

Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS)

SPCS Reloaded

Report of the SPCS External Review Team

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5 January 2004

I. Summary of Findings

Note: This section is not an Executive Summary, although it does draw on and reproduce text that is in the report. Instead, it focuses on the findings of the External Review Team and on the three principal messages that we wish the report to transmit.

Purpose of the External Review

The Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS) was initiated in 1992, substantially completed in 1995, and formally approved by the Provincial cabinet in 1996. The Swiss Government and other donors have supported a series of implementation projects, each of which has been the subject of specific monitoring and evaluation procedures.

The report that follows looks not at the action taken pursuant to SPCS, but at the strategy itself. It examines the validity of the strategy in the changed context of 2003, at how well it has stood the test of time and responded to the priority environment and development needs of the Province. It assesses the present development outlook and the relevance of SPCS in meeting today's challenges. And it offers a range of suggestions for an approach that builds on the SPCS and moves onwards from where it was able to take sustainable development in Sarhad.

Assessment of the SPCS

To its credit, SPCS is still regarded, a decade after its completion, as a robust piece of work, made particularly legitimate by the participatory process followed in putting it together. It has provided a robust framework for sustainable development in the Province, and is widely regarded – by those who know it – as an excellent contribution both to awareness raising on environment and development issues, and to orienting the Province towards the highest priority responses to these issues.

At the same time, the relevance of SPCS to the challenges of today has sunk to such an extent that it no longer makes sense either to consider it as the basic framework for sustainable development, nor to update it so that it meets the requirements of today. We recommend that SPCS be regarded as an ongoing source of inspiration, ideas and wisdom, but that the process of sustainable development be substantially reframed to meet a substantially changed reality. We do not recommend updating or rewriting SPCS. We don't regard a new strategy as necessary.

What Next?

What is needed now is a new beginning, framed by SPCS but operating in the world of devolution, new governance and pro-poor development. We require an initiative that will bring the benefits where they need to be felt, not wait for the needs to knock at SPCS's door. In the coming phases of work, the approach pioneered by the SPCS must be made operational, streamlined, focused and concentrated on actions that can bring tangible benefits to people and communities.

We do not recommend a new strategy, nor even the revamping of the one that exists. It stands. It remains valid, and need not be replaced. What we recommend is a roadmap that takes the best that SPCS can offer – its vision, its understanding of sustainable development, its experience with participatory structures, its bridging of government, civil society and the private sector – and brings it into the workshops and laboratories where development is being crafted, sculpted and polished.

In reality, we recommend moving beyond the notion of a conservation strategy, even though we realize that SPCS was much more. We are not even recommending a strategy based on the contribution of environment and natural resources to poverty alleviation. Instead, we are recommending an approach, a road-map, a battle plan based on bringing the vision of sustainable development into efforts to address poverty at the provincial, district and local levels. We are recommending that the follow-up to SPCS be dedicated to supporting devolution, orienting development to the most needy, and ensuring that the contribution of environment and natural resources to poverty alleviation is thoroughly understood and incorporated into development planning and practice.

Conceptual Framework

We offer a conceptual framework based on the need to create and preserve sustainable livelihoods, especially in rural areas. We believe that livelihoods lie at the root of human development. More to the point, livelihood security is an *a priori* condition for both poverty alleviation and sustainable development. In a situation where livelihoods are being lost, where they are being undermined or threatened, the conditions for investment in sustainable development are not assembled. Livelihood insecurity increases social tension, breaks down social cohesion and solidarity, leads to an increase in power-based behaviour and, in the worse cases, degenerates into outright conflict. Where there is conflict, a negative spiral is engaged, where hostility further increases social tension, undermines mechanisms for cooperation and renders impossible the solidarity on which sustainable development must be based. On the other hand, security tends to be self-reinforcing, in that it engages the positive spiral, where security permits the development of cooperative institutions, engenders mutual dependence, and permits the advance towards development goals essential to all parties. In particular, it creates the environment in which the investment in actions with a longer-term pay-off – essential to the achievement of sustainable development – becomes possible.

Thus stability and predictability are essential preconditions for the pursuit of sustainable development, and security of livelihoods is essential if this stability is to be achieved. So, if security is the gateway to sustainable development, and sustainable development cannot be successfully pursued where security is absent, it is the security of livelihoods that provides the key to security at the local level. It follows that sustainable development must be pursued through a focus on the preservation and creation of livelihoods at the local level.

In order to preserve and create sustainable livelihoods, we need to understand what is threatening these livelihoods. The answers are multifarious, but offer a guide on where SPCS should concentrate effort. Part of the answer lies at the policy level, both in terms of the national framework of policies, incentives and regulations, and at the global level in

respect of terms of trade, access to credit, conditionality attached to loans and grants from donors, and the policy “overrides” linked to the global and regional political situation. Part of the answer lies in creating transparent and participatory mechanisms of governance so that development action is more responsive to the needs identified by the affected people and communities themselves. And part lies in offering responses and applying experience and expertise in such a way that these needs are met in ways that promote social justice and sustainable use of the environment and its resources.

SPCS has a role at all three levels. It must intervene to help put in place a policy framework that offers incentives for sustainability and ceases to reward unsustainable behaviour. It must help strengthen the participatory structures at the provincial level but especially at lower jurisdictional levels so that development addresses the real needs of people and communities. And it must bring to bear its environmental and natural resource-based expertise so that the development approaches are sustainable.

Mainstreaming Sustainable Development

One of the implications of bringing development down to the level where people’s concerns prevail, and of basing it on democratic structures through which they can to some extent steer the development process, is that environment will no longer be the central thread that unites the development process. Indeed, this is already the case. In part because the donors were taking it that way and in part because development is increasingly based on definition of needs at the base, the principal focus of development is now on poverty alleviation. Instead of trying to graft sustainable development onto the root stock of traditional development concerns, SPCS must **mainstream** its sustainable development message into the current of people-centered, poverty-focused development.

This requires more of a shift than most people realize. SPCS is, after all, a complete framework in its own right, and is generally acknowledged to offer a compelling paradigm for sustainable development. SPCS must accept now that the principal framework is another one – one that SPCS has helped to bring about and in which it can take pride – but one that is nevertheless not the SPCS and one for which sustainable development is not the central objective.

The framework for development, for now and for the conceivable future, is the framework of poverty alleviation, as articulated in the Federal PRSP, as is being elaborated in the Provincial PRSPs, and as set out in myriad donor frameworks. It is not that these frameworks are complete nor perfect, but it is precisely their incompleteness and imperfection that offers the entrée to SPCS.

The principal challenge for SPCS in the next phase is to bring its influence, experience and vision to bear on the poverty-based development framework, so that what results is an approach to development that not only relieves poverty and addresses the needs of the most marginalized, but one that advances sustainability at the same time.

SPCS should work with and through the poverty lens, but in doing so it should emphasize the contribution made by the environment and natural resources to poverty alleviation and

to sustainable approaches to development. Indeed, one of the clear criticisms that can be made of the PRSP and similar poverty alleviation strategies is that they have taken insufficient account of the need for a sound and well-managed resource base and for a healthy environment. Without these, success in poverty alleviation will always be compromised, and many early results will prove to be unsustainable.

II. Scope of the Mission

This report summarises the findings and recommendations of the Mid-Term Review (November 2003) of the Sarhad¹ Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS)². The purpose of this review was to “*enable the stakeholders, in the context of changed realities, to take stock of the current situation and identify steps for course correction.*” Specifically, the External Review Team (ERT) was asked:

1. To assess the ownership of the SPCS and progress of its implementation keeping in view positive and negative factors that have impacted on implementation.
2. To analyse and draw lessons learnt from the SPCS experience taking the strategy as a product and process, and including implementation and impact; and
3. To formulate recommendations for future course correction while reviewing the strategy’s relevance in the changed context.

It is important to stress that the ERT was reviewing the strategy as both a process and a product, and assessing its continued relevance to the changed context of the world in 2003, of Pakistan and of the North West Frontier Province. Other missions have evaluated the performance of the Strategy against the implementation work plans and follow-up projects, as well as the performance of IUCN in supporting the Strategy.

We believe that the report fulfills the objectives set out above, with the following comments:

- We regard the “changed realities” as presenting a substantially changed context for SPCS compared to the time of its completion in 1994, or its adoption in 1996.
- As a result, we allow ourselves to suggest “course corrections” that substantially alter its course – not so much as a product but as a process.

III. Approach and Organization

It is important to stress at the outset that this report is not solely the result of a visit to Sarhad by the ERT. The field visit in November 2003 was the culmination of a long and meticulous process which began almost two years previous. Indeed, in January 2002, IUCN submitted a draft Concept Paper for the Mid-Term Review of the SPCS to the Government of NWFP (See Annex 1). At the same time, IUCN’s “Programme Support for Northern

¹ This report refers to the Province variously as Sarhad, North West Frontier Province, or NWFP. There is no particular significance to the use of the different terms. We have used them interchangeably.

² The team, composed of Mark Halle, Jehanzeb Khan, and Alejandro Imbach, was constituted in May 2003. The field component of their mission took place 1-13 November, 2003.

Pakistan” unit submitted a funding proposal in support of the MTR to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The three members of the ERT were recruited between November 2002 and March 2003.

In May 2003, an Inception mission visited Pakistan and held a first meeting with the Steering Committee for the Mid-Term Review. This mission – and the Steering Committee – validated much of the Concept Paper, but introduced some amendments as well. In particular, it introduced the notion of focus group discussions and structured interviews with stakeholders, which turned out to be an important input to the ERT.

Between May and October 2003, two streams of activity took place in parallel. First, the ERT reviewed and absorbed a significant collection of documents pertaining to the SPCS and related issues in Pakistan and NWFP. The list of the documents reviewed is attached at Annex 2. It included the series of PSDN case studies mentioned in the Concept Paper, material from SPCS and NCS reviews, Annual Development Plans of the Provincial Government, sample PC 1s of projects relating to the SPCS, and much more.

At the same time, IUCN organized a series of eight Focus Group discussions around key topics of the SPCS and in the two Districts – Chitral and Abbottabad – that benefited from District Conservation Strategies. The Focus Group discussions were reflected in comprehensive reports prepared by local consultants, and were supplemented by a series of interviews which, again, were written up and made available to the ERT. A list of the Focus Group reports and specific interviews is included at Annex 3.

The ERT visited Pakistan in the period from 1 - 13 November. During this time, they met with the rapporteurs of the Focus Group reports, senior government officials and IUCN staff. They visited Abbottabad, where a workshop was held, and Islamabad for discussions with Federal Government Departments, donors, and IUCN staff. Back in Peshawar, they visited field projects, held a stakeholder consultation and, on completion of their work presented the preliminary results to the Steering Committee and to IUCN’s Senior Management. In addition, they read and absorbed many hundred pages of additional documentation relevant to SPCS.

This report, then, is the result of an intense process begun in May with the Inception mission, and concluding here with the delivery of the final conclusions and recommendations of the ERT.

IV. Changes in the Global Context

The roots of the SPCS may be traced back to the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) in 1980. The WCS provided the intellectual template for the Pakistan National Conservation Strategy, completed in 1992, which in turn served as the mother-ship from which SPCS was launched in 1996. A clear philosophical thread runs through the three, although each successive strategy reflects a further stage in thinking on sustainable development and builds on the experience of the former.

And yet there is a strong continuity, not only in the ultimate goals being pursued, but also in the assumptions that underlie the pursuit of sustainable development. With a perspective of almost ten years on the SPCS, of some fifteen on the PNCS and of almost twenty five on the WCS itself, it is important to examine these assumptions and to determine how well they hold up in a world that, in many ways, has been profoundly transformed. It is important, where the assumptions are found to be in need of modification, to understand the consequences for the choices made in the SPCS process, and on options for the future of the process.

This is the purpose of this chapter of our report: to sketch out what we understand to be the context in which the goal of sustainable development is today pursued. What are the elements of that context, and what do they imply for the objectives of the SPCS at global, national and provincial levels? We will see that a series of deep shifts have taken place in the policy context in which SPCS is working. When one further considers the political earthquakes that have gripped the region, it is clear that the challenges of constructing the sustainable development edifice are today very different from those facing IUCN and its partners in the Provincial Government when they embarked upon the task in the early 1990s.

Basic Assumptions

Perhaps the greatest assumption the sustainable development community made is that the stream is basically running in the right direction. We tended to believe that, for all the frustrations and setbacks, the process of development was nevertheless advancing – the economy was growing, opportunities for our generation were better than for the last, and would be still better for our children, health and education services were improving, and being offered where they never had been before, awareness of the environment was growing among decision-makers together with the means to translate this awareness into environmental achievements, governance was becoming slowly more transparent, more participatory and more accountable, and the orientation of both multilateral and bilateral development assistance was becoming more sensitive to the challenges of poverty eradication, social justice and environmental conservation.

A second and related assumption held that the task of sustainable development was to integrate the policy planning and implementation process, to mainstream sustainability thinking, and to use whatever influence could be gained to tinker with, modify, browbeat, threaten, blackmail, or otherwise nudge development onto a more sustainable path. The assumption was that the development process is what it is, and is changeable only incrementally, with enormous effort and patience. And what change can be achieved is the preserve of insiders, so the challenge is to gain acceptability, work on the inside and effect whatever change can be secured.

A third assumption is that policies in other areas than the development and environment spheres are essentially policy-neutral until otherwise demonstrated. Under this assumption, the challenge for sustainable development is to counter the most egregious instances of unsustainability, and otherwise to focus on sustainable development-friendly course

corrections, but not to dispute the basic policies themselves, nor the economic model on which they are based.

A final assumption holds that, even in a moderately unfriendly policy environment, policy space can be carved out to preserve or even advance the principal factors of sustainable development. Even in the public sector-cutting environment of a structural adjustment plan, means can be found to “ring-fence” key environmental resources, or to replace lost public sector programmes with private sector or NGO action; in an atmosphere of deregulation, waivers can be obtained for environmental legislation and standards, or pro-poor requirements. And in any event, the growing awareness of environment and sustainable development issues would eventually bring the economic policy community to its senses and lead to a gradually rising priority for action aimed at advancing sustainable development along with a more critical examination of current policies to discern their impact on sustainable development prospects.

Taking just the last ten to twelve years – roughly the period from the first conception of the SPCS to the present - how well have these assumptions stood the test of time? What are the relevant changes to the policy environment in which the SPCS has been navigating? And how close a watch has SPCS kept on the shifting tides and the fickle winds of change?

