

**Government of North West Frontier Province  
IUCN-The World Conservation Union  
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation**

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**Mid-Term Review  
of  
Programme Sarhad Provincial Conservation  
Strategy Support Project – Phase IV**

**Review Period: July 2001-June 2004**

**June 23 - July 3, 2003**

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## Abbreviations

ACS	Abbottabad Conservation Strategy	PSDC	Provincial Sustainable Development Council
ACS	Additional Chief Secretary	PSNP	Programme Support for Northern Pakistan
AKRSP	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme	RBM	Result Based Management
CCS	Chitral Conservation Strategy	RTs	Roundtables
CFSD	Chitral Fund for Sustainable Development	SD	Sustainable Development
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency	SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation
CIP	Community Infrastructure Project	SDNP	Sustainable Development Networking Programme
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	SMART	Self Monitoring And Reporting Template
DCO	District Co-ordination Officer	SMEDA	Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority
DEPC	District Environmental Protection Committee	SMG	Senior Management Group (IUCNP)
DLFSD	District Level Fund for Sustainable Development	SNI	Sarhad NGO Ittehad
DLG	Da Las Gul (A local CSO)	SPCS I, II, III or IV	Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy Support Project – Phase I, II, III or IV
DPOs	District Planning Officers	SRSP	Sarhad Rural Support Programme
EA	Environmental Assessment	SSDG	Sarhad Sustainable Development Gateway
EDO	Executive District Officer	TNA	Training Needs Assessment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	ToRs	Terms of Reference
EIROP	Essential Institutional Reforms Operationalisation Program	WKMS	Web-based Knowledge Management System
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	WSP	Water and Sanitation Program (World Bank)
FRC	Frontier Resource Centre	WTO	World Trade Organisation
FSD	Fund for Sustainable Development		
GoNWFP	Government of North-West Frontier Province		
IIN	Industrial Information Network		
IPM	Integrated Pest Management		
ITC	Institutional Transformation Cell		
IUCNP	IUCN-The World Conservation Union, Pakistan		
IYM	International Year of Mountains		
LEAD	Leadership for Environment And Development		
LG&RDD	Local Government and Rural Development Department		
LGO	Local Governance Ordinance		
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding		
NARIMS	National Reconstruction Information Management System		
NAs	Northern Areas		
NCS	National Conservation Strategy		
NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan		
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations		
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province		
P&DD	Planning & Development Department		
PC-I	Planning Commission Performa 1		
PEPA	Pakistan Environmental Protection Act		
PHP	Project for Horticultural Promotion		
PRB	Project Review Board		

# EXTERNAL REVIEW OF SPCS IV

## 1. Summary

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An external Mid-Term Review team was organised to assess the Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy Support Project Phase IV, a year before its end in June 2004. Since this was the last phase of support to SPCS, it was important for the team to assess the extent to which the mechanisms put in place to continue the work would be sustained.

At the time of the Mission in July 2003, it would appear that priority issues of development are no longer considered from the SPCS and environmental angle by the GoNWFP. New themes such as poverty reduction, good governance and the issues following the events of Sept. 11, 2001 are now at the forefront.

In spite of this, however, the level of awareness and understanding of issues related to sustainable development within the government and the main actors (civil society, academia, journalists etc.) is impressive, even in the face of recurring changes within the public sector.

Within government, the pace of institutionalisation of the key SPCS mechanisms to assist in sustainable development has been slow. Of the different mechanisms intended to sustain the SPCS principles, only the Roundtables (RT) and the Governmental Focal Points (GFP) are functional. The Focal Groups within the Departments, the Provincial Sustainable Development Council and the Fund for Sustainable Development are still not operational. Nor have any monitoring instruments been put in place to measure sustainability.

Without an overall coordinating body, these mechanisms may dissipate post June 2004 and the end of the SPCS support projects. The review team suggested that a concept paper on PSDC as an independent body outside government be developed and passed over to the government to see how they would operationalise this mechanism that would continue to monitor the implementation of the principles of the SPCS.

On the review team's suggestion, GoNWFP agreed to create a unit or section within P&DD to coordinate and monitor the SPCS process post June 2004 provided external funds are available. The operationalisation of the Fund for Sustainability Development (FSD) has still to take place. This delay is partly due to the fact that the FSD utilisation rules are being scrutinised at the federal level. At another level, the GoNWFP does not expect funding from multiple sources for the FSD, given the shift in focus to other issues.

The quality of the IUCN assistance to the policy dialogue through the focal points in particular, has been expressed on many occasions but a strong call for assistance in policy implementation has been repeatedly made. However the dialogue between IUCN and Government has focused on policies and on the SPCS instruments and not on the overall context in which the GoNWFP has to function in. In most instances IUCN has driven this dialogue and the various implementing mechanisms. To ensure ownership, proper direction and pace of reform and implementation, which is grounded in the current context and based on mutually identified needs, regular high-level policy dialogue has to take place between the IUCN and the ACS.

Capacity building has been greatly appreciated both by government and civil society. The institutional home for a future training programme on environment and sustainable development

for government is foreseen within the P&D Dept. However the necessary future funding mechanisms are not in place.

Clear indicators and simpler monitoring processes for the sustainable development of the Province are not in place. This would improve the effectiveness of the programme and facilitate the translation of the lessons learnt to corrective measures. A simple system should be in place before the end of SPCS IV taking into account what is already available or being built in other programmes.

