
**Mid-Term Review of the
National Conservation Strategy**

A Review of Provincial and District Conservation Strategies

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29 February 2000

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Executive Summary

It was clear from the beginning that the National Conservation Strategy (NCS) would have to be implemented at the provincial level. The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) decided to take the lead on this issue and was soon followed by the government of Balochistan. NWFP subsequently recognized that their strategy should be devolved further into district strategies as well (initially in Abbottabad and Chitral). At the same time the government in the Northern Areas also embarked upon developing a strategy there. This study reviews the progress that these (five) strategies have made in the wake of the NCS. It critically examines the mechanisms put into place, the processes being followed and their impacts. The major focus of the report is in examining operational constraints, limitations in organizational capacity, and the opportunities available (or unique circumstances) in each situation. The report applies a common framework as a reference against which to make a comparative review of the various sub-national or area strategies. This framework includes the following dimensions: institutional arrangements, capacity building, governance and institutional reform, gender equity, the role of civil society, and development planning coordination for sustainable development.

The initiation of the strategy development process itself has had major impacts. The most significant contribution made has been the introduction of a tradition of multi-stakeholder public consultations on sustainable development. As such, it has been one of the very first times that representatives of the government and civil society in these areas are beginning to engage in a meaningful dialogue on policy matters. The round table process has also brought together various government departments that have traditionally been very poorly coordinated. Awareness is on the rise and most stakeholders are enthusiastic about the attitudinal changes gradually taking place. At the same time, however, expectations are also high (partially a factor of the maturity of the strategy consultation process) and there is a growing concern that implementation mechanisms are not sufficiently realistic or sound. Others have pointed out to the realm of ideas and the processes that have been put into motion themselves as significant achievements.

An extremely complex set of factors has made progress an uphill task. Some of the operating constraints for conservation strategies include the hierarchical and compartmentalized decision-making and planning structures in government, limited capacity or technical expertise within both government organizations and civil society, an absence of regulatory or legislative support, a persistence governance crisis, political turbulence resulting in inconsistent policies, rapid decline in provincial development funds as a result of years of economic decline and sagging donor interest. These are only some of the enormous challenges to face in addition to severe environmental pressures and development priorities at hand. Each of the area strategies has identified constraints that are unique to its location and are beginning to formulate programmes to address them directly.

The strategies provide a new concept or a new way of thinking for most people in Pakistan. Government organizations and NGOs are still not used to the incorporating cross-sectoral or multi-dimensional linkages with other initiatives or approaches in their work. The lack of inter-agency coordination is still relatively poor and these organizations lack necessary tools or organizational structures to overcome these shortcomings. IUCN has embarked upon a capacity building programme for government functionaries as well as for representatives of the civil society but with mixed results given the size and complexity of the task. Even IUCN, despite the commendable support to the strategies to date, feels it lacks the capacity or (wo)man power to provide the level of assistance the strategies require during their initial stages.

Given the magnitude of the environmental problems at hand and the seemingly insurmountable operations constraints, there is a growing sense of skepticism amongst many stakeholders about the likelihood of effective implementation of the strategies. There are glimmers of hope, nevertheless, with persistence and perseverance of effort. While the conservation strategies cannot do much about the macro constraints, they have to be flexible and innovative in addressing conservation and development needs directly. An attitudinal shift was never expected to be rapid but there are definite signs of change emerging. The dynamics of some of the round tables in NWFP are encouraging signs of the kind of useful and direct input into policy making that is possible.

There are differing opinions, however, about how decision-making and policy making in Pakistan *actually* takes place. Many argue that there is no planning per se, with ad hocism and political influence determining priorities and political choices on a routine basis. As a consequence, conservation strategies are failing to provide the policy framework necessary in NWFP, for example (SPCS is the only officially approved sub-national conservation strategy). Senior government officials have hinted that, in order to be more effective, the strategy process should be linked more closely to the political process. The level of political support enjoyed by SPCS during its earlier years helped jump start the process to a great degree.

The experience, particularly of SPCS, is especially valuable for the other area strategies that are still in the process of formulation. There are, however, little or no structural mechanisms in place to share or learn from one another's experience. There are no inter-strategy coordination forums (with the exception of within IUCN) or are redundant if they do exist. The same is the case between the provincial/district strategies and the NCS. Except for the initial inspiration from the parent strategy each one is developing virtually independently (save for the IUCN link). Facilitation of such coordination is an extremely important role that the NCS Unit in the Ministry of Environment can play. More specific suggestions for this are contained within this report.

