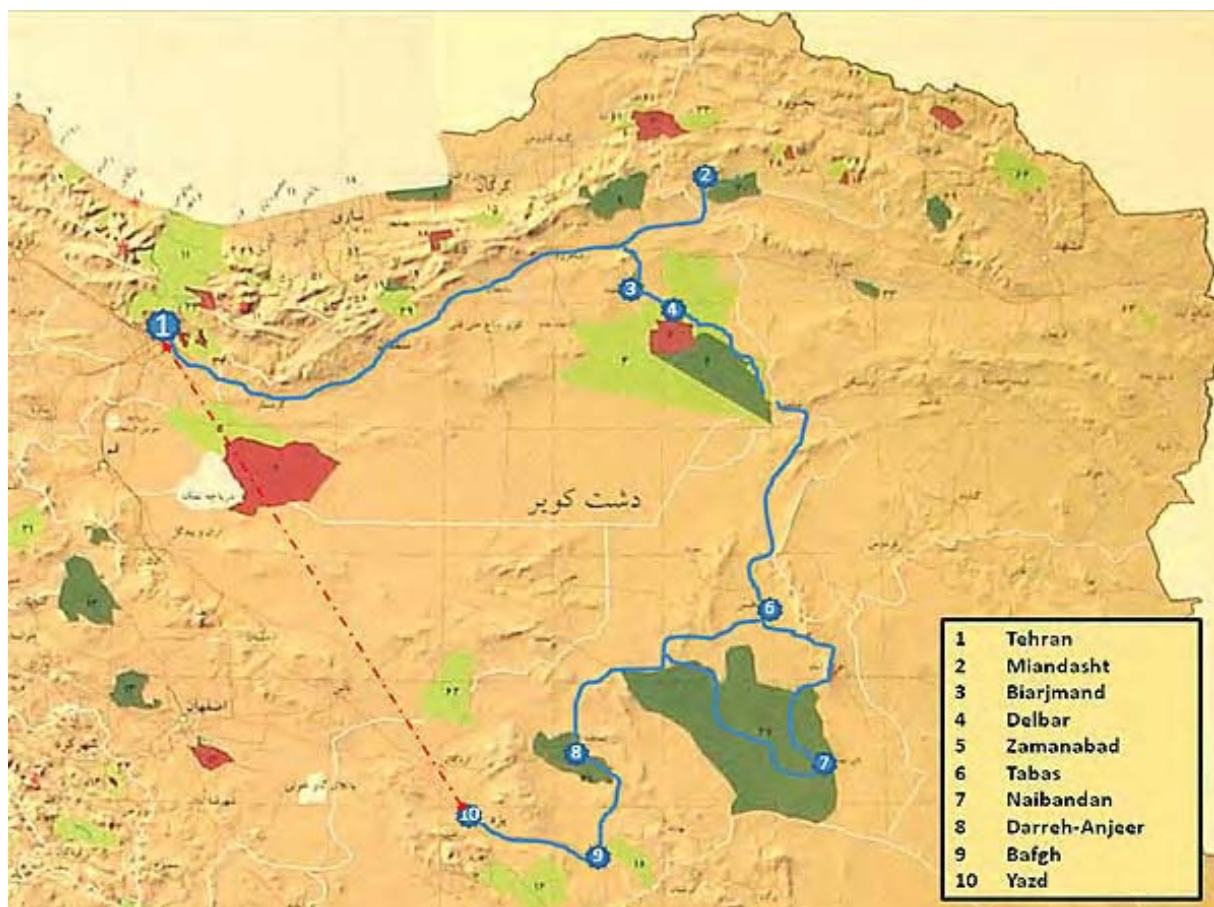


Fig. 1. Excursion to the protected areas and CACP project sites during the terminal evaluation of the CACP 25 November – 3 December 2008.

The CACP is a difficult project to evaluate. First, it lasted more than seven instead of the initially planned four years. Second, it was undergoing considerable management fluctuations, with both the National Project Director (NPD) and the National Project Manager (NPM) changing four times each. Third, a serious dispute about one of the project outcomes and with the contracted agency, lasting for several years, has considerably obstructed project implementation and created deep mistrust among concerned parties, who were initially involved in the dispute. Fourth, the co-operation of the CACP with its most important foreign partner, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) suffered from delayed issuance of visas for WCS staff, and problems importing technical equipment. Finally, some practical problems such as the language barrier, the fact that CACP used the Persian calendar for its accounting, and technical communication problems between the team leader and the national evaluator after the visit of the CACP sites have posed an additional challenge. We came across some discrepancies which and had some questions that we were not able to sort out or to answer. However, even though we were not able to scrutinise details such as the book-keeping of the CACP, we believe that such errors were minor and have not influenced the performance of the project as a whole.



This kind of conservation projects are also difficult to evaluate because there is no “control” to compare the outcomes with. In the case of the CACP, there was also a lack of scientific robust information on the status of the cheetah and prey populations based on a baseline survey. Consequently, there is no knowledge as to what the outcome would have been without the measures implemented during the project. We can compare the achievements only with the expectations formulated at the beginning of the project, and if these expectations were not realistic (as we will discuss in the case of the CACP); the project assessment may be unjust. As a matter of fact, we believe that the situation of the Asiatic cheetah today is more promising than seven years ago, and that this would most likely not be the case without the CACP, regardless of all the critiques and shortcomings that is raised in this report. It is the irony of conserving critically endangered species that at the end, the blame falls on those who have secured its survival. The Asiatic cheetah has gone extinct in all Asiatic range countries except the Islamic Republic of Iran. I.R. Iran now bears the burden to save the Asiatic cheetah. But the important question in this terminal evaluation was: How did the project perform considering the available means, and would there have been ways to achieve more?

*Acknowledgements.* Mehdi Kamyab (UNDP) and Alireza Jourabchian (present NPM of CACP) have provided most of the documents presented in the reference list, and have helped us with a wealth of additional information. Annex I provides a list of persons we met and interviewed during this terminal evaluation. We are grateful to all of them. Here, we would like to name those who have provided special logistic support and help beyond answering our questions: Alireza Jourabchian for organising the field journey, Mohammad Farhadinia, Ali Aghili and Dr. Saeid Neshat for helping with translation, Mehdi Kamyab and Sultana Bashir for helping us to understand the UNDP/GEF Monitoring & Evaluation process. Alireza Jourabchian (DoE) and Mehdi Kamyab have kindly commented on earlier versions of this report and provided very helpful clarifications, and Luke Hunter (Panthera, formerly WCS) provided lacking information.

## **2. The CACP – concept and design**

### ***2.1. Background and rational of the CACP***

The project “Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah, its Natural Habitat, and Associated Biota in the Islamic Republic of Iran” (CACP) was designed to implement emergency protection measures to address habitat degradation and non-habitat-related threats in five known cheetah habitats around the Dasht-e-Kavīr, the Great Salt Desert on the central Iranian plateau, and subsequently to carry out an in-depth analyses of biological and ecological, social and economic factors and root causes currently threatening the survival of cheetahs, their prey and habitats. Additional goals of the project were improved wildlife and habitat (“crucial biotic territories”) management, policy level legislative and regulatory changes, and the improvement of the livelihood of local people living in the vicinity of the five project sites. A stated project strategy was to promote the participation of local communities in order to eliminate threats to the cheetah and its prey, and to reduce the number of human/wildlife conflicts.

The cheetah project sites in the Dasht-e-Kavir included parts of Kerman, Khorasan, Semnan, Yazd, Tehran and Markazi provinces [1], a vast area which was believed to be the stronghold of the Asiatic cheetah and serving as a source population for remnant populations in other parts of Iran and possibly neighbouring countries<sup>1</sup>. It was clear that a medium or even a sizeable GEF Full-sized Project could not cover such a huge area [1], and hence the CACP concentrated on the main threats which were described as “human-related conflicts of interests near the few, scattered settlements, and threats to the arid ecosystems (e.g. from over-grazing) mainly relate to unsustainable resource utilisation in the same localities (and obviously the cheetah and habitat threats are closely linked)”. GEF funds would be targeted most closely to the vicinity of settlements, where “dramatic results” were expected.

## 2.2. *Project start and duration*

The CACP project document was signed by DoE and UNDP representatives on 10 September 2001, with a planned duration of 4 years until September 2005 [1]. It was however initially extended until 31 May 2006 [7], subsequently until 31 May 2008 [8], and finally for the period ending on 30 September 2008 [10, which coincided with the finalisation of the final APR/PIR]. The project period September 2005 – September 2008 was an extension that was granted at no cost to the GEF<sup>2</sup>.

## 2.3. *Project design, goals and outcomes*

The CACP was designed as a Medium Size Project (MSP) within the GEF Arid and Semi-Arid Ecosystem Operational Programme. The overall goal and the general approach as described in the Project Document [1] was to

*“Secure the conservation of the Asiatic cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*) in the I. R. of Iran and the related complex of rare and endangered wild species and their natural habitats with the support and collaboration of local communities” [Goal].*

This was to be achieved through a combination of collaborative management, education and awareness building, and direct action to improve enforcement of laws and regulations. Illegal hunting of cheetahs and their wild prey was to be mitigated through enforcement of improved governmental policies, whereas the support of local people was to be gained through coupling wildlife presence with incentives for local communities, and enhanced awareness in key target groups. Four project outcomes (objectives) were defined:

1. Better understanding of crucial biotic territories for the Asiatic cheetah and related species in the I.R. of Iran, and enhanced knowledge of cheetah population dynamics, behaviour and survival factors [**Outcome 1 – Research and Monitoring**].

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<sup>1</sup> Cheetah distribution in Iran will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5. Thus far, there is no proof for any Asiatic cheetah occurrence outside Iran.

<sup>2</sup> During this period, additional funding was made available to cheetah conservation work in Iran and people or institutions affiliated with CACP (though not directly to CACP) through GEF’s Small Grants Programme and the funding provided by WCS [M. Kamyab]. Furthermore, the DoE undertook the responsibility to pay game guard salaries. WCS inputs were realised as technical assistance and equipment purchased.

2. Improved management of the crucial biotic territories by governmental and non-governmental entities with relevant interests and concerns (stakeholders) in order to rehabilitate over-grazed habitat and ensure better protection for cheetahs and their prey [**Outcome 2 – Protection**].
3. Enhanced and sustained well being of the human communities living within or in proximity of such natural habitats [**Outcome 3 – Co-management**]<sup>3</sup>.
4. Enhanced awareness and support of the government and civil society of the I.R. of Iran on relevant issues and concerns, in particular regarding the prevention of non-habitat-related threats to the Asiatic cheetah (e.g. illegal hunting and killing of cheetah and related species) among most relevant groups (local peri-desert communities, nomadic herders, hunters, youth) [**Outcome 4 – Awareness**].

In a first phase, **rapid surveys** were planned to identify remnant cheetah populations, status of prey populations and critical habitats. During the preliminary surveys, the need for further research and capacity development was to be identified. The rapid surveys were to provide baseline input for the **inception mission**, planned immediately after the preliminary surveys. During the inception mission, the challenge of cheetah conservation in central Iran was to be examined from various angles as per a logical framework analysis. Emphasis in this phase was on the identification/definition of:

- A revised **LogFrame** and a **Workplan** for the CACP;
- A workplan to undertake collaborative management (CM) to increase local incomes and social indicators and ensuring equitable sharing of benefits from sustainable resource use;
- Crucial emergency measures to secure the short-term conservation of cheetahs and their crucial resources;
- Activities required to strengthen the capacity of national enforcement agencies;
- Elements of a public awareness and social communication campaign;
- Recommendations for modifications of national policies and regulations.

#### **2.4. Project Sites**

Dasht-e-Kavir, the Great Sand Desert, with its peripheral protected areas extends over more than 200,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The CACP concentrated on five protected areas of various categories distributed around the Dasht-e-Kavir [Fig. 2; Table 1]. These areas were: (1) Naybandan, (2) Kavir National Park, (3) Touran, (4) Dare Anjir, and (5) Bafgh. The size of the PAs varies from 885 km<sup>2</sup> to 15,170 km<sup>2</sup>, the total area of the CACP sites was 39,134 km<sup>2</sup> (Table 1). Several of these PAs were established or upgraded in the year 2001 or later as a consequence of the CACP.

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<sup>3</sup> In the ARP/PIR 2003 to 2005 [5, 6, 7] Outcomes 1–4 were reported in this order. In 2005, Outcome 3 / Co-management was discontinued, so that in ARP/PIR 2006 to 2008 [8, 9, 10], “Awareness” is presented as Outcome 3.

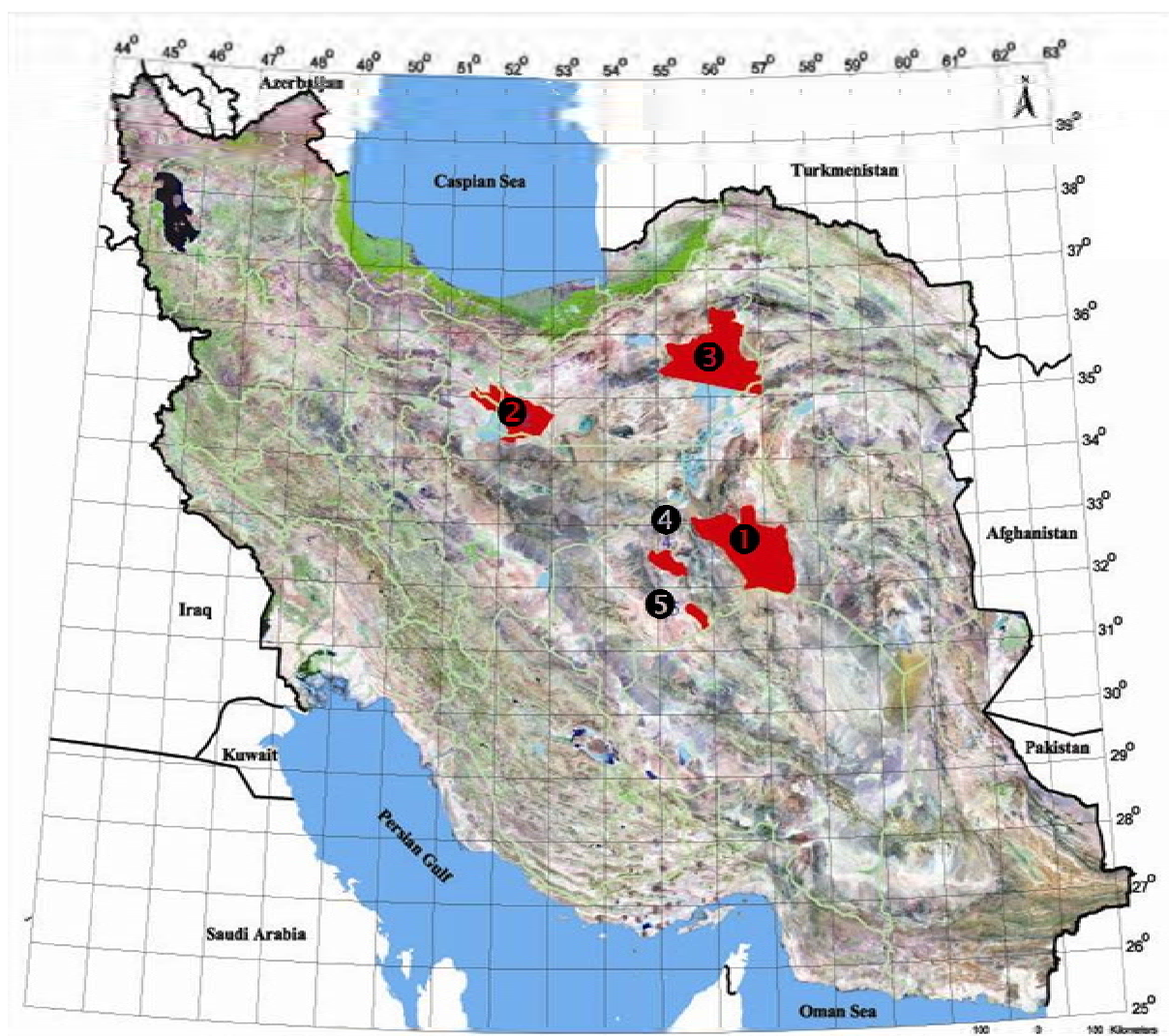


Fig. 2. The cheetah sites around the Dasht-e-Kavir (Great Salt Desert) selected for the CACP. The protected areas are: 1 Maybandan; 2 Kavir; 3 Touran; 4 Dare Anjir; 5 Bafgh. Map taken from CACP Final Report [3].

Table 1. Protected areas around the Dasht-e-Kavir where the CACP and related activities were mainly implemented. “Nr” refers to Fig. 2. Status according to [34] are: national park – NP, wildlife refuge – WR, protected area – PA, biosphere reserve – BSR. Year refers to the year the PA was established or upgraded. Temperature is the mean annual minimum and maximum value. Sources of information were references [3] and [34].

| Nr | Site          | PA status          | Year       | Area [km <sup>2</sup> ]           | Altitude [m] | Annual precipitation [mm] | Temperature [°C] |
|----|---------------|--------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1  | Naybandan     | WR                 | 1994, 2001 | 15,170                            | 600–3009     | 50–150                    | 14.5–19.5        |
| 2  | Kavir         | NP, PA:<br>BSR     | 1964, 1976 | NP 4,422<br>PA 2,490              | 740–1920     | 132                       | 10–25            |
| 3  | Touran        | PA, NP, WR:<br>BSP | 1972, 2002 | NP 1,010<br>WR 3,033<br>PA 10,371 | 700–2400     | 78–231                    | -15–14           |
| 4  | Dare Anjir    | WR                 | 2002       | 1,753                             | 850–2200     | 75                        | 15.5             |
| 5  | (Kuh-e) Bafgh | PA                 | 1996       | 885                               | 1060–2860    | 70                        | 16               |

### 3. Project structure and implementation

The designed structure of the CACP and the plan for implementing the foreseen activities are outlined in the Project Document [1] and referred to at length in the mid-term evaluation [2].

#### 3.1. Organisational structure and management of the CACP

The Project Document [1] lists the following functions or groups for the implementation and supervision of the CACP:

*Steering Committee (SC)*. The SC comprised representatives from DoE and other Iranian ministries (Jihad-e-Keshavarzi, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Industry and Mines, Road and Transportation, Energy), Iranian universities, national NGOs, UNDP and the international conservation community. The Committee was meant to provide overall advice to the project, promote linkages between governmental and non-governmental actors, and review outputs and impacts, based on the reports of the NPM, the MT, and individuals or organisations contracted. The SC was to meet at the conclusion of the inception workshop and at the completion of each mission by the Mentoring Team, and at other times as required. It would approve (1) modifications to project activities, (2) budget revisions, and (3) evaluate funding requests for each project site. The Chair of the SC – appointed by the Head of the DoE – would recommend to UNDP and to DoE's Deputy for Natural Environment action concerning the CACP and project staff including the NPM.

The SC was meant to be a powerful instrument granting the cross-sectoral implementation of cheetah conservation. However, the SC was never constituted as it was foreseen in the Project Document [1], though the group has met four times between in 2002 and 2008 [M. Kamyab]. The absence of a functional SC was criticised in the 2004 Mid-Term Evaluation [2] and shall not be repeated here. The MTE recommended to UNDP and NPD the mobilisation and a change in the composition of the SC to reflect a balance between governmental and non-governmental members; this however did not happen.

*National Project Director (NPD)*, who was appointed by the Head of the DoE. The NPD supported the project and served as a focal point on the part of government. The NPD's responsibility included ensuring effective communications between the partners and monitoring of progress towards expected results. In the CACP, the NPD was always DoE's Deputy for Natural Environment. The NPD of the CACP changed several times (Fig. 3), and was held by the following personalities:

- Mr A. Najafi, September 2001 (start of project) – February 2004;
- Dr. H. Soleimanpour, March 2004 – August 2005;
- Mr A. Najafi, September 2005 – July 2006;
- Dr. D. Najafi, August 2006 – December 2008 (time of the evaluation).