Changes in the Outlook for Sustainable Development

The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (June 1992) was – there is little doubt – the high water mark for the environmental movement. It hammered into place major new elements of the global environmental architecture (the UNFCCC, CBD, CSD³) and set out a detailed roadmap on how to make the trip from the unsustainable development practices that characterized the world at that time, to the sustainable world imagined in the Rio Principles and sketched out in fine detail in the speeches of the succession of Heads of State at the Earth Summit. A detailed instruction manual was provided, in the form of Agenda 21, and an estimate of \$125 billion handed round as the cost of undertaking the work. Governments were given very strong encouragement to go home and play out the scenario, and promises of substantial aid resources were made to prime the pump.

The high spirits in Rio prevented the jubilant greens from noticing a tidal surge moving up the river, soon to overwhelm and largely invalidate the too-easy commitments to Rio, Agenda 21 and sustainability. Because, at the same time, a belief in market-based solutions was taking over with the force of a religious crusade, sweeping all doubts and all alternatives aside in its inexorable advance. Started as a vocal exercise in Washington and London, the score-sheet of the “Washington consensus”⁴ was passed around OECD capitals and multilateral financing institutions until it was sung by a global chorus and drowned out all other tunes. Under this approach, countries that underwent policy reform and opened their

³ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Commission on Sustainable Development)

⁴ The Washington consensus holds that countries that liberalize trade, offer reinforced protection of investor rights, float their currencies and sharply reduce public interference in the marketplace will be rewarded with investment-led growth.

economies to trade and investment would generate, through their own growth, the resources needed for their development and, consequently, the resources to address their social and environmental challenges. Trade, not aid, was the answer. Countries should not beg but grow their way out of poverty.

Not coincidentally, this approach was being promoted as the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations was coming to a conclusion (the agreements were signed in April 1994), resulting in a massively expanded reach of trade policy into the field of domestic decision-making. Coupled with the requirements of economic policy reform and the increasing linkage of development assistance with governance-based conditionality, the scope for sovereign decision-making by developing countries was greatly curtailed. Henceforth, developing countries' access to credit, markets for their goods, and even technical assistance was linked closely to their performance against the criteria set by the Washington consensus.

SPCS, like the PNCS and the WCS before it, is firmly in the tradition of the **Rio consensus**, with its belief in the determining action of governments in the achievement of development, and its reliance on strategies and plans as a fundamental tool to guide that action. Yet if there is one central impact of the Washington consensus, it is to undermine the ability of governments to do much more than put in place a favourable policy framework for development and to help orchestrate the different actors involved. It also removed from the hands of national governments the decisions that are central to achieving development – transferring them upwards to multilateral institutions, downwards to local jurisdictions or to civil society, and outwards to the market place.

We shall return to this reality later, but for the SPCS there are two implications – first, that fewer of the decisions fundamental to achieving the SPCS' objectives are in the hands of the project's principal partners in the Sarhad government and, second, that the nature of the policy framework governing development in Sarhad is likely to make the difference between success and failure for the SPCS.

SPCS and Market Liberalization

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Washington consensus has proved disappointing, especially for developing countries. Its precepts did indeed lead to rapid economic growth, but little of it was to the benefit of developing countries. Further, where developing countries shared in the growth, it did little to close the gaps between rich and poor in those countries. If anything, it had the opposite effect.

Economic openness has only rarely been rewarded with a large increase in inward investment. The new trade rules imposed a range of new obligations on developing countries, but did not translate into substantially improved access to Northern markets for their primary products. Removing obstacles to investment and tightening protection of investment rights has not led automatically to increased investment flows. And while the standard policy reform package has offered some benefits, it has generally proved to be at the price of increased social marginalization and a widening gap between rich and poor.

So, while the Washington consensus has tended to work for its chief proponents, it has proved disappointing to most others, and especially to most developing countries. How has this generally recognized failure been received? For the proponents of the reform package, the fault lies in the incomplete application of the prescriptions, and in the governance failure that bedevils too many countries, especially in the developing world. For the victims, it has led to a vocal “anti-globalization” movement, an undermining of social stability nationally and internationally, and a new effort on the part of developed countries to oppose or reform policies that they are convinced are not in their national interest. The failure of the recent WTO Ministerial meeting in Cancun is an example of the latter process in action.

The problem in dealing with this situation is that there is merit to the arguments on both sides. It is perfectly clear – and is growing increasingly so – that the global economic system is grossly skewed in favour of the rich countries, and that the liberalization of trade and capital that lies at the heart of globalization has deepened the gap between rich and poor countries, and between the rich and poor in most countries. As it is, the system is unsustainable and both rich and poor countries face serious problems if the situation is not addressed soon.

At the same time, it is equally clear that countries that undergo reform half-heartedly, because it is required as a condition of access to financial markets, tend to do the minimum necessary to meet the conditions of the creditors. The limited reform that they do undertake tends also to underline the governance failures built into their present systems, providing a double motive for voter dissatisfaction. Without substantial governance reform in many countries, the benefits that could be derived from economic openness tend not to result in real advances for development and poverty alleviation.

Did the Rio crowd go down without a whimper? Not exactly. Increasingly disturbed at the steady weakening of government services, and the sacrificing of the public good to private interests, the world community made a series of attempts to muster their forces. The UN's special Millennium Assembly set a range of specific targets to be reached by the collective efforts of the world community over the coming ten to fifteen years. The UN Summit for the Least Developed Countries examined the situation of the world's most destitute, and the UN Conference on Financing for Development (FFD) sought to mobilize resources to meet the development challenge. These culminated in the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in September 2002.

Development Assistance after WSSD

To most observers and participants, WSSD was a disappointment. Almost no firm and enforceable commitments were made, no significant new resources were pledged, and the task of implementing the outcomes was handed back to institutions that have proved their ineffectiveness beyond the shadow of a doubt. Taken together with the weak Millennium Goals, the slender outcomes of the Least Developed and FFD summits, and the continuing decline in untied aid allocations, **it is now clear that we will not tame the tide of globalization with our existing structures and processes.** Appealing to the greater good of the poorest and the coming generations is not sufficient to counteract the strong economic and political interests vested in the present arrangements and privileges.

These pressures, and in particular the dual pressures of globalization and for governance reform, has substantially changed the paradigm facing development planners, and those dedicated to the advancement of sustainable development. The impact of this new paradigm is nowhere more strongly felt than in the field of development cooperation, and *ipso facto* in respect of the conditions under which a process such as SPCS unfolds and develops. Several factors may be noted.

First, there is a growing recognition on the part of both donors and civil society that progress towards sustainable development is not possible in a negative policy environment. It follows that many aid approaches used in the past – to compensate for governance failures, misguided policies, or as stop-gap measures – are now subject to much closer scrutiny and to more critical examination. **The need to demonstrate the sustainability of aid interventions has risen up the priority checklist.**

Aid-supported approaches, programmes and projects are also now being subjected to tougher tests to prove their relevance to the key policy objectives set by governments and donors together. An example is the attention now being paid to poverty alleviation, when heretofore it has tended to be only a vaguely expressed goal.

In part because of growing criticism in Northern capitals and of the growing competition for ever-scarcer budget resources, there is now much more attention being paid to aid effectiveness, and greater up-front scrutiny of development assistance to gauge its real chances for success. Environmental assistance, in particular, is being subjected to tougher tests of relevance, and there is a growing impatience at environmental tinkering at the edges of a system that is in overall decline. Where environmental aid projects used to be considered worthy simply because the issue was widely regarded as positive and important, today it must, if anything, meet stricter tests than assistance in other fields.

There is now a clearly-emerging aid paradigm that is being broadly applied, with little tailoring to ensure it meets the requirements of local circumstances. The first dimension of this paradigm is the need for a favourable policy context. Much more aid effort, attention and resources are going into basic policy reform. The second dimension is the growing intolerance for poor governance and the realization that, in the absence of minimum levels of participation, transparency and accountability on the part of public authorities, supporting these with aid resources is simply a waste of money. The third dimension, and it is still fairly exploratory at this stage, relates to an effort by development assistance to return to its roots – namely to the challenge of assisting the poorest and most marginalized first and foremost. The new “poverty focus” of development assistance reflects the growing realization that the market pendulum may have swung too far away from the public sector, and that there is a necessary role to be played – under government supervision at least – to ensure the protection and delivery of essential public goods.

V. Changes in national and provincial context

SPCS preparation started in early 1990s. The Strategy was approved by the Provincial Cabinet in 1996. SPCS was inspired by the global movement for environmental protection. It developed within the national and provincial context prevailing during the period of its formulation. Much has since changed, and SPCS cannot be assessed without taking into consideration the significant changes in the political and social context in Sarhad during the period under consideration.

The geo-political setting

Many of the relevant changes in the context are known and reasonably well understood. The impact of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and, in particular, the escalation of its war against the Mujaheddin in the mid- and late-1980s, not only led to the arrival of over 2 million Afghan refugees in Sarhad, with all the attendant pressures on the natural resource base and the economy, it also turned Peshawar into a theatre for high-level political maneuvering on a scale rarely seen anywhere. The withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan during the late '80s could have been an opportunity for the stabilization of the region. Afghanistan, however, continued to face ceaseless turmoil throughout the 1990s, a situation that continues today.

This has had numerous implications for Pakistan – particularly for Sarhad. The emergence of many social problems - such as the “kalashnikov culture”, the drug trade and indigenous drug addiction - are seen as spill-overs from the war in Afghanistan. The situation on the Province’s western border has been complicated by political upheavals, corruption, polarization of the society, and resurgence of narrow political ideologies resulting in intolerance and violence that has undermined social order and stability.

Both the internal instability and the external threats caused by the war in neighbouring Afghanistan are significant in considering the challenges faced by the SPCS, and the obstacles facing Sarhad in placing its development on a sustainable footing. These political and social upheavals have taken place precisely in the period that corresponds to the development and implementation of the SPCS. The “aid” resources that poured into the Province in support of the Afghan refugees or “freedom fighters”, and the central stake of various international players in their success, fundamentally altered many of the balances on which Sarhad’s society and governance had previously rested. **Among the changes were a growing interlacing of the Province and its economy with the economy beyond the border, the growth of the illicit or frankly illegal economy, the growth of religiously-motivated assistance, and the natural suspicion of the presence and motivation of some aid actors.**

It is often said that sustainable development cannot thrive in an atmosphere of insecurity and instability. Indeed, security is the basis for planning, and planning for sustainable development. A return to a situation of security is a precondition to advancing once more in the direction of sustainable development. From 1989, when the last Soviet armoured car retreated over the bridge at Termez, to the present day, there has been no stability in the

region, and therefore only limited stability in Sarhad. The Province was profoundly affected by the internal struggle for domination of Afghanistan that followed the Soviet retreat. The victory of the Taliban forces was, once again, deeply significant for the Province, owing to its natural alliances with those in power in Kabul. The rise of religious fundamentalism, favoured by the Taliban, touched Sarhad as well so that, when the 11 September attacks and the invasion of Afghanistan that followed took place, the Province could not help but be dragged back onto the international stage. It has yet to recover the internal political stability it requires to make development – much less sustainable development – the main priority.

Development worldwide is bedevilled by what are known as “strategic overrides”. Formal policy might dictate a range of established priorities, but these can easily be overridden by any one of many considerations. The fight against terror, or against drug trafficking, or the need to access oil from Central Asia, will often override the formal objectives of both government policy and development assistance. When the override is sufficiently compelling, it will even divert aid in support of the immediate political objective. Development in Sarhad, if not always the programmes of its key development assistance partners, has too often been made subservient to more urgent political objectives. This is the reality that faces the SPCS. These are the political coordinates that must be punched into its navigation system.

Crises of governance and public finance

In parallel with these political developments, Pakistan - and by extension Sarhad - has undergone a crisis in public finance and public service delivery. Throughout the 90s, Pakistan was carrying out macroeconomic reforms supported by IMF’s Stabilization Programmes and subsequently through the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility. Perhaps as a result, Sarhad devoted disappointingly few resources to addressing poverty priorities and to delivery of social services, and both poverty and social gaps have sharpened, as different surveys show.

Pakistan’s testing of a nuclear device in 1998 led to a substantial withdrawal of donor support, with the result that many donor-funded projects suffered. The breakdown of constitutional government in 1999 further diminished backing for Pakistan in many western capitals, leaving the country to grapple with serious external and internal problems. The military regime responded to the difficult circumstances by embarking on an ambitious programme of reforms. The showpiece of these reform efforts is the devolution of powers and responsibilities to the local level through a radical restructuring of provincial and local governments.

The events of September 11, 2001 once again propelled Pakistan onto centre stage. Firmly allied with the United States in the international coalition assembled to fight the war against terrorism, Pakistan evoked renewed interest in the western capitals and the donor community. The realization grew rapidly that the country requires support to address the many external and internal issues that could damage its stability. Within Pakistan and because of its critical geopolitical position, Sarhad assumed a central place in these efforts. This brought the focus once again around to the long-standing governance and development issues facing the Province.

The public sector reforms designed for the Province are broadly directed towards improving public governance, stimulating the private sector through creation of a business-friendly environment, promoting human development and enhancing the quality of the public service. These reform plans have found international support as it is broadly acknowledged that an economically healthy and secure Sarhad is critical for the stability of the region and national efforts to promote tolerance and moderation. To what extent has that goal been achieved?

Social Indicators of Sarhad

It is useful to look at the social indicators for Sarhad to ascertain the social development status of the Province during the period of SPCS formulation and implementation. The NWFP district-based multiple cluster survey of 2001 confirms the poor social indicators and high gender disparities in the Province. Gender gaps in Sarhad are larger than those for the country as a whole – and these are already disturbingly large! The social and economic position of women in Sarhad is extremely weak. Women have a very restricted opportunities to participate in socio-economic development and are traditionally occupied in the household. Women enjoy limited land holdings, low agricultural productivity and an inadequate resource base.

The survey cited above provides startling disclosures - also highlighting the variations in different districts of the Province. The infant mortality rate in the Province is 79 per 1000. Over one third of children (38%) under 5 years of age are underweight for their age. Only 39% of children of primary school age (5-9 years) are enrolled in a primary school. The completion rate for grades 1-5 primary school in children aged 5-9 is 68%. Only 40% of the population 15 years and over is literate; with the wide disparity between males and females (59% versus 21%). About two thirds (63%) of the population has access to the safe drinking water - 88% in urban and only 59% in rural areas. The average daily per capita income of the population is some Rs. 20! 41% of all income earners over 15 years of age receive less than Rs. 60 per day (US\$ 1).