Not surprisingly, gender concerns have taken a blow once again. In a country where women are marginalized in virtually every sphere of life, development planning and conservation programmes are no exception. While most of the conservation strategy texts have made attempts to address gender as a cross-cutting theme, there is a realization that this is not happening in practice. Token representation of women or occasional reference of gender equity in development projects is not sufficient. Most of the strategy stakeholders have expressed their inability to deal with the issue adequately and have requested further technical assistance and guidance.

Finally, this report identifies two or three emerging areas of environmental concern that are not addressed adequately in any of the conservation strategies. The first has to do with the linkages between environment and security. A recent study on such linkages in NWFP has identified a number of *flashpoints* and *hotspots* that need urgent attention or they could flare up into serious social or economic problems - even violent conflict. Secondly, the likely impact of climate change is another area that has not been addressed. Recent studies about Pakistan have shown a high degree of vulnerability in various sectors to changes in global climate. Mitigative measures are known and should be interjected into the conservation strategy process. Lastly, the area strategies have failed to sufficiently link environmental damage or degradation to human and economic costs. Such a perspective helps highlight problems that would not normally be understood as environmental issues. Additionally, more research is needed on the use of economic instruments (pollution charges, user fees) for affecting consumption patterns. The plan for enforcement of the National Environmental Quality Standards is a good precedent for similar instruments to be developed in other areas.

Acknowledgements

This report has been prepared in consultation with numerous representatives of the government and civil society who are either directly or indirectly involved in the preparation and implementation of Provincial and District Conservation Strategies. The time they took to express their insightful comments and opinions for the purposes of this review are gratefully acknowledged.

Special acknowledgements are due to the untiring cooperation and logistical support of IUCN offices in Islamabad, Peshawar, Quetta, Gilgit and Karachi. Particular thanks go to Dr Asif Zaidi, Ms. Maheen Zehra and Mr. Hamid Raza Afridi for their guidance in the preparation of this report, and to Mr. Syed Iftikhar Hussein for his coordination efforts.

Glossary

ACS	Abbottabad Conservation Strategy
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
BCS	Balochistan Conservation Strategy
BEPC	Balochistan Environmental Protection Council
CCS	Chitral Conservation Strategy
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EAD	Economic Affairs Division
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPRCP	Environmental Protection and Resource Conservation Project
FPs	Focal Points
IGs	Interest Groups
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
MTR	Mid Term Review
NACS	Northern Areas Conservation Strategy
NAs	Northern Areas
NCS	National Conservation Strategy
NEQS	National Environmental Quality Standards
NGORC	NGO Resource Center
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NORAD	Norwegian Assistance for Development
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
P&DD	Planning and development Department
PE&DD	Planning, Environment and Development Department
PEP	Pakistan Environment Programme
PEPA 1997	Pakistan Environmental Protection Act 1997
PIMS	Pakistan Institute of Management Sciences
PSDN	Partnerships for Sustainable Development in NWFP
RTs	Round Tables
SDC	Swiss Development Corporation
SDC	Swiss Development Corporation
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SPCS	Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy
TORs	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

Background

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Scope of Study

The development of Provincial and District conservation strategies are an important first step towards the implementation of the National Conservation Strategy (NCS). These strategies have used the NCS as a framework from which provincial and local level realities and priorities are identified for the development of respective regional or area strategies. Thus far, only the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) has an officially adopted document, the Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS), while work is progressing on two of its sub-regional or district strategies, the Chitral Conservation Strategy (CCS) and the Abbottabad Conservation Strategy (ACS). Elsewhere in the country, separate initiatives are underway on the Northern Areas Conservation Strategy (NACS) and the Balochistan Conservation Strategy (BCS). Initial dialogue is also taking place on a possible strategy for Azad Jammu Kashmir, although earlier efforts of introducing strategies for Punjab and Sindh have not yet borne fruit (see section on Punjab and Sindh Conservation Strategies).

This study on district and provincial conservation strategies has been undertaken for the purpose of providing input to the mid-term review of the NCS (see TORs in Annex A). As such it is not intended to be an evaluation of the respective area strategies, but a review of the processes initiated, lessons learned from successes or significant achievements, and indeed from failures or adverse circumstances that hindered progress. It is an effort to understand the factors that can help construct enabling environments for conservation of natural resources and sustainable development at the provincial and district level.

Fundamental to each of the strategies is the effort to ensure that conservation and sustainable development concerns become central to the development planning processes of government, private sector and civil society. The review, therefore, examines the mechanisms being put into place to make this possible and critically assesses the inputs being applied to institutional support, capacity building, governance, and the degree of participation by civil society institutions in the development and implementation of these strategies. Finally, even though financial resource mobilization is one of the key operating constraints, this has been discussed only in broad terms. This is a highly and sensitive and critical area that warrants an exclusive review at the provincial and district levels. A separate study on financing the NCS has also been commissioned for the NCS MTR.