*National Project Manager (NPM)* was a DoE professional with extensive field-based conservation experience with cheetahs and associated biota, appointed by the Head of DoE and approved by UNDP. The NPM's responsibilities were listed in the Project Document [1] and included:

- a) Management and co-ordination of all project activities at each project site;
- b) Preparing and updating quarterly work plans with corresponding budget;
- c) Liaison and negotiation with all associated agencies concerning specific inputs to project activities;
- d) Mentoring and advice to local facilitators concerning the conduct of project activities and measures to overcome problems encountered during their implementation;
- e) Management of sub-contracts and personnel seconded from associated agencies for specific project activities;
- f) Provision of verbal and written English/Persian reports on project activities, impacts and problems encountered to the Steering Committee;
- g) Completion and submission of financial reports to UNDP and the Steering Committee;
- h) The establishment of a collegial and effective relationship with all national and international associated agencies, such as WCS, IUCN, the Mentoring Team, national universities and NGO's.

The NPM reported to the NPD and was to be assessed regarding his performance at each meeting of the Steering Committee SC.

|              | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| A. Najafi    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Soleimanpour |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| D. Najafi    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Jourabchian  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Hamedanian   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Ziaie        |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Raghoshai    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Tyson        |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |

Fig. 3. Succession of National Project Directors (NPD, green), National Project Managers (NPM, blue), the Assistant Project Manager (APM, red), and the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA, purple) in the CACP from the beginning of the project in September 2001 until December 2008. Each square represents a quarter of a year; exact beginning and end of the terms see text.

Like the NPD, the NPM was held by three different personalities over four periods (Fig. 3):

- Mr A. Jourabchian, September 2001 – September 2003<sup>4</sup>;
- Mr A. Hamedanian, October 2003 – March 2005, deputy NPM April 2005 – June 2006;
- Mr H. Ziaie, April 2005 – December 2007;
- Mr A. Jourabchian, August 2008<sup>5</sup> – December 2008 (end of the CACP MSP).

<sup>4</sup> A. Jourabchian was already commissioned by the DOE to prepare the project before it started in September 2001; see Fig. 3.

<sup>5</sup> In the first half of 2008, the CACP was temporarily managed by Mr Mohammadi, Bureau of Wildlife DOE.

*Assistant Project Manager (APM)* was the full-time assistant of the NPM, recruited by DoE in close consultation with UNDP. In regard to the international co-operation of the UNDP/GEF project, an important requirement was that the APM was fluent in written and spoken English. The APM's tasks included [1]:

- a) Management of project inputs including personnel, contracts, training, equipment. Micro-capital grants and miscellaneous items according to project work plan and approved budget;
- b) Managing project resources to achieve the expected results and planning financial disbursements in accordance with the agreed quarterly work plan;
- c) Justifying the quarterly expenditures made from the “*advance of funds*” in order to receive further quarterly allocations from UNDP.;
- d) Keeping an accurate track of expenditure and recording transactions in an accounting system;
- e) Helping in compilation and completion of a signed Financial Report (which contains both a justification of previous expenditure and a request for new funds).

The APM was subject to an assessment of his performance by the NPM, who will report on such assessment at each meeting of the SC. The position of the APM was held by Mr B. Raghoshai from September 2001 to October 2004. The position was then not continued.

*Chief Technical Advisor (CTA)* was an international expert with broad international experience and strong academic qualifications, working part-time in order to provide technical advice and to develop the capacity of the national project team. The CTA was to be elected by UNDP-GEF and approved by the SC. In the first and second year of the project, the CTA was to provide 9 months and 6 months of inputs, respectively. The responsibilities of the CTA included [1]:

- a) Technical support to the project team and associated agencies in the conduct of all project activities;
- b) Effective running and smooth integration of project activities for the first two years;
- c) Liaison with WCS, IUCN, and the Mentoring Team, concerning the need for additional technical support and inputs;
- d) Participation in the Mentoring Team missions;
- e) Training and mentoring of the project team and associated agencies in order to promote more effective implementation of project activities;
- f) Assistance to the NPM in reviewing and assessing project impacts, and designing modifications to project activities in the light of such assessments;
- g) Assistance to the NPM in financial and technical reporting to the SC and UNDP.

The position of the CTA was held by M. Tyson from 6 June 2004 to 19 Oct 2004 2004 (date of resignation report [15]) and was then discontinued.

*Mentoring Team (MT)*, an agency or individual experts) was to be contracted to provide continuous support to the project team. Identification of the MT was a task of the SC and

UNDP/GEF after the Inception Mission Workshop. The MT was to visit the CACP sites within 6 months after the inception workshop and subsequently at least once a year, to provide the following services [1]:

- a) Assist the national project manager and local facilitators in assessing the impacts of project activities;
- b) Based on a review of information from the on-going scientific studies and monitoring programme, and on reports by the local facilitators, assess what changes have occurred in the biological and socio-economic conditions in the project sites (either as a result of project activities or developments outside the scope of the project);
- c) On the basis of (a) and (b) above, and taking into account experiences from similar projects in other regions, recommend to the NPM and the SC what changes to the proposed project activities should be made in order to secure greater project impacts;
- d) Assist the NPM and local facilitators in “trouble-shooting” problems encountered in implementation of project activities;
- e) Provide a written report to the SC and UNDP within one month of the completion of each visit to Iran;
- f) Provide advice to the independent evaluation mission.

The MT was never constituted, and the budget line for the MT was eliminated in the first budget revision [2].

*Rapid Biological Survey Team (RBST)* was to undertake some initial rapid surveys in order to compile critical biological information necessary to ensure that CACP activities are effective. The rapid surveys were conducted by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS, who would also cover the costs), working with a team of two international and 3–6 national experts. The RBST was to carry out the following tasks [1]:

- a) Compile and analyse recent reports of cheetah activity, and other information concerning the location of likely population centres of the cheetah;
- b) Based on the conclusions from the previous activity, design and conduct rapid surveys in 4–5 localities, compiling information on: (1) population size of cheetah and prey; (2) demographic information on cheetah and prey species; (3) land and water specifications of critical habitat; (4) location of areas of human-wildlife; (5) rates and causes of mortality of cheetah and major prey species;
- c) Design a programme of scientific studies to further elucidate the ecological relations of the cheetah and its major prey species, in particular with regard to the information generated by the rapid surveys;
- d) Design an on-going monitoring programme for the cheetah and its major prey species.
- e) Train national experts in survey and monitoring techniques, including the use of survey equipment;
- f) Participate in the Inception Mission and workshop.



WCS staff (T. O'Brien, G. Schaller, E. Sanderson, P. Zahler, L. Hunter) visited the CACP sites repeatedly and provided a series of reports [18, 20a-c, 21, 23, 24]. In addition, Dr. G. Mills visited Naybandan WR in 2002 in the frame of the rapid biological survey to primarily study cheetah-hyena conflicts [19; M. Kamyab].

*Inception Mission Team (IMT)*. In parallel to the rapid biological surveys, inception missions to each critical site were planned in order to assess the threats and conflicts and to conduct stakeholder consultations. The IMT was to be led by an international expert designated by IUCN's Collaborative Management Working Group, and would consist of a multi-disciplinary team, including international and national experts in the fields of alternative livelihoods, environmental education, environmental law, ecology (member of the RPST), and the NPM. The task of the IMT was [1] to compile information on:

- a) Threats to the cheetah and its major prey species, and the underlying causes of those threats;
- b) Human population sizes, including main livelihood activities, and their impact on the cheetah, its major prey species and their habitat;
- c) Social and economic aspirations and constraints facing local communities;
- d) Attitudes of local communities towards the cheetah, its major prey species, and their habitat;
- e) The extent to which non-locals (e.g. recreational hunters, entrepreneurs) impact the cheetah, major prey species and their habitats;
- f) Identification of viable project activities to implement collaborative management (CM) of the natural resources, improve social well-being of the local communities, promote environmental awareness and mobilise public support for conservation of the cheetah, its major prey species and their habitat, both locally and nationally, and generate modification of existing, or promulgation of new regulations, policies and laws governing management and conservation of the cheetah, its major prey species, and their habitat.

This compiled knowledge was to be presented to the SC and used for a revised LogFrame analysis and workplan for the project [1], to be developed during an Inception Workshop. The leader of the inception mission would subsequently submit a written report on the IMT's activities, conclusions and recommendations to UNDP and the Steering Committee within one month after the inception workshop.

The organisation of the Inception Mission and Workshop was contracted to IUCN/CEESP. The Workshop took place on 20–22 January 2004 in Semnan [12]. Another output of the IMT was a "roadmap", titled "A co-management strategy for cheetah conservation in Iran" [13], released in January 2004 as a "working draft", but never finished. A conflict between DoE and UNDP on the one hand and CEESP/CENESTA on the other hand over the lack of findings up to then, the organisation of the Inception Mission Workshop and the CM related work emerging in 2004 [6] led to a legal fight and finally the cancellation of the contract. In 2005, Outcome 3, Co-management, was dropped [7, 8].

*Local Co-Management Facilitators (LCMF)*. As other key members of the project team, the Project Document [1] identified local CM Facilitators. Among others, the LCMFs should as-

sure that the monitoring protocol prepared by the RBST is followed during the implementation phase, leading to a “learning by doing” process. The Project Document states that “in this phase of the initiative, the biological and social component of the project will need to collaborate very closely”.

At the first meeting of the SC, at the conclusion of the inception mission workshop, an Iranian environmental NGO was to be identified and contracted to provide project services. These services would include [1]:

- a) Recruitment of local facilitators to work with local communities in each of the identified project sites. The local facilitators will work full-time at the project sites and need to be recruited from the local communities/ethnic/tribal group, and need to be experienced in environmental conservation, team building and project management;
- b) Provision of assistance to local facilitators in the implementation of project activities promoting collaborative management improvement of social well-being, and on-going survey work;
- c) Provision of assistance to local facilitators in the design and implementation of local environmental awareness programmes focused on the cheetah, its major prey species, and their habitat;
- d) Design and implementation of a national environmental awareness programmes focused on the cheetah, its major prey species, and their habitat;
- e) Provision of assistance to local facilitators in assessing and reporting to the national project manager on the impacts of project activities, and in assisting the national project manager in the formulation of recommendations for modifications to project activities in the light of these assessments for consideration by the Advisory Committee<sup>6</sup>;
- f) Provision of assistance to local facilitators in their interactions with the Mentoring Team.

The LCFMs would report to the identified Iranian environmental NGO, who in turn would report to the NPM and the SC. In addition, an independent evaluation was foreseen within 18 months after the commencement of the project, with a specific mandate to evaluate the performance of the Iranian environmental NGO [1].

The LCFMs were never recruited, probably because the designated Iranian NGO was CEN-ESTA, which dropped out of the CACP in 2004/05. The MTE [2] made a clear statement about the need for LCFMs and recommended that ICS would be recruited to provide the services regarding local CM. This did however not happen, although ICS was granted one of the GEF Small Grant Projects and some of the ideas originally included in the CM component activities were taken up by these SGPs<sup>7</sup>.

The organisational structure and the different functions in CACP are described in detail in the Project Document [1]. If we repeat them here, it is not only to meet our ToR [Annex III] and

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<sup>6</sup> The Advisory Committee is mentioned in the Project Document [1], however not defined. It may refer to either the Steering Committee SC or the Mentoring Team MT.

<sup>7</sup> The SGPs were not about co-management, but mainly about “local awareness raising” and partially about “poverty reduction”, which can be considered as preliminary steps in the CM process [M. Kamyab].

for the sake of completeness, but also to demonstrate the **overly complex and complicated organisational structure of the project as it was envisioned per the project document** for a medium sized project which was to be implemented over four years!

### *3.2. Partnerships and co-operations*

The successful implementation of the CACP, which aims not only to secure the survival of the Asiatic cheetah in Iran, but also the sustainable co-management of the critical habitats, required a broad partnership on various levels, e.g. between national and international conservation agencies and experts, between various ministries of the Iranian government, with educational institutions and the media, and last but not least with the local communities and people in regard to the envisaged co-management of the cheetah sites. The Project Document [1], the MTE [2], the APR/PIR 2002–2008 [4–10], and the CACP Final Report [3] occasionally mention partnership and co-operation, but there was no explicit partnership structure including all key players beyond bilateral agreements. However, the planned organisational structure of CACP as described above (chapter 3.1.) emphasises the importance of an integral partnership arrangement as several of the foreseen institutions or mechanisms were meant to integrate and/or coordinate partners of various backgrounds.

*Intra-governmental partnership* and co-operation was strived for by integrating several ministries into the Steering Committee SC, namely the Ministry of Jihad-e-Keshavarzi (in particular the Forest and Rangeland Organisation), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Industry and Mines, the Ministry of Road and Transportation, and the Ministry of Energy, Management and Plan Organisation. The SC never functioned as intended in the Project Document [1], but several ministries besides the DoE were nevertheless successfully integrated into the CACP (e.g. the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Industry and Mines [3]).

*An international partnership* was initially forged between the Department of Environment of Iran (DoE), the Global Environment Facilities (GEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Other international partners were the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the World Conservation Union (i.e. IUCN), and the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) [3b], as well as several international experts from conservation NGOs or scientific institutions who participated in the Inception Mission Workshop [12]. The most important international organisation involved in the CACP besides UNDP/GEF – and the only one providing additional funding – was WCS, who has displayed an outstanding commitment regarding Outcomes 1 (Research and Monitoring) and 2 (Protection).

*National partnerships and co-operations* included the integration of several Iranian universities<sup>8</sup> and environmental or conservation-oriented NGOs into the CACP. Several of the co-operations implied by the organisational structure of the CACP, as outlined above, never materialised, and inter-sectoral partnership remained weak. Certain aspects such as eco-tourism

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<sup>8</sup> Within or in cooperation with the CACP, a total of 5 MSc theses and 5 BSc papers were produced, of which 3 focussed on cheetah, 2 on prey (gazelles), and 6 on other related topics. Only two of these works are available, at least in abstract, in English [A. Jourabchian].

were later established by the NGO Tarh-e-sarzamin (Plan for Land) through GEF SGP. These (partly still ongoing) projects were granted to NGOs, which were in major part newly founded by students of the then-NPM H. Ziaie, and were hence closely cooperating with the CACP.

*Partnership with local communities* was planned, on a large scale, through implementation of the co-management activities. This partnership ceased at an early stage in 2004 as the contract with CENESTA was cancelled and Outcome 3/Co-management was aborted. Nevertheless, some of the ideas were taken up again in the frame of SGPs, which also led to the formation of several local organisations in the CACP sites (chapter 4.2.; Annex I).

### **3.3. Stakeholder participation and public involvement**

Direct involvement of (local) stakeholders or the public was not foreseen in the organisational structure of the CACP (chapter 3.1.). There were however positions such as the IMT and the LCFMs who would have facilitated the co-operation with local people and institutions. Several stakeholder organisations, e.g. tribal institutions, pastoralists, herders, and hunters, were invited by T. Farvar (CEESP and CENESTA) and participated in the Inception Mission Workshop [12] at Sangsar. Other CACP partners however challenged the selection of local representatives [M. Kamyab] (see also chapter 5.4. point 2). Stakeholder participation and public involvement was mainly part of Outcome 3 / Co-management and was hence not completed. The SGPs emerging in the last years of the CACP again closed some of these gaps (see also chapters 4.3. and 4.4.).

### **3.4. Indicators and project monitoring**

Indicators and the monitoring processes are described at length in the Project Document [1] and referred to in the various annual reports [4–10], the MTE report [2] and in the Final Report [3]. Here, we list the indicators as presented in the executive summary of the Project Document and give a brief overview on the monitoring procedures.

*Indicators for the general Goal of the CACP:*

- 1) (In the short-to-medium term) improvement in quantity and quality of natural habitat for the cheetah and a rise in number of related animal and plant species.
- 2) (In the long term) presence of a sustainably viable population of the Asiatic cheetah in the I.R. of Iran with local community support and collaboration. Removal of the cheetah from the IUCN list of Critically Endangered Species.

*Indicators for Outcome 1 – Research:*

- 1) Crucial biotic territories where it is necessary to improve protection of the species and manage the habitat identified.
- 2) Report on ecology, behaviour and population dynamics, and justifications to undertake specific management recommendations produced.
- 3) Programme of on-going studies, and monitoring system designed and implemented.

*Indicators for Outcome 2 – Protection:*

- 1) Emergency conservation measures implemented, resulting in a reduction of short-term mortality of cheetah and prey species.
- 2) Grazing lands for cheetah prey species rehabilitated in crucial biotic territories, through collaborative management with local communities, resulting in increased cheetahs and prey species populations.
- 3) Strengthened enforcement measures result in reduction in reported cheetah kills and reports of cheetah trophies for sale.

*Indicators for Outcome 3 – Co-management:*

- 1) Self-assessed well-being of relevant communities and family income of relevant groups show upward trends.
- 2) Human morbidity and mortality rates improved; incidence of social conflicts show downward trends.
- 3) Local initiatives that couple sound environmental management with local income generation and well-being (e.g. health and socio-cultural benefits) increase.
- 4) Enhanced equity in the distribution of costs and benefits of environmental management.

*Indicators for Outcome 4 – Awareness:*

- 1) Governmental regulations fully in line with the acquired knowledge of the Asiatic cheetah and related habitats and species.
- 2) Public support for conservation of cheetah and associated habitats increased, as shown by media reports, publicity campaigns, etc.
- 3) Local hunting and off-take rules in line with acquired knowledge, and decreased tolerance of illegal kills through better enforcement.

Furthermore, the Project Document [1] identified “outputs” (which are similar to indicators) for project activities (in brackets the funding allocated) implemented to achieve the outcomes:

*Activity 1.* Rapid biological surveys to identify crucial biotic territories for the cheetah in the I.R. of Iran, including the collection and analysis of data on cheetah occurrence, demographics, behaviour, survival factors, habitat and related biota, especially principal prey species. Proposals for longer term information gathering and monitoring will also be prepared (US\$60,000).

- 1) Biotic map and report identifying crucial biotic territories for the cheetah and its prey species, including linking corridors; assessment of current cheetah population size, demographics, behavioural descriptors and other factors essential for conservation purposes.
- 2) Design of longer term survey work and a monitoring system to assess population dynamics and the impact of management plans and socio-economic initiatives on the cheetah and related biome and habitat.

*Activity 2.* A multi-disciplined “inception mission” undertaken to the crucial biotic territories to secure detailed information on threats and underlying causes, and to identify emergency conservation measures, goals and modalities to promote collaborative management, and to identify options for alternative livelihoods (US\$90,000).

- 1) Inception report, outlining threats and underlying causes, and proposing activities to be implemented in order to undertake emergency conservation measures, the promotion of collaborative management, strengthened enforcement, increased public awareness, modifications to policies and regulations, and options for increasing local incomes and social indicators, and ensuring equitable sharing of benefits from sustainable resource use.

*Activity 3.* Programme of information gathering and monitoring implemented based on recommendations generated by activity 1, above (US\$150,000).

- 1) Continually improved scientific information available to guide modifications in project activities, management arrangements, and policies and regulations.

*Activity 4.* Implementation of a programme of work to promote collaborative management (CM), and public awareness based on recommendations generated by activities 1 and 2, above (US\$180,000).

- 1) Collaborative management agreements, strengthened capacity for enforcement, and materials for increased public awareness

*Activity 5.* Implementation of measures to improve local income generation and well-being (e.g. health and socio-cultural benefits); and enhanced equity in the distribution of costs and benefits of environmental management based on recommendations generated by activities 1 and 2, above (US\$165,000).

- 1) Facilities and programmes to improve social welfare, and mechanisms to increase the financial benefits of conservation and sustainable management.

*Activity 6.* Development of a National Action Plan (NAP) for the Asiatic cheetah and its associated biota and habitat, including a synthesis of CM plans in the crucial biotic territories, a social communication campaign, relevant [new] policies and regulations, links with other national initiatives (US\$80,000).