These indicators provide a flavour of the social development situation in Sarhad. SPCS embraced the Social Action Programme (SAP), the major social sector development endeavour in the 1990s, as the primordial vehicle for addressing social progress in the Province. However, rather than developing explicit linkages between SPCS and SAP, and exploring how to bring about mutual reinforcement, SPCS tended to assume that, with the SAP addressing social development, it could concentrate on natural resources and the environment. SAP, too, culminated in 2002 with mostly unsatisfactory achievements (ref. the Implementation Completion Report – Second Social Action Programme Project). It achieved a minimal impact on the human development position of the Province.

Ordinary citizens benefited neither from expanded investment and active donor involvement in the social sector since service delivery continued to be of poor quality. Assessments of the SAP rate achievements in education as unsatisfactory, and in health as marginally satisfactory. Rural water supply and sanitation also received an unsatisfactory rating, while only the population welfare sector was rated satisfactory. The net school enrolment rates in Sarhad increased from 39% in 1998-99 to 41% in 2001-02. For males, it moved from 47% to 48%, while in case of females it climbed from 30% to 33%. The percentage of children

immunized climbed from 54 to 57%. These marginal improvements were offset by the high population growth rate.

It was in this bleak setting that SPCS was expected to define the sustainable development policy agenda of the Province. That it failed to penetrate the policy priorities pursued by the Province's elected representatives is not a surprise, though it is a bit disappointing. Without a clear strategy for improving quality of life, SPCS was bound to remain a conservation effort - somewhat in isolation from the pressing development needs of the people of the Province. Meanwhile, poverty continued to deepen and to threaten social stability.

Poverty in Sarhad

Sarhad is the poorest province of Pakistan. There is evidence that poverty became exacerbated in the Province during the 1990's compared to the situation in Pakistan as a whole. Sarhad's population is close to 20 million and is growing at 2.5% per year. Nearly 50% of the population lives in mountainous and arid areas. The overall incidence of poverty in Sarhad is substantially higher than that for the country as a whole (poverty head count in 1998-99 is 43% as compared to 33% for Pakistan). Average per capita consumption is lower when compared to the rest of the country. While urban poverty in Sarhad declined by six percentage points from 1990-91 to 1998-99, rural poverty increased by more than four percentage points during the same period. Urban poverty remained much higher than in the urban areas in the rest of the country.

The percentage of the Province's population living in poverty in FY93 was 35.3%. It escalated to 42.6% in FY99. During the same period, the incidence of poverty for Pakistan moved from 26.6% to 32.2%. Certain characteristics of poverty of Sarhad - poor social indicators and high gender disparity have already been mentioned. Gender gaps are significant for all socio-economic indicators in Sarhad. These tend to be wider in rural areas than in urban areas. Even as the population growth rate registered a downward trend, the average family size remained at 7.8 members per household, which compares unfavourably with the average of 6.8 for Pakistan. The average farm size in the Province is only 2.2 acres, compared to 9.4 acres in Pakistan as a whole.

These indicators explain some of the pressure on Sarhad's limited resource base, which is mostly confined to unexploited minerals and hydro-electric potential. SPCS was developed and implemented in this environment of poverty and deprivation. Little wonder that the Strategy remained on the fringe of provincial development endeavours as it did little to offer solutions to the pressing issue of poverty alleviation and improving livelihoods.

Drought

Another change in the national and provincial context is the severe drought that hit parts of Pakistan towards the end of the 1990s. Drought spread to 14 districts of Sarhad - Abbottabad, Bannu, Buner, Chitral, D.I.Khan, Dir (Upper), Dir (Lower), Hangu, Haripur, Kohat, Karak, Kohistan, Tank and Lakki Marwat. Precipitation during 2000 was 20-35% lower than the historical average. Lower than average temperatures in the snow/glacier melt zones further resulted in shortfall in the availability of water in the Indus River System. The drought affected agriculture, damaged crops and orchards and led to death, slaughter and distress sale of livestock. The impact was greatest in the barani (rain fed) areas.

The drought highlighted the disastrous impacts that can result from environmental degradation. A Drought Emergency Relief Assistance Programme (DERA), with federal assistance and in collaboration with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, is underway in the Province. Sarhad plans to promote a water conservation strategy through building of small dams and irrigation schemes. The impact of the drought on poverty in Sarhad is still being assessed.

Devolution

The most radical contextual change in Sarhad's political and administrative landscape has been the reform programme – and in particular the devolution of powers and responsibilities to the Local Governments. Devolution has major implications for SPCS and its future.

Under a federally-organized National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB), large-scale restructuring of the provincial and local governments was initiated in 2001. The purpose was reconstruction and regulation of elected local governments. This was to be achieved through devolution of political power and decentralization of administrative and financial authority to accountable local governments for good governance. The objective was to achieve effective delivery of services and transparent decision-making through institutionalized participation of the people at the grass roots (preamble-LGO 2001).

The new district based-government structures established under the devolution plan are now largely operational in the Province. These have fundamentally altered the province–district relationship. Under the previous system, policies and plans were formulated at the provincial level. Districts were implementation units. In the post-devolution political and administrative landscape, districts are self-contained political units with local political leadership and management teams. The province-district relationship, though defined in the LGP and LGO, is still nebulous and evolving.

The LGP 2000 envisaged that 'Local Government would function clearly within the provincial framework. Sustainable development and credible improvement in the delivery of the services through devolution of power and responsibilities and decentralization of authority to the districts will greatly enhanced the image and effectiveness of the provincial government at the grass roots'. The Local Government Ordinance 2001 stipulates that 'the district governments are required to work within the provincial frame work and adhere to federal and provincial laws (P-69 – Section 54 LGO)'. The Ordinance also states that the general policy of the provincial government is to be followed (P-73 – Section 16 LGO).

The provincial government is authorized to provide guidelines and render advice to the district government through the concerned Zila Nazim to achieve the aims of government policies and to promote economic, social and environmental security of the province. The District Mushawarat (Consultation) Committee is prescribed in Section 140 (P-129 – LGO). It provides a forum for consultation among the various levels of Nazims.

District Based Planning Mechanism under LGO 2001

The local government system creates new institutions and processes for district-based planning and development. Apart from the inputs of the elected local leaders, it also provides for institutional participation of the civil society organizations through the mechanism of Citizen Community Boards (CCBs).

The Zila Nazim (ZN) is the elected head of the District Government. S(he) is expected to provide a vision for district wide development as well as leadership and direction for efficient functioning of the district government (P-73 – Section 18 LGO). ZN is also to oversee formulation and execution of the annual development plan, delivery of services and functioning of the district government.

Sectoral development plans are to be prepared by the devolved departments. It is the responsibility of the executive district officer of the concerned department to ensure the preparation of these plans (P-78 – Section 39 LGO). Urban districts (those with a population over one million) are termed city districts. In city districts, the Zila Council is required to approve master plans, zoning, land use plans, environmental control, urban design, urban renewal and ecological benefits. Development of an integrated system of water reservoirs, water resources, treatment plants, drainage, liquid and solid waste disposal, sanitation and municipal services are also the functions of the city municipal government.

The Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) is responsible for municipal services regulations, planning and coordination at the tehsil level (P-87 – Section 53 LGO). TMAs have wide-ranging environmental functions under Section 54 of LGO. Union Nazims are required to provide leadership for union-wide development and keep a check on environmental damage (Section 80 LGO). Village councils and neighbourhood councils also have environmental functions (Section 96 LGO).

Citizens Community Boards

LGO 2001 provides for participation by non-elected citizens through the Citizens Community Boards, which are legally-registered non-profit organizations at the local level. Establishing the priorities for the development budget is to be done through a bottom-up planning process (P-116 – Section 109 [12] LGO). The modalities for community participation are laid down in section 119, wherein detailed guidelines are provided regarding the mechanism of identification and approval of the various schemes.

The CCB system is not yet functional. The District Governments, TMAs and Union Administrations are organizing awareness campaign with the purpose to disseminate the concept of CCBs and the District Social Welfare Officers have been given the responsibility to register them. Rules for the functioning of the CCBs are currently being drawn up. How well the system will function is still a matter of speculation. Indeed, some elected representatives argue that it is their prerogative to determine expenditures from public funds. They have reservations about the role assigned to the CCBs.

The present position

The devolution of power and responsibility to lower tiers of government is still taking place. The main areas of concern relate to the integration of the devolved structures of governance with the still existing provincial and local government structures, as well as the prospects for developing a coordinated and collaborative approach. It is also clearly a high priority to enhance the capacity of local government structures and to set in place district-level compliance mechanisms. Though the LGO 2001 defines the scope and mandate of the local government institutions, practical difficulties are being encountered in fully establishing the requisite structures and functions. Whereas some of the difficulties would be resolved through improved information, knowledge, skill development and capacity enhancement of the elected and appointed officials, there are black areas where design flaws require urgent attention to put the system on a sound footing.

The devolution of power from the province to the local level was envisaged within a wider frame that also envisaged devolution of authority from the federal to the provincial level. While power has been devolved from the province to the local level, devolution from the federation to the province has not been undertaken. The result is dilution of provincial authority and responsibility and what appears to be a threat to the standing of the provincial administration. As a result, the Province is not geared for the supportive role necessary for effective functioning of the local governments and has little incentive to support devolution wholeheartedly. Appropriate linkages among various tiers of government and requisite integration mechanisms are not in place. In addition, the province is still heavily dependent on the federal tax assignments. More predictability and transparency is required in federal/provincial and provincial/local fiscal transfers.

Another key feature is the absence of compliance mechanisms in the districts. With the abolition of the institution of District Magistrate - the chief enforcement officer in the district - direction and district-wide leadership for compliance with laws and regulations are missing. This is a serious shortcoming since, in the public eye, the effectiveness of local government institutions is measured by improvements in public service delivery, compliance with existing statutes and access to justice. A wide gap has emerged on this score that is evident in the weak implementation of environmental laws.

Some of the institutions envisaged under the devolution plan are still not functioning. The Zila Mushawarat Committee (district consultation committee), Monitoring Committees and Masalehat Anjumans (conflict resolution committees) have either not yet met or have not been constituted. The District Public Safety Commission and the Union Public Safety Committees also await notification.

Devolution Support

A number of initiatives are in place to support the devolution plan. The most elaborate is the Decentralization Support Programme, operated with funding from the Asian Development Bank. Rupees 206.7 million is earmarked for 2002-03 to 2006-07 for capacity building and systems support to the provincial and local government departments. The UNDP-supported Essential Institutional Reforms Operationalisation Programme (EIROP) is also engaged in similar efforts.

Provincial reforms

Sarhad is undertaking a Provincial Reforms Programme (2001-2004) to address its multiple socio-economic problems. This is being undertaken through the NWFP Structural Adjustment Credit (SAC), which is worth US\$ 90 million and aims to transform the way the provincial government provides services. The programme expects that 'decentralization would shift the locus of responsibility to the local governments, enhance local capacity and develop a new strategic emphasis on development outcomes and primary service delivery'.

Specific objectives of the reforms programme are:

- Good governance through rationalization, professionalism and accountability
- Strengthening public services delivery systems and devolution of responsibilities
- Financial management reforms
- Private sector development for sustainable economic growth
- Priority allocations to social services
- Maintenance of public assets
- Improved service delivery
- Increased fiscal space
- Efficient and equitable provincial revenue system
- Reliance on own revenues
- Increased cost recovery
- Complete devolution of fiscal functions
- Release of funds
- Sustainable fiscal outlook
- Reduced debt burden

Concurrently, Sarhad has also prepared its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). This paper provides extensive analysis of the poverty situation in Sarhad; presents medium-term budgetary frameworks for enhancing effectiveness and accountability of expenditure and strengthening of resource mobilization. It lays great emphasis on accelerating human development and creating social assets. The main pillars of PRSP are governance reforms; improved service delivery; effectiveness and accountability of public expenditures; sustainable private sector development to accelerate economic growth; and addressing vulnerability to shocks. In other words, it is fully compatible with the movement towards devolution and decentralization. Indeed, its success depends on it.

Some of the changes in the national and provincial context during SPCS implementation have been recounted in this chapter. It is obvious that SPCS, despite its many successes, cannot continue to function in the new environment in its original form. The approach requires significant adaptation and readjustment. The challenge is to integrate post-SPCS initiatives with the new development paradigm. SPCS must promote sustainable livelihoods, improve quality of life and protect the environment in a decentralized setting where people enjoy new possibilities to participate in the decisions that most affect them. SPCS must align with the changed landscape – not as a comprehensive plan of action but as a series of actions synergized with other interventions.

SPCS presaged the development of district strategies. Devolution has heightened the need for district-based institutions and mechanisms for development planning and action. It is this requirement that SPCS should meet if it is to find relevance in the new development paradigm.

VI. Assessment of the SPCS

Introduction

As noted in Part I above, this report is focused on the SPCS itself, and not on the projects and programmes through which its implementation was advanced and supported. That has been done elsewhere. This section focuses on the SPCS – on the framework for sustainable development that it offers, and on the institutional mechanisms it adopted or pioneered. **It aims to assess how well SPCS has stood the test of time and how useful it is in facing today's challenges.**

Assessing a process of this nature is not a simple task, given the large variety of issues that can be addressed. The SPCS Review focused on a limited number of key aspects of the strategy:

1. Nature of Strategies
2. SPCS Assumptions
3. SPCS Format and Content
4. Institutional arrangements for implementation
5. Application and effectiveness
6. Monitoring, evaluation and learning
7. Ownership and adoption
8. SPCS and the development agenda
9. Gender integration in SPCS
10. Poverty alleviation and SPCS

1. Nature of strategies

As noted in Part III above, the adoption of the NCS by the federal cabinet in 1992 spurred the Government of Sarhad to develop a provincial conservation strategy. Key political and civil service leaders in the province were attracted to the development of a strategy as offering a flexible approach to secure the economic, social and ecological well-being of the people of the Province through conservation and sustainable development of its natural resources. Civil society partners perceived it as an opportunity to penetrate the heretofore closed public sector planning process and to engage with the public sector. The donors, too, were amenable to the idea as strategic planning fitted the dominant development paradigm of the period. The time was propitious for the preparation of an ambitious statement of concerns and solutions. Adoption of a conservation strategy, it was hoped, would raise the political profile of the environment and enable key environmental issues to be dealt with on a priority basis.