The MTR has been impressed by the enthusiasm at the district level in the development of district sustainable strategies with IUCN support. In the context of devolution of power the district authorities have strongly requested assistance in the implementation phase. The review mission believes that IUCN should respond positively to this request and provide assistance to the district authorities on a selected number of key issues where natural resources are at stake. IUCN could assist with key NGO partners and members, in transforming policy work in practical terms. Cross sector issues such as water and health, forests and the economy for the poor etc. have been mentioned as entry points. Funding mechanisms at the district level should be established. The MTR calls for establishing simple indicators in determining fields to monitor progress in these fields at the district level.

However the Provincial level should not be disregarded. A heavy workload has been concentrated on a reduced number of staff. IUCN could provide some strategic assistance but in close dialogue with the highest provincial authorities.

Finally, certain assumptions on which the SPCS was based, have been questioned by the MTR team;, in particular the changing global and national milieu in which the project operates.

## 2. Introduction

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The Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy was developed between 1992 and 1996 as the overall sustainable development framework for the province. The Government of NWFP and IUCN have entered into a series of memorandums of understanding to jointly implement the strategy as an overall development framework. The fourth and final phase of implementation cooperation is co-financed through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and will end in June 2004.

The specific objectives of the external midterm review designed as an integral part of the monitoring system agreed to by SDC and IUCN Pakistan, were to:

1. identify key achievements, gaps, bottlenecks and constraints;
2. review the progress made by SPCS-IV in:
  - identifying and supporting the mechanisms and processes that should be sustained in the future by the government, civil society and/or IUCN Pakistan, and
  - positioning its district level work vis-à-vis the Local Government Ordinance of 2001; and
3. identifying how future support to SPCS could be merged into the fledgling IUCN programme in Northern Pakistan, currently supported through Programme Support for Northern Pakistan (PSNP).

The team was composed of three full members and two resource persons:

- Francois Droz, Team Leader, Senior Advisor, Environment Division, SDC, Bern. He is the overall IUCN focal point in Bern and represents SDC in the IUCN donors meetings held twice a year in Gland, Switzerland.
- Mehreen Hosain (SDC Consultant), who has worked extensively on issues of environmental management, governance and poverty reduction in Pakistan and globally with a range of donors including the World Bank, ADB, EC, and SDC.
- Dhunmai Cowasjee, Head, Programme Coordination Unit, IUCN Pakistan, responsible for setting the direction of the overall Programme in Pakistan.

The resource persons were:

- Syed Manzoor Ali Shah, Chief, Green Sectors, Planning and Development Department, Government of NWFP, focal point for the SPCS Support Project within the government.
- Masood-ul-Mulk, Chief Executive, Sarhad Rural Support Programme, a member of the Phase III review team, in March 2000.

Besides the project document, the key documents consulted by the team were the SPCS reports, the Aide Memoire from the previous phase (March 31, 2000) and Planning Mission's report (March 2001). A key instrument was the well-prepared IUCN Pakistan internal review report<sup>1</sup>, which greatly facilitated an understanding of the different issues. In addition to this literature review, the following tools/techniques were applied to the external review:

- Discussions with the project staff (both group level and individual);
- Focus group and individual meetings with government officials, NGOs, members of academia, including some members of the private sector (annex 1: Itinerary and people met); and

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<sup>1</sup> Internal Review of Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy Support Project – Phase IV and Programme Support for Northern Pakistan, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2003

- Information gathering through the press to identify current concerns in the province and in the country.

The majority of meetings and presentations were held in Peshawar except for a general IUCN introduction in Islamabad and a two-day field visit to Abbottabad.

**Outputs:**

- Feedback to IUCN Staff, July 3
- Feedback to Government of NWFP including an Aide Mémoire, July 4 (Annex 3)
- Feedback to SDC-Pakistan, July 5
- 2 detailed reports, on SPCS IV and on PSNP

**Remarks:**

The team had the difficult task of reviewing the fourth and final phase of the SPCS support project when:

- a Mid-Term Review of the 10-year SPCS process was in the design stage and stakeholders were often confused between this SPCS IV mid-term review mission and the overall SPCS mid-term review, which is to be completed by the end of the year; and
- it was difficult to clearly attribute the outcomes of this phase of the project, as they often merged with the cumulative results of three phases of project implementation.

### **3. Context and trends**

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#### **3.1 General context**

The implementation of SPCS-IV (July 2001-June 2004) has taken place against a backdrop of considerable turmoil framed both by the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and a period of far-reaching political and institutional reform in Pakistan. In the wake of a crisis of governance, the Government of Pakistan initiated a programme of devolution in 2000. A period of transition in which the architecture of the devolved governments was determined and extensive public consultations undertaken culminated in district level elections in October 2001. National and provincial elections took place a year later in 2002. Although administrative powers have been devolved, fiscal decentralisation is yet to take place. Work on determining own-source revenues and equalisation formulas for fiscal transfers, is currently underway.

While these changes resulted in a period of considerable political and institutional chaos, they have also presented stakeholders with significant opportunity to influence the decisions affecting their lives.

#### **3.2 Changes at the provincial level**

Institutionally, there have been no changes as such in the *Federal* Government. At the *Provincial* level the deconcentrated units of the major service delivery line departments (staff, assets and budgets) have been devolved to local governments. Provincial government now has no local representation in the devolved service delivery sectors, except for provincial functions, but head offices and directorates remain unchanged. It is important to note, however, that exceptions have been made in certain sensitive areas such as Forestry, which remains a provincial subject in the

NWFP. The distribution of roles and responsibilities between the province and the districts was still under review and discussion at the time of the MTR mission.