- 1) National Action Plan (NAP) and draft policies and regulations arising out of experience and information generated by all previous activities and outputs.

*Monitoring and evaluation.* As a GEF/UNDP project, the CACP was subject to monitoring and evaluation as foreseen for GEF projects and described in the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy document [36]. Standard evaluation included yearly project reviews (APRs and PIRs [4–10]), a Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) [2], a Final Report [3], and a Terminal Evaluation TE (this report). More specifically, the Project Document [1] delineated the following principles (original text shortened):

“The Mentoring Team (MT) will visit the project team and project sites at the end of years 1, 2 and 3 of project implementation to assist in solving problems, and recommending modifications to project activities based on the most recent information available.

The environmental and social consequences of local management plans and accompanying socio-economic activities will be monitored in a “learning by doing” mode, leading to on-going modifications and improvements. For this purpose, a monitoring protocol will be prepared by the RST, and the LCMFs will assure that it is followed up during the implementation phases. In this phase of the initiative, the biological and social component of the project will need to collaborate very closely.

The Steering Committee SC will meet at the conclusion of each visit by the mentoring team to review recommendations for modifications to project activities, and overall progress made in the project.

An independent mid-term evaluation will be held after 24 months. The role of the evaluation will be to assess the performance of all components of the project, with particular emphasis on the impact of the social mobilization work undertaken by the Iranian NGO. The evaluation report will recommend modifications to project activities, as required.

The project activities will also be subject to UNDP’s standard monitoring practices.”

The Project Document [1] repeatedly alluded to the fact that the Goals and Outcomes of the CACP were formulated based on limited knowledge and that consequently, adjustments would be needed. The organisational structures for a continuous monitoring and evaluation were foreseen, but – as we have indicated above (chapters 3.1. and 3.2.), were not consequently implemented (see chapter 5).



Local women baking bread in traditional oven for the CACP visitors.

## 4. Results and conclusions from the CACP

Our most important source for the following summary of the results and conclusion of the CACP is the Final Report from October 2008 [3], and the English translation of the “Final report summary and conclusions” [3b] of the full report available so far only in Farsi. The CACP Final Report [3] does not consequently distinguish whether an activity was performed as part of the UNDP/GEF project, was a WCS contribution, or part of a SGP. Wherever available, we list additional references. This is however not always possible, as most of the findings in the frame of the CACP are still unpublished or certain works mentioned in the report – e.g. BSc and MSC theses – are not available (in English). The fact that the reporting was not done according to common scientific standards and that no scientific publications are available makes it difficult or impossible for the evaluators to verify the results and conclusions drawn in the reports, as important biological/ecological parameters such a prey density, number of cheetahs, population trends, etc. are impossible to be “observed” during a field trip.

### 4.1. Research and monitoring

The activities and results under the Outcome 1 - Research and Monitoring according to the Final Report [3] were:

- 1) Compilation of baseline information on cheetah distribution and estimated sub-population sizes in the 5 CACP sites, based on field interviews and cheetah sightings at project inception (Rapid Surveys). Before the start of CACP, the information available was very limited, and the cheetah seems to have been a rather unknown creature to the local people living at the rim of the Dasht-e-Kavir [3b]. In the 1970s, cheetahs in Iran were found in 44 different sites including a total area of 120,000 km<sup>2</sup> and estimated to number 200–300. This area declined and in 2000 appeared to have diminished to some 38,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with total population estimates of 50–100. In 2008, cheetahs were found in 13 different sites including 54,000 km<sup>2</sup> of mainly protected habitat. The known cheetah distribution area has hence increased by 40 % [3]. Five additional sites with unconfirmed cheetah observations need to be investigated (Fig. 4). Observations in Kalmand PA – where cheetahs were last reported in 1976 – suggest that this site was recolonised from Bafgh PA (Fig. 4). Cheetah observations with an unequal distribution over the months may even suggest seasonal migration between the two sites. Within the five CACP sites, a population size of 39–52 cheetahs is estimated (Table 2). A very rough estimate for additional confirmed or unconfirmed sites with cheetah presence brings the total up to 71–122 [3]. Considering the speculative character of these figures and the reduced prey populations (wild sheep *Ovis orientalis arkali*, wild goat *Capra aegagrus*, and jebeer gazelle *Gazella bennettii*) which have dropped by almost 50 % within a decade, Iran’s cheetah population is presently estimated to be at least 70–80 individuals [3].
- 2) Developing and updating digital maps of cheetah habitats by means of GIS/RS technique: The Final Report presents maps of cheetah sightings, which have been compiled into a GIS project from all five CACP sites and additional PAs. (GIS projects based also on works carried out by WCS; see Attachments 1–3 in [20].)



Table 2. Rough estimation of cheetahs in Iran at the end of the evaluated CACP implementation phase. Adapted from Final Report [3].

| Site, PA                     | CACP sites | Total   |
|------------------------------|------------|---------|
| Kavir NP and Kavir PA        | 4-6        |         |
| Khartouran NP, WR and PA     | 10-15      |         |
| Bafgh PA                     | 7-9        | } 39-52 |
| Dare-Anjir WR                | 5-8        |         |
| Naaybandan WR                | 13-16      |         |
| Other confirmed Sites        |            | 21-38   |
| Unconfirmed Sites            |            | 4-20    |
| Sites yet to be investigated |            | 7-15    |
| Total                        |            | 71-122  |

3) Organisation of 6 training workshops (e.g. on cheetah's status in Kerman and Golestan provinces, application of camera traps and radio telemetry in wildlife research, use of anaesthetics on carnivores, GIS techniques, use of sampling protocols in prey census, etc.) for DoE experts, NGO staff and university students.

4) Application of camera trapping to study population parameters of the cheetah and associated species. A total of more than 19,000 camera days from 2001–2007 resulted in 128 photographs of cheetahs, of which 118 have been taken within the five CACP sites (Table 3) and 10 taken by ICS in the Miandasht PA. 109 cheetah pictures were taken during systematic trapping sessions; the remaining 19 pictures were taken opportunistically. Furthermore, about 4,000 photographs of other species were taken. In such remote and vast study sites, camera trapping required a considerable effort. Nevertheless, camera trapping formed the basis for assessing the relative and absolute abundance of cheetahs (see above) as well as the composition of cheetah sub-populations. It provided also some detailed insight on male coalitions, reproduction (Fig. 5), etc. In Naybandan WR, eight camera trapping sessions were conducted over a period of six years. 62 pictures of cheetahs were taken, among which 15 different individuals were identified. Four of the cheetahs have been photographed only once, indicating that they may have been non-residents passing through [3]. (For methodology and data analysis see also [20, 21, 22].)

Table 3. Cheetah pictures taken by camera traps in the five CACP project sites. Adapted from Final Report [3].

| Site       | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | Total |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Bafq       | 0    | 19   | 0    | 0    | 0    | 2    | 0    | 21    |
| Dare Anjir | 0    | 7    | 3    | 8    | 3    | 0    | 0    | 21    |
| Kavir      | 0    | 0    | 2    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 2     |
| Turan      | 0    | 0    | 12   | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 12    |
| Naybandan  | 2    | 9    | 0    | 23   | 9    | 8    | 11   | 62    |
| Sum        | 2    | 35   | 17   | 31   | 12   | 10   | 11   | 118   |

5) Conducting surveys on various aspects of cheetah's ecology and biology in different areas, particularly on food habits, habitat preference, reproduction, etc.

Cheetahs in Iran live in hilly terrain, slopes and canyons of the mountainous areas around Dasht-e-Kavir. It appears that the Asiatic cheetah today actively avoids plains and prefers the habitats located on the foothills of the mountains. 83 % of 157 cheetah sightings in Naybandan, Touran and Bafq PA were on mountainous or hilly terrain, only 17 % on plains. Our general picture of the cheetah is that of a high-speed hunter in open African plains. The Asiatic cheetah in present-day Iran is however a hunter of large prey in a mountainous and sometimes remarkably rugged terrain. It was speculated that the mountains are only a refuge or last resort as a consequence of the prey depletion in the plains, but there are some indications that even in the past, the Asiatic cheetah in Iran has used mountainous habitats [19] (see also frontispiece).

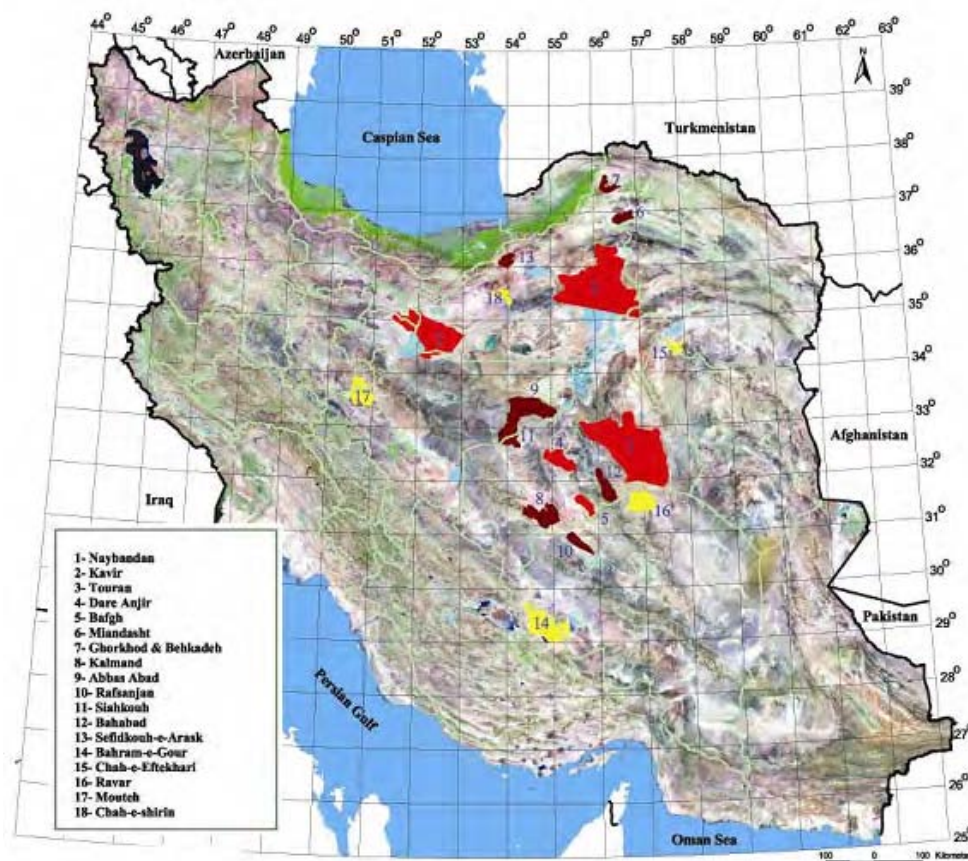


Fig. 4. Confirmed (red and brown) and unconfirmed (yellow) cheetah sites around the Dasht-e-Kavir (Great Salt Desert) in Iran in 2008. The CACP sites in red (see also Fig. 3). Map adapted from CACP Final Report [3].

Consistent with preferred habitats, the mountain living ungulates are more important as cheetah prey than gazelles. Of 21 ungulate kills observed in 5 PAs, 10 were wild sheep *Ovis orientalis arkali*, 5 ibex *Capra aegagrus*, 2 jebeer gazelles *Gazella bennettii*, and 4 goitered gazelles *Gazella subgutturosa* (scientific names according to [35]). In spite of the low frequency of gazelles in cheetah diet, they are still hunted by cheetahs, thus indicating that a rise in the

latter's population would be beneficial for cheetah's survival. Empirical evidence suggests that cheetahs depend on larger herbivores with smaller herbivores such as hare having a less significant role as prey. Observations in Naybandan WR and Dare-Anjir WR suggest that male ungulates are more vulnerable to cheetahs than females. This may have consequences for wildlife management, as hunting licenses are generally issued for male ungulates only.



Fig. 5. Camera trap picture of a female cheetah with four cubs. This picture taken in Dare Anjir Wildlife Refuge in 2005 was helping to raise awareness for the Asiatic cheetah on a global scale. Photo courtesy I. R. Iran DoE/CACP/WCS/UNDP-GEF.

- 6) Perform prey censuses by means of Distance Sampling Methods developed by WCS [20, 21, 22] to estimate prey base of the cheetah in the 5 project sites. Transects and point counting were conducted at least twice for each site, expending great effort and energy. However, prey estimates of the first round analysed by WCS were not deemed to be realistic, probably due to non-conformity with the sampling criteria. Meanwhile, DoE's annual censuses are carried out at least once a year in all PAs under DoE management, including the 5 CACP sites, and traditional DoE approaches will be used to estimate prey abundance and demonstrate the impact of the project.
- 7) Collaboration with academia and support for research projects in selected cheetah habitats (5 BSc and 6 MSc<sup>9</sup>).
- 8) Collaboration and *ad hoc* consultations with technical international partners, including 8 field missions by WCS experts as well as further missions by CCF. (These field missions

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<sup>9</sup> The report does not provide a list of these theses.

were mainly in the early years of the project in the frame of the RBS. They have resulted in several reports, e.g. [18, 19, 23, 24, 26].)

9) Expanding field investigations from the 5 CACP project sites to a total of 13 areas and initiating seven studies to identify new (or unknown) cheetah habitats (see point 1 above). These works were all co-financed by the DoE [3].

10) Publication of 15 papers and articles, including 12 that were drafted in English [3]<sup>10</sup>.

11) WCS initiated a radio-telemetry study in Bafq WR, where in 1149 trap nights in February 2007 and March 2008, two male cheetahs and two male leopards were captured and fitted with GPS collars [37]. 137 days and 248 days of positioning data were subsequently retrieved for one of the cheetahs and one of the leopards<sup>11</sup>. This study aims to better understand movement patterns, area requirements, habitat preferences, feeding ecology and reproductive biology as well as the existence of possible corridors between Bafq PA and adjacent PAs.

12) Other activities related to research or monitoring included analyses of dead cheetahs (collection of remains of 15 cheetah carcasses; dissection and post-mortem analyses of three cheetahs; osteological and craniometric study on 8 skulls and 7 skeletons; ongoing collection of samples for genetic studies in cooperation of WCS) and the evaluation of the use of ultra-light aircrafts for surveillance and census of prey populations.

#### **4.2. Protection**

The Outcome 2 – Protection aimed to implement urgent measures to protect cheetahs, their prey and crucial habitats to avoid further decline of the populations. The most important activities and achievements under this objective according to the Final Report [3] were:

##### *Root cause analyses:*

1) Identification of threats and root causes in each of the 5 CACP sites. Importance of threats varied among the PAs, but generally, poaching and overgrazing were ranked before herd dogs, road accidents, mines, access rights, and military and smuggler activities.

2) Assessment of vegetation cover in selected cheetah habitats and identification of important endemic flora species for the rehabilitation of rangelands. Touran and Miandasht<sup>12</sup> PAs were the subject of rangeland rehabilitation activities.

3) Identification of land use rights (e.g. grazing) in the cheetah project site and initiation of a programme to procure access rights. Access rights were bought with higher priority in Majerad (Touran), Ab Nar Oasis (Naybandan) and Miandasht in order to maintain the integrity of core zones within the PAs.

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<sup>10</sup> The report does not provide a list of these papers. According to a list provided by A. Jourabchian, 10 MSc and BSc theses were produced during or in cooperation with CACP. See also footnote 7.

<sup>11</sup> The surveillance of the leopards was ongoing when this report was written.

<sup>12</sup> Miandasht PA was not one of the five CACP sites, but has been one of the focal areas of the ICS, an NGO cooperating with the CACP.

4) Identification of mines and mining activities within cheetah habitats and negotiation of infrastructure development and mining activities.

*Site protection and regulations:*

5) Cross-sectoral coordination in particular with the Ministry of Industry and Mines in order to limit the expansion of mining activities within the CACP project sites.

6) Control of development plans within designated sites (e.g. major rerouting of the Bafq-Mashhad rail road and the control of uranium mining activities in two of the project sites).

7) Improving the protected area designation and upgrading the protection level of 4 project sites and 2 other sites identified as important cheetah habitats (i.e. Abbas Abad and Miandasht). Improvement of the protection status of selected cheetah habitats was a major achievement ensuring the long-term survival of the cheetah within the PAs.

8) Development of conservation strategies/measures and implementation of a law enforcement programme to augment protection across the 5 project sites.

*Capacity development and infrastructure:*

9) Recruitment of 32 additional game guards soon after the inception of CACP. Today, these guards comprise 60 % of the guard force in the CACP sites. An additional 5 individuals are working at DoE offices on project-related tasks. Between the inception of the project to September 2004, game guard salaries were paid from the GEF budget. Since October 2004, the DoE has been paying the guards' salaries, thus securing a sustainable basis for the augmented protection (see further comments in chapter 5.3). DoE manages and oversees 191 protected areas across Iran. Since 2000, the number and presence of guards has only been increased within the CACP sites.

10) In the course of more than 10 workshops, CACP guards received technical training on guarding procedures and on systematic collection and reporting of field data (camera trapping, GPS, collection of tissue samples, tracking, etc.) CACP guards have benefited from a number of training programmes. The professional skills acquired by these game guards is superior to the other DoE guards.

11) Provision of infrastructure and equipment for the guards: 30 motorcycles and 3 pick-up vans; uniforms and field equipment; construction of additional game guard stations in the 5 project sites and in Miandasht.

*Surveillance:*

12) The presence and field visits of the CACP project management, local, regional and national DoE authorities and international experts in the project sites were considerably more frequent (746 person days), with the highest field presence in 2001–2003.

12) Control of illegal grazing (i.e. in the absence of grazing licenses issued by the FRWO) through regular monitoring and enforcement by the guards. CACP has also endeavoured to

ensure sustainable grazing, where the carrying capacity of rangelands within the 5 project sites would determine the extent of grazing. These efforts included (1) the expelling of free ranging camels from the cheetah habitats; (2) renewing grazing permissions according to rangeland capacity, (3) reducing livestock operation radius in the field, (4) defining points of entrance and exit of nomads with herds, (5) proposing alternative rangelands, and (6) imposing more serious penalty on violations. However, the success of these measures was considered “not satisfactory” in the Final Report [3].

13) As a contribution to biological and ecological knowledge, 1,178 game guard reports based on standardised formats designed by the CACP were generated and analysed. This information, together with data from camera trapping, was used to estimate cheetah and prey populations (see above).

14) Anthropogenic mortality<sup>13</sup> of the cheetah during the CACP has decreased from an average of 1.5 cats/year to about 0.5 cat/year. CACP and DoE census data furthermore suggest that main cheetah prey populations (wild sheep, wild goat and gazelle) has dramatically declined in the majority of areas under DoE management, but have stabilised or increased in the 5 CACP sites [3]. Given higher level of law enforcement and protection in the selected sites (game guards, game posts, conservation category, equipment, etc.), it would not be presumptuous to conclude that violations are less commonplace. However, official or informal data on poaching are not available, and population estimates are not carried out according to a scientifically robust protocol. Hence, there is no hard evidence to demonstrate the impact of augmented protection through CACP on either prey or predator populations.

### **4.3. Co-management**

The Final Report [3] states that the fulfilment of this Outcome would be most crucial for the long-term sustainability of cheetah conservation. However, in the light of the controversy about the Outcome 3 – Co-management during the CACP and the fact that this topic was discontinued in 2005, the report devotes only one page to this objective. Some additional information is found in documents [12] and [13], but most of the reports produced are not available in English. The final report [3] lists the following important activities, however without presenting any (quantitative) findings or original source for the results:

- 1) Investigation of the socio-economic situation of local communities in the vicinity of the CACP sites, including human population situation, main occupations, livestock husbandry, poachers, industries, mines, local awareness and attitude, etc.
- 2) Efforts to ensure that local communities get priority regarding access to resources and biodiversity-related benefits (e.g. rights to harvest medicinal plants in Naybandan) over people from neighboring provinces.
- 3) Meeting in Sangsar (Semnan Province) with participation of national authorities and stakeholder groups and international experts in order to compile the project's strategy (the Inception Mission Workshop, see also report [12]).