1.2 Study Approach

For the purposes of this review, individual and group discussion were carried out with key persons concerned with each of the conservation strategies (Annex B). While it was not possible to meet with all major actors, a broad spectrum of views has been obtained from which a reasonable snap-shot of the prevailing conditions can be determined. In addition to the interviews, a number of documents were consulted (Annex C). There is a fair degree of reporting, internal evaluation and external monitoring reports available, especially of the SPCS and BCS indicating a healthy tradition of self-reflection. Finally, an SDC workshop was attended in Peshawar (11 Feb. 2000) on lessons learned in the management of natural resource and biodiversity (a case study of SPCS) that provided more insight into the functioning of the SPCS.

1.3 Organization of the report

The report is organized in three main parts. Section I provides a background for the provincial and district strategies and the scope of the study within the context of the Mid Term Review of the NCS. Section II provides a consolidated review of the area strategies using a framework that reflects the critical ingredients for effective conservation strategies: institutional arrangements; capacity building; governance and institutional reform; gender equity; role of civil society; and, development planning coordination. Finally,

Section III provides some generalized assessments and recommendations for the greater NCS MTR process and identifies certain gaps or weaknesses with suggestions for improvement.

2.0 Provincial and District Conservation Strategies

2.1 Decentralizing Implementation

The development of area conservation strategies is the logical fulfillment of the NCS aspiration to devolve or decentralize implementation to the local level¹. Their common stated goal is “to secure the economic, social and ecological well-being of the people of the region through conservation and sustainable development of natural resources”. While also sharing similar objectives and principles, the strategies have singled out and prioritized issues of local relevance and importance within their ecological, socio-economic, cultural and political circumstances (note the identification and prioritization has been completed by SPCS, CCS and BCS while NACS and ACS are still in the consultation phase).

Many of the broader implementation challenges, however, of institutional arrangements, organizational capacity, governance, coordination, resource mobilization, legislative support, etc, are very similar across strategies, and as such, offer the opportunity for common understanding, strategizing and experience sharing. Section II of this report provides some context-specific discussions of individual strategies as well as of the larger “common picture”. The operating environment has deteriorated significantly since the early 1990s with sagging political commitment to conservation issues in general, decreasing development expenditure and receding donor interest (for a multitude of reasons) and worsening coordination. The conservation strategies, nevertheless, remain ambitious with lofty aspirations with the upcoming generation of strategies (ACS, BCS, CCS and NACS) striving to innovate to overcome the challenges. Most eyes and ears remain glued, at the same time, to news of the decentralization drive by the government. If exercised in its true sense, it will offer a renewed opportunity for effective implementation of the areas strategies. Skeptics, however, remain doubtful of the degree to which the devolution of authority and decision-making will be allowed.

2.2 The Process

The NCS has been used as a reference in developing each of the area strategies. Inception reports were discussed widely with all concerned stakeholders including representatives of communities and extensive consultations took place along sectoral as well as thematic lines through interest groups or round tables. A suggested implementation framework is also included in the final strategy documents. Despite external donor support and technical assistance from IUCN in each instance (point discussed further in various section of the report), the strategy is co-owned by the Planning and Development Department (or in the case of NWFP, by the Planning, Environment and Development Department) and submitted to the provincial cabinet for approval. Interestingly, no formal approval is required from other stakeholders involved in developing or implementing the strategy.

Although only one (SPCS) out of five of the area strategies is officially under implementation, the other four should also be seen as having started important processes. Their impact or contribution begins long before the official document is approved by respective government departments. Perhaps the most valuable contribution at this stage is the initiation of dialogue and mobilization of various stakeholders around a common purpose. Unprecedented fora have been created for the exchange of ideas and which allow tremendous possibilities for coordination of initiatives and programmes. These have, at the same time, raised expectations and growing frustration at the lack of perceivable progress.

2.3 Relationship with the National Conservation Strategy

As mentioned before, the NCS was the seed that germinated the area strategies. It recognized the importance of implementation at the provincial level, and as such, the area strategies are an adaptation of

¹ See *Implementation Design for the NCS For Pakistan*, January 1992

the recommendations of the NCS to local needs, potential and aspirations. The NCS also embodied a fundamental principle that has left an indelible mark on the “rules of business” in the environment sector: the spirit of public involvement. The value of this principle has been recognized and largely appreciated at the provincial and district levels as well.

