

Abstract Template

Title, author and date of the evaluation report: Support Project to the Northern Areas Conservation Strategy, Mid-Term Review, June 2001

Objectives of the project: The Northern Areas Conservation Strategy (NACS) is a project of the Northern Area Administration, based in the Planning and Development Department (P&DD), and technically assisted by IUCN. The objective is to develop a Strategic Framework for sustainable development of the Northern Areas of Pakistan and for the conservation of its natural resources. The project has various cross-thematic components including awareness raising, capacity development, institutional strengthening and constituency building.

IUCN area of specialisation: Conservation Strategies

Geographical area: Pakistan

Project duration: 3 years

Overall budget of the project or programme

Donors: SDC, NORAD

Objectives of the evaluation:

To advise NORAD, SDC, IUCN, and Northern Areas Administration on the progress of the NACS support Project in relation to the project objectives, to identify the gaps and missing potentials, besides recommending measures that would improve the long-term effects of the project.

The review focused on the progress in achieving the project's two main objectives the first phase, which are:

- 1) Development of a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development through sustainable management of natural resources for the Northern Areas,
- 2) Institutional strengthening and capacity building of relevant partners, which will facilitate implementation of various components of the project as well as provide a strong ownership for full implementation of the Strategy once it has been prepared.

Type of evaluation: Mid-term review

Period covered by the evaluation: one year and half

Commissioned by:

Audience: NORAD, SDC, IUCN, NA administration

Evaluation team: Mixed external/internal

Methodology used: The mission reviewed the status of the NACS support project implementation through interactions and meetings with key partners and desk study. Seeing the complex and strategic nature of the project, the review team, using routine review exercise and preparatory assistance MTR reports and consulting project team and resource persons, to focus the MTR on five (5) major issues:

1) ownership, partnership and facilitating role, 2) capacity building, 3) learning mechanisms, 4) processes and institutional mechanisms and 5) management issues.

Questions of evaluations:

- 1) Ownership, partnership and networking: What is the effectiveness of support project (IUCN) in facilitating and promoting ownership among various stakeholders towards NACS? How can the formulation process be used to prepare and facilitate NACS's implementation?
- 2) Capacity building:

- 3) Learning mechanisms: Has NACS been able to draw lessons from previous experience (National Conservation Strategy, Sahrad Provincial Conservation Strategy, Balochistan Conservation Strategy) and translate them into winning approaches?
- 4) Processes and institutional mechanisms: What is the effectiveness of public consultation mechanisms and of communication among stakeholders?
- 5) Management issues:

Findings:

- 1) Ownership: The members of the project support team and direct partners are very dedicated to the NACS. The support project was successful in creating, in a relatively short period of time, a level of understanding of the potential use of the future NACS and of broader commitment to it from various stakeholders. Consultation and decision-making processes are reasonably transparent and known to stakeholders.
- 2) Capacity Building: The support project has fully realised the need of capacity building of different stakeholders from the very inception. The P&DD' Environment Section is responsible for NACS, the environmental appraisal of NRM projects, providing advice to other sections. Therefore, capacity building activities are crucial for the Environment Section.
- 3) Learning mechanisms: The experiences made so far in Balochistan and in the Sahrad provinces are well known to the main actors of NACS,. Not only all documents produced have been studied but several visits, contacts, and exchanges have allowed NACS to check their understanding of the processes and mechanisms to put in place. The review team found that the support project to the NACS has exploited most of these positive experiences.
- 4) Processes and institutional mechanisms: The project has been acknowledged as a pioneer in convening a diverse group of stakeholders (through Interest groups and roundtables) around various themes within NACS framework. Public consultations have been extensive and almost completed. The media have been involved very effectively in the NACS process. Key partners have asked to enlarge the membership of the NACS Steering Committee to give due representation to key institutions and to stakeholders. Out of 16 background papers, 50% have been drafted but the whole process has been delayed and the reasons for this delay remain unclear.
- 5) Management issues: The team appreciated the efforts made by the project in terms of work planning. The 2001 work plan though ambitious is very coherent. The monitoring system in place focuses mainly on monitoring of activities but does not provide full effectiveness in terms of steering.

Recommendations:

- 1) Ownership: The issue of ownership towards NACS is to be given a stronger attention and means are to be found to increase ownership among the main stakeholders. There is a need for improvements in a few processes (communication, transparency and coordination) to enhance the quality of partnerships and ownership of the NACS development and implementation process.
- 2) Capacity building: A more comprehensive concept of capacity building is to be established with more emphasis given to learning by doing and on the job training.
- 3) Learning mechanisms: More innovative thinking should be introduced, especially in relation to drawing the main lessons and introducing new collaborative mechanisms, but also in the elaboration of background papers is concerned.
- 4) Processes and institutional mechanisms: The Steering committee appears to be very active but the enlargement of its membership to civil society should be envisaged and its connectivity with key mechanisms as Interest Groups or Roundtables should be improved.

5) Management issues: A progress shift from activities monitoring to more result oriented and on concrete indicators based monitoring would considerably increase the transparency of the process and the commitment of all stakeholders.

Language of the evaluation: English

Available from: IUCN Pakistan Country Office, IUCN headquarters.