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<sup>13</sup> This refers probably to direct illegal killing. Road mortalities seem to have increased in recent years.

- 4) Preliminary actions regarding the development of small local businesses in local communities, such as eco-tourism, medicinal plant corporation, handicraft production, etc. (these works were mainly carried out by Tehran-based and local NGOs and financed through GEF SGPs). First steps to establish eco-tourism related to wildlife and nature conservation have been made in Kavir NP and Touran PAs.
- 5) Identification of initiatives that couple sound environmental management with local income generation in communities around the cheetah habitats, e.g. launching local funds with co-operation of GEF SGP in Touran, Bafq and Naybandan. APR/PIR 2004 [6] mentions under “*couple sound environmental management with local income generation and well-being*” the establishment of “*compensation payment for cheetah/other carnivore depredation*”, hence paying the local herders for livestock losses due to predators. There is however no further evidence for the establishment of such a system.
- 6) Collaboration with local authorities regarding lasting solutions for the problem of grazing livestock inside the cheetah habitats in Bafq and Touran.
- 7) Establishing a Rural Strategic Development Group in order to mitigate the local people’s problems, aiming to reduce poaching in Touran.

#### **4.4. Awareness and education**

The Asiatic cheetah and its critical status were hardly known outside the conservation community before the start of the CACP. Considering the broad support needed for its conservation, enhanced awareness among politicians and state authorities, local communities, stakeholders and the general public was crucial for the success of the project. Activities under Outcome 4 – Awareness and Education listed in the Final Report [3] were:

##### *Authorities, administration and experts:*

- 1) High-level lobbying of the policy-makers including sensitisation of the President of the Republic.
- 2) Reformed legislation increased the penalty for a cheetah kill from 20,000,000 Rials to 200,000,000 Rials (about \$20,100), the highest fine for any species in Iran<sup>14</sup>.
- 3) Organisation of two scientific conferences, three technical workshops, and five local meetings on cheetah conservation in order to disseminate CAPC’s results and exchange ideas between experts and stakeholders. The CACP has positively influenced the interest in and the approach to wildlife research and conservation of the Iranian scientific community. As a result, projects were launched also on other species and in other regions of the country.

##### *Local people and stakeholder groups:*

- 4) Awareness in the communities in the vicinity of CACP sites was built through active involvement of local people into projects funded through SGPs. Four national NGOs (Iranian

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<sup>14</sup> Many of the points listed under Outcome 3 are related to other Outcomes, e.g. “Protection” or “Co-management”. We keep here the order as presented in the CACP Final Report [3].

Cheetah Society ICS, Eco-Researchers Society, Plan for the Land Society, and Mohitban Society), in cooperation with local NGOs or CBOs, have launched projects addressing problems or needs at local level (see also Chapter 4.3.). The total SGP budget amounted to \$208,000, of which \$119,750 were disbursed until October 2008. Prior to undertaking field activities, the four NGOs, key local officials, game guards and community members from target areas were trained in basic community approaches by another NGO. These trainings supported the constitution of core working groups in the selected SGP sites.

- 5) Four NGOs and three CBOs were trained in Tehran or in their own towns or villages in regard to project development (e.g. SGP applications), research, and educational campaigns.
- 6) Groups of selected promising students were educated in a one-year course in nature conservation and related topics in Bafq and Touran. Furthermore, educational classes/workshops for students in Tehran and in the villages around Naybandan and Dare Anjir were given. Many Iranian students were educated regarding conservation of cheetah, wildlife and nature in general. Such concepts were rarely present at Iranian schools, but are now increasingly demanded by teachers. A partnership was formed with the Ministry of Education in order to establish such topics in the educational programmes.
- 7) Training of game guards in communication and collaboration with local communities regarding conservation and management (to supplement their protection duties). Study tours for local people to visit the cheetah sites were organised and have helped to create trust between the guards and the local people who were previously prohibited to enter these areas. The game guards, who concentrated mainly on law enforcement and “physical protection” increasingly understand and accept the importance of collaborating with local people.
- 8) Distribution of more than 60 titles of wildlife/environmental books to communal libraries in Bafq and Touran in order to provide teachers, students and local people with more sources of information.
- 9) Negotiations with local and regional CBOs and stakeholders (decision-makers, religious leaders, herders, women, etc.) in order to draw their attention to cheetah conservation and seek their support for cheetah conservation in their region. There are indications that the cheetah-human conflict was eased e.g. in Bafq, Touran and Naybandan, with a number of NGOs and CBOs becoming actively involved in cheetah conservation.
- 10) Interaction with local authorities and decision-makers in Bafq and Touran regarding appropriate solution to prevent overgrazing of pasture land in the PAs.

*General public and media:*

- 11) Public awareness campaign through mass media at local, national and international levels. In total, more than 50 topics were broadcasted on electronic media and more than 150 topics through newspapers, on average two per month over the duration of CACP.
- 12) Over 120 minutes of documentary film/video made and 128 photographs [3b] of cheetahs in their natural habitats taken in cooperation with professional film makers or photographers, providing a unique set of documentary for awareness raising.



- 13) Various educational materials such as books, brochures, posters, calendar, etc. were produced and disseminated.
- 14) The CACP established a bilingual website (<http://cheetah.iranDoE.org>).
- 15) 31 August was declared "Asiatic Cheetah Protection Day", and, in a partnership with and among relevant NGOs, various programmes with the cheetah as a flagship species were organised around the country. The cheetah is now recognised as a symbol for wildlife conservation not only in Iran, but also at international level.



Asiatic cheetah habitat in Touran National Park.

## 5. Evaluation of the CACP

The CACP in Iran was more than “just another GEF Medium Size Project”. On the one hand, it was indeed more, as it strongly profited from the additional investment by WCS, then from the GEF SGPs, and in recent years from the DoE Biodiversity Fund. Even though we have not tried to scrutinise the budgeting and accounting of the CACP, it is obvious that without this help, the original GEF/UNDP funding would not have been adequate to achieve the results presented in Chapter 4 above. But the CACP was (and is) also more in regard to its remarkable symbolic value. The public awareness in Iran – as well as the media interest in our Terminal Evaluation (see below) – has been very high, as was the awareness within the international conservation community. Even though the Asiatic cheetah was an almost unknown species to the local people and the general public at the beginning of the project (Chapter 4.1. and [3b]), it was an urgent request of wildlife conservationists in Iran and some experts from abroad to launch a comprehensive conservation programme for the last remaining Asiatic cheetahs. As a consequence, we have experienced that the identification of all people involved with the CACP is outstandingly high. This is a challenge, but more important, it is a chance for the survival of the Asiatic cheetah. Nevertheless, during the assessment of the CACP, it was very obvious that the emotional attachment of all interviewees was strong and that all those involved from the beginning or an early stage of the CACP implementation were preoccupied with the notion that “something” must be done urgently. The crucial questions were, as usual, what to do and how to do it.

### 5.1. *Project design and planning*

#### *Development of the proposal*

The GEF project for the conservation of the Asiatic cheetah was drafted in 1998 and approved with a GEF contribution of \$750,000 in September 2000 [16]. The Project Document [1] does not name any authors, but apparently, a considerable number of people were involved in the development of the conservation of the Asiatic cheetah programme, both Iranian wildlife biologist and conservationists (e.g. A. Jourabchian) as well as experts from the international conservation community – e.g. P. Jackson (CatSG) and G. Schaller (WCS) – and have directly or indirectly influenced the proposal. The final Project document was authored by T. Boyle [M. Kamyab] with inputs from the DoE. In 2000, and prior to the signature of the GEF project, DoE, UNDP and WCS developed and agreed on a joint project called “Emergency action plan to save the Asiatic cheetah in critical habitats of I. R. Iran” [16]. This project, though it was never approved [M. Kamyab], recognised that under the GEF initiative, the GEF co-funded CACP would focus on collaborative management processes and that “such models, however, are not likely to emerge until about 2003”. This statement demonstrates that the partner organisations were aware of the risk of delay, even though they were still too optimistic. But everybody involved was also aware that beyond the emergency measures needed to halt the further decline of the cheetah population, the recovery and the long-term survival of the Asiatic cheetah would require the sustainable management of cheetah habitats and consequently an agreement with local land users. It was furthermore obvious that the general knowledge on the Asiatic cheetah was very limited and that experience with cheetah conservation from Africa was not always directly applicable in Iran.

The four objectives or Outcomes (1 – Research and Monitoring, 2 – Protection, 3 – Co-management, and 4 – Awareness and Education; see Chapter 2.3.) were therefore well chosen and have addressed the major issues regarding the long-term conservation of cheetahs in Iran. These four objectives have remained important throughout the implementation of the project and they still remain strategically valid as reference beyond the now ending project phase.

#### *Concurrence between objectives, means, and schedule*

However, the expectations regarding project impacts and results went beyond the possibilities of a Medium Sized Project. The expected results – as can be deduced from the Indicators listed in the Project Document [1] (see Chapter 3.4. and below) – were too ambitious and unrealistic regarding the time and means (funding, organisational structure and experience) available. In the frame of the CACP as approved in 2001, and considering all the obvious constraints when working in such a huge and remote area as central Iran, it was rather unlikely to reach these objectives. To name a concrete case: “*Human morbidity and mortality rates improved; incidences of social conflicts show downward trends*” [1]. It seems obvious that – among many other assignments – such a goal cannot be reached in the context of a four-year project with a total budget of less than \$1.5 million for five project sites with a combined area of 38,000 km<sup>2</sup> distributed over a total range of almost 200,000 km<sup>2</sup>. This is an example of an unrealistic indicator from Outcome 3, but there are several others<sup>15</sup>.

Another weakness of the proposal is the almost complete lack of information regarding the methods or procedures to be applied to reach the goal and objectives or to measure the indicators (see below). Very obviously, the great challenge in planning the CACP was not what to do, but how to do it. The proposal was preoccupied by organisational structures (see below), but almost completely neglected the important scientific and technical aspects.

As a consequence of over-ambitious expectations, all four Outcomes have been only fulfilled partially. It should be noted that the Final Report [3], includes results that were an outcome of CACP partner projects such as the WCS work (which was a planned contribution to the project from the beginning) and the SGP projects (which were initiated at a later stage) or were achieved during the prolongation years, when the CACP profited from financial support from DoE’s Biodiversity Fund. The total performance of the UNDP/GEF project would be even less positive without these amendments. Nevertheless, we think that the project’s “partial success” was still significant, but unrealistic expectations in the proposal have probably contributed to the predicament of the CACP, to the struggle between project partners and clearly to the frustration of those involved.

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<sup>15</sup> As another example for the recovery of a Critically Endangered species, we may consider the Iberian lynx *Lynx pardinus*, listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List in 2002. The species is restricted to two populations in Andalucía, Spain, with a total of about 150 specimens. In a conference in Cordoba, Spain, in 2004, it was estimated that its recovery to first the Endangered status and subsequently to Vulnerable status would require considerable conservation efforts for at least 10 to 20 years and an investment of at least €100 million. The Life project of the European Union and the Government of Andalucía from 2007–2011 has a budget of €7 million. Conservation costs from southern Spain cannot directly be compared with those in central Iran; but the Iberian lynx is a good case study to gauge the costs for the recovery of a Critically Endangered species.

*LogFrame, indicators and control mechanisms*

A very crude “LogFrame” can be found in the original Project Document [1]. A “*revised log-frame analysis and workplan for the project, incorporating the principles of adaptive management*” [1] was expected as an outcome of the Inception Mission, but this did not happen, because “*the international workshop at Semnan in January 2004 did not serve as an appropriate inception workshop*” [3]. The Mid-Term Evaluation in June 2004 [2] mentioned the lack of a logical framework matrix as a weakness that should have been identified by the UNDP/GEF Regional Manager. We agree that the lack of a well-structured LogFrame was a shortcoming – not least to facilitate the work of the managers and evaluators! In fact, a LogFrame is mainly a tool to facilitate the work of the project management and the coordination among project partners. In addition, it serves as a reference point for the monitoring and continuous adaptation of the project (e.g. as a tool for use by the Steering Committee). The project document had foreseen such control mechanisms, but they were never properly implemented – e.g. the Steering Committee was dysfunctional – and hence the development of a proper LogFrame would most likely have been a rather ineffective exercise under these circumstances. It is questionable whether the SC as it was designed could have acted as an oversight mechanism, but it is obvious that such an institution, that should have included all project partners and maybe additional outside observers (e. g. The Mentoring Team) and should have met regularly, was missing.

The proper design of a LogFrame includes a thorough and integrated monitoring and evaluation regime complete with indicators, targets and means of verification. The progress of the project in regard to not only the targets and indicators is continuously evaluated, but also the objectives, the time-plan, and the available means (i.e. funding and professional capacity). There is no indication that the principle design of the CACP (objectives, indicators, etc.) was scrutinised. Most of the indicators listed with the Outcomes in the Project Document were formulated in a very general way, leaving open as to how exactly they would be measured. An example to illustrate this statement is an indicator from Outcome 2 – Protection: “*Emergency conservation measures implemented, resulting in a reduction of short-term mortality of cheetah and prey species*”. In practice, these are not easy parameters to measure in a proper quantitative way. Based on DoE records on confiscation and poaching, the Final Report [3] states that “*anthropogenic mortality of the cheetah in the decade preceding project implementation has been reduced from an average of 1.5 cheetahs per year to around 0.5 cheetah per year over the life of the project*”. Considering the small sample and the short time series, it is impossible to judge whether these figures represent a significant decrease in anthropogenic mortality.

The project description had foreseen the following monitoring and evaluation mechanisms: (1) Outside mentoring service to be identified at the Inception Mission. The Mentoring Team (MT) would have visited the CACP at the end of years 1, 2, and 3 to review the progress and make recommendations for changes; (2) The Rapid Biological Survey Teams (RBST) would prepare monitoring protocols for the environmental and social consequences of the local activities (as mentioned above, it was emphasised that in this phase, the biological and social teams would need to collaborate very closely!); (3) the Steering Committee (SC) would review the recommendations of the MT each year and modify the project accordingly; (4) a

mid-term evaluation by an independent evaluator after two years; (5) UNDP standard monitoring procedures.

The yearly reviews and reports APR/PIR [4–10] were carried out as foreseen. The Mid-term Evaluation was conducted by Babak Davarpanah and Tim Boyle in June 2004 (36 months after project inception) and resulted in a comprehensive and rather critical report. The internal control mechanisms of the CACP did however not work as foreseen, and as a consequence, the recommendations of the MTE [2] were not satisfactorily implemented. The tight collaboration between the biological and the social team remained unfulfilled, the SC was ineffective (and met only rarely), and the MT was never established. At the time of the MTE, M. Tyson was recruited as Chief Technical Advisor (a position that was foreseen in the Project Document [1]), but the CTA remained in the project only for a few months, as a consequence of insurmountable differences with the NPD and the NPM [M. Kamyab; A. Hamedanian].

As a reaction to the failed Inception Mission Workshop in January 2004, and based on a draft produced by the CTA, M. Tyson, in summer 2004 and the recommendations in the Mid-Term Evaluation Mission in June 2004 [2], WCS and CACP released a “reviewed draft work-plan for the UNDP/GEF/DoE conservation of the Asiatic cheetah project” in December 2004 [14]. The introduction states: “*Due to delays in implementation of the activities recommended in the original work plan, and limitations in the available budget, the present document suggests a restricted number of activities. These should be achievable in the time remaining for the project, given adequate management.*” This statement indicates that CACP and its main partners were aware of the impossibility to reach the objectives formulated in the original Project Document [1]. The new draft work-plan reviewed the progress and results of the CACP up to 2004 and proposed more realistic goals and activities for 2005 and 2006. The subsequent implementation of this revised work-plan, however, remained obscured. Towards the end of 2004, the APM and the CTA left the CACP, and in 2005, the NPM and the NPD were replaced too (Fig. 3).

## **5.2. Project organisation and implementation**

### *Organisational structures and management issues*

In Chapter 3.1., we have explained as to how the organisational structure of the CACP was originally designed and that several of the designated mechanisms or positions were not implemented or did not properly work. This was the case for the Steering Committee (SC), the Mentoring Team (MT), the Inception Mission Team (IMT), the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), the Assistant Project Manager (APM), and the Local Co-Management Facilitators (LCMFs). We think that this was not only a deficiency of the project management, but that the proposed project structure was too complicated. It was to be expected that the CACP would encounter many problems during the implementation phase, requiring a creative approach and an adaptive management that called for a slender, able and flexible management with the authority to take clear and fast decisions.

A crucial point in the CACP has been the state of the relationship between the respective National Project Directors (NPDs) and the National Project Managers (NPMs). These two positions have repeatedly changed during project implementation (Fig. 3). At least some of the

changes in the position of the NPM were a consequence of a discord between the NPD and the NPM, thus hampering implementation progress. The NPD is appointed by the Head of DoE, and the NPD in turn appoints the NPM with UNDP's endorsement [1]. The position of the NPM is central to the proper implementation of CACP and even more important than apparent as several of the supporting positions (CTA, APM) and mechanisms (SC, MT) did not work as foreseen. The NPM is also the focal point for all external partners and the foreign experts, a position that requires a "common language" beyond Farsi and English and a common understanding of the questions and approaches. The understanding of the NPM's terms of reference seems to have changed with each change in the position. The UNDP office attempted to facilitate communication between the different national and international institutions and individuals, but was subsequently preoccupied with other tasks, including the resolution of the legal dispute over the CM components with CEESP [M. Kamyab].

We believe that the CACP management was understaffed, underequipped and lacking in important capacities during protracted periods of project implementation. The absence of functioning supportive mechanisms (SC, MT) may have reduced the NPM's effectiveness regarding co-ordination and organisation, but it also left some important tasks from the range of duties of these absent mechanisms with regard to the management and monitoring of the project unfulfilled. The management of such a complex project as the CACP, including several partners with very different background and covering issues from natural and social sciences to wildlife and PA management, media work, and (local) politics requires so many different professional skills and the support of a highly professional multi-disciplinary team with the financial resources to match.

### *Budgeting and financial issues*

The Terminal Evaluation is not intended to be a financial audit. We address this topic here for the sake of completeness and to discuss whether financial disbursement influenced the project effectiveness. The GEF funds were mostly spent during the initial years of project implementation (Table 4, Fig. 6). By the MTE juncture in 2004, 66 % of the GEF funds had already been disbursed [2], leaving little room for management corrections required at that time. The disbursement schedule also led to problems with payment of CACP staff and game guards<sup>16</sup> [8, 15]. In 2004 and 2005, the guards received their salaries with a delay of several months [e.g. interviews with guards in Zamanabad, 27.11.08, and Aliabad, 29.11.08; see Annex I] and did not receive any personal/professional equipment. Since 2006, the CACP guards have been employed by the DoE on annual contracts, and salaries have been paid on time, but they still complained about equipment and infrastructure shortages (e.g. transport and communication means; see also [10]).

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<sup>16</sup> The UNDP office had originally agreed that new guards who were urgently needed to improve law enforcement at the CACP sites would be paid for from the GEF co-funding for the period of one year.. However, it took considerably longer to secure DoE's co-funding for the sustained recruitment of the guards [M. Kamyab].