SPCS combines a strategic approach to the conservation of natural resources in Sarhad with the outline of an action plan for implementation. Part 1 lays down the context; Part 2 outlines the strategy; and Part 3 spells out the implementation mechanism. Implementation is largely assigned to the government departments. **The SPCS stresses that it does not offer a detailed road map for implementation, suggesting that further action-oriented plans would follow. This has not been the case.** While some projects and initiatives appear to be inspired by the Strategy, there are no well thought-out action plans to guide its effective implementation. To make matters worse, the numerous actions that the Strategy recommends (and expects to be implemented) are not prioritized to provide the basis for feasible plans of action. The wish list is simply too long.

The MTR of NCS points out the need to explain more fully and deal with the varying expectations of what is meant by ‘strategy’ and ‘strategic planning’ (P26-MTR-NCS). These terms are variously understood. To some a strategy implies detailed designs and budgets. At the local level, it is seen as more projects – predominantly more infrastructure. The MTR-NCS concurs with the view (held by some at the provincial level) that a strategy is a ‘market of ideas’ followed by concrete policies and laws only when they have been proven to be useful, through a process of policy, trial, monitoring and spread of ‘best practices’. Strategies are a blueprint for action, but as such they lead to frustration unless there is local capacity in place to translate strategy to action. Plainly, the strengths and limitations of strategy development for sustainable development need to be fully understood. This not only helps in defining next steps, but also facilitates shared appreciation of the enterprise.

It is also necessary to highlight that many organizations conceive strategies as processes aimed at strengthening awareness and empowerment, in which the key outcome is not the document but the participatory discussion it permits and the awareness created as a consequence. SPCS has performed much better under this conception than under the “blueprint for action” one.

2. Assumptions

Looking at the SPCS process and its products, the presence of some key underlying assumptions emerge:

1. Government is the key target of the process and governmental organizations serve as the principal mechanism for implementation
2. Influencing the provincial planning process, in particular by affecting Annual Development Plans, will lead to a growing number of environmentally-sensitive activities and to a larger allocation of the public budget to environmentally-related issues
3. Sustainability of key institutional mechanisms can be relied upon once they have demonstrated their usefulness, despite significant political changes at national or provincial levels
4. Environment is an ongoing priority in the international agenda, and hence a key criterion in the allocation of international development assistance funding

5. SPCS implementation can depend on continued external financing, with little need to ensure the reorientation of national and provincial budgets.

All of these initial assumptions about SPCS have proved to be completely or partially wrong in the course of the decade of implementation, and most have become a major constraint for the successful implementation of SPCS. A critical review and replacement of assumptions is a key task for any successful future existence for the Strategy.

3. Format and content

Analysis of the format of the SPCS is considerably affected by the changes in the global context presented above. SPCS was prepared in the immediate post-Rio era and reflects the optimistic outlook that was then prevalent. In development terms, the dominating outlook rapidly evolved into one based on free trade and markets (under the Washington consensus), only to be over-ridden by one that gives priority to security issues over all others. This analysis, undertaken in 2003, is made with this “itinerary” in mind.

Considering the date of preparation and publication (1992-1996) the format of the Strategy document seems appropriate. The document is basically aimed at providing guidance and orientation to Governmental action at different levels, and most of the document is devoted to the Action Plan, including clear actions and expected outputs for the different sectors, as well as a comprehensive financial analysis and an input to the monitoring and evaluation framework.

Aspects that could have improved the Strategy format and content include:

- a. A clear and convincing analysis of the objectives of undertaking a conservation strategy and expectations for its use as a process, instrument or guide to action. A clear statement of the link between the “conservation” approach and the challenges of poverty and development might have helped clarify that to which SPCS aspired, and those objectives that it considered beyond its scope.
- b. An analysis of hypotheses and scenarios aimed at identifying the basis for expecting that the Action Plan would be implemented and result in significant advances for conservation. This lack of focus resulted in a Strategy that went in all directions, proposing ideas and activities in a broad spectrum of fields and actors, without adequate attention being paid to how these actors might be mobilized, and how to ensure the expected impact.
- c. An Action Plan with a clear indication of who is expected to change and what change is expected. Instead, SPCS presents a long menu of things that should be done, by somebody, somehow. We know now that outlining the challenge is no guarantee that it will be addressed.
- d. Multi-stakeholder implementation mechanisms. The implementation mechanisms included in the document are almost purely Governmental. This fact originates both in IUCN’s experience with the NCS, the strong role the public service has tended to play in Pakistan’s development, and the lack of many viable alternatives.

Interestingly, this issue and its risks are very well analyzed in the introductory chapters of the SPCS, but the Action Plan shows evidence that this initial, well focused, analysis was not carried through to the Strategy's suggested actions. Closely linked to the implementation issue is the accountability issue. Who was it intended should be held accountable for implementation of the Action Plan and the Strategy in general, and did the intended parties knowingly take on this responsibility? The answer to these questions is not in the Strategy. In this, SPCS is no worse than others in its category. Most Strategies fail both to pose and respond to this sort of question for a variety of reasons, ranging from lack of political clarity to the fact that the Strategies are often – honestly – pursued for their awareness-raising value more than from any realistic hope of substantially changed outcomes.

- e. The SPCS is mute on the identity of the key target groups. Given its language and style, it appears to have been aimed mostly at Government and, to some extent, the academic and technical sectors. There is little evidence of effort put into producing popular versions of the SPCS in local languages, nor of consistent planning to use the Strategy for awareness and education purposes.

It is easy, with the benefit of our 2003 perspective, to point to where SPCS might have been improved. In all fairness, there are few if any strategic documents in the mid-nineties that avoid the drawbacks mentioned above.

Looking at the Strategy with our present perspective, some obvious gaps appear:

- There is no strategy. As mentioned before, the participatory process succeeded in creating awareness (probably the most important result of SPCS) and in drawing up a list of implementation needs. The same result was achieved in the preparation of the sectoral papers. All the needs so identified were structured in the SPCS Action Plan. This is good, but it is not a strategy.
- The Strategy fails to explain why it is expected that the activities included in the Action Plan would lead to conservation.
- In terms of content, the general approach is biased towards conservation, making it a “green” sectoral strategy within the broader field of sustainable development. In the current context, the poor effort to link conservation and poverty stands out as a major weakness of the Strategy.
- Given the complex interactions among the different sectors, a sectoral strategy cannot succeed in the totality of the sector, but only in a few carefully chosen areas. This fact seems to have been ignored at the time; SPCS instead seeks to deal from an environmental base with issues such as poverty whose solution requires a much broader scope.
- Needless to say, eradicating poverty greatly exceeds the field of environmental conservation. But key conservation issues are in evidence in rural areas, where a substantial proportion of the poor lives, and where livelihoods of the poor are closely linked to natural resources. These specific links should have been comprehensively addressed in the strategy.
- The growing and ever more obvious gap between Government's efforts at regulation (design and enactment of laws and regulations) on the one hand, and enforcement of these regulations on the other. While Government continues to churn out laws and regulations continuously, the low level of enforcement is ever more striking, whether due

to lack of capacity, absence of political will, clientilism or corruption. Non-enforcement of the rules creates a critical governance problem that puts a serious question mark on all efforts to promote change through Governmental action. This single issue is the most important reason why SPCS is widely regarded as obsolete.

- SPCS is strongly based in the assumption that enough external funding could be made available from Pakistan's donors to make serious progress towards implementation. When the context changed, as was the case following the explosion of a nuclear device in 1998 or the break in constitutional rule, with the consequent donor withdrawal from Pakistan, the momentum behind the Strategy was seriously tripped up.
- SPCS failed to secure the advantages of developing hypotheses and attendant scenarios, and therefore failed to identify changes whose achievement was less dependent on continuity in donor support for Pakistan. Much time was expended, and much wasted, pursuing approaches that depended on assumptions that did not come to pass in reality.

4. Institutional arrangements for implementation

Implementation of SPCS is primarily the responsibility of the government, but not its exclusive domain. Government departments are actually expected to facilitate implementation by helping their own structures and all others to perform their respective roles. The Strategy devised innovative institutions and mechanisms to strengthen public participation and address environmental issues. Roundtables (RTs), Focal Points (FPs), and Government Focal Points (GFPs) are the key mechanisms for rendering the Strategy operational.

FPs and RTs were formed in NWFP during 1994 to address key themes of sustainable development. Government Focal Points were introduced in 1998 to institutionalize the concept of Focal Points in the concerned government departments.

Roundtables (RTs)

RTs are multi-stakeholder forums established for the purpose of developing the component strategies of the SPCS, supporting SPCS implementation, and assisting in any revision that might be necessary. They include representation from the public, private and non-governmental sectors. Roundtables are official forums (some have been formally "notified" by government), but they lack a clear legal charter.

RTs are an innovation introduced by the SPCS (although in fact they mirror to some extent the traditional *Mahraka* system of consultations in Sarhad). Apart from the aforementioned objectives, they also perform a range of ancillary functions, including facilitating participation, networking, capacity building and awareness.

The purpose and mandate of RTs evolved during the various phases of SPCS implementation. At the time the RTs were created in 1995, their broad responsibilities included assistance in the development of the component environmental strategy for their respective sectors and themes, monitoring the implementation of the strategy, and advising the government on implementation issues. Under the SPCS-II support project, the RTs were mostly involved in the refinement and development of sub-strategies for their respective

thematic areas, exploring opportunities for their implementation, and building a sense of ownership of the SPCS among stakeholders.

The Terms of Reference for the Roundtables were revised in 1999 and updated to allow them to:

- Act as an intellectual forum to debate, promote, and further refine the SPCS;
- Provide necessary guidance and input for the development of sectoral policies;
- Debate sectoral issues and constraints and identify interventions required for sustainable development of that particular sector;
- Provide a forum for interface between the public sector and the civil society;
- Review the programmes and projects being planned or undertaken in the sector and identify opportunities for establishing effective linkages among the initiatives;
- Identify innovative financing mechanisms to foster sustainable development.

Three different types of Roundtable are now in operation. Thematic RTs (NGO RT and Communication RT) are managed directly by the IUCN-SPCS support unit. Government notifies the five sectoral RTs (sustainable industrial development, sustainable agriculture, environment education, urban environment, and cultural heritage & sustainable tourism) and the Focal Points are housed in the concerned department. The RTs for the formulation of the District Conservation Strategies in Chitral and Abbottabad districts are consultative in nature.

Focal Points

Focal Points are technical staff appointed by IUCN and seconded to government departments on a full- or part-time basis, to strengthen those departments' capacity in areas essential to the SPCS. These appointments are short-term measures to enhance the capacity and awareness of government departments engaged in SPCS implementation. These individuals, stationed in the concerned line departments, act as the secretariat for the RTs.

FPs have made an important contribution to the vibrancy of the Roundtables, networking with the stakeholders, facilitating public consultation and raising awareness. They serve as an interface between government and civil society for inputs to government policy and decision-making. Some FPs have been the motivating force behind major initiatives – such as approval of the sectoral policy in agriculture.

Government Focal Points

The concept of GFPs, was initiated under the PSDN/OSPCS. GFPs, as staff of the respective departments, are expected to act as counterparts to the Focal Points and gradually assume responsibility for mainstreaming sustainability concerns in their departments. The intent is to institutionalize the SPCS process and its objectives in the public sector. GFP

functions include facilitation and support (together with the Focal Point) of the roundtable process. The plan was that they would ultimately take over the role and functions of the FPs and be the center of sustainable development activities in the concerned department.

How have these inter-related mechanisms worked out in practice?

Roundtables, supported by Focal Points, and complemented by Government Focal Points are the key mechanisms for the implementation of the SPCS. Roundtables have proved to be useful in the absence of institutions or departments with a specific mandate to promote sustainability. Since they span departments, jurisdictions and sectors, RTs have tended to play an integrative role. RTs are also constructive mechanisms for conflict resolution and interest aggregation owing to their multi-stakeholder composition.

As has been noted above, SPCS implementation suffered adversely from the political upheavals of the late 1990s. Quick turnover of key personnel in the government, who were interested in and understood the issues, affected the implementation process, leaving much of the momentum dependent on individual vigour and commitment. Partly as a result of this, the SPCS institutional mechanisms have neither been institutionalized nor embedded in the regular management practices of government. With every change of government and personnel, the process of sensitization and awareness building must be started afresh. Further, the development and dynamism of the Roundtables has also tended to be closely linked to the quality of the Focal Points.

It is perhaps too early to judge the performance of Roundtables in a definitive manner. Individual Roundtables have varied in their output, but it is nevertheless clear that RTs have not been able to engineer very much real policy change. They have, on the other hand, provided a forum for the empowerment of the civil society and provided a neutral environment in which they can engage with other stakeholders.

Some members of Roundtables feel that the decisions of the RTs should have a binding legal effect. If it is intended that the Roundtables should serve as important policy and implementation mechanisms for the SPCS, this approach needs reassessment. It is not realistic to rely upon RTs as an alternative to the more formal policy-making functions of the provincial legislature, nor the executive branch. Instead, RTs might continue to serve as a neutral forum for debate on the policy options facing the formal decision-making bodies, and as a mechanism to strengthen the environmental and sustainability dimension and enrich public policy formulation in the Province.

The performance of the Focal Points has also been mixed. More than any other factor, it is the quality of the individual FP that has proved to be by far the strongest factor in determining success and impact.

The extent to which the role and function of Focal Points has been integrated with the department has varied but has typically been disappointing. Without adequate support, the FPs have tended essentially to be overworked, one-person, environment cells in their departments.

GFPs are a more recent endeavour to sustain and implant the concept of FPs within the departments. The Chief Planning Officer of the concerned department is usually the choice for the position. The responsibilities of GFPs are assigned to him/her in addition to his/her normal duties. The departments do not have clearly defined internal work distribution. GFPs, therefore, end up performing *ad hoc* activities.

The concept of GFPs has two basic flaws –the officers designated as the GFPs do not always carry weight in policy formulation and decision-making; and rapid staff turnover results in lack of expertise for the newcomer. Since there is no explicit charter of duties, evaluation of performance is difficult.

Decentralization

Sustainable development is closely connected with local initiatives for conservation, protection and regeneration of natural resources. Communities cannot adequately be involved in the management of natural resources without decentralized, needs-based planning. Even before the formal introduction of the devolution policy, the Provincial government had commenced various experiments in community participation – most notably through the area development projects and the Social Action Programme (SAP).