### **3.3 Changes at the district level**

At the *District* level 11 'Groups of Offices' now exist. The 11 Groups, an elected 'Nazim' and a 'Zila' (district) Council now form the new tier of District Government. The 'District Coordination Officer' or DCO is established as the highest-ranking civil servant in the district, heading the District Coordination Department and with District Development Committees overlooking decision-making. These major changes were accompanied by the redesign of jurisdiction to merge rural and urban areas. 335 Tehsil/Taluka/Town Municipal Administrations have been created largely with the municipal service delivery mandates of the local bodies. At a lower level 6022 *Union Administrations* have been created with minimal executive functions but, legally, a potential to gain more functions. In the NWFP there are 23 District Governments, 1 City District Government in Peshawar, 34 Tehsil Municipal Administrations, 2 City Towns and 957 Union Administrations.

The Local Government Ordinance (LGO 2001) provides for institutional arrangements such as Village and Neighbourhood councils and Citizen-Community Boards (CCBs) for citizen participation in local government. CCBs are being formed primarily with the purpose of identifying and managing local, relatively small-scale service and infrastructure investments. As they are 'selected' rather than 'elected' there are dangers of 'capture' by interest groups. There is also potential for them to become agents of change, shifting local power dynamics.

A third of all local council seats were reserved for women (resulting in a total of 36,007 women being elected across all four provinces, although not all reserved seats were filled), a significant step in the political empowerment of women. There are serious issues of capacity amongst women councillors and they lack an enabling environment to allow them to grow into their new role.

Under LGO 2001, each Zilla or District Council is required to develop its 'vision' for the district. The district Finance and Planning department is mandated to carry out district-level development planning and co-ordination work. The district F&P departments were set-up around the first quarter of 2002.

### **3.4 Changes in the Planning, Environment and Development Department-PE&DD**

A clear commitment from Government to the principles of the SPCS was fundamental to its success. An empowered and committed counterpart agency was an essential component of this commitment. With the Devolution of power the Planning, Environment and Development Department of PE&DD, the main counterpart organisation for implementing the SPCS IV, lost two thirds of its staff, with many being relocated to the districts. Structural changes also took place. Just before August 2001, the Environment Wing was detached from the PE&DD and merged with the Forest Department to create a new Environment Department. The position of Additional Secretary, Environment was abolished, and all the staff of Environment Wing were either transferred or terminated.

With regard to the SPCSIV, it was only in February 2002, that the GoNWFP Project Coordinator was notified and April when the Government Focal Points were appointed. Instead of a full time



Project Coordinator, the government PC is the Chief, Green Sectors who holds four other portfolios besides the environment and reports to the Additional Secretary. Finally, the SPCS Project Review Board approved the first SPCS work plan in August 2002, exactly 13 months from the start of the project. Moreover, the changing global context resulted in a shift in donor and national priorities, towards issues of national security, governance, access to justice, social sector interventions and poverty reduction frameworks.

## **4. Assessment of progress made and recommendations**

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### **4.1 To what extent has SPCS IV facilitated institutional strengthening?**

There were two areas of focus: the first related to institutionalising environmental assessment, while the second related to strategic planning and policy development at appropriate levels. A range of mechanisms, were put into place to ensure that strategic planning and sustainable policy development is institutionalised at different levels. They are described and analysed in Section 6, Key Mechanisms of SPCS.

SPCS IV worked with two strategic partners, the provincial EPA and the Planning and Development Department (P&DD) to build capacity for environmental assessment. Under PEPA 1997, small-scale projects do not require EIAs. However, at the request of the NWFP EPA, IUCN worked towards developing checklists (for the project proposal development stage) and guidelines (for the appraisal stage). These have been prepared and are being vetted by IUCN to ensure consistency with similar guidelines being developed for the Northern Areas.

As these checklists and guidelines need to be pilot tested by government, there is some risk that there may be delays in their implementation. Training needs at different tiers of government (provincial and district) will also need to be identified. The IUCN focal points will need to support the smooth implementation of these checklists and guidelines.

***Recommendation:***

***Ensure that training needs are identified and sufficient capacity building undertaken at different tiers (provincial/district, civil society) to allow for the implementation of these environmental assessment checklists/guidelines before the end of SPCS IV.***

***IUCN should assist the EPA in applying the checklists or guidelines to at least 3 to 4 cases to create a momentum of win-win solutions in finding alternatives for long-term development.***

### **4.2 Has the SPCS IV been effective in developing necessary skills in select organisations, with due regard to gender?**

The development of relevant skills in key organisations in order to build capacity for implementation of the SPCS was an important objective. The component involved a longer term training programme for a variety of stakeholders (government, private sector and civil society including academia) from different levels (provincial and district); skill development for the staff of select umbrella CSOs, guidance for new graduates through an organised internship programme and one-off workshops.

The longer-term training was offered through LEAD Pakistan. Eighty people were offered the chance to attend 3 one-week modules, with progression from one module to the next depending

on performance. Feedback suggests that the training was useful and that many would suggest that it continue.

Staff from AKRSP, SUNGI, SRSP and SNI has been offered training to build critical capacity for effective participation in the implementation of the SPCS agenda.

An internship programme has placed 20 interns for six months within government departments and civil society organisations. Feedback from the group suggests that the internship programme is a useful way of exposing young graduates to the environment sector, to which few are exposed in university, while giving them practical skills. It is an opportunity for many to learn about the NGO sector through actual experience rather than through second-hand media reports. Feedback on the public sector placements has also been positive. Almost all the graduates of the programme have been able to find jobs and it has provided an impetus both for the newly qualified young professionals and the departments and NGOs that engage with them.

For all of these training schemes, SPCSIV has paid particular attention to ensure a gender-balanced approach. In general the target was always set at 50% women participation. In terms of achievements this target was not always achieved because of lack of women applying or following the courses through.