Regrettably, however, apart from similarities in inspiration, goals and approach, little more is shared between the NCS and area strategies on an operational or organizational basis (this is also largely true between various area strategies as well). Occasional exchange visits have been organized by IUCN but mechanisms for systematic learning from one another’s experience are virtually non-existent. For example, even though the Joint Secretary (NCS Unit) of the Ministry of Environment is an official member of the SPCS Steering Committee, the former has never attended a meeting of the Committee let alone provide institutional support from the Federal Ministry. This is also true for all other provincial non-government stakeholders with the exception of IUCN which has played a central role in the formulation of each strategy. Despite being literally the mother of all strategies, little or no weaning for any of the offspring has taken place. These concerns are discussed more fully in Section III.

Review of Provincial and District Conservation Strategies

3.0 A Status Check

Officially launched in late 1997, the SPCS is the most mature area strategy and is well into its implementation phase. It has identified 9 priority areas² and is provided technical and professional assistance from IUCN via the SPCS Support Project, PSDN³ (Partnerships for Sustainable Development in NWFP). Strong political and especially bureaucratic support from the highest provincial authorities (Chief Minister and Additional Chief Secretary), a tradition of a democratic social culture, and prior experience with other large development projects provided the necessary push at the conception and formulation stages. This helped put into motion a vibrant and participatory environmental movement in the province. The objectives and principles or “codes of practice” of the SPCS appealed to a wide cross-section of society and the inspirational strategy document (that covered a broader set of issues than “just” conservation and which also offered commitments to remedy structural barriers) won much popular support.

The initial enthusiasm and momentum, however, is now waning. Political, economic (including reduced donor and government development funds) and bureaucratic changes are gradually undermining some of the gains made in earlier years. There is a realization that expectations may have grown too high and members of the civil society are beginning to question the effectiveness of such an approach. This is not meant by any means to under rate the significant achievements to date (some of which are discussed in the sections below). However, it is indeed a time to consolidate some of the gains made to ensure permanency and longevity.

The district strategies of ACS and CCS will serve as interesting implementation cases since traditionally district planning policies and resource allocation are sent down from the provincial head quarters. The NACS, on the other hand, offers a unique opportunity as the NAs already exercise a relative degree of autonomy/decentralized management. ADP allocations are made as a lump sum for disbursement locally, reducing red-tape and administrative delays likely in Chitral and Abbottabad. NACS and CCS also benefit from the strong presence of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN organizations) in the region which has already done a lot of social mobilization and created village organizations through which the concepts of conservation strategies can be introduced.

Balochistan also has its unique circumstances: frequent changes in government and bureaucracy, a fragile resource base, generally acknowledged capacity limitations in both public and private sectors, poor governance record, relatively less organized and restricted advocacy capabilities of NGOs, and recent curtailment of several international donor-funded projects. The final draft of the BCS document has been prepared and will shortly be submitted to the provincial cabinet for approval.

Note: The comments made in this report may appear unduly critical upon first reading, but the intention is to present to the NCS MTR team an impression of the constraints, challenges and opportunities that are common to the provincial and district strategies. For a fuller appreciation of achievements (and limitations) the reader is referred to the excellent internal and external reviews of the strategy conducted from time to time⁴.

² 1. governance and capacity building; 2. poverty alleviation and population; 3. NGOs; 4. communication and education; 5. urban environment and sustainable cities; 6. sustainable industrial development; 7. natural resource management; 8. biological diversity, parkas and protected areas; 9. cultural heritage and sustainable tourism

³ 1. strategic planning; 2. sectoral programmes; 3. capacity building (public sector and civil society organizations); 4. awareness raising/communication and education; 5. development of financial, institutional and legal mechanisms; 6. linkages with civil society; 7. decentralization and good governance; 8. monitoring NWFP’s progress towards development

⁴ An external MTR of Phase III of SPCS is scheduled for late February 2000

4.0 Institutional Arrangements

4.1 Round Tables

Amongst the various institutional arrangements envisaged for the implementation of the area strategies, the most active or most catalytic in their effect have been the sectoral and thematic round tables (RTs) or Interest Groups (IGs) and Focal Points (FPs – in SPCS only). Not only did the RTs allow the first real opportunity for a regularized dialogue between civil society and government, but they have also managed to bring together related government departments to the discussion table for the first time. The operating dynamics of the RTs have varied depending on their composition, agenda, access of the FPs and other members to senior bureaucracy, donors and politicians. While the RTs and IGs constituted in most places have been identifying issues and prioritizing these for various area strategies, the ones in NWFP have matured to a relatively sophisticated level. Some have been more productive than others such as the RT on Sustainable Agriculture in NWFP, for example, whose accomplishments are noteworthy.