Most of the inefficiencies of the public sector, it was thought, could be solved through decentralization. The District became the spotlight for intervention. In order to involve the elected representatives in the local development efforts District Development Advisory Committees (DDACs) were established already in the early 1990s to provide an institutional forum for the prioritization of local projects through the elected representatives of the people. The District Social Action Boards (DSABs), organized by the federal government for implementation of the SAP, had similar functions and restrictions on their mandate. In a limited manner, these structures blazed the trail towards decentralization.

The Poverty Alleviation Programme launched by government in 1999 finally acknowledged the district as the basic unit for development planning and implementation. Subsequently, the federal plan for devolution of power and responsibilities, initiated in August 2001, created new institutions of district based planning and development.

District Conservation Strategies (DCS)

SPCS was spurred by the NCS. The logical next step was to focus on the natural implementation level – the district. Decentralization was, therefore, inherent in the SPCS process. Chitral and Abbottabad districts were selected as experimental grounds for the development of District Conservation Strategies. A support unit was established at each district headquarters. District RTs with membership from both the public sector and civil society were constituted. Public consultations ensued to involve people and elicit their views. Sector-specific research papers were simultaneously commissioned to provide technical inputs to the process.

The District RTs played a central role in the preparation of district strategies (see below). The DCS process afforded greater voice to stakeholders in identifying their development needs through decentralized participatory planning. While technical input is essential to

provide options for implementation, consensus building is equally important for ownership of the programme. It is difficult to undertake decentralized planning and community consultation without an institutional order. The RTs proved to be useful mechanisms for policy formulation, discussion and debate.

The DCS process proved to be both timely and visionary in nature, and resulted in a broad sense of ownership of the strategies within the district. There is some criticism leveled at the RTs in terms of their composition; marginalized groups were not always adequately represented.

The decentralization of decision-making can lead to substantial gains for local conservation efforts. However, decentralization can also result in the dispersal of scarce capacity where the requisite institutions are not in place. Impaired capacity may, in turn, produce deleterious effects on natural resource management. Capture of local State institutions by power elites can also undermine key objectives.

District Roundtables

The Roundtables were initially conceived and implemented to provide an institutional base for the DCS process where others tended to be missing. The post-devolution scenario has begun to create the new institutions for district based planning. For RTs to function with legitimacy in their present formulation, they would need to sort out their links with and contribution to the District Assemblies and the District Executives. In light of the diverse membership of the RTs, their advocacy role could be expected to take on more significance. Legitimacy would be further enhanced if RT membership included representatives from the marginalized segments of public opinion that are not adequately represented through the electoral process.

The RTs have proved to be a useful mechanism for identifying and scoping policy issues relevant to sustainable development. They have helped in making public policy in the districts more participatory, more accountable and more transparent. At the same time, they lack the formal legitimacy that state-led policy formulation derives from their political and electoral mandates. The concept of RTs therefore requires rethinking so as to find its optimal place in post-devolution governance arrangements.

5. Application & effectiveness

The basic questions to address in this section are: who used the SPCS? How often did provincial decision-makers consult the SPCS? Was it used to guide the allocation of public expenditure and strategic investment? Was it of use to civil society in bringing issues of concern onto the public agenda? Have the development plans of non-governmental organizations been based on the findings and recommendations of the Strategy? Did the private sector feel obliged to take the SPCS into consideration? **The premise here is that the utility of the SPCS might be judged by its relevance to the governance and resource appropriation processes in the public sector, and the priorities adopted by the private sector and the non-governmental organizations.**

These questions are not easy to answer. Perhaps it is important to go back to the context of SPCS development to comprehend its utility for planners and practitioners. Was it

developed as a comprehensive blueprint for implementation, for all the stakeholders? How useful is the instrument of an all-embracing strategy? What are the best measures to determine the success of the Strategy?

SPCS evokes a variety of responses from the different stakeholders. It certainly was seen as a giant step forward in tackling environmental problems. The outcomes, though, remain ambiguous. Some feel, rather strongly, that unless the Strategy has a legal mandate for implementation, it is doomed to remain peripheral or even irrelevant in the presence of the formal competition like the five years plans and the annual development programmes. One-time approval by the provincial cabinet does not make SPCS the touchstone of provincial development efforts. It is clear that the SPCS was never fully internalized in the public sector management and development processes. And the situation is even worse with the non-governmental and private sector organizations.

The above comments reflect an assessment of SPCS seen through the prism of development investments and not through that of pro-poor governance and sustainable development, where its impact would be significantly less notable. It is no coincidence that the SPCS unit in the government was housed in the Planning & Development (formerly Planning, Environment & Development) department, where its focus is limited to affecting new programmes and projects. SPCS never provided a fundamental reorientation in the way society conducts itself, nor in the way State and non-state actors interact. Linking SPCS to the instrument of binding legal sanctions might have reinforced the mandate for implementation, but designing and implementing a more inclusive, broad-based and networked institutional arrangement is of overriding importance if the full range of the SPCS agenda is to move forward.

SPCS is not only about influencing development investments. Its sweep is much broader. Most, if not all, government departments have responsibilities that are within SPCS' domain. Similarly, the issue of environment concerns private sector activities and the agenda of non-governmental organizations.

Over the past years, the linkages of environment with larger issues of public policy such as governance and poverty alleviation have been emerging with ever-sharper focus. These cross-sectoral themes could not be addressed through the sectorally-compartmentalized provincial line departments. Although PE & D was advantageously poised for interdepartmental coordination, its particular development orientation turned out to be a limiting factor. PE & D's inadequacy in addressing larger issues of governance in the context of environment and development surfaced during the course of SPCS implementation. Overextended with new mandates, PE & D could not accommodate the changing development paradigm and was itself drastically down-sized during the devolution restructuring. This reduction led the MTR-SPCS to revisit the institutional arrangements for SPCS implementation. The results are presented in the recommendations section of this report.

6. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Monitoring and evaluation is a particular issue within the larger perspective of implementation. The SPCS must be approached in two separate components:

- a) the SPCS strategy document, and related Action Plans
- b) the SPCS Support Projects, implemented by IUCN-Pakistan and the NWFP Government

The SPCS Support Project has been through several phases, each one monitored on the basis of the work plan and objectives set out in the respective project proposal, focusing on the implementation of the agreed activities and the delivery of the identified products. All of them were, it was concluded, completed in a satisfactory manner.

By contrast, the SPCS' own Action Plan was not clearly assigned for implementation to any particular organization. As a result, no organization specifically monitored its progress until the last phase of the SPCS Support Project that began in 2001. Some of the activities included in the Action Plan were completed by different organizations working on their own, while others were not undertaken at all. No organization or unit tracked these activities in a centralized way with a view to assessing how much of the action called for was implemented, that is until Phase 4 of the SPCS Support Project.

Under the current Phase 4 of SPCS, the Government of NWFP decided to engage public sector partners by developing a monitoring mechanism similar to SPCS Support Unit's internal M&E reporting system for effective monitoring of the project activities. In order to ensure such monitoring, projects developed two reporting templates: one for reporting progress against SPCS-4 project activities, and the other for reporting progress against the SPCS and its Action Plan. These templates, once approved by the Project Steering Committee, began to be used by the public sector partners for reporting and are submitted periodically to the SPCS-4 Project Coordinator.

There have also been, over the years, two incomplete attempts to assess SPCS's impact. The first proposed to use the "Wellbeing of Nations" approach, and Robert Prescott-Allen facilitated a training session on that methodology, but there was not follow-up.

In a second attempt, Peter Hardi from IISD developed a specific methodology published in a report entitled *Development and Implementation of Indicators for Sustainable Development for the NWFP of Pakistan*. The SPCS Project, based on this contribution, developed a preliminary report on Sustainable Development indicators for Sarhad Province. During the current phase of SPCS implementation, the plan was to select a set of indicators based on this study and other associated factors, so as to develop a baseline report, and this task was still under implementation at the time of the SPCS MTR. When completed, these indicators may enable the government to analyze the state of environment on a regular basis. At the time of the Review, however, there is no baseline study nor any report based on the monitoring of indicators relating to sustainability in Sarhad.

Looking back over the years, it is evident that a number of attempts were made to establish a monitoring and evaluation system, but they were incomplete and poorly articulated. Moreover, there is no clear links between the M&E efforts and reporting back to society and organizations other than donors and a few Governmental agencies. **This must be regarded as a significant failure of the SPCS process.**

In terms of learning, it can be said that no formal and explicit learning mechanisms were established. Despite this is evident that, over the course of the SPCS process, a number of significant changes (discussed elsewhere in this report) continued to take place in relation with different aspects of the SPCS process. These changes imply that a reflection and learning process was taking place continuously and that it led to a number of significant adjustments that were instrumental in keeping the SPCS alive and active.

How much more could have been learned if formal and explicit mechanisms had been in place is a matter of speculation that the MTR did not pursue. A strong recommendation now to put these mechanisms in place is included in the pertinent chapter.

7. Ownership and adoption

The SPCS was prepared through a process-oriented and participatory route as an effort to extend the implementation of Pakistan's National Conservation Strategy (NCS) to the provincial level. Its preparation extended over a period of four years, dictated by the extensive consultation process. The document acknowledges the people of North West Frontier Province as the authors of the SPCS – this being its greatest source of legitimacy.

The leaders of the SPCS process understood that the 'real virtue of strategic planning for sustainable development was in initiating a public dialogue and creating public ownership of the strategy through awareness and participation'. The provincial cabinet ratified government's formal ownership of the Strategy by adopting it in 1996. Endorsement by non-governmental organizations and representatives of the private sector provided it with wider ownership and legitimacy. The assumption was that broad-based endorsement would facilitate ownership and thus implementation of the Strategy while maintaining the momentum for action.

Seven years later, the Mid Term Review of the SPCS confronts an elemental question – who owns SPCS? Ownership of SPCS was raised as a vital concern during the MTR-SPCS inception workshop. The document ascribes its ownership to the people of NWFP. Some see the tragedy of the commons afflicting it - a strategy owned by all is owned by none.

SPCS is the result of a partnership among government, civil society, the private sector and donors. Understandably, each of these stakeholder groups holds a different perspective on it. Ownership, too, is uneven. With government at the centre stage of implementation, civil society institutions either lack the ability or are not given the responsibility and implementation structures to execute significant parts of the SPCS. Not surprisingly, ownership in the private sector and among the non-governmental organizations is feeble.

Unfortunately, within government, ownership also remains restricted to a narrow band of political and civil service leaders. While the executive formally approved the Strategy, the provincial legislature remained largely oblivious of its significance. **Without the critical support of elected representatives, SPCS never made it into the mainstream political agenda of the Province.** The priorities of the provincial annual development programme are based on the needs of the electoral constituencies as identified by the parliamentarians. SPCS-related projects did not figure high in this priority list. Public expenditures sanctioned by the provincial legislature have not been significantly affected by the SPCS agenda.

Without broad ownership and without broad understanding of the strategy, its objectives and contents, SPCS became progressively more marginal to the setting of public policy priorities in the area of environment and development. A principal ongoing challenge is the communication of the Strategy in language(s) understood by the vast majority of the population. It has to relate to aspirations and expectations of common people – in easily understood dictums. In short, SPCS has to integrate with existing realities and people's lives.

To make things worst, SPCS was supported by a 4-phase project run by IUCN - the SPCS Support Programme. As memories of the original process diluted with time, the SPCS name become more and more identified with IUCN, thus further undermining the objective to have other organizations and institutions adopt SPCS as a guide to their work. In this way, the already weak sense of ownership has continued to spiral downwards in a self-reinforcing cycle.

The MTR of the NCS identifies lack of ownership as a major reason for the implementation problems of the Strategy. The case of SPCS is, if anything, more acute.

8. SPCS and the development agenda

SPCS, by its very design, is intended to offer a comprehensive approach to environment and development in the province. At the same time, it never had the ambition to provide the only – or even the principle – framework, especially in the development field. Instead, it explicitly sought linkages with complementary initiatives such as Social Action Programme. Human development and poverty alleviation were seen as necessary complements of a sustainable development endeavour.

Public consultations outlined the priorities and needs of the people of the Province. The village level consultations highlighted the importance of addressing poverty as a necessary precursor of sustainable development action – in part because so many development problems are environmentally-based, and as a gauge of good faith: if the villagers are to be listened to, then it is their priorities that must count. This should not have presented a problem, since natural resource management is a good way to address poverty, and addressing the poverty challenge could provide the platform to address most natural resource management-related environmental problems. Indeed, the experience led SPCS to continue, consolidate, and expand the existing integrated rural development projects with special emphasis on education, health, income-generation, and environmental protection activities.

To what extent did this approach succeed? Success in implementation depends, to a large extent, on the existing instruments and institutions of development. The main tools for implementing development programmes in Sarhad are five years plans, federal public sector development programmes and the provincial annual development programmes.

Planning in Sarhad (mostly through federal intercession) is based on definite cycles and different instruments. Currently, the major interventions in the Province include the ten years perspective plan (2001-2011); the provincial reforms programme (2001-2004); the structural adjustment credit; medium term budgetary framework; and Poverty Reduction

Strategy Paper. This multiplicity of interventions poses a daunting challenge to integration and implementation of various programmes.

The process of integrating environment and development in Sarhad was initiated in the early 1990s, largely through support from SDC and the Netherlands. The Malakand and Dir Social Forestry Project and the Swiss-funded Kalam Integrated Development Project experimented with new participatory approaches. These projects achieved some success.

The preparation of SPCS was aimed to mainstream these experimental approaches at the level of the province, thus effecting a paradigm shift towards sustainable development. However, the integration of environment and development requires an approach that transcends institutional boundaries and will not succeed merely through structural arrangements. The paradigm shift depends on a cultural conversion that fuses the objectives and mechanics of environment and development. The PE & D department, despite its central role in the provincial development bureaucracy, was a far too restricted base for such a transformation.

Whatever the validity of these assumptions, the impact of SPCS on government planning in the form of the five years programmes appears to be extremely limited. It is barely visible, for example, in the ninth five year plan finalized in 1998, a mere two years following the adoption of SPCS! Clearly the desired effect of 'greening' development was not achieved.

Capacity development was also adopted as a major means of integrating environment with development planning, especially during SPCS implementation through the support projects. While these efforts have no doubt been useful, they have not brought about the critical mass of capacity development necessary to bring about such integration, especially in the absence of institutional restructuring and creation of an enabling environment.