The MTR has received very positive feedback from the Government and others concerning in particular the internship programme in particular. The first working experience is a determining factor in future careers. The MTR believes it is particularly important to expose graduates not only to green issues but also to demonstrate the interdependence between social - economic and environmental dynamics. Discussions with government indicated that there could be potential for enhancing this programme through agreed resources from other development projects and programmes

***Recommendations:***

***The MTR strongly recommends that the training modules be pursued beyond 2004 and to favour cross-sectoral exposure for graduates with due concern for gender balance.***

***The MTR team recommends that the GoNWFP utilises the opportunity presented by other project windows for the training modules. These project windows should be identified for the remaining SPCS IV period.***

***The MTR team recommends that the GoNWFP and IUCN locate an institutional home, which has an overview of the current development dynamics. Appropriate funding mechanisms for the internship programme should be developed both within government and civil society.***

### **4.3 Has the SPCS been able to strengthen and expand the financial resource base for sustainable development in the NWFP?**

Given that funding in general is limited and that funding for the environment even further, innovative and 'local' financial mechanisms to finance SD projects have been sought. Since the concept of a provincial Fund for Sustainable Development was already available - mandated under the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act of 1997, as a depository for pollution charges - it was expanded to cover funding from other sources. The Government has been assisted with the

composition of the board, getting the governing board notified, and in developing utilisation rules.

The operationalisation of the Fund has yet to take place and the Government would like to see substantive support for the Fund in place. Important funding coming from multiple sources is however unlikely according to the ACS who is expecting initial outside support at this early stage of this funding mechanism.

There has been some discussion on the concept of district-level sustainable development funds. Stakeholders in Chitral were interested in the proposal, particularly if it could be used to supplement current development funds. However, there were questions on the source of financial resources for the Fund and its use, given that complete financial authority has yet to be devolved to the district level. The MTR members discussed the possibility of using the Fund to assess whether environmental concerns had been taken into account in current development projects or the possibility of funding the incorporation of such concerns in projects through the Fund. Suggestions on Fund disbursement included a grant system where proponents would have to meet eligibility criteria, define performance targets and suggest how monitoring and evaluation could be carried out.

***Recommendation:***

***The MTR team suggests that the operationalisation of the Fund be expedited with a cut-off date of December 2003, after which the SDC contribution towards this funds be reverted to other uses – to implementing the EIA checklists and guidelines either at the provincial or district level (Abbottabad, Chitral or D.I. Khan).***

***The MTR recommends that IUCN assist the select districts with the setting up of Funds that would support the integration of environmental concerns into district level development planning.***

Some productive linkages between donor agencies and those in need of finances to implement their plans for sustainable use and management of natural resources have been fostered. In addition, workshops to build capacity in proposal development were held. Instances of technical support include, support to the Tehsil Municipal Administration of Chitral in preparing a PC-1 for solid waste management and submitting it for the ADP 2003-04, and support to the Agriculture Department and Frontier Resource Centre in accessing funds from Project for Horticultural Promotion – another SDC funded project – for training women and men farmers in improved farming techniques. The NWFP Local Government & Rural Development Department and the Environment Protection Agency were also supported to prepare and submit funding proposals to the National Environment Action Plan Support Project, a UNDP and GoP funded initiative.

Feedback suggests that both the government and civil society partners have found the capacity building workshops very helpful to improving their skills in proposal development. If IUCN is to assist the districts in setting up district-level funds, then project development skills at this and lower (tehsil and union) levels will need to be built up.

***Recommendation:***

***The MTR team suggests that the fundraising training should be done by specialised NGOs or the private sector.***

#### **4.4 Have learning and feedback mechanisms been institutionalised to form the basis for informed decision-making?**

The lack of data at all governance levels has considerably hampered the effective planning of development and internalising learning from the experiences of successful projects. Cognisant of this, several projects in the NWFP have begun focusing on improving data collection and availability. The SDC and UNDP funded EIROP project has chosen several districts in which to test its District Citizens' Information Centre (DCIC) that would collate information being held by several government departments and make it available over the web to any citizen. As Abbottabad is one of their select districts, the information being held in the Abbottabad Conservation Strategy website will be amalgamated with the DCIC information. In Chitral, the National Reconstruction Bureau is planning to set up a National Reconstruction Information Management System; again if this goes ahead, information held in the Chitral Conservation Strategy website can be incorporated within in. This will allow stakeholders to see what information is being used for annual development planning and it is hoped that with such information available, people will be able to influence such planning.

At the provincial level, two initiatives were being discussed: the GoNWFP's web portal and the suggestions by IUCN to host a Sarhad Sustainable Development Gateway web portal with information from a variety of stakeholders rather than government alone. It has now been decided that the one initiative will be carried forward: a single portal hosting information from the government, CSOs, academia and the private sector, hosted and maintained by the IT department in P&DD. The MTR did not have the opportunity for evaluating the quality and the regularity of the data produced. However the feed back from the ACS was positive.

***Recommendation:***

***The MTR team recommends that the work on SSDG is completed prior to June 2004 and the necessary capacity within P&DD is built to update and maintain this website.***

As part of earlier work, sustainable development indicators for the NWFP to monitor its progress towards sustainable development had been developed. The work has been delayed due to the partners' concerns about the overlaps and thus duplication with the NWFP's State of Environment Report. However, now that confusion has been removed, it is hoped that the work would move at the desired pace. Equally important, indicators to measure the progress of poverty alleviation under the national and provincial PRSPs are being developed. Since there is bound to be some overlap between the two, it would be beneficial to identify which environment and poverty indicators are common and could be utilised for both. Ideally, the same section or department with the provincial government should monitor them. These indicators should be taken into account in developing the provincial PRSP monitoring framework and the institutional home for the two should be the same. Linkages between district, provincial, and national levels in the selection and identification of data should be ensured. Regularly produced and publicly accessible data is essential. It will be necessary to associate key Academia and Journalists to ensure credibility of data and diffusion within population.