Table 4. Disbursement of project funds (US\$) as presented in the CACP Final Report [3].

| Year   | International Fund<br>(UNDP/GEF) | National Fund<br>(DoE)* | Total        |
|--------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| 2001   | 5,390.24                         |                         | 5,390.23     |
| 2002   | 171,235.65                       |                         | 171,235.65   |
| 2003   | 194,128.74                       |                         | 194,128.74   |
| 2004   | 184,424.00                       | 104,678.00              | 289,102.00   |
| 2005   | 46,844.00                        | 189,990.57              | 236,834.57   |
| 2006   | 45,485.24                        | 266,410.69              | 311,895.93   |
| 2007   | 58,863.05                        | 192,648.63              | 251,511.68   |
| 2008** | 17,929.08                        | 104,678.00              | 122,607.08   |
| Total  | 724,300.00                       | 858,405.89              | 1,582,405.89 |

\* converted from Rials (100 IRR = 0.0104678 US\$); \*\* until September 2008

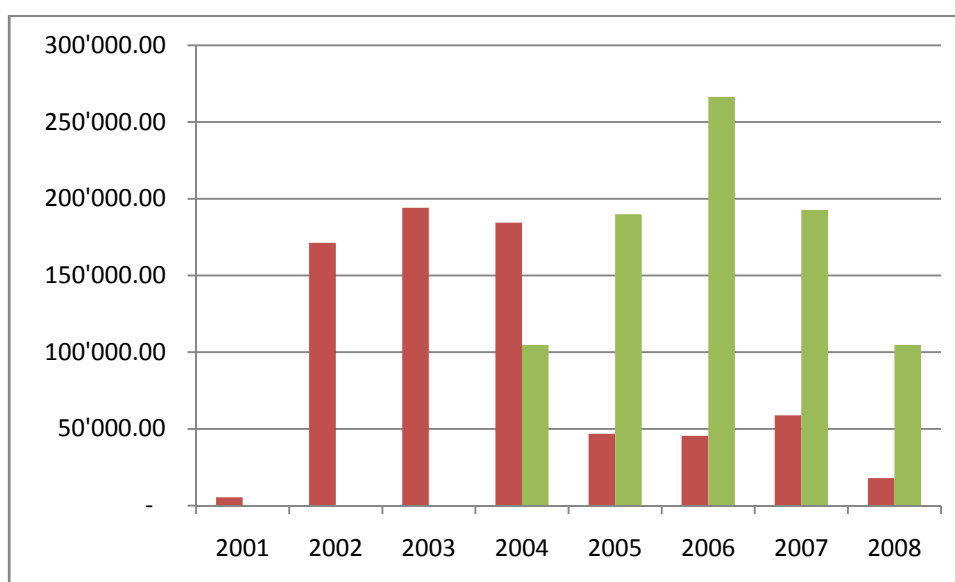


Fig. 6. Disbursement of CACP project funds provided by UNDP/GEF (red) and DoE (green). The figures of 2008 include the time period up to September.

The national budget on the other hand was mainly spent from 2005 to 2007 (Fig. 6), during which DoE was taking over the payment of the guards and bought up grazing rights [8]. The total amount spent by the DoE, through the Biodiversity Fund, in recent years is higher than foreseen in the budget of the Project Document [1]. Additionally, DoE provided in-kind contribution of \$235,525 according to the Final Report [3]. The money was spent to construct game posts in selected PAs, maintain infrastructure, procure access rights inside PAs, and finally to pay salary (DoE experts, and staff at provincial offices). The Project Document [1] and the Final Report [3] both provide figures budgeted for different activities; The evaluators do however not have any information allowing a proper attribution of actual expenditures to these activities.

The APR/PIR 2008 [10] provides a review of the financial situation of the CACP. The amount of co-financing to be raised by the project from “other national and international agencies” was budgeted at \$522,600 in the Project Document [1]. The sum estimated by the end of the project was however at least \$618,000 (including \$208,000 from GEF SGPs – which is strictly speaking not co-funding, but parallel funding, as they originate from the same source as the MSP, namely the GEF – and \$410,000 from WCS<sup>17</sup>; however, WCS in-kind contributions, e.g. staff time and travel costs may not be fully included in this sum). DoE’s cash co-funding of the project has been significant and in major part related to payments made to game guards on project’s payroll. It was originally budgeted at \$210,000, but is estimated to be \$975,500 by the end of the project [10]. In-kind contributions of the DoE could be considered as DoE’s contribution in the provision of office space in Tehran as well as the leveraging of DoE resources at the provincial/field level in line with project objectives. Whilst a calculation of the latter sum would be a challenging and imprecise exercise, nevertheless, a rough estimate would indicate that the DoE has fulfilled the lion’s share of its commitments in this regard [10].

### **5.3. Results and outcomes**

#### *Outcome 1 – Research and monitoring*

Asiatic cheetahs are ecologically different from their better-known conspecifics in the African savannah. We understand this thanks to the CACP and mainly the results of the Rapid Surveys. The good habitats (and distribution areas beyond the five CACP sites) and the most important prey has been established. However, knowledge of cheetah population dynamics, behaviour and survival factors is still rudimentary. These aspects cannot be properly studied without applying adequate methods (e.g. radio-telemetry, systematic camera-trapping etc.), but so far, only two cheetahs were radio-tagged (by WCS). Additional scientific information came from NGO work, namely the ICS. In the Project Document [1], the generation of needed biological/ecological information was mentioned as an important aspect. The project plan has foreseen a collaboration with WCS in regard to wildlife science and an intensive exchange between the different parts of the project (natural and social sciences and park management). CACP has however neglected to integrate the work of the guards in the PAs into a more general and consistent research approach. The project start was promising with the Rapid Biological Surveys. The guards were integrated in this work (and all expressed fond memories about their involvement during the interviews) and received training in field techniques. But the enthusiastic work during the initial years dwindled over the years. This was a consequence of the management problems of the CACP and of changing priorities of respective NPDs and NPMs, but also due to a lack of continuous training to benefit the guards and secure their involvement in research activities. For example, our interviews with the guards in the PA ranger stations revealed that the guards had not understood the principles of monitoring and the importance of camera-trapping as a robust method for estimating populations. They all thought that camera trapping was merely applied to prove the presence of the species. Furthermore, the guards never received any feedback regarding their work and effort; so

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<sup>17</sup> This funds were allocated to the radio telemetry component which started in 2006/07 [10; M. Kamyab], which so far has not been completely implemented.



they had no understanding of the importance and quality of their own contributions. Considering the central role of the guards regarding the (quality of) monitoring, their continuous training and motivation would be crucial. The reviewed draft work-plan [14] recognised that there was a problem with the reliability and quality of the data collected in the field, and that refresher courses would be needed. This however did not happen.

There was/is also a disagreement about methodological approaches (as for example set up by the RBST) and probably about the importance of producing scientifically robust data. The Final Report [3] states that “*prey estimates of the first round analyzed by WCS were not deemed to be realistic, probably due to non-conformity with the sampling criteria. Meanwhile, DoE’s annual censuses are carried out at least once a year inside all reserves under DoE’s management, including the 5 project sites. Therefore, prey abundance based on traditional DoE approaches will be used to demonstrate project impacts*”. The discrepancy between the DoE data and the CACP census based on the WCS protocols is probably a consequence of low animal density, problematic extrapolation over a large area, and possible errors in the analyses [A. Jourabchian].

This example illustrates a general shortcoming of the CACP in regard to Outcome 1: There is almost no biological/ecological knowledge available based on robust (statistical) methods that is analysed and reported according to scientific standards. The Final Report lists many results and findings from different activities, but the relevance and reliability of these outcomes cannot be assessed due to lack of respective (scientific) documents (see also “Reporting” below). While the “scientific evidence” of a perception may not really be important for its conservation relevance, it might be risky to base decisions on anecdotal observations or personal opinions rather than robust scientific data.

This observation is also valid for the monitoring of cheetahs and their prey. Although the Final Report provides information on estimates of cheetah population and trends in ungulate population dynamics, we cannot assess these statements because we lack the methodological and statistical background. Up to now, there is no reliable monitoring system for the cheetah or for its main prey species on population level in place. Monitoring of wildlife populations is an important, but difficult and often underestimated endeavour and therefore an under-budgeted task in conservation projects such as the CACP.

According to the key review criteria explained in the ToR (Annex III), our overall judgement of Outcome 1 is Moderately Unsatisfactory for the achievements and Moderately Likely for the sustainability (see Table 5 for details).

### *Outcome 2 – Protection*

Improved management (protection) of the remaining cheetah areas, as an emergency activity, started immediately and was implemented successfully during the initial years of the project. This objective included three lines of actions: (1) improved (legal) establishment of protected areas, (2) better surveillance of these areas through an increase in the number of game guards, and (3) negotiations over land-use rights (grazing) with local people.

New protected areas were created or existing ones upgraded soon after the beginning of CACP, and 32 new guards were hired according to a well-defined selection system which

granted a certain advantage to local candidates. These guards were educated in “physical protection” and survey techniques in several training workshops. The motivation of the guards however declined strongly as a consequence of problems with the delays in salary payments and lack of feedback (see above). Furthermore, the guards complained about insufficient personal equipment and lack of transport and communication means. We think that the guards play a central role regarding the efficiency of the protection function, and that it is absolutely crucial to keep their training and equipment, and therefore their moral and their esteem in the local population at a high level.

Table 5. Rating of the Outcomes of the CACP according to the Key Review Criteria (Annex III). The criteria are: Achievement: HS = Highly Satisfactory, S = Satisfactory, MS = Moderately Satisfactory, MU = Moderately Unsatisfactory, US = Unsatisfactory, HS = Highly Unsatisfactory; Sustainability: L = Likely, ML = Moderately Likely, MU = Moderately Unlikely, U = Unlikely; - = criteria is not applicable or cannot be judged for the respective feature of the outcome.

| Outcome                 | Achievement |            |               | Sustainability     |                 |                         |            |               |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------|---------------|
|                         | Relevance   | Efficiency | Effectiveness | Financial resource | Socio-political | Institutional framework | Governance | Environmental |
| 1–Research & Monitoring | HS          | MU         | MS            | ML                 | ML              | ML                      | MU         | L             |
| 2–Protection            | HS          | S          | S             | ML                 | ML              | ML                      | L          | L             |
| 3–Co-management         | MS          | US         | US            | U                  | MU              | ML                      | ML         | MU            |
| 4–Awareness & Education | HS          | S          | S             | ML                 | L               | L                       | ML         | ML            |

Protected Areas are managed by the DoE (see Annex II for details), through provincial and local administrators. Park boundaries are flagged, and all parks that we visited during the Terminal Evaluation field excursion had at least one ranger station (partly build in 2001/02 as in kind contributions to the CACP). Most of the PAs seem well established and accepted by the local population (although we have to admit that our contact with the local population during the field trip was probably not representative, as we mainly visited communities or local organisations which have been co-operating with the CACP or with affiliated SGPs). In certain cases, the establishment of the PAs or ranger stations has brought an immediate gain to local neighbours, such as better access to water or electricity. On the other hand, the land use-conflicts are not yet all resolved. In particular, within the Touran BSR, land use conflicts over grazing rights are on-going. The PA guards seem to be somewhat ambivalent in regard to their relationship with the local people. In particular, senior staff or chief guards seem unable to balance the requirements of “protection” (keeping local people away from the PAs to avoid overgrazing or poaching) with that of “co-operation” (integrating local people into park management and hence helping to provide incentives to local communities).

According to the key review criteria explained in the ToR (Annex III), our overall judgement of Outcome 2 is Satisfactory for the achievements and Moderately Likely for the sustainability (see Table 5 for details).

### *Outcome 3 – Co-management*

The implementation of the co-management part was contracted to IUCN/CEESP (which was also responsible for the organisation of the Inception Mission Workshop and the “road map”). The delayed implementation and reporting and the unsatisfactory Inception Mission Workshop (see above and [2]) caused a major conflict between UNDP and DoE on the one hand and CEESP on the other. The ensuing dispute considerably hampered CACP’s implementation, to the extent that the MTE [2] assigned a high priority in solving this conflict. In the course of TE interviews, all three CACP NPMs considered the community work lead by IUCN/CEESP to be a failure.

The CM component of the CACP is the one with the largest discrepancy between planning and realised benefits and has, in our opinion, suffered most from unrealistic expectations. Furthermore, the ecological and social component of the project never collaborated very closely, and there was no common understanding among the parties involved in the CACP regarding the importance of the CM component, or rather the approach taken by CEESP to carry out CM activities.

After the cooperation with CEESP, the CM component was abandoned. , Some of the activities foreseen under Outcome 3 were later taken up by (still ongoing) SGP projects. The SGP projects were, initiated on the recommendation of M. Kamyab, by the then NPD Dr. Soleymanpour and NPM H. Ziaie and implemented by several new NGOs which were mostly founded by students of H. Ziaie. The Teheran-based NGOs and their local counterparts have over the past two years achieved visible results in regard to the work with local communities, i. e. by initiating the foundation of local CBOs. During our visits in Khankhodi (26.11.08), Ghaleballa (26.11.08), Ahmadabad (27.11.08), Tabas (28.11.08), Bafgh (1.12.08), and Sheytoor (2.12.08) we were presented with the work of these organisations regarding the creation of local groups, production of handicrafts and local products, first trials in eco-tourism, etc. (for more details see Annex I). Marketing strategies however were not in place, partly not even considered, and the local projects have so far not been integrated into the PA management, and often not discussed with or at least not understood by the responsible park administrators. The young people running the SGPs are very enthusiastic, but inexperienced and rather blue-eyed in regard to enterprise generation and alternative livelihoods<sup>18</sup>. These projects were all well-intentioned, but were rather naively initiated in regard to their economic sustainability. A true market seems to exist only for the medical plants (i.e. the project in Ahmadabad; see Annex I, 27.11.08). The other projects – including the production of local handicrafts – were based mainly on the idea of eco-tourism, but there was no market evaluation to identify potential national or international visitors or examine the marketing concept.

The SGP projects are not part of the CACP MSP and are therefore not assessed in this TE Report. However, given that the SGP projects have closely cooperated with the CACP and were presented to the evaluators as key-players regarding the involvement of local communi-

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<sup>18</sup> Putting alternative livelihoods in place would need to address the whole value chain in micro-enterprise generation from simple book-keeping and accounting skills to design, manufacturing, inventory management, marketing and distribution. Operational and financial sustainability are key to long-term survival of these rural-based micro-enterprises [M. Kamyab]. These skills were obviously (still) lacking in the newly established NGOs funded by the SGP.

ties around the CACP sites, we found them worthy of mention here. During short and well-prepared visits, it is almost impossible to assess objectively the work of NGOs and CBOs and their integration into and impact on local communities. Although we agree that the engagement of CBOs into conservation and sustainable land use is the proper long-term approach, the positive effect of the SPGs on conservation is so far not evident or at least not measurable. More obvious, however, is the fact that none of these projects have yet lead to sustainable enterprises. Nonetheless, during our site visits and interviews we found that the expectations of both the Tehran-based NGOs and their local community-based partner organisations as well as of the villagers are very high and may, if unfulfilled, lead to frustration.

The support of local people and stakeholders for the protected areas in general or wildlife and cheetah conservation in particular is very difficult to assess during a short visit and with a limited number of interviews. Our impression was that both the local awareness of and the support for cheetah conservation (e.g. through a protected area system) was high. However, we mainly visited local groups and NGOs cooperating with the CACP and found no opportunity to interview randomly selected local people or potentially opposing stakeholders. During our visit in Ghaleballa on 26 November 2008 (Annex I), where we met local people and representatives of the NGO “Plan for Land”, who implements a SGP, a dispute over access and grazing rights revealed that there are still unsolved management questions and unfulfilled expectations on the part of the local communities. To our understanding, there is no systematic investigation on the opinion or commitment of local people and stakeholders. A risk in sustaining the support of the local people are the high expectations in regard to generating income through the PAs (eco-tourism, see above), which might, if they get frustrated, decrease the local support and result in higher indirect threats to the survival of cheetahs.

According to the key review criteria explained in the ToR (Annex III), our overall judgement of Outcome 3 is Unsatisfactory for the achievements and Moderately Unlikely for the sustainability (see Table 5 for details).

#### *Outcome 4 – Awareness and Education*

The fourth objective was in our opinion one of the most successful parts of CACP, even though we cannot really assess the results and conclusions presented in the Final Report [3] and summarised in Chapter 4.4. above, due to lack of quantitative information. Our comments here are based on the findings of the interviews and discussions in Tehran as well as the visits to the project sites (Annex I). The level of awareness among DoE staff (e.g. park administration, guards) is high, and so was our impression when talking to local people and representatives of the media. Public awareness and support has been continuously improved during the project through meetings, media work, and the release of educational material. The work in schools and the production of educational materials have led to increasing awareness of and support from the Ministry of Education. NGOs (partly through SGP projects) played an important role in awareness building and education on local level, whereas the national awareness raising was a consequence of the activities of the project Secretariat. Judging from the attendance of a media conference organised by the DoE in Tehran at the end of TE mission in Iran, the interest is remarkable. We were not only surprised by the number of journalists attending the conference, but also by the quality and complexity of questions asked, indicating

that several of these journalists had understood the goals and challenges of Asiatic cheetah conservation and had monitored the CACP with interest.

According to the key review criteria explained in the ToR (Annex III), our overall judgement of Outcome 4 is Satisfactory for the achievements and Moderately Likely for the sustainability (see Table 5 for details).

#### ***5.4. Project activities to achieve outcomes***

The Project document [1] identified 6 activities to achieve the 4 outcomes. Most of these activities were somehow related to the outcomes and have already been mentioned in our report. We however wish to briefly address them here in the order that they are listed in the Project document:

##### *1. Rapid biological surveys*

The rapid surveys were carried out and have been reported [18, 19, 20]. Biotic maps were designed and produced [20, 3] and sampling protocols were developed [21, 22]. The “longer term survey work” was designed and implemented through training of the guards to a certain point, but then somehow stalled (see below).

##### *2. Multi-disciplined inception mission*

The inception mission was never carried out in the manner it was foreseen in the Project Document [1] and proposed by the CCF [28]. This activity lost its original meaning and purpose as it was not implemented during the inception phase of the project (see comments by P. Zahler in 2003 [24]), though it was agreed that the related workshop with a broad participation was still needed. This workshop took place in January 2004 and was summarised in a report [12] produced by CEESP/CENESTA<sup>19</sup>. The workshop did however not result in an improved collaboration between the project partners. It actually added to the conflict between CACP/UNDP and CEESP/CENESTA. The procedures and most important the selection of local stakeholder representatives were not discussed and agreed on among the CACP partner prior to the workshop, and CACP and UNDP doubted that the people invited were indeed genuine representatives of the local communities and interest groups [M. Kamyab]. As a matter of fact, the Sangsar workshop and the resulting draft “roadmap” [13] did not fulfil the requirements of the Inception Mission as it was foreseen in the Project Document [1]. The workshop and the document however revealed the deep gap between different project partners about the general approach and priorities in cheetah conservation.

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<sup>19</sup> The report [12] names no authors or organisation and is not dated, but the workshop was organised by CEESP.

### *3. Information gathering and monitoring*

The rapid surveys (see above) resulted in a number of recommendations, protocols and training workshops for the guards aiming to establish a continuous monitoring of the cheetah and its major prey populations. This work was however not consistently implemented in 2004/2005. As indicated above (Chapter 5.3.) we do not think that a robust and reliable monitoring system has been in place and consider this to be a clear shortcoming. The problems were partially related to the organisational challenges of the CACP, but obviously there were also conceptual differences between the original design (as proposed by WCS) and the possible practical application as the CACP management saw it [A. Jourabchian]. It is without any doubt a difficult and tedious task to establish a robust quantitative monitoring for carnivores and wild ungulates at the CACP sites, but this is of ultimate importance for the control of success of the conservation programme and needs to be tackled. However, there must first be a total consensus about the philosophy and the approaches between all partners involved in research and site management.

### *4. Work programme to promote collaborative management and public awareness*

A document labelled as a “working draft” of a “Co-management strategy for cheetah conservation in Iran” dating back to January 2004 is available [13], obviously produced by CEESP. This work was however discontinued. Of the indicators listed in the Project Document [1], two were more or less satisfied (“strengthen capacity for enforcement” and „materials for increased public awareness”) whereas collaborative management agreements were not signed.