Two questions that arise about the RTs, however, need careful consideration: firstly, what legal basis do they have, and as such, what should be their mandate or TORs; and secondly, in what ways are the RTs in a position to influence the provincial and district development planning process? The first point is critical for the institutionalization of the consensus building process. With the exception of NEQS (under the PEPA 1997) at the national level and soon in the forestry sector in NWFP (with the enactment of the Forestry Act), public consultation is not legally required for any policy or legislation development process⁵. At the moment the RTs are constituted through administrative orders that could technically be reversed at any moment by the secretary of the concerned department. Also, it has been argued that the practice of public consultations has been primarily carried out due to the influence of NGOs and international donors without much sincere government interest shown in taking over these functions, putting into doubt the likelihood of their sustainability (there are PSDN plans, however, to gradually transfer the RT secretariat functions to government). Finally, the role or mandate of RTs is being routinely questioned, particularly in NWFP, as discussions progress into the implementation arena. Should the RTs only be advocacy or policy advisory bodies? Through what mechanisms will RT recommendations be translated into policy changes? Should RTs be given any implementation or monitoring functions? Would they need or be allowed any administrative powers? If so, what kind of organizational structures and accountability measures have to be put into place? In other words, it is high time for (a) permanent institutional homes to be found for the RTs, and (b) formal, clearly stated rules of business be laid out. These issues are clearly more urgently applicable to SPCS, but the other strategies also have much to learn from the precedents being set in NWFP.

The second question about whether the RTs can influence decision making and development planning processes is also fundamental to future implementation of the strategies. For without formal institutional mechanisms through which decisions can be influenced, the RTs can continue to be public *consultation* forums but not forums that actually *participate* in decision making. This may well be a very tall order since governments have traditionally been shy of allowing such influence from the outside. Even so, however, conservation strategies will have to first fully understand how decision making *actually* takes place in the provinces and districts, how priorities are traditionally identified, allocations made, and how all these issues are influenced by the prevailing political processes. At present, the RTs are not sufficiently connected to the latter and, instead, have been concentrating lobbying efforts within the bureaucracy.

4.2 Steering Committees

Each of the areas strategies has a high level Steering Committee consisting of senior government, private sector and civil society representatives. The Committee's mandate is to review progress, provide overall guidance, raise/allocate financial resources and monitor implementation of the strategies. Experience has

⁵ *Environmental Legislation: Mid term Review of the National Conservation Strategy*. Draft Report. Hagler Bailly, 12 January 2000

shown, however, that these Committees have met very infrequently and have not been able to cover all their functions. The effect of this inactivity or lack of patronage is being felt at various levels especially where government, institutional reform and governance issues are concerned.

4.3 Government Departments and Organizations

SPCS implementation is the main agenda of the Environment Section and Environment Wing in PE&D Department. Full time focal persons have been provided by PE&D Department (in NWFP) to all key line agencies for integrating environment into sectoral policies, programmes and projects and catalyzing and supporting environment friendly initiatives and capacity building. Proper staffing, institutional capacity and disagreements over the mandates between the Environment Section and Environment Wing have continued to plague PE&DD in Peshawar for some time. There is virtually no contact in the formulation of the district strategies in Chitral and Abbottabad, even though these are extensions of the SPCS itself. Similarly the NWFP EPA also suffers from chronic capacity and funding shortages. The World Bank EPRCP initiative provided much needed institutional support but which has also reportedly been ineffectively utilized.

An Environment Section has been established in the P&D Department in Balochistan as well but which also is in need of further institutional support to lead the coordination, catalyzing and supporting BCS implementation. Other institutional developments in Balochistan include the establishment of the Balochistan Environmental Protection Council (BEPC – the only provincial Environmental Protection Council in the country) and the Corps of Volunteers – a citizen’s group that meets on a weekly basis to discuss solutions for environmental problems in the city of Quetta. Balochistan EPA (BEPA) also continues to remain severely under-resourced to meet the tasks put before it by PEPA 1997, BEPC and Corps of Volunteers.

A P&D Environment Section staffed by a single individual in Gilgit is the main governmental hub for NACS. In Abbottabad there is only one P&D officer whose responsibilities cover the entire Hazara Division.

4.4 Private Sector

Private sector mobilization has been fairly restricted to their participation on IGs and RTs. With the exception of the NWFP none of the other strategy areas has a sizeable industrial base. The Balochistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) has shown some interest but has not been as forthcoming as industry in NWFP (Sustainable Industrial Development RT). NACS, CCS and ACS are focusing their efforts on smaller traders, hoteliers and other tourism related businesses. Understandable, these groups are interested in potential economic benefits but are concerned about regulatory frameworks that may be imposed on their sector with the introduction of the conservation strategies.