***Recommendations:***

***The MTR recommends that the work on sustainable development indicators be completed at the earliest and before the end of SPCS IV.***

***P&DD should be the home for these indicators but they should be shared widely with stakeholders and built into a dynamic process.***

*Together with selected partners IUCN should be able to propose a model for monitoring purposes and identify partners who would be ready to regularly provide and update the data.*

*To ensure the regular production of data would need support beyond June 2004 the MTR recommends the allocation of necessary funding to produce limited and high quality data for decision- making.*

#### **4.5 How effectively has the SPCS been able to promote integrated planning for sustainable development at district and lower levels?**

Please refer to section 5 on district work.

#### **4.6 How effective has the SPCS been in networking with other organisations to raise awareness on sustainable development?**

SPCS-IV has carried out a number of activities to raise public awareness about sustainable development. These range from regular institutional communication products and services like the publishing of SPCS newsletter and updating the websites of SPCS, ACS and CCS to carrying out workshops like those on Traditional Practices of Agro-pastoralism and Role of Market Forces in the Depletion of Forest to celebrate the International Year of the Mountains, in addition to briefing sessions on WTO obligations and SDPI/SMART programmes. Important days related to environment have been commemorated in collaboration with partners and these occasions have been used for awareness raising as well as organising debates among school and college students on themes of sustainable development. A great emphasis has been laid on the gender aspects of sustainable development through assistance and technical support to outfits like Gender Empowerment Mainstreaming (GEMS - a gender group from all SDC-funded projects in NWFP) and Gender Voices (a network of civil society organisations with a gender focus in their work) as well as developing gender checklists for projects.

SPCS-IV has also been developing linkages with major projects working on sustainable development in the province. Two notable successes have been the formation of a forum of capacity building projects – with formal recognition from both the government and the donors – and intensive collaboration with EIROP that has spawned many useful synergies. The provincial Advisory Group on Capacity Building is an important step forward in coordinating work at the provincial level. Given the number of projects that are supporting capacity-building endeavours in both government and the civil society sector, the need for coherence is vital.

Feedback suggests that all stakeholders are not aware of the activities undertaken under this phase of the SPCS Support Project and consequently, may have had unrealistic expectations. If IUCN is to move on from SPCS, then it needs to communicate with past and present stakeholders about its work till June 2004 and then beyond.

#### ***Recommendations:***

***The MTR team recommends that all future capacity-building projects be encouraged to join this Group.***

*IUCN, together with GoNWFP, should use its communication expertise to ‘close’ the feedback loop. It should inform all its stakeholders about the work that will be undertaken till the end of SPCS IV, the lessons learned from its internship, modular training and capacity building programmes, and its plans for the future. This may help address the some of the expectations of stakeholders in the NWFP. In this last phase, SPCS values should be translated into a set of principles that are disseminated to stakeholders.*

## **5. Devolution of power at the District level**

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### **5.1 Context**

In May 1997 the inception report of the Chitral Conservation Strategy called for:

- developing effective local government at all levels
- devolving authority to the district level
- constitutional guarantees for safeguarding local government
- capacity building of agencies through technical support and awareness raising
- recognition of local level organisations

The devolution programme has resulted in a mandate under the LGO 2001 for each Zilla or District Council to develop and implement a sustainable development ‘vision’ for the district, with the assistance of the district Finance and Planning Department. This provided the necessary regulatory framework for the DCSs to endorse and legitimise their findings. It was astutely concluded by IUCN that adoption by the Zilla Council’s of the DCSs as their own ‘vision’, would ensure them an ‘institutional home’ and enhance the likelihood of implementation.

Over the review period the Chitral Conservation Strategy (CCS) was debated in the district and adopted by the Chitral Zilla Council as its ‘vision’ document. This is being printed and is due to be launched shortly. The Abbottabad Conservation Strategy was initiated at a later stage and reflects the shift from ‘conservation’ to the ‘sustainable development’ agenda. It was also due to be adopted by the Abbottabad Zilla Council in early September 2003<sup>2</sup>.

What is important to note is that the basis of the devolution programme is in consonance with the premises of the SPCS- that governance and political structures are frequently the underlying causes of poverty and the degradation of environmental assets.

### **5.2 Review and Analysis of Progress**

In many respects the DCS’s supported by IUCN were prescient- leading the way for the reforms that were to be initiated by the Government of Pakistan 3 years later. Both Strategies have explored new terrain through unprecedented processes of public consultation, which despite being difficult and slow, have been critical in engendering ownership of the final product.

The District Round-Tables have been both an effective forum for encouraging debate on the contents of the Strategies, as well as a mechanism for building a constituency that will ensure the Strategies are adopted and implemented. The District Level Round-Tables should continue to be supported as participation is broad-based and it is potentially an important mechanism for ensuring that the guiding principles of the district strategies are translated into action. However, given the mandate of the elected bodies such as the Zilla Council and the Mushavirat Committee,

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<sup>2</sup> It was indeed adopted early September 2003.

the role of the district RT needs to be clarified. For example, are the RTs advisory bodies to the Council or the District Nazim? Are they a forum for the exchange of information or a task force for executing activities?

In terms of gender balance, while the participation of women has been actively encouraged, it has remained at a roughly estimated 10-20 percent. Given the difficult environment in the NWFP, this is not necessarily an area of major concern. However, efforts could be made to both further facilitate the participation of women and build their capacity to participate, particularly in light of their new roles under the devolved governments.

The ability of IUCN to engage pro-actively and effectively with the new structures of government, in a period of turbulence and overall inertia in government is impressive. The notification of a CCS Committee in Chitral and an ACS Special Committee in Abbottabad are indicators of the quality of engagement.