The draft co-management strategy [13] addresses problems that without any doubt need to be solved to grant the long-term survival of healthy wildlife populations in the cheetah areas. The document mentions the potential conflict between “protection” (important in a short-term approach to halt the further decline of the cheetah) and “co-management” (important to secure the long-term support for wildlife conservation by local people) and stresses the importance of further work “because, rightly or wrongly, herders in much of the CACP project sites have become convinced that cheetah conservation is synonymous with repression and alienation of herders from the resources they depend upon”. This is a problem common to conservation programmes, which include land-use conflicts. Modern conservation tends to work with and not against local people and tries to provide incentives to local communities rather than impose restrictions. There can be no doubt that collaboration and co-management is ethically more acceptable and in the long run a more sustainable approach. However, practical evidence for successful implementation of such models is frustratingly scarce. Wherever long-term and large-scale recovery of habitats and wildlife populations has succeeded – and there are a number of impressive examples for this, for example, from Europe – it was correlated with a strong rural exodus and/or a substantial transformation of the local economy including the abandonment of traditional livelihood. This does not mean that efforts to support local communities and to search for long-term sustainable solutions regarding the co-existence of local people with cheetah and its prey not be continued. But it is a warning about a too blue-eyed hope that co-management is the answer to all conservation problems and will be able to satisfy both the needs of local land-users and of wildlife. The ultimate limit to co-existence of livestock husbandry and harvesting natural resources including wildlife on the one hand and

maintaining healthy habitats and wildlife populations on the other hand is the ecological carrying-capacity of these arid and semi-arid areas where the cheetahs live. The bottleneck will not be the good years with enough precipitation, but the years of drought when both wild and domestic ungulates are in urgent need of fodder. The bad years define the long-term average threshold of anthropogenic land-use in regard to livestock husbandry. The local people – as much they might have expressed their support for cheetah conservation in the discussions – are mainly concerned about their economic future and an improvement of their livelihood, and this is very difficult to achieve building on a traditional local economy.

### *5. Measures to improve local income and well-being*

In 2006, two NGOs, ICS and Boompajooahân (Annex I, 26.11.), started SGP projects focusing on awareness raising and improved collaboration between park management staff and local people. The NGOs *Tarhesarzamin (Plan for Land)*, *Boompajooahân* and *Mohitban* were granted additional SGPs in 2007 focussing on poverty reduction and enterprise generation. *Plan for Land* was working on eco-tourism in Ghaleballa (Annex I, 26.11.), and the NGO *Mohitban* and their local partner NGO “*Tabas Sympathetic Green Spreader Association*” began a project in Tabas. Socio-economic improvement and “green micro-credit funds” were not initial elements of these projects, but have been developed in the course of the work [M. Kamyab]. Now the SGP projects also aim improving social welfare and local income. We have visited these organisations and their projects, e.g. in Khankhodi, Ghaleballa, Ahmabad, Zamanabad, Tabas, Bafq and Sheytoor (Annex I). All projects claim to generate additional (rather than alternative) income for local communities directly or indirectly linked with conservation, sustainable land-use, or with the nearby protected areas. There are three general lines of work to generate income: (1) eco-tourism, (2) production of local handicrafts, and (3) production or harvest of medical plants (see Chapter 5.2.). As mentioned above, all these projects have raised certain expectations in local people regarding the improvement of their (economic) situation, and the success of the projects will mostly depend on their economic achievements. “Eco-tourism” has become a magic word in these villages, but access to the villages and the PAs is complicated, tourism infrastructure not available, and wildlife observation in central Iran – compared to traditional safari tourism regions – extremely difficult. We are sceptical about the (economic) sustainability of these projects. The SGP projects should be carefully evaluated by experts in alternative livelihood and human-wildlife-conflicts. At the moment, the benefit of these micro-economic projects generated through the SGPs for the long-term conservation of cheetah is not evident. On the other hand, discontinuing these projects now could have a negative effect on the motivation of local people to support conservation efforts, as their raised expectations would be frustrated.

### *6. Development of a National Action Plan for the Asiatic cheetah*

A National Action Plan (NAP) has so far not been developed, but policies and regulations have been adopted to better serve the conservation of the Asiatic cheetah. We consider an Action Plan to be a very useful instrument to advance species conservation in a collaborative approach. But it is – just like the LogFrame discussed earlier – not more than an instrument

and only helpful if it is used to guide the co-operation and implementation of actions and as an instrument to regularly review the status of the work and progress made. Thus far, we believe that the absence of a NAP has not been a big shortcoming for the conservation of the cheetah in Iran, but that the termination of this first phase of the CACP might now provide an opportunity to review and discuss the findings and experiences and to incorporate the lessons learnt into a NAP (see Chapter 6).

### **5.5. Reporting and communication**

The CACP has suffered from a number of organizational or conceptual shortcomings which are not crucial to the survival of the cheetah, but might have hampered the co-operation between partners or the continuous monitoring and review of the project. One of these shortcomings that we want to address here is reporting and communication. Some shortcomings regarding communication have already been addressed in a report authored by P. Zahler in 2003 [24]. Another important aspect that we want to mention here – because it has considerably complicated our evaluation – is the inconsistencies in reporting.

There was obviously no reporting and communication concept for the CACP. The GEF monitoring and evaluation policy [36] requires a strict form of reporting in the form of APR/PIR [4–10], but these forms are clumsy and hard to follow and understand for someone not familiar or not involved with the GEF/UNDP projects and control processes. Furthermore, the PIR format has changed over the project period and the format cannot be easily understood. These reports are not useful for the internal communication among project partners and even less helpful for the communication with the outside world. We have also received an incomplete series of quarterly reports from the CACP, but they were so rudimentary and inconsistent that no other document ever referred to these reports.

Many of the reports produced by the CACP, the UNDP, or CACP contractors or (international) partners suffer from one or several of the following shortcomings: (1) lacking author(s) and institutions/organizations, (2) not being dated (3) not having a reference list or the references in the list are not cited in the text (4) incorrect tables or figures or erroneous references to tables and figures in the text. Many of the reports or documents were labelled as “drafts” and came often with “track changes” corrections, and no “final version” was available.

The last APR/PIR 2008 [10] and the Final Report [3] both present impressive lists of project activities and outputs, but it is not possible to assess these results because the documents lack a reference list. We think that the completion of such a project should include a comprehensive and easily available list and archive of all reports, publications, BSc and MSc theses, leaflets, etc. produced during the project years. We understand that many more documents are available in Farsi than the list of references we based our evaluation on. It is normal and absolutely correct that many if not most of the documents are produced in the national language, but all reports/publications containing information relevant to the project partners should at least have an English executive summary and be included into an electronic library containing all project documents. Such an archive should be available on a CD and/or on the CACP website. It is commendable that the CACP maintains a website (<http://cheetah.iranDoE.org>), but



this website could be used much more effectively for promoting the project (e.g. as a tool for the dissemination of documents). The website has not been regularly updated and none of the progress reports could be downloaded (at least not on the English version of the website) with the exception of the English summary of the final report.

The various management and communication problems, the fact that several of the foreseen organisational structures were not established or did not properly function, the lack of a Log-Frame as a control instrument together with the inconsistent reporting had a negative impact on the continuous monitoring and evaluation system of the CACP. Even if critical points and shortcomings were (at last) discovered and disclosed, as for instance in the MTE report, the project management did often not carry out the necessary adaptations. This might not have been the fault of the monitoring and evaluation system or of the evaluators, but it made the system ineffective. Based on the rating criteria as explained in the ToR (Annex III), we judge the Monitoring and Evaluation system of the CACP as Moderately Unsatisfactory.

### ***5.6. Status of the cheetah and advances in its conservation***

A long-term indicator for achieving the main Goal in the Project Document [1] is the “removal of the cheetah from the IUCN list of Critically Endangered species”. While we agree that the IUCN Red List can be helpful in the planning of conservation strategies (see Chapter 6.2.), down-listing cannot be considered a realistic expectation within such a short time. In addition to the status of the Asiatic cheetah metapopulation, which at a first glance would not yet meet the criteria for “Endangered” (as compared to “Critically Endangered”), the challenge of the assessment according to IUCN Red List procedure is the scientific robustness of the available information. While it is justified to up-list a species based on assumptions or expert opinion, down-listing requires certainty that the threshold level is achieved and maintained. In the case of removing the Asiatic cheetah from “Critically Endangered”, the total population must reach 250 mature individuals, and this minimum population level must be maintained over at least 5 years and verified by means of adequate and reliable monitoring methods<sup>20</sup>.

In order to strive for down-listing (as indicated in the Project Document), the cheetah population in Iran must not only grow, the monitoring must also be improved. The qualitative and quantitative statements regarding stabilisation or slight increase presented in the Final Report [3] cannot be considered robust scientific evidence. WCS and other experts involved in the RBST recommended monitoring protocols for cheetah and other wildlife populations [21, 22]. The most promising approach to a quantitative estimation of the cheetah population is camera trapping. Thus far, however, systematic capture-recapture camera trapping has not been applied. Having said that, we do not believe that camera trapping alone will be sufficient to survey the status and development of the cheetah in Iran. As long as the population structure, individual or group home range sizes and the social set-up (e.g. group composition) of the Asiatic cheetah is not really understood, it will be difficult to interpret the pictures gained from camera trapping. Considering the specific land-tenure system of cheetahs and the possi-

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<sup>20</sup> There are several additional conditions and criteria in regard to the population structure etc. The Red List assessment is a relatively complex procedure. Details can be found under [www.redlist.org](http://www.redlist.org).

bility of (seasonal) migration between “cheetah areas”, it will be difficult to simply apply capture-recapture protocols as used for other large cats. Hence, a robust monitoring of the cheetah metapopulation requires a better understanding of basic parameters of cheetah biology and ecology in Iran (e.g. by means of radio-telemetry studies) and the use and comparison of a diversity of methods, from simple track counts to molecular (genetic) analyses.

### ***5.7. Sustainability and risk assessment***

In the original Project Document [1], three potential risks for the CACP were mentioned: (1) continued political/governmental support, (2) socio-economic changes, and (3) climatic conditions and changes. The document considered political support to be strong, socio-economic conditions improving (and leading to an increasing investment from the DoE), the climatic conditions were however not further assessed. The climatic conditions in the past years were not favourable for the conservation programme; the years of drought particularly impede the recovery of the prey populations.

Changes in the government can and have indeed influenced the situation of the DoE, the position of the NPD and subsequently of the NPM. During the implementation of the CACP, the political support for cheetah conservation has probably further increased, as a consequence of increased awareness in the Iranian society and governmental agencies in general. An indicator of high political support has been manifested in the financial support of the CACP through tapping the “Biodiversity Fund” beyond the original agreed contributions. The DoE has reaffirmed its clear commitment to the conservation of the cheetah, and there is no indication of declining political support. According to the present NPD (Dr. D. Najafi) and NPM (A. Jou-rabchian), the commitment of the Iranian government and the DoE to continue the conservation of the cheetah is firm.

The economic situation of Iran in the years of the implementation of the CACP has been rather favourable. The recent economic crisis however may reduce national income and hence available conservation funding, but the CACP has – as a consequence of the high awareness – the opportunity to be among the priority wildlife conservation projects, if its visibility is upheld in national and international arenas.

There is no evidence that the CACP has so far led to a sustainable recovery of the Asiatic cheetah. As a matter of fact, a sustainable recovery was not to be expected in such a short period. The Asiatic cheetah is – according to IUCN Red List rules – still Critically Endangered, and its conservation and activities in all CACP objectives must go on. A long-term extension of the CACP would be most welcome from a conservation point of view. The CACP has not fully achieved the goals and objectives expressed in the Project Document [1], but it has laid the ground for the long-term conservation of the Asiatic cheetah and has become a model conservation project in Iran and in the Middle East. The economy, organisational structure and scientific tradition of the I. R. of Iran is favourable to the conservation of the cheetah, but we believe that an international commitment and engagement in the conservation of the Asiatic cheetah is still important, both to support Iran’s DoE in the conservation of the cheetah, and to use the cheetah project for the promotion of wildlife conservation beyond the Dasht-e-Kavīr and Iran.

## 6. Recommendations

The conservation and recovery of a top predator such as the Asiatic cheetah in an environment like the Dasht-e-Kavīr in Iran is a complex and long-term endeavour. A medium size GEF project with a mere budget of about \$1.5 million can only be considered a start. The CACP has been able to do this, in spite of all problems and shortcomings, but the recovery of the Asiatic cheetah has only begun. The chance for the survival of the Asiatic cheetah today is better than it was in 2001. The CACP is the appropriate platform and should be continued with international support and the I. R. of Iran has a high potential to carry on.

### 6.1. *Cheetah conservation and research*

- 1) To down-list the Asiatic cheetah in the IUCN Red List was and remains an explicit long-term goal of the CACP [1]. The Final Report [3] points out that the Project Document did not provide a target number of cheetahs for reaching this goal. The IUCN Red List criteria provide (as explained in Chapter 5) not only numbers, but also conditions to be met in regard to population structure and population dynamics. The principles of the IUCN Red List can indeed be used to formulate concrete quantitative project goals, and we recommend to do this, because it also emphasises the importance of the population (or rather metapopulation) structure and therefore provides indications on further research and surveillance needs. IUCN has recently released guidelines for strategic planning in species conservation [38, 39]. These handbooks also provide guidance for the development of conservation strategies and action plans, and we recommend considering the starting of a new CACP implementation phase with a renewed partnership and the participatory development of the originally conceived National Action Plan (NAP).
- 2) The agreement on actions and priorities was and is still hampered by a limited amount of secured knowledge on the biology and ecology of the cheetah. The CACP has provided a lot of new information over the past seven years, but much of this information remains hypothetical or anecdotal and leave (too much) room for speculation and interpretation. We recommend to rigorously advance the field research on cheetahs and their prey according to recognised scientific standards and with the aim to produce robust scientific knowledge (e.g. published in scientific journals). The research topics should be agreed upon among the partners (CACP, external scientific organisations such as WCS or Panthera, and Iranian universities or other research institutions). Research topics should include feeding ecology, social organisation and land tenure system and large-scale population structure according to a metapopulation concept (e.g. it is important to know how the different “subpopulations” are related to each other).
- 3) Monitoring and surveillance of the cheetah and prey populations must be further advanced. This goes hand-in-hand with the research, but must involve the PA management and the DoE/CACP guards. For the cheetah, population estimates with a confidence interval (to provide a quality parameter) must be the goal, for the prey population, at least relative abundance and good indicators of trends should be envisaged. Monitoring populations of elusive animals in such remote areas is not an easy task regarding the methods to be used and the investment needed. There is no single method, which can produce the data needed over such a

large area. Hence, we recommend the combination of several approaches in a concept of a stratified monitoring, where the results of intensive methods applied in relatively small reference areas are used to calibrate data gained with extensive methods on a larger scale. This includes organisational aspects, e.g. the development of protocols for (pathological, genetic) analyses of dead cheetahs, etc.

### ***6.2. Protected area management and incentives to local people***

The challenge of integrating PAs into cheetah conservation still requires striking a fine balance between “protection” – this is prevention of illegal hunting and grazing – and “co-management” – integrating local communities into PA management through generating economic incentives. The protection needs to be continued, even further strengthened through continuous training and better equipment for the guards. On the other hand, the PA management should be integrated into the CM work; during our interviews, several of the chief guards or park managers did not seem to appreciate the merits of working with local communities. Our recommendations are:

- 1) Improve the conservation effectiveness of the guards through (1) refreshed and continued training (e.g. a training workshop every year, covering various topics); (2) better and well-maintained equipment (uniforms, personal equipment, communication, transport); (3) provision of feedback on game guards performance.
- 2) Integrate the PA staff (managers, chief guards, guards) into the participatory work with the local communities, and integrate selected villagers into the PA work (e.g. as guides) in order to strengthen mutual understanding and trust.
- 3) Evaluate carefully the community-work started with the SGPs. Both to continue and to discontinue these projects bear the risk of failure and frustration, and it is very difficult to undo errors when working with local communities. We advice to select some of the most promising approaches as model projects in order to provide examples of success within a relatively short time.

### ***6.3. Organisational aspects***

As explained above, we think that the original design of the CACP organisation was too complicated to manage and to support decision making. We recommend that the CACP management together with its most important partners should review the CACP organisation and re-design it according to the proven needs of the project. In addition to the internal management structures (including the improved contact with other DoE departments and the provincial and local DoE offices), we think that the CACP needs four lines of co-operation and communication: (1) with the administration of other ministries to secure the integration of cheetah and PA conservation into their agendas; (2) with the media to inform the broad public; (3) with local people and organisations working with CM aspects; (4) with international and scientific partners to guarantee the proper methodological approach and an adequate analyses, interpretation, and reporting of the collected data and the clever integration of the findings into the conservation and management activities. Some more concrete recommendations:

- 1) Hold a meeting of all partners presently integrated into the CACP and review the organisational and co-operation structures and the lines of communication.
- 2) Define a clear and simple organisational structure for the CACP with clearly defined contacts. We propose to consider the following organisational structure: (1) CACP management team with clearly defined responsibilities and contacts, led by the NPM and overseen by the NPD. (2) administrative/political contacts within the Iranian governmental administration can be maintained by the NPD with support of the NPM and requires no ad hoc committee. (3) An “Asiatic cheetah conservation committee”, where all partner organisations and institutions are represented. This committee should combine the former obligations of the SC and the MT, but beyond this to monitor the progress or the work according to the work plan (and revise the work plan as needed) and the practical co-operation between the different partners. This committee should meet once a year. (4) A larger “network” on national and international level, that is actively informed about the progress of the CACP (to increase the outreach of the project) and individually contacted/consulted whenever needed.
- 3) Strengthen the CACP management through defining responsibilities for the different functions outlined above and create additional capacity within the management team if needed.
- 4) Revise or re-define a working plan in agreement with all partners in the “Asiatic cheetah conservation committee” and in accordance with the NAP if such an action plan is being developed.
- 5) Develop a reporting and communication concept. The concept should address the shortcomings mentioned in Chapter 5.5. Reports should follow a standardised form (authorship, data, references, etc.) and be released in the final version as PDFs. An archive of all reports and documents should be established and made available, e.g. through the CACP website as done with the Final Report [1]. All important reports in Farsi should have an English summary. Scientific publications should be advanced.

#### **6.4. CACP as a catalyst for nature conservation in the region**

The model character of the CACP has been mentioned repeatedly. We would like to support this idea and think that the outreach of the project in this respect could be strengthened. The conservation of the Asiatic cheetah has definitely created more national and international awareness than any other wildlife conservation project in the region. In Iran, the CACP has generated wide interest among young researchers for cat, carnivore and wildlife conservation and research in general, and it has the potential to help spread this interest across the national borders to the whole region.

To play this role, it is important to keep the conservation of the Asiatic cheetah high on the agenda and to continue the public relation work. We would also like to encourage the CACP management to (1) maintain and strengthen the relationship and co-operation with Iranian universities and to continue to integrate young researches (e.g. to offer MSc projects relevant to cheetah conservation), (2) to consequently make publications, reports, but also procedures and forms available on the CACP website, and (3) to use the CACP to promote other wildlife conservation or research projects in Iran and the neighbouring countries.

## 7. Lessons learnt

The CACP as a GEF MSP has clearly contributed to saving the Asiatic cheetah from extinction. It has, however, not achieved several of the aims point out in the project document Here, we highlight five important considerations where we think learning from the first phase of CACP implementation may have considerable potential to improve the efficiency of the continued project:

1. *Evaluation process and evaluators.* Assessing a complicated and complex project such as the CACP requires a variety of expertise from the evaluators, which are difficult to find in one individual or even in a small team. In addition to professional qualities, the evaluator must be independent and impartial, and yet be familiar with the topic and the project to be able to critically assess the documentation and interviews. The MTE has revealed many critical shortcomings of the CACP, many of the important remarks and recommendations were however not implemented in the following project phase. The authors of this Terminal Evaluation Report – are all natural scientists with a focus on ecology and wildlife conservation, who were not (or only marginally) involved or familiar with the CACP before this terminal evaluation. Whilst this ensures the independence of the Evaluators, given the complexity and the inconsistent reporting (see below), it nevertheless considerably impeded the evaluation task. The evaluations might have been more effective if a team of evaluators combining all skills required had accompanied the CACP throughout its implementation. Such a team would also have to review the APR and might even be better placed to continuously monitor and supervise the project than the Mentoring Team that was foreseen in the Project Document [1] but never established.