5.0 Capacity Building

One of the explicit objectives of the district and provincial strategies is to improve the institutional capacities (both in the public sector as well as in civil society) to achieve the sustainable development of natural resources. Although succinctly stated in a phrase, this is a confoundedly difficult task given the complex range of institutions and nature of changes needed to effectively implement conservation strategies. There are several important dimensions to this. One of them is the scarcity of technical expertise, especially in the areas of environment and sustainable development. There is a lack of culture for strategic planning, inter-sectoral programming/coordination, a dire need for policy, legal and institutional reform, environmental information collection and research.

5.1 Training

IUCN is making a valiant effort through provision of various trainings, but the task is too large for any one agency to deal with effectively, particularly within the public sector. It has organized trainings in a variety of areas for selected government and civil society representatives. To a large extent these training have been opportunistic in nature by availing relevant training opportunities being offered at various institutions in the country such as the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan Institute of Management Sciences (PIMS) and NGO Resource Center (NGORC), etc. In addition, PSDN has undertaken the initiative of organizing a training programme in six modules of five days each for mid-level government officers of various provincial departments. The impact or utility of these trainings is difficult to assess since so many other factors simultaneously influence the development of capacity. The challenge and complexity of capacity building has been recognized by SPCS and is equally true for all the other strategies: *“Capacity development is a vast subject and requires a holistic approach. Its macro vision involves the simultaneous improvement in many interconnected factors linking micro and macro initiatives. Because of its systematic, capacity development requires a critical mass with coordinated and coordinated and sustained progress over many years, involvement on many fronts and on several sectors simultaneously. If we look at capacity development from this angle the SPCS Support Project is in its infancy and requires ample time to see changes as a result of different capacity development initiatives.”*⁶

There is a relatively greater degree of awareness and sensitivity to strategic planning, conservation and sustainable development in general amongst NGOs, media and academia in all the provinces and districts. Training opportunities (as discussed above) and “greening” of programmes by IUCN support projects continues in NWFP and Balochistan but the need for greater awareness raising is felt in Abbottabad and Chitral especially amongst smaller organizations. Civil society appears much more receptive to the concepts of conservation strategies in the NACS due to the “priming” done by many years of development activity by AKDN. Conversely, however, all these organizations are set in their ways and objectives and need to be marketed the respective strategy concerns and priorities. Just as anyone else, they are trying to view the NACS from their own operational perspective, and mostly being the hands-on practitioners that they are, their greatest concerns from the outset are about how the strategy will be translated into action at the village level.

5.2 Policy and Legal Reform

Policy making has traditionally been the privilege of government, but the process is usually inadequately coordinated, resulting in gaps and difficulties in implementation. What’s more is that there is a general lack of environmental policies against which decisions and planning can take place. At the moment Federal policies are applicable in most parts of the country with few locally adapted sectoral policies. Given the lack of a comprehensive policy framework, guidelines in the Five-Year Plans, for example, become the relevant policies.

Similarly, there are few provincial or local level laws related to natural resource management many of which are out of date. Even with the passage of PEPA 1997, those old sectoral laws continue to govern conservation issues since the former is primarily a legislative tool for the prevention and abatement of pollution (“brown areas”) in the country. Environment is on the concurrent list meaning that both the federal and provincial governments can legislate in these matters as long as it is not in conflict with the federal laws. However, even so, the IUCN Legal Panel assisted draft NWFP Environmental Protection Act and AJK Environmental Protection Act were declared redundant by the federal governments and have not been allowed to pass (the SPCS document provides a number of specific suggestions for legal reforms). The lack of enforcement is also a major problem common to both policies and laws. This is attributed to the lack of political will and numerous other governance issues. Moreover, implementation of policies is often sought through administrative procedures and the tool of legislation, in support of policies, is scantily used. The use of other options such as economic tools, although mentioned in the strategy documents, is even less common.

⁶ *Partnerships for Sustainable Development in NWFP: Annual progress Report*. July 1998 – June 1999, IUCN Sarhad Office)

5.3 Strategic Planning Process

This is another area where the conservation strategy process has tried to improve capacity. At present, much of the Environment Section staff (in all strategy locations) is focused on preparation of project concept papers or doing environmental reviews of projects forwarded to P&D for approval (a task for which there is little technical capacity to begin with). Although there is a practice of making Annual Development Plans and Five-Year Plans, these exercises are little more than a listing of projects. A tradition of strategic planning does not exist anywhere in Pakistan. Furthermore, strategic plans will be of no utility unless they are coordinated and in agreement with priorities of other departments. The same is true of the NGOs where an added complicating factor often is their dependency on project financing that does not leave much room for long-term planning.