The devolution programme not only resulted in a period of institutional chaos with lack of clarity on new roles and responsibilities, but a serious vacuum in capacity and resources. The Conservation Strategies have provided important inputs in capacity, responding to the articulated needs of the district governments. Their presence at the district level, and access to technical resources enabled them in this role. For example, support was provided to the CCS Committee and Zilla Mushawirat Committee (the Committee mandated to develop the vision for integrated development) by arranging orientation workshops on environment and sustainable development. The DCO's offices and the EDO's have also been assisted in a range of functions related to planning and project cycle management, as well as issues related to sustainable development. Partners from the districts have been included in modular and one-off training programmes. In the future, the selection of trainees and types of training at the district level will need to be undertaken in relation to the new roles of the local governments. Training should focus on the skills needed to carry out strategic environmental assessments, as well as capacity to identify, plan and implement projects related to sustainable development.

It is important to mention that the efforts of the DCS units though admirable, have been constrained by the limited capacity of these units themselves. With minimal human and financial resources these units have struggled to cope with the demands of multiple stakeholders, while attempting to maintain quality of intervention.

### **5.3 Post decentralisation**

Evidence would suggest that the two key elements in determining the impact of decentralisation on governance and service provision are an enabling policy framework and support for implementation capacity.

Given this, IUCN and the authorities are well positioned to play (and have already played) a key role in the successful implementation of the devolution programme through the development of essential capacity in strategic and participatory planning. At this juncture, however, it is also fairly critical that the DCSs result in some concrete investments, or they will risk being shelved and forgotten as local governments move on with their business of providing essential services.

The overall approach needs to be more strategic and based on a sound analysis of the existing situation and the mandates and capacities of provincial and local governments in relation to environmental assets. A two-pronged strategy would need to be developed at the provincial and local/district level. This includes building on the existing partnership with the SDC and UNDP

funded EIROP project which is engaged in capacity building of the new local governments, as well as the ADB funded Decentralisation Support Programme (DSP), which is funding capacity building of these new structures. It is encouraging that a number of ‘investment proposals’ have been submitted to the DSP. While there is undoubtedly some strategic thinking in the district offices as well as in Peshawar, there is a need to articulate this thinking within a coherent framework for responding to the new challenges.

Partnerships are central to this paradigm- IUCN needs to maintain its links with existing partners and develop new linkages to build its work at the district level. The work with government continues to be critical, but increasing engagement with key NGOs and the private sector should be encouraged at the local level. These partnerships could be fostered through the joint implementation of demonstration projects at the local level.

It is important that the SPCS utilize this window of opportunity and continue to respond in a timely manner to the urgent needs of the new district governments. It is equally important to re-align the sustainable development rhetoric of the SPCS with the newly emerging agendas of poverty, local economic development and governance.

***Recommendations:***

***In order to learn from experience and scale up, the best practice lessons and processes of the district strategies should be distilled into ‘guidelines and operational manuals (e.g. for planning, coordinating participatory processes, M&E etc.). This will facilitate replication and scaling up.***

***The MTR suggests that the IUCN undertake a rapid analysis of local government cadres and competencies in relation to environmental management functions, as well as an assessment of training needs for government, NGOs/CBOs and the private sector, with a specific focus on the needs for implementing the DCSs. This exercise should result in a strategy, which could suggest potential links to donors/funding agencies and training organisations.***

***IUCN should assist in clarifying the role and composition of the RTs in the districts post the visioning exercise, given the mandate of the elected bodies.***

***The MTR believes that efforts at promoting gender equity should be sustained, with a focus on bringing in more women, including elected representatives into the existing Roundtables and in training events.***

***The MTR strongly recommends that small-scale initiatives focused on the poverty-environment nexus should be implemented through local partnerships between government, NGOs and the private sector. Funding for these initiatives should be identified a matter of urgency. One possible mechanism is to examine existing government funding allocation, and ‘re-orient’ priority projects to demonstrate elements of sustainability.***

***IUCN should work with SDC in disseminating the experience of the DCSs to key donors. The MTR believes that IUCN’s outreach and linkages with grassroots partners, combined with concrete experience in local level planning is a strategic advantage, which should be leveraged.***

***IUCN should make all efforts available to increase its forces at the district level to build up on this important momentum. At this stage additional support from GoNWFP cannot be expected.***



## 6. Key mechanisms of the SPCS

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A range of mechanisms, were put in place to ensure that strategic planning and sustainable policy development is institutionalised at different levels. These included the Roundtables, Government Focal Points (GFPs), Focal Groups, IUCN Focal Points, the Project Coordinator in P&DD, the PRB, the Steering Committee, the PSDC and the Fund for Sustainable Development (FSD). Some of these were ‘project related’ (e.g. IUCN focal points, Steering Committee, PRB) and served a shorter-term purpose, while the other institutional mechanisms were intended to be more sustainable. The IUCN focal points, Steering Committee and the PRB will all be phasing out at the end of the project.

Many of these mechanisms were started in Phase III and have been continued through Phase IV, with the assumption that either government or civil society partners will, based on their efficacy and usefulness, agree to continue supporting them.

According to the government feed back<sup>3</sup>, some of these mechanisms need to be dropped, while others are dependent on external resources. There are some that are adding to the workload of senior staff,; given the reduction in positions following the devolution process it will be difficult to maintain them. There is a need to understand the new context and to find solutions according to the current needs of government.