The Provincial Government's approval of SPCS is a tribute to the political skill with which the process of strategy development was managed, and to the comprehensiveness of the approach followed. It did not, however, signify approval – much less adoption – of the total package of recommendations, policies and measures that the SPCS recommends. Indeed, there is evidence that the Provincial Government was motivated at least in part by the hope of donor funding following a strategy that so clearly enjoyed donor support.

It is now clear that integration of environment and development cannot hope to succeed if it is focused principally on the public sector. Indeed, such integration depends on a comprehensive rethinking of the role of the State in environmental management. What can be brought about through the planning and project approval process in the end affects only a limited range of the province's sustainable development priorities.

9. Gender integration in SPCS

The inception report of SPCS made specific reference to the position of women in Sarhad as an environment and development concern. It underlined the importance of education, literacy, population and community development approaches as critical in supporting women's development. The SPCS did not specifically import what is now a considerable

body of experience with 'gender and development' approaches. The importance of associating women in the policy planning process was not sufficiently emphasized. One example of this is the limited participation of women in the public consultations. At the village level, they did not participate until the consultative process was modified and the female facilitators used to facilitate five women's meetings.

The activities for gender integration in SPCS have mainly centered on building a basic understanding of the gender and development issues in the PSDN support unit team, interns and the Environment Protection Agency. The process so far has not progressed to strategic implementation of gender integration and environment planning/activities of government, PE&D department and other stakeholders.

The participation of women in the public domain is severely restricted in Sarhad. The process of SPCS development took tentative steps for promotion of women's participation in the public policy debate. Pioneering activities include women's consultations for the preparation of district strategies, women's representation on some RTs and greater intake of females in the SPCS teams. The Forestry Roundtable has two female members. The NGO Roundtable includes NGOs implementing gender and development or women's development programmes. Integration of gender perspectives into NGO programmes is facilitated by the NGO focal point. The education focal point promoted female teachers' education and gender balance or neutrality in all publications. Though modest, these initiatives are path-breaking in a culture that restrains women's participation in public life.

10. Poverty alleviation and SPCS

Sarhad has a higher incidence of poverty than the national average - the highest concentration of poor people in Pakistan live in the Province. Not unexpectedly, poverty alleviation was the foremost issue raised in public consultations wherein poverty was identified as a major cause and consequence of environmental degradation.

SPCS acknowledges poverty as a multidimensional problem and highlights its complexity. It also stresses the link between poverty and unsustainable population growth. Despite that, with its predisposition towards conservation, SPCS did not give sufficient attention to the issues of poverty alleviation and economic growth. The conservation strategy relied on the human development efforts being undertaken through the Social Action Programme to address the key poverty-related issues, and made no special effort to dovetail with the range of specific initiatives for poverty alleviation and economic growth in the province.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) prepared by the Government of Pakistan recognizes that Pakistan 'faces the twin challenges of reviving growth and reducing poverty. This requires rapid economic growth - equitable in nature and broad-based in its reach. While reducing poverty helps growth, by enabling the poor to participate productively in the economy, growth in itself is not sufficient for poverty reduction. The quality of growth, in terms of its relative impact on various segments of society, determines its impact on poverty. For growth to reduce poverty, it must create or at least sustain existing livelihoods, and otherwise emanate from sectors that have greater employment generation capability.

The PRSP is rather perfunctory in its reference to environment. It remarks that the 'National Conservation Strategy (NCS) is the broad national environment policy of Pakistan, within which the National Environment Action Plan (NEAP) has also been approved. The government has formulated a comprehensive strategy to develop provincial capacity for implementing environmental protection laws and monitoring their effectiveness. A proposal to strengthen their capacity and improving their effectiveness has been prepared for presentation to Pakistan Environmental Protection Council (PEPC)'.

Regarding the work done in the environmental field, the PRSP claims that 'the government has also made considerable progress on the enactment of legislation for the protection and conservation of the environment. The Environmental Protection Act, 1997 has now been promulgated, which provides a comprehensive framework for conservation of wildlife habitats and biodiversity; compensation for damages/losses caused by a polluter, thus internalizing the externality; establishment of environmental tribunals and magistrates; initiation of environmental assessment; and promotion of public education and awareness of environmental issues'.

The PRSP may currently be regarded as the government's economic growth and poverty reduction strategy. It aims to integrate environmental concerns in its growth models, otherwise increased economic growth will be attained at a huge environmental cost. Therefore, SPCS must link with PRSP priorities. The linkages between poverty and environmental degradation are well established. It is important to privilege interventions that tackle both simultaneously without favouring one at the expense of the other.

VIII. Relating to the New Context – Findings of the ERT

Lessons for SPCS

There are many lessons for SPCS that stem either from the global context for sustainable development or from the geopolitical position of the province itself. These are offered as guide posts for the recommendations that follow:

1. Development approaches must be tailored to the realities of the political, social and economic system at any time. This means that it is useless investing in approaches that depend absolutely on a textbook interpretation of development and rest on assumptions that cannot be counted on with confidence. Development investments that are predicated upon significant political and social stability, that depend on a robust and efficient apparatus of state, or that ignore the pressure placed upon provincial institutions by refugees, to take just these examples, appear destined for problems.
2. Development assistance must reinforce its commitment to sustainability in its main-line programming (in other words, it must of course continue to respond to emergencies). To do so, it must considerably tighten the screening of programme and project proposals to ensure that they are, in fact, contributing to the creation and preservation of sustainable livelihoods. Tests of sustainability, and in particular critical

review of the assumptions made for development in the province, must be reviewed and updated.

3. There is nothing that undermines political, social, and therefore environmental stability than the loss of livelihoods and prospects, especially when these involve a sudden and massive dislocation. For this reason, security must be regarded as a precondition to sustainable development. Progress towards sustainable development is inconceivable in an atmosphere of insecurity. Priority must be given to measures that promote security, and measures that undermine or threaten it must be abandoned. Of particular importance is livelihood security, and development interventions that favour secure livelihoods must be given top priority.⁵
4. A livelihoods approach to development will succeed only in a favourable policy environment. Where the policy framework offers incentives for unsustainable behaviour, one cannot count on people to act in ways that appear to them contrary to their interests. A great deal of work can and must be done to ensure that the policy framework operating in the province offers incentives for sustainable development, and that it is at least policy-neutral in terms of the signals given. Work at the policy level is too often neglected by development assistance programmes, and yet it can make the difference between success and failure.
5. A livelihoods-based approach is in many ways equal to a poverty-based approach, and there is a real need to ensure that the dedication of development efforts to poverty reduction is genuine, and not confined to the level of rhetoric, as is too often the case. Assessing development interventions against a scale made up of their likely impact on poverty is essential, and the consequences of these tests must be taken very seriously. Nothing offers a sense of security and the political stability needed to develop better than a sense that opportunities are being created or are expanding. Nothing undermines it more quickly and more surely than the sense of opportunities being foreclosed.
6. As important as a favourable or benign policy environment is the need for continued reform of governance institutions, and in particular those that operate on the principle of subsidiarity – where decisions are taken at the lowest jurisdictional level consistent with efficiency. Pakistan's ongoing decentralization offers an example of subsidiarity in action, but much more attention needs to be placed on how local and regional institutions can become more participatory, more transparent, and more accountable.
7. Finally, a growing population with a rising level of expectations cannot find sustainability on the basis of a shrinking base of resources. The present downward trend in respect of several environmental or natural resource factors must be reversed if we are not to fall into the weir of mutually supportive degradation.

Several things will be clear from the discussion of the changed global and national contexts and from the assessment of the SPCS itself. Perhaps the central conclusion is that the challenge of sustainable development in Sarhad is substantially different from what faced the

⁵ This conceptual framework is picked up and elaborated somewhat in the chapter on Findings below.

Province when it initiated work on the SPCS a decade ago. The governance context in Pakistan has shifted substantially. Pakistan finds itself in the eye of a political storm that has radically altered the navigation signals. And the development community has gone through a re-examination and realignment of priorities that has left the development assistance scenario almost unrecognizable to those familiar with it in the early nineties.

The challenge for SPCS is to respond to these changes, to take advantage of the openings they offer, and to work out how best it can contribute to sustainable development in light of the new realities they present. **It is our view that the current context is so different from the one on which SPCS was based that it is not a matter of making minor adjustments to the approach adopted in SPCS implementation. Instead, the challenge is to reconsider the relevance of the SPCS approach, tools, methods, project activities and even its assumptions in light of the opportunities that present themselves today.**

The ERT offers seven principal conclusions as an introduction to the Recommendations that follow.

1. First, we offer a conceptual framework to guide the SPCS into its next phase of existence. We propose a focus on **sustainable livelihoods**, on what factors favour the creation or – at least – maintenance of sustainable livelihoods, and what factors threaten or destroy them. We believe that livelihoods lie at the root of human development. More to the point, livelihood security is an *a priori* condition for both poverty alleviation and sustainable development. In a situation where livelihoods are being lost, where they are being undermined or threatened, the conditions for investment in sustainable development are not assembled. Livelihood insecurity increases social tension, breaks down social cohesion and solidarity, leads to an increase in power-based behaviour and, in the worse cases, degenerates into outright conflict. Where there is conflict, a negative spiral is engaged, where hostility further increases social tension, undermines mechanisms for cooperation and renders impossible the solidarity on which sustainable development must be based. On the other hand, security tends to be self-reinforcing, in that it engages the positive spiral, where security permits the development of cooperative institutions, engenders mutual dependence, and permits the advance towards development goals essential to all parties. In particular, it creates the environment in which the investment in actions with a longer-term pay-off – essential to the achievement of sustainable development – becomes possible.

Thus stability and predictability are essential preconditions for the pursuit of sustainable development, and security of livelihoods is essential if this stability is to be achieved. So, if security is the gateway to sustainable development, and sustainable development cannot be successfully pursued where security is absent, it is the security of livelihoods that provides the key to security at the local level. It follows that sustainable development must be pursued through a focus on the preservation and creation of livelihoods at the local level.

In order to preserve and create sustainable livelihoods, we need to understand what is threatening these livelihoods. The answers are multifarious, but offer a guide on where SPCS should concentrate effort. Part of the answer lies at the policy level, both in terms of the national framework of policies, incentives and regulations, and at the global level in respect of terms of trade, access to credit, conditionality attached to loans and grants from donors, and the policy “overrides” linked to the global and regional political situation. Part of the answer lies in creating transparent and participatory mechanisms of governance so that development action is more responsive to the needs identified by the affected people and communities themselves. And part lies in offering responses and applying experience and expertise in such a way that these needs are met in ways that promote social justice and sustainable use of the environment and its resources.

SPCS has a role at all three levels. It must intervene to help put in place a policy framework that offers incentives for sustainability and ceases to reward unsustainable behaviour. It must help strengthen the participatory structures at the provincial level but especially at lower jurisdictional levels so that development addresses the real needs of people and communities. And it must bring to bear its environmental and natural resource-based expertise so that the development approaches are sustainable.

2. There has been a paradigm shift in the approach to governance in Pakistan, a fact that, more than anything else, has changed the outlook of development in the country and offers a radically different framework for the advancement of the SPCS from the one that obtained during much of SPCS’ existence. For the first time in its existence, a serious effort is being made to move beyond the traditional “command and control” approach to governance, to set in place a new approach based on localized decision-making and on accountable control of development. The process of **devolution or decentralization** set out in the Local Government Ordinance of 2001 proposes much more than simply the development of local administrative structures. It is a blueprint for shifting substantial authority for development from the Provincial government to the District, Tehsil, Union and village levels.

Of course it is much more than that. If fully implemented, and if the current problems in concept and implementation are worked out, it will lead to a radically different approach to the distribution of power and authority, to the basis on which development decisions are made, and to the form of development that Pakistan adopts. The decentralization model is based on the principle of subsidiarity: namely that decisions should be taken at the lowest jurisdictional level possible, consistent with efficiency. It is also based on the core principles of good governance, namely transparency and access to information; participation in decision-making based on a clear assessment of rights and responsibilities; and mechanisms to ensure that those in power are held accountable to the voters for the decisions they take and how they implement these, including access to justice.

This bears some explanation. Transparency and access to information are essential preconditions for good governance. Unless decisions are made in an open manner, the basis on which the choices were made are also open to scrutiny by the public, and the information on which the decisions were made can be seen to be accurate, the value of the decisions made will always be in doubt.

Similarly, if the people positively or negatively affected by decisions are appropriately involved in the taking of those decisions, it is far more likely that the resulting decisions will advance their legitimate interests. But on what basis should people participate, given that not everybody can be involved in every decision? On the basis of the extent to which their rights are affected or their responsibilities engaged. Thus a farmer whose lands will be flooded by a dam reservoir has a direct stake in decisions concerning the dam, because his rights are fundamentally affected. A city dweller who will benefit from the electricity the dam will produce is only marginally affected (in this case positively) and so his right to participate in the decisions are similarly less compelling.

Participation – the very core of the new governance – is contingent on democratic institutions, so that those with a right to participate can choose those who will defend and represent them. These institutions – whether village committees, Citizen Community Boards (CCBs), Union Councils, or others – must in turn respect the principles of the new governance, and be transparent, participatory and accountable in their functioning.

Finally, those entrusted – by vote or administrative mandate – to implement decisions must be answerable for their performance. Mechanisms for the exercise of accountability close the governance loop, and ensure that the value of participation and transparency translate into real improvements to people's lives. The CCBs have been designed to serve as a force for accountability, ensuring that Union, Tehsil and District governments fulfill their promises and respect the new rules of participatory decision making and transparency. If these grass-roots mechanisms function as is intended, the entire development culture of Pakistan may well be turned on its head. They must be helped in order to ensure that they are able to fulfill their role, perhaps through a series of umbrella organizations that support CCBs, provide information on best practice, build capacity and take their defense when they are attacked.

Devolution, by focusing on the development of democratic structures at the District and lower levels of jurisdiction, has laid the basis for the new governance to emerge and take hold in the public administrative culture. For SPCS, it offers a hope for sustainable development that never – even remotely – existed before. **Should the new governance catch on, prospects for implementing sustainable development will be greatly improved. It follows that SPCS must place a great deal of emphasis on making the transition work.**

Seven elements of environmental governance

Source: 2003. World Resources 2002-2004: Decisions for the Earth: Balance, voice, and

power. United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, World Bank, World Resources Institute.

