

Evaluation Abstract

Title, author and date of the evaluation report:

Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS) Reloaded: Report of the SPCS External Review Team, Prepared by Mark Halle, Jehanzeb Khan and Alejandro Imbach, January 2004

Name of project, programme or organizational unit:

Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy

Objectives of the project, programme or mandate of the organizational unit:

This review was concerned with the process of SPCS preparation and implementation, not the strategy itself. The objectives of the Strategy can be found in the document adopted in 1995.

IUCN area of specialisation: Conservation Strategies

Geographical area: North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Pakistan

Project or programme duration, length of existence of organisational unit:

Preparation of the SPCS document was initiated in 1992, completed in 1995, and formally approved by the Provincial cabinet in 1996. The implementation process is still ongoing.

Overall budget of the project, programme or organizational unit: N/A

Donor(s): Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); Sarhad Provincial Government; Government of Pakistan

Objectives of the evaluation:

The purpose of the 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.” The evaluation was specifically designed to:

1. Assess the ownership of the SPCS and progress of its implementation;
2. Analyze and draw lessons learned from the SPCS experience, taking the strategy as a product and process, and including implementation and impact;
3. Formulate recommendations for future course correction, while reviewing the strategy’s relevance in the changed context.

Type of evaluation: Mid-Term Programme Review

Period covered by the evaluation:

1992 – 2003 (Note: The review examines the validity of SPCS as of 2003 by monitoring shifts in the domestic and global context in the 1990s)

Commissioned by: SDC

Audience: SDC, IUCN, NWFP Government, Government of Pakistan

Evaluation team: External

Methodology used:

After the submission of a draft Concept Paper to the North West Frontier Province Government in January 2002, the External Review took place in several stages:

1. An Inception Mission to Pakistan to validate the scope and approach of the Concept Paper (May 2003);
2. Document collection and review (May – October 2003);
3. A series of eight Focus Group discussions on key topics of SPCS in the two districts that had benefited from District Conservation Strategies (May – October 2003). The discussions were reflected in comprehensive reports prepared by local consultants and supplemented by a series of structured interviews;
4. A Review Team visit to Pakistan, including meetings with focus group rapporteurs, senior government officials, donors and IUCN staff; a workshop; visits to field projects; stakeholder consultations; and presentation of preliminary results to the Steering Committee and IUCN senior management (November 2003).

Questions of the evaluation:

1. Ownership: Level of integration of SPCS approaches, priorities and recommendations within projects, programmes and organizational processes; level of commitment to SPCS goals, consultation and participation of government, civil society groups, and private sector organizations.
2. Lessons Learned: (a) SPCS format (i.e. assumptions, structure, content and purpose); (b) institutions/mechanisms used or developed by SPCS, incl. district strategies; and (c) progress towards social, economic and ecological well-being.
3. Changes in the context: Implications of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the World Trade Organisation's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (WTO/TRIPs), Millennium Development Goals (MDG), National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSDs), and the events from September 11; implications of devolution for natural resources management and shifts in donor priorities; recent environmental phenomena like drought and other climate change factors.
4. Management of SPCS: existence and adequacy of SPCS database, baseline information and monitoring systems; evolution in capacity of government, civil society and private sector since SPCS; evolution in knowledge, understanding and practice.
5. Donor perceptions: strategic coordination and integration of environmental and developmental concerns in the province; impacts of devolution; changes in international context.

Findings:

SPCS has provided a robust framework for sustainable development in the Province, and is widely regarded as an excellent contribution to raising awareness on environment and development issues. At the same time, its relevance to today's challenges has sunk to an extent that it can neither be regarded as the basic framework for sustainable development, nor can it be updated to address current requirements.

In addition to a thorough review of changes in the global and local context, the report contains a comprehensive list of findings, some of which are highlighted below:

- SPCS has an appropriate format. Aspects that could have improved its content include a clear analysis of objectives; an Action Plan that clearly indicates who is expected to change and what change is expected; multi-stakeholder mechanisms, etc.
- There is no strategy, looking at the document from today's perspective. In terms of content, it is very much biased towards conservation.
- Roundtables, supported by Focal Points, are the key mechanisms for SPCS implementation. Although roundtables have provided a forum for the empowerment of civil society, they have not been able to engineer real policy change.

- The District Conservation Strategies process proved to be both timely and visionary in nature, and resulted in a broad sense of ownership within the district.
- SPCS was never fully internalized in the public sector management and development processes, with the situation being worse with respect to non-governmental and private sector organizations.
- Attempts to establish a monitoring system were incomplete and poorly articulated.
- With government at the center stage of implementation, ownership in the private sector and among NGOs is feeble. Ownership within government also remains restricted to a narrow band of political and civil service leaders.
- The importance of associating women in the policy planning process was not sufficiently emphasized.

Recommendations:

In the next phases of implementation, the approach pioneered by the SPCS must be made operational, streamlined, focused and concentrated on actions that bring tangible benefits to people and communities. The Evaluation Team does not recommend a new strategy. It rather suggests the development of a roadmap based on bridging the vision of sustainable development into efforts to address poverty at the provincial, district and local levels.

The Team recommends 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.

Other key recommendations include coupling local level action with work at the policy level; undertaking an operational strategy based on partnerships and synergies; moving out of Peshwar, while multiplying SPCS presence around the province; strengthening compliance to environmental rules and regulations; taking advantage of ongoing decentralization efforts as a way of implementing sustainable development.

Specific recommendations on immediate follow-up activities, structure, monitoring and evaluation, and gender integration are presented in Section IX of the External Review.

Lessons Learned:

The Review Team points out a number of lessons learned. Some highlights are presented as follows:

- There is nothing that undermines political, social, and therefore environmental stability than the loss of livelihoods, especially when these involve a sudden and massive dislocation.
- 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.
- 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.
- A growing population with a rising level of expectations cannot find sustainability on the basis of a shrinking resource base.

Language of the evaluation: English

Available from: IUCN Global Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative, Gland, Switzerland; IUCN Asia Regional Office, Bangkok; IUCN Pakistan Country Office, Karachi; and IUCN Sarhad Provincial Office, Peshawar.