6.0 Governance and Institutional Reform

A number of specific governance and institutional reform issues have already been referred to in the previous section on Capacity Building. There are also other pervasive and more far reaching concerns, however, of administrative transparency and accountability, an institutional culture that is overly centralized, bureaucratic, paternalistic, and inflexible. In a departure from the NCS, the provincial and district strategies have zeroed in onto these governance issues as major impediments to the effective functioning of the government, or more specifically, “the system of decision making and implementation as it affects the people and the environment they live in”. Although these matters need to be addressed at the national level (as recognized by the present government), they have been taken up by the area strategies as it relates to their implementation.

The lack of capacity, and especially that for environment, is a crucial limitation in the attainment of the goal of sustainable development. A clear vision and definition of objectives is wanting in most agencies, preventing even the effective utilization of the knowledge and expertise that does exist. Equally important are inefficient monitoring and accountability systems in government institutions. The linear accountability “seldom takes effect due to shared vested interests through the ranks and (or) misdirected political interventions”. Various governments (including the current one) have made some attempts to redress this situation, but the general political instability in the country and vested interests have not allowed sustained efforts in this regard. Similar concerns are also expressed about certain NGOs that apparently do not exhibit transparent procedures and financial accountability systems.

The colonial system of hierarchical and compartmentalized decision making is another characteristic distancing government from realities on the ground. The premise is that positions higher in the hierarchy are best informed, and thus most competent to take decisions. While this may be true for certain positions that require an overall sectoral view, it is not so when knowledge of other sectors of the government and of institutions outside of government is needed. This has led to excessive bureaucratic and inefficient structures and is a reason for particular alarm in Abbottabad and Chitral where correspondence between line agencies, for example, is virtually directed through the provincial headquarters in Peshawar on a routine basis. The Northern Areas, however, is relatively better off in this respect with all routine decision-making taking place at the administrative headquarters in Gilgit.

Much hope and expectation lies within each of the strategies in the present government’s decentralization drive and revival of local government institutions. Local body elections are expected at the end of the year, but it is far from clear how much authority will actually be devolved to the district and tehsil level.

Finally, participation is very closely related to devolution and rooted in the concept of empowerment. Civil society must participate in public decisions as their legitimate right, and the government should create an environment in which they can exercise this right freely. The RTs process is the beginning of public involvement in decision-making but as pointed out in section 3.1, legal and institutional reforms are needed to ensure meaningful and sustained participation. Furthermore, active participation of the private sector must also be encouraged.

7.0 Gender Equity

Gender has been identified as a cross-cutting theme in all of the district and provincial strategies with the BCS also dedicating a specific chapter to it in its draft text. However, a review of the strategy texts and programmes reveals that less than satisfactory progress has been made on this front. Whatever effort that has taken place is in the way of specific projects for women only, for example. Practically, in other words, gender is being managed as a sector and not a cross-sectoral theme. Not only is there a relatively poor representation on the RTs and IGs, there is generally a poor understanding of the gender concept and even IUCN staff is largely at a loss for how to manage this situation. Some SPCS RTs are considering reviewing each area of their activities from a gender perspective” to identify interventions that take into consideration the relations between men and women in that particular sector. The larger NGOs are relatively sensitized and have specific programme components for women and development. The major gaps are in public sector programmes, smaller NGOs and private sector. Stakeholders involved with every strategy have acknowledged the need for additional technical assistance in mainstreaming gender concerns in programmes and projects.

8.0 Role of Civil Society

The area strategies have made a commendable effort to involve a broad cross-section of society in the strategy process. In addition to NGOs, print and electronic media, researchers, academia, private sector including trade groups and labor unions have been called upon to participate in strategy discussions. The Forum for Environmental Journalists (more structured and organized in NWFP than in Balochistan) has played a major role in raising public awareness, albeit mostly amongst urban literates. Academia and research organizations have brought much needed expertise and knowledge but there are sentiments that the full potential of their participation is not being utilized. NGOs, of course, have been the most active and vocal civil society representatives in many areas. Although also of varying strengths and sophistication (most mature NGOs dominating NWFP and the NA scenes), NGOs have proven to be amongst the most willing and cooperative partners in the strategy process. Irrespective of their technical and financial capacity, however, the institutional space available to them is limited apart from on the RTs and IGs. There continues to be a lack of trust or confidence between NGOs and government, with the latter generally not prepared to allow NGOs to become involved in the development process. The NGOs, on the other hand, are also often suspicious of government intentions and sincerity. This feeling of animosity between government and NGOs is gradually lessening as they continue to interact with one another through the strategy process in different ways. Most NGOs, themselves, are plagued by a number of constraints such as donor pressure/priorities, limited technical expertise, and an absence of effective coordination amongst each other.

The commercial sector, on the other hand, has played a relatively less active role except on the SPCS Industrial Development RT. Even in the case of the latter, it has mainly been large, formal industrial units that have been engaged in the dialogue on NEQS implementation and related issues that became mandatory under PEPA 1997. BCS, NACS and the two district strategies have also tried to engage the private sector around urban pollution and trade with varying degrees of success. The IUCN teams recognize that this potential partnership needs further investment.