- 1 Institutions and laws: Who makes and enforces the rules for using natural resources? Who resolves disputes? Who makes the rules and the penalties for breaking them? Who resolves disputes?**
Government ministries; regional water or pollution control boards; local zoning departments and governing councils; international bodies such as the United Nations or World Trade Organization; industry trade organizations. Environmental and economic laws, policies, rules, treaties, and enforcement regimes; corporate codes of conduct. Courts and administrative review panels.
- 2 Participation rights and representation: How can the public influence or contest the rules over natural resources? Who represents those who use or depend on natural resources when decisions on these resources are made?**
Freedom of Information laws; public hearings, reviews, and comment periods on environmental plans and actions; ability to sue in court, lodge a complaint, or demand an administrative review of a rule or decision. Elected legislators, appointed representatives, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) representing local people or other environmental stakeholders.
- 3 Authority level: At what level or scale—local, regional, national, international—does the authority over resources reside?**
Visible in: Distribution of official rulemaking, budgeting, and investment power at different levels of government (e.g., district forest office; regional air pollution control board; national agriculture ministry; international river basin authority).
- 4 Accountability and transparency: How do those who control and manage natural resources answer for their decisions, and to whom? How open to scrutiny is the decision-making process?**
Mechanisms: Elections; public oversight bodies; performance reviews; opinion polls; financial audits; corporate boards of directors; stockholder meetings. Availability of public records of rules, decisions, and complaints; corporate financial statements; public inventories of pollutant releases from industrial facilities, power plants, and water treatment facilities.
- 5 Property rights and tenure: Who owns a natural resource or has the legal right to control it?**
Visible in: Land titles; water, mineral, fishing, or other use rights; tribal or traditional community-based property rights; logging, mining, and park recreation concessions.
- 6 Markets and financial flows: How do financial practices, economic policies, and market behavior influence authority over natural resources?**
Visible in: Private sector investment patterns and lending practices; government aid and lending by multilateral development banks; trade policies and tariffs; corporate business strategies; organized consumer activities such as product boycotts or preferences; stockholder initiatives related to company environmental behavior.
- 7 Science and risk: How are ecological and social science incorporated into decisions on natural resource use to reduce risks to people and ecosystems and identify new opportunities?**
Mechanisms: Science advisory panels (e.g., Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change); natural resource inventories (e.g., Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations biennial State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture report); ground- and satellite-based ecosystem monitoring programs (e.g., Millennium Ecosystem Assessment); national censuses and economic tracking; company health, safety, and environment reports.

3. There is a special case to be made for good **environmental governance** (see box above). As the World Resources Report 2002 – 2004 states: “Better environmental governance holds special promise for the poor – the people most vulnerable to environmental degradation, whose opinions and ideas are most often muted in environmental decisions.” It is the poor who are most vulnerable to environmental governance failures, because environmental degradation, loss of access to natural resources or of natural resource-based employment hits them most directly. The poor are much more likely to live on marginal lands, steep slopes or other lands subject to rapid degradation. They are more likely to depend on common property resources. Several studies have showed that the poorer the household, the greater the importance of natural resources in family income. When these resources degrade or disappear, poor households are particularly vulnerable.

In urban areas, too, the poor are more likely to be confined to polluted areas, and much less likely to have an effective voice in articulating complaints. Their lack of political organization, poor access to information and reluctance to take on the politically powerful also means that they receive far less attention from government services, adding to their marginalization.

It is for these reasons that effective action on the environment depends on providing for effective participation of the poor in decisions that affect the environment. This in turn means targeting the poor as a matter of priority, providing the mechanisms for them to participate in the taking of decisions on environmental matters, and building their capacity to articulate and defend their interests.

It is highly significant that in the Participatory Poverty Assessments recently undertaken by DFID, environment and natural resource-related issues routinely came out high on the list of concerns expressed by poor people and households in both the urban and rural areas. Indeed, some of the key issues emerging from these assessments were natural resources for livelihood security, access to land and tenure issues, and water quality and health. Health emerged as more important even than education, principally because the cost of health care due to polluted water is pushing households over the poverty line.

It is time to move beyond the earlier arrogance of the development ideologues who held that environment was a luxury the poor could not afford, to a recognition that, in many respects, addressing poverty requires that firm attention be paid to the quality of the environment and to the natural resource base on which the poor depend directly. Improving environmental governance offers the surest way to do that.

One key aspect of environmental governance is access to justice on environmental matters. This right, recognized in the Aarhus Convention (see box), is fundamental to making the new governance structures work for the environment in that it gives citizens standing to insist on access to environmental information, and the right to pursue grievances on environmental matters. The

design and establishment by the Sarhad government of environmental tribunals and the naming of environmental magistrates is a step in the right direction, but it must be followed up with their vigorous use in addressing complaints and ensuring compliance with environmental rules and regulations.

The Aarhus Convention: State-of-the-art access

Source: 2003. *World Resources 2002-2004: Decisions for the Earth: Balance, voice, and power*. United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, World Bank, World Resources Institute.

The Aarhus Convention is an environmental treaty that turns the 1992 Rio Declaration's vague commitments to the principles of access into specific legal obligations. Since its negotiation in 1998 as a regional agreement among the countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), 24 nations in Europe and Central Asia have become Parties to the treaty, and 40 have signed it. It entered into force in October 2001, and is now open to signature by all nations of the world.

The Convention not only recognizes the basic right of every person of present and future generations to a healthy environment but also specifies how the authorities at all levels will provide fair and transparent decision-making processes, access to information, and access to redress. For example, the Convention requires broad access to information about the state of air and atmosphere, water, land, and biological diversity; information about influences on the environment such as energy, noise, development plans, and policies; and information about how these influences affect human health and safety. A person does not need to prove "legal standing" to request information or to comment on official decisions that affect the environment, and the Convention requires that governments respond to requests for information from any person of any nationality within one month.

The Aarhus Convention also gives citizens, organizations, and governments the right to investigate and seek to curtail pollution caused by public and private entities in other countries that are parties to the treaty. For example, a Hungarian public interest group could demand information on airborne emissions from a Czech factory. For most signatory countries, meeting the standards of the treaty will require authorities to change how they disseminate environmental information to the public, to create new systems of environmental reporting by businesses and government, to improve the practice of public notification and comment, and to change judicial processes.

Adopting and implementing the Aarhus Convention's principles beyond its European base could provide a straightforward route to better access at a global level. But while there is growing interest in endorsing the Aarhus principles in Latin America, southern Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region, many countries perceive the treaty's concepts of democratic decision-making about the environment as too liberal or threatening to commercial confidentiality. Some countries are also reluctant to adopt a treaty that they did not have a chance to shape initially. Nonetheless, the Aarhus Convention stands as an example of real progress toward a global understanding of what access is and how it can be manifested in national laws and practices.

4. One of the implications of bringing development down to the level where people's concerns prevail, and of basing it on democratic structures through which they can to some extent steer the development process, is that environment will no longer be the central thread that unites the development process. Indeed, this is already the case. In part because the donors were taking it that way and in part because development is increasingly based on definition of needs at the base, the principal focus of development is now on poverty alleviation. Instead of trying to graft sustainable development onto the root stock of traditional development concerns, SPCS must **mainstream** its sustainable development message into the current of people-centered, poverty-focused development.

This requires more of a shift than most people realize. SPCS is, after all, a complete framework in its own right, and is generally acknowledged to offer a compelling paradigm for sustainable development. **SPCS must accept now that the principal framework is another one – one that SPCS has helped to bring about and in which it can take pride – but one that is nevertheless not the SPCS and one for which sustainable development is not the central objective.**

The framework for development, for now and for the conceivable future, is the framework of poverty alleviation, as articulated in the Federal PRSP, as is being elaborated in the Provincial PRSPs, and as set out in myriad donor frameworks. It is not that these frameworks are complete nor perfect, but it is precisely their incompleteness and imperfection that offers the entrée to SPCS.

The principal challenge for SPCS in the next phase is to bring its influence, experience and vision to bear on the poverty-based development framework, so that what results is an approach to development that not only relieves poverty and addresses the needs of the most marginalized, but one that advances sustainability at the same time.

SPCS should work with and through the poverty lens, but in doing so it should emphasize the contribution made by the environment and natural resources to poverty alleviation and to sustainable approaches to development. Indeed, one of the clear criticisms that can be made of the PRSP and similar poverty alleviation strategies is that they have taken insufficient account of the need for a sound and well-managed resource base and for a healthy environment. Without these, success in poverty alleviation will always be compromised, and many early results will prove to be unsustainable.

5. The new governance is based on rights and responsibilities, thus elaborating on the basis concept of the Social Contract. In exchange for securing new rights through the devolved democratic institutions, it is important to insist that people and communities accept certain responsibilities. One of the most persistent problems in Pakistan – and no less so in Sarhad – is the **compliance gap** – the gaping chasm between what norms, standards, regulations and laws dictate, and

the way people actually behave. If devolved democracy is the carrot, the need to strengthen compliance is the stick.

The level of compliance with environmental rules and regulations (and no doubt with other fields as well, though this was not examined) is appallingly low. There appear to be several reasons for this. First, the capacity to implement the laws is weak, so that enforcement is sporadic and there is little capacity to follow up. Second, there is a culture of ignoring or skirting the law, and of using influence and powerful contacts to deflect its proper application. This in turn has a demoralizing effect right down the line, so that there is no incentive to comply. Finally, with the State giving the example that laws need not be complied with, a culture of non-compliance has replaced the culture of respect for what should be required.

This is not a cultural phenomenon but a governance one. Sarhad is characterized by an almost rigid adherence to cultural norms and traditions so that, in respect of tradition, religion and social interactions, Sarhad is one of the most law-abiding societies in the world. At the same time, there is no generalized sense that the respect and deference that the people show one another directly is owed directly through contributing to a sound environment.

Shakil Durrani⁶ observes that a single penalization of a senior official or powerful businessman for transgressing environmental laws would have much more impact than all the awareness work undertaken around the SPCS. Whether or not he is right it is clear that, unless environmental regulations are not only promulgated but enforced, the culture of considering the air and water as society's disposal units will only intensify.

6. Not all development takes place at the local level, and the scope for local decision-making is necessarily affected by the policies in place at higher levels. It is one of the fallacies of many engaged in rural development and in poverty alleviation that these can be addressed uniquely or almost uniquely through local-level action, through people and communities taking charge of their own development. What is possible at local level depends to a considerable extent on the way in which local markets function, on access to credit, on land tenure rights, on access to justice, and on the pattern of incentives and disincentives built into the economy. In short, the policy framework in place to a large extent determines the rules of the game.

Too many well-meaning developments have failed as a result of disregarding the **policy framework** – ignoring whether the policies in place would favour and support the development objectives or, on the other hand, render them more challenging or even impossible. Proposing measures that run contrary to the policies in place is often a recipe for failure.

⁶ Presently Federal Secretary, Population Welfare

So, local level action must necessarily be accompanied by work at the policy level - to review policies to determine whether or not they are supportive of pro-poor strategies and, where that is not the case, to seek to amend existing policies and develop new ones such that sustainable development is advanced. By policies, we mean the range of formal policy statements, the laws, rules and regulations, the norms and standards applied and the range of institutions that support the implementation of the above policy instruments. For example, the setting of taxes and charges on petrol and diesel, and the differential between them, can have a considerable impact on orienting consumer choice.

A great deal of work needs to be done to put in place a policy framework at the Provincial level that will encourage and support the advancement of sustainability through the poverty alleviation framework. If devolution represents a radically new approach to development, then a policy framework that represents the old approach will be invidious. Furthermore the policy framework must offer a solid place for the private sector, and help to ensure that the operation of the market favours sustainable development.

7. For SPCS, the above considerations have profound implications. If the principal focus moves to the district and local level jurisdictions, the concentration of its institutional presence in Peshawar is not necessarily ideal. If the principal focus moves from environment to poverty, the present range of skills and backgrounds is not necessarily the optimal one. It will be a major challenge for SPCS (the Provincial government and IUCN) to restructure and reorient around the new set of challenges.

The principal message is that SPCS must move out of Peshawar, multiply its presence around the province, and interact with a wide range of local-level institutions and actors from different fields. Unless it is prepared to scale up very considerably, and unless the donors are prepared to support this, the implication is that a different approach is needed.

We propose that the future of the SPCS be operated through **partnerships and synergies**. Locally-based development is not new in Sarhad. Many actors have been working at the local level and many more are beginning to do so. The Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) is working with over one thousand village organizations throughout the province. SPO is similarly entrusted with developing participatory organizations from the village to district levels. Sungi is active on the ground throughout four districts of the Hazara, and the examples could be extended.

SPCS should link with these organizations to secure the implementation of sustainable development through their work. It should ensure that these organizations are fully aware of the link between environment and natural resources management on the one side, and poverty alleviation on the other. It should help develop natural resource-based packages that can be implemented at the local level, through the existing village organizations. It should strengthen

the capacity of these intermediary organizations, and the ground-level structures through which they work, to ensure that sustainability is built into all their work.

Similarly, SPCS need not endeavour to establish itself as an independent initiative operating in parallel with donor and government programmes. It should review all such programmes being developed or implemented in Sarhad and look for ways to build synergies between their aims and the aims of the SPCS. This offers considerable scope for SPCS to multiply its influence, to improve its impact, and to ensure that the strategy is fully mainstreamed into the new approach to development.

IX. Recommendations

Introduction

Above, we have offered our general recommendations on the direction SPCS should now take. Below, we set out more specific recommendations. Prior to that, there are a few points that must be made to set these recommendations in context. The assessment above indicates that SPCS has lived a full life and can be proud of its offspring. They have gone forth, established themselves and a respectable number of them are thriving. There have been some setbacks and disappointments, some judgments turned out to be erroneous, and some of the assumptions on which SPCS was based were not validated by reality. However, it is to be expected that not everything turns out the way one wants. It never does.

So what can we say about the future of SPCS? We regard SPCS as a feature of the landscape, respected but not sacrosanct, not to be removed or replaced, not to be redrafted or recast, not to be updated and corrected. We regard it as an important reference – a general framework which must now be reframed in reality. What follows SPCS is what has sprung from it. If we are now ready to move beyond SPCS, it is because the changes in the Sarhad, Pakistan and global context require new and complementary approaches. SPCS remains and will, no doubt, continue to be a source of inspiration, ideas and wisdom for many years to come. But there is a need now for a fresh approach.