### ***Recommendation:***

***Before discussing the details of each mechanism, the MTR’s broad conclusion is that it will be critical to establish a dialogue between the GoNWFP and IUCN for the identification of options that take into account the change of context and the capacity of the P&DD.***

### **6.1 Round tables**

The five **Roundtables** - on Communication, NGOs, Sustainable Agriculture, Urban Environment, Sustainable Industrial Development - have proven to be a particularly effective mechanism for bringing together diverse stakeholders, who without such an ‘enabling’ and ‘neutral’ platform would have difficulties in dialogue. At the district level, the Roundtables have been more cross-sectoral, and an important mechanism for discussing issues in an integrated manner, bringing together stakeholders, and ensuring that there is ownership of the DCS process and product. As such they have been ahead of their time in bringing together civil society, academia, the private sector and the government.

Feedback indicates that the credibility of the Roundtables is contingent on ownership by all stakeholders. There are concerns that housing the Roundtables within ‘government’ or ‘civil society’ would diminish their efficiency as a meeting point for diverse groups and opinions. Are they platforms for information exchange, neutral ground for discussing contentious issues or are their ‘recommendations’ binding and to be translated into policy decisions? Does information flow into the entire Department and into the respective channels of the civil society? The facilitating role of the IUCN, as a ‘neutral’ broker, has been critical. However at this stage of the project, the MTR believes that IUCN FP should no longer be driving the process, and the impetus should now rest with the other stakeholders.

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<sup>3</sup> See attached Government response

The Roundtables are an important mechanism for dialogue and hence their ‘institutionalisation’ needs to begin immediately . As a first step, the Secretariat of the provincial Roundtables needs to move from the IUCN SPCS Support Unit to government departments and partners and their role in housing the Secretariat needs to be clarified and agreed. Information needs to flow from these Secretariats into the entire Department and similarly, to a more broad-based group of CSOs, academia and private sector than are presently represented .

Additional questions relate to the length of a member’s term in the RT, how new members are to be brought in to the RT, and what the ideal balance between private sector, CSOs, academia and government members should be? The NGO RT has a different role to play that is not dependent on the government position. This RT should retain its independence and continue to develop its own format in addressing common problems, strategies and concerns.

### ***Recommendation***

***Ensure before the end of SPCS IV, that the concept of each round table is revisited to clarify structure, TOR, membership criteria, home, finance etc.***

## **6.2 Government Focal Points**

The **Government Focal Points** have been operating in select departments – P&DD, the Agriculture, Industries and Local Government and Rural Development Departments and the EPA. With the assistance of the IUCN focal points, and in some cases the larger IUCN programme, they have been able to push for the incorporation of environmental concerns into some of the department’s policy work. For example, in the development of a drought management strategy for the agriculture sector in the NWFP, framing of rules under the NWFP Forest Ordinance 2002, review of NWFP’s Forest Vision 2025, establishment of a cleaner production centre by the Industries Department, development of a city development strategy for Peshawar. They are seen as the ‘champions’ of the SPCS within their own departments and a reminder of the environmental agenda. The GFPs are also responsible for calling for and conducting RT meetings; the actual work of organising these meetings falls for the time being to the IUCN focal points.

Feedback suggests that the GFPs are engaged in SPCS related activities because of their own personal interest or through the support of the IUCN focal points. There are a number of reasons for this. Staff in most provincial government departments has been reduced following LGO 2001 and there has been a consequent increase in the workload of senior bureaucrats. SPCS related work is not part of the official Job Description of these staff nor are there any financial compensation or other benefits for this additional workload as is common with other projects. Hence the support of the IUCN focal points, who are regarded as an ‘extra pair of hands’, has been crucial. After the end of SPCS IV and the IUCN focal point mechanism, the GFPs will need to develop structures or guidelines within their department to advocate for the SPCS, its values and its principles and to incorporate environment into the department’s policy and project development. Alternatively, incorporating SPCS principles into departmental work needs to be formally recognised by being incorporated into the Job Description of several senior staff within the department and then monitored by the departmental Secretary.

### ***Recommendation***

***Explore with the GFPs and IUCNP ways to reduce the actual SPCS related workload on the GFP and mechanisms to document and share best practices in the different departments.***

*Ensure, as soon as possible, that the secretariat of each Roundtable has shifted from IUCN to an appropriate government department or civil society organisation.*

### **6.3 Focal Groups**

The proposed **Focal Groups** within select departments have yet to be operationalised as the SPCS Steering Committee felt this was a premature move without the presence of a Provincial Sustainable Development Council. Feedback suggests that though the Focal Group idea is an interesting mechanism from which to advocate SPCS principles within a department, the current workload of most staff would prevent the more senior section heads from attending.

#### *Recommendation*

*The MTR recommends that this concept should be abandoned.*

### **6.4 Provincial Sustainable Development**

In order to ensure long-term viability of the SPCS, an umbrella body, the **Provincial Sustainable Development Council**, was to be created bringing together the different representatives of the Government, civil society, the private sector etc. The current PSDC concept calls for a Minister in the Chair, to ensure monitoring and compliance at the highest level possible. There are apprehensions however, that with such representation, the Council would meet infrequently and as such would not be able to perform the SPCS oversight role as imagined. Discussions with stakeholders have suggested an alternative role, of an independent body outside of government that could advise on the SD projects that could be undertaken or provide feedback on current development projects. Another alternative could be a six-monthly or yearly meeting of the GFPs and the representatives of the RTs to exchange mutual experiences. Without this overall umbrella both provincial and district level instruments such as Roundtables, would be operating in a vacuum.