2. *Expected results.* The objectives of the CACP and the expected results went far beyond the possibilities of a Medium Sized Project. The discrepancy between time and means available and the proposed indicators are most obvious in regard to the conservation goals (“*Removal of the cheetah from the IUCN list of Critically Endangered species*”) and enhanced well-being of human communities in proximity of cheetah habitats (e.g. upward trends of family income; improved human morbidity and mortality rates). Indeed, unrealistic expectations could be found throughout the project document. While it is good to have ambitious expectations and to work hard to meet them, unrealistic goals are demotivating and can obstruct co-operation of project partners. This was indeed the case with the CACP. We think that in this first phase of the CACP, it would have been more realistic to concentrate on (1) improved legal protection of sites and law enforcement, (2) a robust monitoring system for cheetahs and their prey, and (3) an information and public awareness campaign. Whilst projects in wildlife research and improved management could have been initiated, in all likelihood such projects would not have finished within four years,. In addition, all co-management goals should have been addressed in a much larger context.

3. *Organisational structure.* For a MSP with an expected duration of four years, the CACP had an overly complex organisational structure. Considering the vague formulation of the indicators and the almost complete lack of any indication on the applied methodology (see below), it should have been expected that this project would require an adaptive process and consequently a highly efficient decision-making practice. Although the competencies regarding decision-making of the different bodies and committees are not clearly defined in the pro-

ject document, clearly such a complicated structure is not conducive to innovation and improvisation. On the other hand, collaboration (mutual information exchange, competencies, decision-making, etc.) seems not to have been properly organised and a logical framework as an important control instrument was lacking. For the continuation of the CACP, we recommend to design an organisational structure that is more straightforward, flexible and efficient and serves mainly the implementation of the project activities and collaboration between project partners.

4. *Methodology and training.* The methodology to be applied to implement project activities or to measure indicators were not described in the project document and seem to have been neglected or else have been the subject of dispute throughout the project. This hampered the implementation of research projects and the establishment of a sound wildlife monitoring system. Reliable monitoring data are indispensable for the assessment of any conservation measures, and it normally takes years to establish a well-functioning system. Necessary steps include (1) testing and adaptation of methods, (2) training of field staff, (3) education of data analysts, and (4) consistent reporting. These aspects should have received much more attention, and it will be one of the most important and urgent tasks for the next phase of the CACP to improve monitoring methods and to develop necessary capacities. However, to put in place a rigorous monitoring regime, the CACP must receive proper financial support. Monitoring is often a task that is neglected by the funding agencies and consequently notoriously underfunded. However, sound monitoring provides a good return on investment, as it helps to improve the procedures and to avoid costly errors.

5. *Reporting and scientific publications.* The reporting arrangements of CACP were on the one hand confusing (this was in no small part due to the fact that many reports were only available in Farsi or English and these reports used different calendar systems), and on the other hand very scanty. The lack of reports using scientific standards or papers published in scientific journals make it difficult for the evaluators to assess the findings and results of the project. Above all, the CACP is a wildlife conservation project with the main goal of removing the Asiatic cheetah from the IUCN list of Critically Endangered species. In ecological terms, this implies the stabilisation and subsequently an increase of the population. This can be directly measured through a robust monitoring producing a population estimation with a measure of accuracy, indirectly by continuously measuring mortality (death rate) and natality (birth rate), or underlying ecological factors such as changes in habitat quality or prey availability. To assess the effect of conservation measures, these biological/ecological parameters must be correlated in time with the implemented activities of the CACP or compared with habitats where conservation activities have not been implemented. In order to be communicated and understood, all activities, methods, findings and conclusions must be compiled in reports using generally accepted scientific standards. For exchanging information among CACP partners (or to inform external evaluators), it suffices for the project to produce good quality reports on a regular basis. In order to present the CACP to the global conservation community and to further develop capacities in wildlife research and conservation in Iran, we also recommend aiming for publications in international journals. Producing scientific reports and publications provides a useful control with regard to the performance of the project.

## 8. List of documents and references

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Wild goats, one of the Asiatic cheetah's preferred prey, in Bafq protected area.

## **Annex I – Itinerary of terminal evaluation mission and individuals interviewed during the visit to I. R. Iran, 20 November–6 December 2008**

- 20./22.11. Documentation review (home-based)
- 23.11. Departure for Iran; arrival 24.11. at 3.00 am
- 24.11. Meeting with DoE directors and senior staff: Dr D. Najafi (Deputy Director, NPD); Dr Moghaddam (GD, Head of Wildlife Office); Dr Montazami (Bureau of Biodiversity, Gene Bank).
- CACP personnel: Mr A. Jourabchian (NPM); Mr M. Atarodi (Assistant NPM); MS S. Pahlevanzadeh.
- UNDP officials: Mr M. Kamyab (UNDP country office).
- NGOs: Mr M. Farhadinia and Mr. E. Morteza (*Iranian Cheetah Society*); Mr Ali Aghili (*Persian Leopard Society*); Mr A. Khaleghi (*Tarhesarzamin* or *Plan for Land*).
- 25.11. Journey to Miandasht; evening at Jajarm; discussion with local governor and Mr. Yazdani.
- 26.11. Meeting with Mr Ebrahimi (GD DoE Semnan Province).
- Assisting the release ceremony of the young cheetah and speech by Dr Shahriari (GD DoE North Khorosan).
- Meeting with Mr Ghorbanlou (Director Touran Biosphere Reserve) in PA administration centre.
- Meeting with NGO *Boonpazhoohân Ecoresearch Society* in Khankhodi village. The NGO is working in reducing conflict between local people and cheetah through education and developing eco-tourism infrastructure. They have been working since three years.
- Meeting with Imam Ahmadi in Biyaryomand.
- Visit local office of NGO *Plan for Land* in Ghaleballa. Meeting with A. Khaleghi, D. Ashayeri and S. Ashayeri and M. Agami (chief of village).
- 27.11. Visit ranger station in Delbar, interview with game guards of Touran NP: Mr A. Akbar (director of Biosphere Reserve, head of guards); Mr AR. Mazinani (administration staff); Mr H. Ghazinejad.
- Visit with NGO *Protectors of the Cheetah Land* in Achmadabad. The NGO consist of a group of women harvesting medicinal plants. They try to generate jobs for local people and are also involved in the production of carpets and other handicrafts.
- Visit in Zamanabad with Mr. Heiderid.
- Meeting with guards at the ranger station in Zamanabad, interview with guards: Mr Hami, Mr Najafi, and Mr Teiuri.

- 28.11. Trip to Touran NP from Zamanabad.  
Journey to Drumek ranger station. Meeting with Mr M. Farhadinia.  
Meeting at Tabas DoE office with Mr. B. Najafi (director PA Naybandan).  
In the evening meeting with NGO *Mohitban Society* (Ms M. Mobargha) and *Tabas Sympathetic Green Spreader Association* and Dr Neshat (advisor). Both NGOs are involved in community based education projects. The Mohitban Society from Teheran is supporting the Tabas Sympathetic Green Spreader Association in their activities.
- 29.11. Visti with head of the city Mr Kiani (Governor of Tabas Distirct). Interview with Mr Kiani, Mr Najafi, Mr Neshat and his assistant. In the afternoon meeting with Mr R. Rires.  
Excursion to Mohammad Rezaei River, Naybandan PA.  
Evening in Aliabad ranger station, interview with 4 CACP guards.
- 30.11. Excursion to Naybandan PA. Journey to Tabas, overnight at DoE centre Tabas.
- 1.12. Meeting with Mr. Alian of Saghand DoE Office (responsible for Dare Anjir PA) and guard Mr Mollae.  
Visit of the Children Educational Centre in Bafgh. Education and awareness SGP project of ICS (exhibition, theatre and masks, educational movie).  
Meeting with Mr Akbari (DoE chief, local governor), Mr Nadafion (deputy governor) in Bafq, and Mr Ebrahimi, environment office of the Bafq iron mine.
- 2.12. Excursion to Bafgh PA, Orsestan DoE Station with Mr H. Jowkar (WCS) and Mr A. Khajeyii (DoE guard).  
Village Sheytoor: Cultural centre, presentation of local awareness work by NGO *Iranian Cheetah Society*.  
Meeting with Mr A. Hamedanian (former NPM) and Mr Mensavi (designated head of DoE of Yazd province).  
Meeting with Mr Hossini (former director DoE Yazd province) and Mr Talabi (head of security department of DoE office in Yazd).
- 3.12. Meeting at DoE office of Yazd province in Yazd with Mr Hossini.  
Afternoon flight to Teheran.  
Meeting at UNDP office with Mr. Knutsby, Mr. Medhi Kamyab, Ms. Elzira Sagynbaeva, and Ms. Laleh Daraei
- 4.12. Meeting at CACP office in DoE Teheran; interview with Mr A. Jourabchian (NPM).
- 5.12. Meeting with Mr H. Ziaie (former NPM) at Taj Mahal Hotel.
- 6.12. Preliminary oral presentation on TE to DoE, UNDP at DoE headquarter.

## Annex II – Protected Area system of Iran<sup>21</sup>

The Protected Area System is the critical pillar for conserving Iran's biodiversity. The first protected areas were established in 1967, with an initial emphasis on conserving stocks for hunting and fishing. The objectives evolved to conserving globally significant biodiversity, and the number of PAs has grown constantly to 131 protected areas in 2003, and 191 by 2008. The total area covered by PAs now stands at 127,000 km<sup>2</sup>, approximately 8% of the country, and covers all important ecosystems and habitats of Iran. The PA system is governed by several laws, based on the Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation Bill (1974). These establish that the DoE is the responsible agency for establishing and managing PAs, in consultation with other government agencies and stakeholders. The legislation establishes four categories of PAs: National Parks, National Natural Monuments, Wildlife Refuges, and Protected Areas: *National Parks*. This is the highest form of protection, approximately equivalent to IUCN Category II. The only allowed activities are research and sustainable recreation (e.g. ecotourism). National Parks receive priority treatment from both DoE and Provincial Governments, leading to increased budgets and increased staffing. The laws are considered strict, and the level of enforcement/compliance is considered satisfactory. Currently, there are 23 National Parks covering 19,700 km<sup>2</sup>.

*National Natural Monuments*. These also have a high form of protection, approximately equivalent to IUCN Category III. These are typically established to protect unique formations, for example, an ancient tree, and often small from a biodiversity perspective. Currently there are 22 National Natural Monuments covering 240 km<sup>2</sup>.

*Wildlife Refuges and Protected Areas*. These are approximately equivalent to IUCN Categories IV and V, respectively. The focus is mostly on preserving the habitat for animal species or plants. Certain socio-economic activities are allowed, after receiving the permission of DoE. Large-scale activities require the approval of an inter-department committee in the national DoE office. In practice, enforcement and compliance are significantly less than in National Parks, and the habitats in many Wildlife Refuges/Protected Areas are still being degraded. Currently, there are 35 Wildlife Refuges covering 37,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and 111 Protected Areas covering 69,600 km<sup>2</sup>.

A system of 9 UNESCO biosphere reserves has been established, and this covers many of the protected areas with high biodiversity. These are: Aras Baran (810 km<sup>2</sup>), Arjan-Parishan (590 km<sup>2</sup>), Geno (440 km<sup>2</sup>), Golestan (870 km<sup>2</sup>), Hara (870 km<sup>2</sup>), Kavir (6910 km<sup>2</sup>), Miankaleh (630 km<sup>2</sup>), Touran (14,000 km<sup>2</sup>) and Urumiya (5750 km<sup>2</sup>).

The approach to managing all categories of protected area was developed in the 1970s. In line with best practices at the time, the emphasis was on building fences and empowering guards. Subsequently, the Iranian environmental agencies have improved management methods, largely without cooperation from the international community and therefore without benefiting from many of the best practices developed internationally. In summary, the approach to

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<sup>21</sup> This Annex is based on information provided by M. Kamyab. The system of protected areas forms the backbone of biodiversity conservation in Iran. The protected sites will host the source populations of the Asiatic cheetah also in future, although cheetahs clearly roam outside protected areas, too, and a viable metapopulation will depend on functional corridors between the protected areas.

managing PAs is: (i) DoE identifies suitable areas; (ii) DoE requests the National Parliament to approve the protected area; (iii) DoE hires consultants to prepare a Pre-Feasibility Study and then a Feasibility Study for each area<sup>22</sup>; (iv) DoE hires guards and builds infrastructure to implement the Feasibility Studies; (v) where necessary and possible, DoE facilitates the development of alternative livelihoods for local people.

Under the supervision of DoE, other government agencies (e.g. the Forests, Rangelands and Watershed Organization, FRWO) issue permits to allow activities (e.g. grazing) inside PAs. The findings of the Feasibility Studies indicate that past management measures are often not succeeding. The weaknesses associated with this approach include: (i) local communities and other stakeholders are not always sufficiently committed to the PA's objectives; (ii) with some exception for National Parks, DoE staff and resources are insufficient to manage the PAs; (iii) there has been little success in developing alternative livelihoods, and; (iv) there has been limited progress in resolving land ownership and resource access conflicts<sup>23</sup>.

Population growth is also a factor, as the population has quadrupled in the past three decades. For example, under pressure, the FRWO may issue grazing permits beyond the carrying capacity. Furthermore, once permits have been issued, shepherds may graze far beyond the permitted amounts. As an indication of these weaknesses, recently 70% of the Paban National Park was downgraded to 'Protected Area'. Another weakness with the present approach is that local communities are unable to sustainably exploit the assets found in PAs, due to legal constraints, to limited capacity and to inappropriate incentives, mostly related to the lack of ownership over local development processes, because the central government takes the lead in planning, setting objectives and identifying development paths. These constraints make it difficult to generate community support.

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<sup>22</sup> The Feasibility Study contains many elements of a 'Management Plan', but with a focus on background information and guidelines, and without adequately covering management mechanisms and financial management.

<sup>23</sup> All land inside protected areas belongs to DoE, except land that was traditionally owned by local communities. This is complicated by the fact that much land inside protected areas has been traditionally used by transhumant societies, but not permanently habited. A key approach to resolving these issues has been for DoE to purchase land inside protected areas from traditional owners.

## **Annex III – Terms of references**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Terminal Evaluation**

#### **Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah, its Natural Habitat and Associated Biota**

**(Atlas Identification Number: 13102)**

### **1. Project Context & Background**

#### **1.1 Global Environment Facility (GEF) and GEF in Iran**

The Global Environment Facility (GEF), established in 1991, helps developing countries fund projects and programs that protect the global environment. GEF grants support projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants. GEF is an independent financial organization that provides grants to developing countries for projects that benefit the global environment and promote sustainable livelihoods in local communities.

The main UNDP/GEF Programme in Iran was introduced in the mid 90's by way of workshops and seminars outlining the GEF funding mechanism and identifying focal areas. The implementation of the first GEF Enabling Activities (EA) project began in 1998 within the focal area of climate change. This was followed in subsequent years with implementation of other Enabling Activities, medium sized projects and Project Development Facilities (PDFs) across POPs, IW, CC, and BD focal areas.

The UNDP/GEF Programme in Iran is mainstreamed within UNDP's Country Programme (CP) for Iran (2005-2009) and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) approved on 31 March 2004. For all GEF Projects being developed, integration and close linkage with the UNDAF's thematic areas of: i) strengthening capacities for achieving MDGs; ii) enhancing good governance; iii) improving economic management and creating employment; iv) prioritizing sustainable development, disaster management and energy efficiency and v) facilitating transfer of science and technology will be ensured. In addition, co-funding of environmental interventions through the GEF will be one of the main areas of support to the Government of Iran in the new Country Programme (2010-2014).

#### **1.2 Project Background**

The cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) may be a classic case of a large carnivore species that is slowly but surely being driven to extinction through fragmentation and the elimination of isolated sub-populations. Cheetah populations have been reduced worldwide from over 100,000 in 44 countries to below 15,000 in 27 countries. The only remaining country outside of Africa containing a wild population of cheetahs is Iran, where it is listed as critically endangered.

Fragmented cheetah sub-populations currently exist within the vast and barren Dasht-e-Kavir region, of north-central Iran. While cheetah populations in Iran were estimated as high as 200 in the 1970s, recent estimates place the number at around 50. However, these numbers are not based on any substantive or replicable field surveys and are closer to very rough estimates than true numbers.

Two main reasons account for the accelerating pace of cheetah's extinction in Iran. The first is habitat disturbance, including factors such as habitat encroachment and herder

/cheetah conflicts and desertification in large parts of the country. The second is direct killing of cheetah's prey in particular by local communities, and off-take for commercial uses.

Because of the critical nature of the Asiatic cheetah's status and the almost total lack of information concerning this species, a UNDP/GEF project was developed in conjunction with Iran's Department of Environment (DOE) entitled Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah, Its Natural Habitat, and Associated Biota in the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRA/01/G31).

The project was originally designed to put in place emergency field conservation/protection measures in 5 selected cheetah habitats and subsequently to carry out in-depth analysis of biological, social and economic factors and root causes currently threatening cheetahs and associated endangered fauna. In addition, the project document envisages improved wildlife management, removal of non-habitat-related threats and policy level legislative and regulatory changes. A stated project strategy is to support local communities' participation in order to eliminate threats to the cheetah and its prey, and to reduce the number of human/wildlife conflicts.

The project has been under implementation since September 2001, but is now nearing financial completion with only a few thousand dollars remaining undisbursed. Due to the project's success in mobilizing additional resources from the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Department of Environment and the UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme, the radio-telemetry component led by WCS and the SGP co-funded component focusing on community awareness-raising are still funded and under implementation. The project is therefore not operationally complete. In recent months, UNDP has proposed to further extend the project through the injection of an additional \$ 300,000 in UNDP core co-funding.

### **The project's objective:**

The overall goal of the project is *Conservation of the Asiatic cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus venaticus) in the I.R. of Iran and the related complex of rare and endangered wild species and their natural habitats with the support and collaboration of local communities.*

To achieve this objective, the project has four components:

#### **Outcome 1**

Better understanding of crucial biotic territories for the Asiatic cheetah and related species in the I.R. of Iran, and enhanced knowledge of cheetah population dynamics, behavior and survival factors.

#### **Outcome 2**

Improved management of the crucial biotic territories by governmental and non-governmental entities with relevant interests and concerns (stakeholders) in order to rehabilitate over-grazed habitat and ensure better protection for cheetahs and their prey.

#### **Outcome 3**

Enhanced and sustained well-being of the human communities living within or in proximity of such natural habitats

#### **Outcome 4**

Enhanced awareness and support of the government and civil society of the I.R. of Iran on relevant issues and concerns, in particular regarding the prevention of non-habitat-related threats to the Asiatic cheetah (e.g. illegal hunting and killing of cheetah and related species) among most relevant groups (local semi-desert communities, nomadic herders, hunters, youth).

The total approved budget for the Medium-sized project is USD 1,457,600 and approved budget for PDF-A is 30,000 comprising:

MSP:

|                                      |             |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| GEF                                  | USD 725,000 |
| In-kind                              | USD 732,600 |
| DOE                                  | USD 210,000 |
| Other national & Internat'l agencies | USD 522,600 |

PDF-A:

|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| GEF        | USD 25,000 |
| NGO        | USD 5,000  |
| Government | USD 5,000  |

The project team comprises a National Project Director (NPD), appointed by the Head of the DOE, who supports the programme or project and serves as the focal point on the part of government. This responsibility normally entails high level oversight and monitoring of progress towards expected results. The National Project Manager (NPM), is responsible for the overall management of the project and will be accountable to the NPD. The NPM is supported by an Assistant Project Manager.