It is not an approach to which SPCS can easily be adapted. Nor should it be. **What is needed now is a new beginning, framed by SPCS but operating in the world of devolution, new governance and pro-poor development.** We require an initiative that will bring the benefits where they need to be felt, not wait for the needs to knock at SPCS's door. In the coming phases of work, the approach pioneered by the SPCS must be made operational, streamlined, focused and concentrated on actions that can bring tangible benefits to people and communities.

We do not recommend a new strategy, nor even the revamping of the one that exists. It stands. It remains valid, and need not be replaced. What we

recommend is a roadmap that takes the best that SPCS can offer – its vision, its understanding of sustainable development, its experience with participatory structures, its bridging of government, civil society and the private sector – and brings it into the workshops and laboratories where development is being crafted, sculpted and polished.

In reality, we recommend moving beyond the notion of a conservation strategy, even though we realize that SPCS was much more. We are not even recommending a strategy based on the contribution of environment and natural resources to poverty alleviation. Instead, we are recommending an approach, a road-map, a battle plan based on bringing the vision of sustainable development into efforts to address poverty at the provincial, district and local levels. We are recommending that the follow-up to SPCS be dedicated to supporting devolution, orienting development to the most needy, and ensuring that the contribution of environment and natural resources to poverty alleviation is thoroughly understood and incorporated into development planning and practice.

We are aware that this is a radically different approach from the one adopted in developing the SPCS and in the implementation phase to date. Following this new approach will have important implications for the Provincial government and for IUCN. **It implies a strategy of engagement, of partnership, of seeking synergy, and not a strategy of projects and events.** In recommending this, we are well aware that we are calling for a cultural transformation – away from the traditional command-and-control, hierarchical model, to one more appropriate to the principles of new governance. The recommendations below are intended to point the way.

The recommendations begin by proposing a new implementation structure, its components and an outline of their role. Afterwards, a number of specific recommendations are presented, in each case with an indication of the component in the new structure that we recommend should undertake them.

1. Immediate Operational Recommendation

The approach proposed in this report to following up on the SPCS is sufficiently different from past phases of SPCS implementation, and the implications for the key implementation players so serious, that we propose a workshop to work through the approach and recommendations. We propose that this workshop should take place in Pakistan soon after the report is adopted, and before too much effort has gone into planning the follow-up. The workshop would focus on identifying the specific actions that need to be taken to implement the recommendations of the report, the sequence of these actions, and the allocation of responsibility for undertaking them.

We propose that it should include IUCN, SDC, key players in Pakistan's decentralization process and key Pakistani experts on pro-poor development and local development approaches.

2. Mechanisms

- **Overall Steering Mechanism**

We recommend transforming the SPCS Steering Committee into a new body, with a suitable name such as Provincial Council for Sustainable Development, whose purpose is to oversee and direct the planning, coordination and monitoring of the work undertaken in this new phase pursuant to the SPCS. We recommend that it be chaired by the Chief Secretary (with, possibly, a civil society co-chair), and that the Local Government and Rural Development Department provide the Secretariat. It should also include suitable representatives from Planning & Development, Finance and Environment, as well as from the private sector, civil society, academia and IUCN.

- **Steering Mechanism: Policy**

We recommend that a sub-committee of the overall steering body be established to oversee two aspects of the work undertaken in the new phase. These are: the work on the provincial policy framework, and the work on greening the poverty frameworks. We recommend this sub-committee be chaired by the ACS, and the secretariat provided by P&D. It should include members from Finance, Environment, Agriculture, Energy, Industry, Forestry, and from the private sector, civil society, academia and IUCN.

- **Steering Mechanism: Local-level Action**

We recommend that a second sub-committee of the overall steering body be established to oversee all the work aimed at the District, Tehsil, Union and community levels. We recommend that it be chaired by the Local Government Department, and include representation from among the District Nazims, District Coordination Officers, EDOs for Community Development, NGOs (such as SRSP, Sungi, SPO and others), Local Government Associations, CCB umbrella organizations and IUCN.

- **IUCN**

We recommend that either IUCN or a formal public-private partnership of IUCN and the Provincial Secretariat be considered the "executive body" for the above steering body and sub-committees, on the understanding that it would work with and through suitable partners in all cases.

3. Outline of roles

Provincial Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD)⁷

It is the apex body whose main tasks are to:

- Provide orientation, guidance and approval to proposed actions
- Analyze and approve work plans
- Receive and approve the regular progress reports
- Take the decisions of the Council to the respective organizations of its members (Government, private sector, NGOs, etc)

Provincial Policy Committee (PPC)

Under the guidance and oversight of the Council it should:

- Identify the key interventions needed to influence the Provincial Policy framework in favour of sustainable development and to introduce environmental considerations in poverty reduction policies and plans.
- Develop an annual work plan in a participatory way, outlining the areas to be addressed and how the different organizations might combine their efforts in addressing the priorities identified.
- Monitor the implementation of the annual work plan.
- Generate progress reports for the Council on a periodic base (e.g. every quarter).

Local-level Action Committee (LAC)

Under the guidance and oversight of the Council it should:

- Identify the key areas of work in relation to poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods and the sites where these actions will be implemented.
- Develop an annual work plan, through a participatory process, outlining the work to be done at:
 - Local (village) level, including location, activities and partners/participants for each initiative.
 - Tehsil and District levels in terms of capacity building, initiatives for improved local governance, support to Tehsil

⁷ The PCSD should be assisted by a research think tank – eg. a Provincial Centre for Sustainable Development. It should help research and debate policy positions and perform the task of third-party monitoring of policy decisions, initiatives and compliance. Administratively it could be located in the P & D department, but must be an autonomous entity. This could even be an existing academic facility. Donor support could be tapped to upgrade the facility.

and District governance bodies, local communications, etc., and how the different organizations may join efforts to achieve them.

- Monitor the implementation of the annual work plan.
- Generate progress reports for the Council on a periodic base (e.g. every quarter).

Consideration should be given by this Committee to identifying target districts, or clusters of districts, for priority attention.

Executive Secretariat (ES)

Under the guidance and oversight of the Council, the Secretariat functions (initially performed by IUCN but with a gradual transfer to P&D Department or other organization chosen by the Council) will be to:

- Support the preparation of Annual Work plans by the Committees
- Support the monitoring and reporting tasks of the Committees
- Coordinate the network of organizations and agencies working under the umbrella of the Council related with both the policy framework and local actions.
- Coordinate and contribute to the training and capacity building plan
- Coordinate and contribute to the communications plan, with special focus on public information in local languages.
- Undertake other tasks, as decided by the Council

The implementing structure outlined above will also oversee the implementation of the following recommendations, under the oversight of the Provincial Council. Each recommendation includes, in brackets the acronym of the Committee that will take responsibility for it. In all cases, the Executive Secretariat will assist the pertinent Committee.

4. Provincial Government level

- Work with the Department of Local Government and the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure compliance with environmental and natural resources legislation, build capacity to support devolved government, and assist Districts to develop a Sustainable Development Vision, on the model of the work underway in D.I. Khan, and on District Strategies, on the model of Abbottabad and Chitral. (LAC)
- Work with and through the Decentralization Support Programme (DSP) and the Structural Adjustment Credit (SAC) to provide policy support to the Provincial government in the process of devolution of

provincial government functions essential to sustainable development, in particular through provision of capacity building. (PPC)

- Work with the Provincial PRSP process to introduce the sustainable livelihoods concept to policies and programmes addressing poverty alleviation. (PPC)
- Work with the Provincial government to transform the P&D department into a Sustainable Development department, with responsibility for ensuring that all provincial and district level development efforts are compatible with sustainable development. We see this change as substantive and not cosmetic. Indeed, as part of the evolution away from centralized planning is over, such a department is needed to ensure that all public expenditure is compatible with the goal of sustainability. This should not be limited to development investments only and should apply to the entire range of public expenditures. The Sustainable Development department should also look after the way the provincial economy is moving. Currently there is no institution in the province looking after this aspect. Concerns such as poverty alleviation require cross-departmental actions and cannot be handled through the traditional compartmentalization of the civil service. (PPC)
- Make a particular effort to work with the Provincial Assembly and political parties at the provincial level to advance the integration of sustainable development concepts in the planning and implementation of development at all levels.
- Undertake a study on the enforcement of environmental rules, regulations at the District and local levels, building upon work done previously (eg. by LEAD Pakistan). The study should aim to identify areas where enforcement could have a major positive impact on public opinion and public health. (PPC)
- Undertake a provincial policy audit to determine which policies support, and which undermine an approach to development that addresses the need for poverty alleviation and advances sustainable development. This policy audit might be undertaken with SDPI, or with a provincially-based policy research organization – for example the provincial centre for sustainable development suggested above. (PPC)
- Establish a pro bono legal service to work with environmental tribunals and magistrates and to reinforce access to environmental justice. IUCN-Pakistan and the IUCN Environmental Law Centre

should consider promoting the establishment of an NGO in this area, with representation at the Provincial and district levels.(PPC)

5. District and Local Jurisdictions

- Assist District Governments to take informed decisions relating to natural resources management, through the establishment of baseline data sets, provision of best practice information, and by offering specific packages of support services to District Governments. IUCN might consider developing “quick reaction” technical teams that could be deployed at short notice to meet these needs.(LAC)
- Ensure that District Nazims and other government leaders at the District and local levels are briefed on the SPCS, ACS and CCS as part of a package to build capacity of decentralized government leaders in sustainable development.(LAC)
- Provide District-level support to the EPAs. Promote the practice developed in Punjab of assigning District-level officers from other departments to reinforce the EPAs on a part- or full-time basis. The requisite training would also have to be provided for.(LAC)
- Work with SPO to support the Development Trust for Community Participation, with special reference to providing information and services relating to environment and natural resources management. (PPC)
- Work with the Association of Local Governments in the Province by offering capacity building and services relating to sustainable development, through the Decentralization Support Programme, the Local Government department and others. This should include design of institutional capacity to deal with trans-boundary issues, such as water and watershed management.(LAC)
- Offer District-level capacity building on environment and natural resource management to CCB leaders. This might be undertaken by IUCN-led technical teams based in strategic locations around the Province, and each serving several districts.(LAC)
- Produce a guide to District Strategies and expand the District Strategies initiative to 3-4 more Districts, offering support to the others.(LAC)
- Link with the village organizations of SRSP to develop and disseminate environment and natural resource-based packages, especially those based on collaborative management and community-

based natural resources management. IUCN should link the Province to the work of its Co-Management Working Group (of the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy), and help provide best practice on CBNRM approaches worldwide.(LAC)

- Launch an NGO-Business partnership initiative, based on the guidelines set out in the Asia Foundation's guide. More generally, help to organize business for environmental action at the district level. Public-private partnerships might also emerge from this partnership.(LAC)
- Building partnerships with the key NGOs working at the District and Local levels (SRSP, SPO, Sungi, Khwendo Kor, etc.) and the various District and Local level umbrella bodies being established under devolution (e.g. Association of Local Governments, umbrella bodies of CCBs). All work that is implemented at the local level should be undertaken with and through such partners and not directly.(LAC)
- Work closely with the donors supporting devolution or those implementing poverty alleviation frameworks in Sarhad to seek synergies and openings to introduce both the sustainable development perspective and practical sustainable development input to these.(PPC & LAC)
- Identify elements from the international experience that are relevant to Sarhad in closing the digital divide and providing access to information at the District Level. The experience of Development Alternatives through its Tara Haat initiative may prove to be particularly relevant. (LAC)
- Look into the possibility of effecting a conversion of ODA debt from select donors to create a fund aimed at strengthening sustainable development in poverty alleviation programmes at the District and local jurisdictional levels. (PPC).

5. Monitoring and Evaluation (PPC & LAC)

Wherever the monitoring and evaluation function is located, it should feed directly into the Sustainable Development department proposed above, so that the latter becomes the repository for the lessons learned and enhances its ability to support district-level initiatives for sustainable development.

- To develop an integrated monitoring, evaluation and reporting system, covering all organizations and activities inscribed in the sphere of the PCSD (policy initiatives, local work, etc.) and focusing on the following aspects:

- ? Preparation of the Annual work plans identifying outputs and outcomes to be achieved in the different parts of the system
- ? Monitoring the implementation of the work plan undertaken by different organizations, and the timely delivery of outputs (products and services) of accepted quality.
- ? Track the investments and their use, to monitor how well the current flow of resources is matching the expectations.
- ? Monitoring the changes in behaviour by targeted actors identified in the work plans.
- ? Monitoring key impacts (people's well-being, environmental condition, policy framework status) in the areas and themes where PCSD is active.
- ? Establishing a baseline to monitor changes in the entire Province. This work should start by establishing a baseline situation based on quantitative indicators developed from current frameworks for sustainable development assessment (e.g. IISD Dashboard; IUCN Sustainability Assessment).
- ? Evaluation of all the information coming from the monitoring processes mentioned above.
- ? Feedback of the evaluation results into the pertinent decision-making mechanisms at different levels (District, Province, other) and in different governmental and non-governmental sectors and organizations involved in the sphere of the PCSD.
- ? Reporting on monitoring and evaluation results to other key organizations and institutions and to the people of Sarhad through the available media mechanisms (newspapers, radio and other local means).

6. Gender integration (LAC & PPC)

There is no question about the negative impact of poor gender integration on the development of Sarhad. Marginalizing 50% of the population from the processes of analysis, development of ideas and proposals, and decision making on the best pathways to be followed, has posed and will continue to pose a severe constraint to progress towards better and more sustainable livelihoods.

Unfortunately, gender integration is still a major issue for the different groups and communities who live in Sarhad and it will continue to be for a long time given the strong

cultural characteristics that constraint gender integration. This fact should not obscure the need to keep advocating for that integration and for developing new innovative ways to achieve that aim. Therefore the SPCS MTR team recommends to all stakeholders and parties in the SPCS process to:

- Maintain and intensify the gender integration advocacy activities in a way that balances good advocacy with proper respect for the local cultures in order to help the gender integration process instead of obstructing it.
- Develop new strategies and innovative ways to incorporate women and other marginalized groups into all possible aspects of the poverty alleviation and sustainable development process.
- Develop a specific affirmative-action focus for gender integration in all the activities and processes related with SPCS at all levels, from local development to provincial and national policy making.

Annexes:

1. Concept Paper for the Mid-Term Review
2. List of documents reviewed by the ERT
3. List of Focus Group reports and specific interviews