#### *Recommendation*

*The MTR understands that the PSDC was a central element in the SPCS. It therefore concludes that before the end of the project a concept paper should be produced by the SPCS IV team, concerning PSDC, including a reflection on the independence of this body to become the overall coordination mechanism not only for the RTs, but also for the overall strategy. This paper should be shared with the forthcoming SPCS MTR.*

### **6.5 Project coordinator and P&DD.**

The final mechanism to institutionalise the SPCS within the public sector is the **Project Coordinator**. SPCS IV has had to do with a part-time Project Coordinator who as the Chief, Green Sector, P&DD holds four other portfolios besides the environment. Feedback suggests that though the good intentions are there, practically it has been difficult for substantive time to be spent on SPCS. If the principles of SD are to be internalised within the public sector and particularly in this 'exit phase', then an SPCS Section in P&DD with a full-time head needs to be in place. Otherwise, it is possible that without dedicated follow-up from some organisation or institution within government, the mechanisms that have been built up will slowly dissipate. The GoNWFP has requested financial assistance to continue to support the SPCS process.

The MTR recommends that an SPCS Unit or Section be created in the P&DD. The key functions would be regular briefings on the SPCS within P&DD, the housing of the sustainability/poverty-

environment indicators, the internship programme and the coordination and support of the RTs or as the secretariat of the PSDC.

In addition, these mechanisms need to be supplemented by adequate monitoring tool that would allow the evolution of trends in key environmental issues in the province such as water quality, air pollution, land degradation or/deforestation in the province to be tracked.

***Recommendation:***

***Clarify the role of P&DD in the promotion and regulation of the SPCS and its different instruments such as the RTs, the SDF etc.***

***The MTR strongly supports the GoNWFP's request for additional resources for the creation of a unit in the P&DD to ensure coordination and quality dialogue within the P&DD and between other departments.***

***The MTR stresses the urgency of follow-up to initiate the necessary discussions for the allocation of a three year position within P&DD, and the necessary conditions for its creation. .***

## **6.6 Monitoring tool**

The fundamental question raised by the ACS in the MTR's dialogue with him, was 'what impact has the SPCS had?' In the absence of baseline knowledge and effective monitoring, it was difficult for the MTR to answer this question. Serious efforts have to be made to identify, and refine a few key monitoring indicators for the main and most important environmental issues creating lack of sustainability at the provincial level. Similar efforts have to be undertaken at the district level. The "performance instrument" should be kept simple and be discussed with other large programmes presently under development. (PRSP for instance).

Data collected should be regularly updated and made public. Key academic institutions and journalists could assist in triangulating and verifying data and in dissemination efforts. It is important that data and information should be simple, relevant and user-friendly. IUCN should establish linkages between the district, provincial and national levels in the selection and identification of data.

## **7. Conclusion**

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The SPCS support projects, including SPCS IV, were based on some assumptions that need to be validated. To analyse all these assumptions would go beyond the mandate of this mid-term review. However the major points to be revisited urgently are as follows:

- **SPCS is the agenda of government, private sector, civil society and academia**

In the team's opinion, the SPCS is no longer on the agenda of **all** the stakeholders in the NWFP as other issues – poverty, good governance – have come to the forefront. This is not to say that the values of sustainable development have not been understood and internalised by many in the NWFP. In fact, the understanding of conservation and sustainable development is impressive and well spread in the province but the will to act on that knowledge is dispersed as other issues mentioned have attained more prominence with national and international agencies. The SPCS instruments may not have been institutionalised nor integrated but some important democratic

values such as dialogue between government, civil society and the private sector are recognised results.

The other problem may have been a lack of adequate baseline data and transparent monitoring tools for the SPCS process. What impact was the obvious and valid question, raised by the ACS . Serious efforts have to be made on a few monitoring indicators for the main and most important environmental issues which if disregarded would result in key consequences on the economic development of the province. Similar efforts have to be made at the district level. This monitoring cannot be undertaken by one actor only. In the absence of many stakeholders actively tracking SPCS implementation, the process may already have lost some impetus and impact.

- **Civil society and the private sector are organised and can delegate representatives for a constructive dialogue with government**

In the past, only civil society and the private sector actors were present and able to establish a dialogue with the government. However, the new governance system (elections at the district level) has allowed formal and legitimate representatives from another administrative level to open a constructive dialogue on development. The range of "actors" has therefore widened. The only drawback has been that none of the actors and in particular women, are trained or accustomed to government procedures or have necessary experience in development planning. Hence their recommendations have, perhaps, not been taken as seriously as they could have been.

- **Government is the main impetus of change and working with government and building their capacity will lead to the desired change**

In terms of governance the Government has been an important agent of change in deciding the Devolution process. However given the frequency in turnover of government staff and the drastic reduction in the P&D Department, it would be difficult to assume that at provincial level government can alone bring a real change in ensuring a balanced and sustainable development without the active and full participation of private sector, Ngos and external sources to bring about such changes. Actual government capacity will allow it to deal only with most urgent matters. At the district level, the expectations of the new government structures and elected bodies may allow the local authorities to act as one of the main catalysts of change. The private sector must take an increasing role in sustainable development, however, unfortunately, the principles of sustainability are not high on its agenda. Short term return on investments is the priority and long term concerns such as health, environment and social wellbeing are seen as a hindrance to development and not as a fundamental building block for a sustainable stream of benefits .

- **Dialogue between Government and IUCN is constant**

The dialogue between IUCN and Government has focused on the SPCS instruments and not on the overall context in which the GoNWFP has to function in. In most instances IUCN has driven this dialogue and the various implementing mechanisms . To ensure ownership, proper direction and pace of reform and implementation, regular high-level policy dialogue has to take place between the IUCN and the ACS. This dialogue should be facilitated if need be by SDC. Considering the excessive work-load at the Provincial level, a list of priorities has to be established on what could be achieved at the Provincial level within the next 12 months taking into account the change in the context and new imperatives related to initiatives such as the PRSP. The formal position of the GoNWFP on the Draft Aide Mémoire could serve as a basis for further clarifications and future dialogue.

Berne, 3 October 2003.