Throughout project implementation, the project has grappled with a number of issues and constraints. These included frequent project management changes at senior project management levels, differences of styles between NPDs and NPMs, a protracted legal dispute between the DoE and UNDP on the one hand and CEESP/IUCN in 2003 to 2005, as well as the disproportionate scale and scope of both threats and identified project sites (3,800,000 hectares) vis-à-vis the resources granted by GEF where in retrospect, GEF resources should have been several times the amount that were initially approved in the context of this medium-sized project. Other implementation challenges related to the following:

- The massive logistical requirements associated with implementing the project in an area that represents about 25 % of DoE-controlled areas and 2.3% of Iran's total area as well as the extra burden associated with the remoteness of most cheetah habitats, the patronage of provincial DoE offices notwithstanding;
- The absence of an international Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) to provide continuous technical inputs and speed-up implementation;
- WCS's sporadic and inconsistent contributions due to the State Department/OFAC imposed sanctions, which required WCS to adopt a conservative approach to the provision of its technical inputs;
- The time-consuming nature of biological surveys and the need to constantly revisit and review census protocols prescribed by WCS to fit the peculiar set of topographic and ecological circumstances in Iran.

Some of the root causes of habitat degradation and the processes that underpin flora and fauna extinction such as population pressures, climate change and poverty in the vast territories addressed by the project are systemic issues. Nevertheless, the project, based on the conservation commitment by its staff and its prime international technical partner (i.e. WCS) as well as its alliance with committed local DoE Bureaus and NGOs, has managed to achieve a good understanding of the dynamics of such root causes and to develop the requisite long-term conservation capacities at national, provincial and local levels, the aforementioned systemic issues notwithstanding. Examples of new capacities are provided through application of new wildlife census protocols that are being implemented in Iran for the first time (e.g. point



counting, camera trapping and aerial transects) as well as the use of newly introduced technology and techniques to better understand Cheetah biology (i.e. radio-telemetry studies). A notable project achievement pertains to resource mobilization from the DoE as well as significant co-funding by WCS and the SGP (please see Annex 6.). The net impact of project activities seems to have been a slow transformation in the conservation practices and culture of the DoE. The change in the conservation mindset of the authorities is a step in the right direction in a country where anthropogenic extinction processes are hard at work.

The project has been a pioneer in its science-based approach to conservation in Iran. However, in better calibrating its achievements, the project continues to suffer from its relative inability to accurately measure key socio-economic and ecological indicators. This inability is rooted in the resources required to properly monitor the vast project areas against the backdrop of the meager financial resources provided to the project. It however detracts from efforts to quantitatively measure project achievements for monitoring, wildlife management and learning purposes.

In relation to outcome 3 above, (i.e. enhanced and sustained well-being of the human communities living within or in proximity of such natural habitats), the project has not had any impact, albeit this situation might change in the near future depending on whether the project can be extended and adequate additional funding secured through UNDP and other sources.

## 2. Objectives of the Evaluation

In accordance with the UNDP and GEF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policies and procedures, all projects with long-term implementation period must undergo terminal evaluation at the end of the project. The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has four objectives: i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts, ii) to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements; iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and iv) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned.

The terminal evaluation must provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of the completed project by assessing its project design, process of implementation, achievements vis-à-vis project objectives endorsed by the GEF including any agreed changes in the objectives during project implementation and any other results. Terminal evaluations have four complementary purposes:

- To promote accountability and transparency, and to assess and disclose levels of project accomplishments;
- To synthesize lessons that may help improve the selection, design and implementation of future GEF activities;
- To provide feedback on issues that are recurrent across the portfolio and need attention, and on improvements regarding previously identified issues; and
- To contribute to the GEF Evaluation Office databases for aggregation, analysis and reporting on effectiveness of GEF operations in achieving global environmental benefits and on the quality of monitoring and evaluation across the GEF system.

Terminal evaluations should not be used as an appraisal for preparation, or as a justification for a follow-up phase of the evaluated project.

The evaluation will be based on an analysis of various documents and consultations with key stakeholders. The key documents to be reviewed are:

- Project Document
- Relevant project files
- The Mid-term Evaluation Report
- Annual Progress Reports
- Project Implementation Review Reports
- Budgets
- Annual Work Plans since 2001
- Quarterly Progress Reports
- Project Agreements and MoU(s)

The mission will also undertake field visits to selected biotic areas and interview key beneficiaries, including government officials of line departments, local conservation officials, and local communities (possibly based on a structured questionnaire prepared in advance as an aid to systematic data collection and analysis for evaluation purposes).

The mission will rely on the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, 2006 as reference material on M&E policies and requirements.

### **3. Scope of the Evaluation**

The terminal evaluation should properly examine and assess the perspectives of the various project stakeholders, at both national and local levels. It will include field visits to select cheetah habitats in order to ascertain project accomplishments and conduct interviews of the key stakeholders at local levels. The following should be covered in the terminal evaluation report for this project:

1. Appropriateness of project concept and design;
2. Project relevance and consistency with country priorities and the GEF Biodiversity Operational Programme 1 on Arid and Semi-arid Ecosystems;
3. Ownership of the project at the national and local levels and stakeholder participation at national and local levels;
4. Effectiveness in realizing project immediate objectives, planned outcomes and outputs, and the extent to which these have contributed towards strengthening the institutional, organizational and technical capability of the Government in achieving its long-term sustainable development objectives (including environmental management goals);
5. Sustainability of project achievements and impacts, including financial and institutional sustainability and an assessment of planned replication and exit strategies;
6. Review of management arrangements and the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, including the quality and timeliness of inputs, activities, responsiveness of project management to changes in the project environment and other monitoring feedback. An evaluation of whether project design allowed for flexibility in responding to changes in the project environment;
7. Financial planning and sustainability, including the timely delivery and use of co-financing commitments;
8. Evaluate the national execution modality to assess its effectiveness and impacts on effective and efficient project execution;
9. Evaluate the Implementing Agency's supervision and backstopping;

10. Cost-effectiveness: were project outputs and outcomes achieved in the most cost-effective manner? Were there any delays that affected efficiency? ;
11. Monitoring and evaluation and the application of adaptive management principles (including effective use of logframe, UNDP risk management system, the annual Project Implementation Reviews, and other monitoring tools and mechanisms as appropriate).

### **Special Issues:**

Review the achievements of the project and assess their effectiveness in solving/mitigating the original conservation problem that was to be addressed;

1. Make an assessment as to whether the recommendations of the Mid Term Evaluation (MTE) have been followed-up on;
2. Determine the effect of the project on target groups and/or institutions;
3. Assess the significance of the results achieved for the country and global biodiversity conservation;
4. Determine the degree of support given by the government in integrating the project objectives and goals into national/provincial/sectoral policies and programmes;
5. The GEF, UNDP and other donors are paying particular attention to risk analysis and management. UNDP has developed a risk management system within ATLAS and guidance on using this system, which is also now incorporated in the annual PIR. The evaluators are requested to determine how effectively the risk management system is being used as an adaptive management tool. Risks may be of a financial, socio-political, institutional, operational, environmental (or other) type;
6. Considering that UNDP is concerned about poverty reduction, local governance and promotion of gender equity, the review will be required to look at these cross cutting issues.
  - Poverty reduction: How has the project contributed to poverty reduction of communities living in and around the park and enhanced sustainable livelihoods?
  - Governance: How has the project facilitated the participation of the local communities in natural resource management and decision making processes?
  - Promotion of gender equity: Has the project considered gender sensitivity or equal participation of man and women and boys and girls in decision making processes?
7. Describe the main lessons that have emerged in terms of:
  - Attainment of project objectives
  - Sustainability of project benefits
  - Strengthening country ownership;
  - Strengthening stakeholder participation;
  - Role of M & E in project implementation and its effectiveness in the application of adaptive management strategies;
  - Innovativeness & knowledge transfer; and
  - Catalytic effect and replication

8. **Capacity Development:** Assess the extent to which national project implementers have been adequately trained and enhanced capacity to take over technical and professional responsibilities as envisaged in the project design.

- **Ratings of Key Review Criteria**

In accordance with GEF Guidelines for Terminal Evaluations, the evaluators will provide ratings for the following as indicated broadly below, and further elaborated in the Guidelines, which must be carefully referred to.

1. **Rate the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of achievement of different Project Outcomes as:**

HS = Highly Satisfactory

S = Satisfactory

MS = Moderately Satisfactory

Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

US = Unsatisfactory

HS = Highly Unsatisfactory

2. Rate the sustainability of project outcomes along the 4 key dimensions: **financial resources, socio-political, institutional framework and governance as well as environmental** using the following scale:

Likely (L)

Moderately Likely (ML)

Moderately Unlikely (MU)

Unlikely (U)

3. Rate the Project's M&E system as follows:

HS = Highly Satisfactory

S = Satisfactory

MS = Moderately Satisfactory

Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

US = Unsatisfactory

HS = Highly Unsatisfactory

Additionally, the evaluators will answer the following questions:

**Did this project contribute to the establishment of a long term monitoring system?** If it did not, should the project have included such a component? If it did, what were the accomplishments and shortcomings in establishment of this system?

- Is the system sustainable (i.e. is it embedded in a proper institutional structure and has financing)?
- Is the information generated by this M&E system being used as originally intended?

#### 4. Products Expected from the Evaluation

The main products expected from the evaluation are:

- presentation(s) to key stakeholders;
  - an interim draft report;
  - a final comprehensive terminal evaluation report.
1. At the end of the field mission, the evaluation team will give a presentation on the conduct of the TE and preliminary findings to key government partners, UNDP Iran, UNDP-GEF and other key stakeholders. Subsequently, the evaluation team will share a copy of the draft TE Report with the Department of Environment and UNDP for their comments. The latter stakeholders will have two weeks to study the TE and revert back with their comments.
  2. Reporting: The main final output of the evaluation will be an independent and comprehensive Terminal Evaluation report with annexes as needed. The minimum requirements for the content of the final TE report are as follows:

##### Executive Summary

- a. Brief description of project
- b. Context and purpose of the evaluation
- c. Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

##### Introduction

- a. Purpose of evaluation
- b. Key issues addressed
- c. Methodology of the evaluation
- d. Structure of the evaluation

##### The project and its development context

- a. Project start and its duration
- b. Problems that the project seek to address
- c. Immediate and development objectives of the project
- d. Planned outputs and sub-outputs
- e. Main stakeholders
- f. Results expected

##### Findings and Conclusions

1. Project formulation
  - Implementation approach
  - Country ownership/Drivenness
  - Stakeholder participation
  - Replication approach
  - Cost-effectiveness
  - UNDP comparative advantage
  - Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector
  - Indicators
  - Management arrangements
2. Implementation
  - Financial planning
  - Monitoring and evaluation
  - Execution and implementation modalities
  - Management by UNDP country office
  - Coordination and operational issues

3. Results
  - Attainment of planned objectives & outcomes
  - Sustainability of impacts (including policy impact and evidence of mainstreaming biodiversity conservation approaches into sustainable development strategies and programmes)
  - Contribution to national capacity development

#### Recommendations

- a. Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project
- b. Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project
- c. Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

#### Lessons learned

- Best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success

#### Annexes

- TOR
- Itinerary
- List of persons interviewed
- Summary of field visits
- List of documents reviewed
- Questionnaires used and summary of results
- Co-financing and Leveraged Resources (see Table 1 attached)

## 5. Evaluation Team Composition & Responsibilities

The mission will comprise of 2 members, an **International Team Leader (ITL)** and a **National Consultant**. The Country Office's Team Leader for Energy, Environment and Disaster Management and the UNDP/GEF Regional Technical Advisor based in Bangkok will also serve as resource persons and shall actively participate in and backstop the review.

The International Team Leader should be fully knowledgeable about the GEF and its programmes and projects in biodiversity, as well as GEF M&E requirements. The National Consultant should be fully knowledgeable about biodiversity conservation in Iran, and preferably have expert knowledge of cheetah conservation issues. The national consultant will be identified in advance of the evaluation mission by the UNDP CO, in consultation with NEX authorities.

The International Team Leader will report to the Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP and will coordinate with and receive support from both the UNDP Country Office and the Department of environment in all logistical matters.

## 6. Methodology

The evaluation will be based on an analysis of various documents and consultations with key stakeholders. The key documents to be reviewed are:

- Approved project brief and final Project Document
- Inception workshop report
- Annual Project Implementation Review Reports
- Annual budgets and workplans
- Quarterly Progress Reports
- Project Agreements and MoU(s)
- PSC, PCC, PMU meeting minutes

- Other technical reports and documents as relevant

The mission will also undertake field visits to selected biotic areas and interview key beneficiaries, including government officials of line departments, local conservation officials, and local communities (possibly based on a structured questionnaire prepared in advance as an aid to systematic data collection and analysis for evaluation purposes). A list of key people to be met during the evaluation field mission is given in Annex 3.

The mission will rely on the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, 2006 as reference material on M&E policies and requirements.

## **7. Conduct of Evaluation**

Under the leadership of the International Team Leader, the Evaluation Team will work independently but will liaise closely with UNDP CO and DoE. The evaluation mission will also liaise periodically with the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor (RTA) at the UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok to ensure that UNDP-GEF and GEF requirements are being met. The team will visit the project site to ensure adequate consultation with all key stakeholders.

Towards the end of the field evaluation, presentation will be made to all key stakeholders in Tehran. After the presentation the team will take note of verbal and/or written responses to its presentation and consider these in preparing an interim draft evaluation report that will be provided to UNDP CO before the team leaves Iran for distribution to stakeholders. UNDP will circulate the draft report to all stakeholders requesting written feedback which should be sent directly to the evaluators within 10 days of receipt of the draft. The TE report including all annexes should be finalized within another 10 days of the deadline for receiving comments on the first draft.

While the evaluation team is free to determine the actual layout of the final evaluation report, this must include the minimum content requirements mentioned earlier. The Team Leader will forward the final report by e-mail to UNDP CO Iran and the UNDP-GEF RTA in Bangkok for onward distribution to all stakeholders. The evaluators will be responsible for the contents, quality and veracity of the report.

## **Annexes**

### **Annex 1: TOR**

#### **International Evaluation Team Leader (ITL)**

The International Team Leader will be responsible for the overall coordination of the evaluation process ensuring all tasks mentioned in Section 4.1 of the TOR are performed effectively. S/he will:

- i. Effectively manage the inputs of the National Consultant and coordinate activities;
- ii. Finalise the draft ToR for the National Consultant;
- iii. Finalize questionnaire(s) for collecting relevant information from different stakeholders;
- iv. Effectively liaise with all stakeholders to seek feedback on the necessary information as per requirements of section 4.1 of the ToR.

- v. Synthesize all information/findings/recommendations in the form of a Mission Report and seek arrangements for presentation to project stakeholders at the end of the mission, being cognizant of the need to incorporate necessary revisions and to finalise the report two weeks after departure from Iran;
- vi. Debrief the Resident Representative and Deputy Resident Representative on the final recommendations of the evaluation mission.

### **Period of Consultancy**

The evaluation timeline encompasses the period from 15 November to 15 January 2008, including a mission by the ITL to Iran from 23 to 6 December 2008. Total duration of field-based consultancy is up to two weeks and may also include up to two weeks of additional home based inputs as per agreement between UNDP and the International Team Leader and based on a mutual assessment of home-based workload.

### **Costs and Fees**

To be met through UNDP TRAC resources at based on mutual agreement and the prevalent rates in the market. Mission costs will also include DSA for Iran at the prevailing rate. Air fare costs to procure the cheapest return economy ticket will also be met through UNDP TRAC funds.

### **National Consultant**

The National Consultant, under the overall supervision of the International Team Leader, will:

- be actively involved in the collection of all background documents and supplementary information as required by the ITL;
- provide substantive analysis of pertinent information as per guidance received from the ITL and in line with the requirements of section 4.1 of the TOR above;
- actively assist the ITL leader in drafting of the final Mission Report and presentation of report to the Steering committee;
- provide translation services throughout the mission;
- coordinate with UNDP and the DoE in provision of logistical support;
- assist in any other task as identified by the ITL.

### **Qualifications**

The national consultant should be fully knowledgeable about biodiversity conservation in Iran, and preferably have expert knowledge of cheetah conservation issues. He/she should have a very thorough understanding of the policy and regulatory environment in Iran and understands the inter-relationship of the various ministries, departments and other agencies. S/he should have background in sociology/economics. The national consultant as a member of the team would focus on assessing the approach to stakeholder engagement and participation.

### **Period of Consultancy**

The same terms and conditions as with 4.3 above will apply. However, any home-based inputs will have to be authorized by UNDP in consultation with the ITL.

### **Costs and Fees**

To be met through UNDP TRAC funds based on mutual agreement and the prevalent rates in the market. The usual DSA for missions out of Tehran trips will also apply.



**Annex 2: Proposed Itinerary****Annex 3: List of key stakeholders to be interviewed / consulted****Annex 4: Summary of field visits****Annex 5: Co-financing as on 30 June 2008**

| <i>Name of Partner or Contributor (including the Private Sector)</i> | <i>Nature of Contributor<sup>24</sup></i> | <i>Amount used in Project Preparation (PDF A, B)</i> | <i>Amount committed in Project Document<sup>25</sup></i> | <i>Additional amounts committed after Project Document finalization<sup>11</sup></i> | <i>Estimated Total Disbursement to 30 June 2008</i> | <i>Expected Total Disbursement by end of project</i> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| GEF Contribution                                                     | UNDP-GEF                                  | 0.023688                                             | 0.725                                                    |                                                                                      | 0.7180                                              | 0.725                                                |
| Cash Cofinancing – UNDP Managed                                      |                                           |                                                      |                                                          |                                                                                      |                                                     |                                                      |
| UNDP (TRAC)                                                          | UN Agency                                 |                                                      |                                                          | 0.030                                                                                |                                                     | 0.30                                                 |
| Cash Cofinancing – Partner Managed                                   | DoE                                       |                                                      | 0.210                                                    | 0.6586                                                                               | 0.7500                                              | 0.9755                                               |
| Other national and international agencies                            |                                           |                                                      | 0.5226                                                   |                                                                                      |                                                     |                                                      |
|                                                                      | UNDP-GEF SGP                              |                                                      |                                                          | 0.208                                                                                | 0.119750                                            | 0.2080                                               |
|                                                                      | Wildlife Conservation Society             |                                                      |                                                          | 0.3645                                                                               | tbd                                                 | tbd                                                  |
| In-Kind Cofinancing                                                  | DoE                                       |                                                      | 0.7326                                                   |                                                                                      |                                                     | 0.7326                                               |
| <b>Total Cofinancing</b>                                             |                                           |                                                      | <b>2.1902</b>                                            | <b>1.2610</b>                                                                        | <b>tbd</b>                                          | <b>tbd</b>                                           |
| <b>Total for Project</b>                                             |                                           |                                                      |                                                          |                                                                                      |                                                     |                                                      |

**Notes**

*The amount of co-financing raised by the project through “other national and international agencies” exceeds the 0.5226 as postulated per the project document. In addition, the co-financing allocated by WCS thus far has been in excess of the 0.3645. The latter sum was allocated to the radio telemetry component which started in 2006/07. However, WCS in-kind contributions (i.e. staff time and partial travel costs) preceding the latter juncture have been considerable. The CO believes that accurate records of in-kind WCS contributions have not been kept at the WCS. DoE’s cash co-funding of the project has been significant and in major part related to payment to game guards on project’s payroll (circa 2005). In-kind contributions of the DoE could be considered as DoE’s contribution to the provision of office space in Tehran as well as the leveraging of DoE resources at the provincial/field level in line with project objectives. Whilst an calculation of the latter sum would be a challenging and imprecise exercise. Nevertheless, a rough estimate would indicate that DoE has fulfilled the lions share of its commitments in this regard.*

<sup>24</sup> Specify if: UN Agency, other Multilateral, Bilateral Donor, Regional Development Bank (RDB), National Government, Local Government, NGO, Private Sector, Other.

<sup>25</sup> Committed amounts are those shown in the approved Project Document. These may be zero in the case of new leveraged project partners.