9.0 Development Planning Coordination and Sustainable Development

Development planning in Pakistan continues to be sector based, rigidly centralized and vertical. This is expected to pose a greater problem, the further away from administrative headquarters one gets. ACS and CCS are, thus, likely to suffer considerable bureaucratic delay in routine functioning unless effective decentralization is made possible as promised by the present government. At present even the district line departments have no idea what the ADPs are going to bring up each year. Also, as discussed in earlier

sections, civil society linkages to the development planning process are still unclear or almost non-existent. On the other hand, for better or for worse, the planning process is very readily influenced, as far as selection of development projects and allocation of funds is concerned, by the political process. The existing political influence may or may not be desirable, but technically, this allows for effective civil society representation if the elected political body is efficient and viable.

Since the other area strategies are in different stages of formulation, it is still too early to say if they will be effective in influencing the development planning process. However, if the example of the SPCS is taken, it is clear that this has not been the case to the extent desirable. “Even the NCS has not been adopted as the guiding document by the Planning Commission”, retort senior government officials in NWFP. This puts into doubt the level of government ownership that has been achieved and it becomes tempting to apply the same conclusion that was put for the NCS by the draft World Bank Strategy Review Paper in 1999 *“the main contribution of the NCS was to provide a framework for action, a set of baseline information, a model of participatory strategy development, a network of stakeholders mobilized through the participatory process, the creation and strengthening of a few key institutions, and thus an opening for subsequent initiatives. These were, in a manner of speaking, incidental outcomes of the NCS process, rather than the stated goal of the NCS programme”*.

The lack of inter-departmental coordination has already been discussed elsewhere in the report, but no mention has yet been made of the lack of donor coordination with respect of the conservation strategies. Funding for the environmental sector in Pakistan has been almost exclusively coming from international donors. The World Bank, UNDP, ADB, The Netherlands, DFID, SDC, NORAD and CIDA are the principal multi-laterals and bi-laterals in Pakistan. SPCS (along with the districts) and NACS has been supported by SDC, while BCS by the Dutch. Both are relatively “decentralized” donors with operations responsibilities in Islamabad rather than in their home countries, yet little or no functional coordination has taken place. Furthermore, also on a broader scale there appears to have been little recognition of the NCS process (the specific areas strategies may be too recent) by environmental donors (other than those financing various strategies themselves) and international NGOs. No direct linkages have been made between their projects and the NCS.

Multi-directional coordination amongst the conservation strategies, themselves, is also absent. There is no representation on each other coordination committees (with the exception of certain IUCN staff⁷) with the result that the area-strategies appear being developed in isolation from one another and, thereby, potentially repeating the same mistakes in different regions.

⁷ An IUCN Strategies Support Panel was established in April 1999 to enhance cross-fertilization of strategies. Members include all strategy managers plus other senior IUCN staff

Assessment and Recommendations

10.0 Provincial & District Strategies as Tools for Conservation and Sustainable Development

There is no doubt that conservation and sustainable development has to take place for and with the communities it is intended for. It is also abundantly clear that communities must be included in the identification and preferably in the implementation of conservation and sustainable development programmes to ensure their support and sustainability of the efforts. Since there can't be any stop-gap solutions to sustainable development, it is necessary to plan within a strategic framework that is cognizant of the complexity of variables that influence development processes. A full comprehension of the *real* forces of change and development is absolutely essential before formulating any strategy. This is the operational context in which the strategy will take life.

The experience of the SPCS (the only area strategy that is formally in its implementation phase), for example, has shown that there are certain political, economic, social and bureaucratic realities (or changes in some or all of these) that have major implications for ways in which implementation will proceed. It is for this reason that conservation strategies must choose their partnerships with care, allow room for flexibility, and be realistic in setting standards or targets.

10.1 Mainstreaming Strategies

Much credit can be taken by the NCS and the area strategies for having raised public environmental consciousness to the level where it is today. At the same time, however, the strategies also raised expectations that are now rapidly becoming the source of frustration and disappointment in several quarters. These are largely impatient voices that have not appreciated the enormity of the task nor the value of the processes that have been put into motion: space for public consultations, review of development planning, creation of potential policy frameworks, environmental information, formation of new partnerships, etc. Having said this, nevertheless, it is also time to demonstrate the practical *utility of these processes* to maintain the confidence and support of the large number of stakeholders who are not impressed by vocabulary or concepts such as "strategic planning", "policy frameworks", "institutional mechanisms", "good governance", and the likes.

10.2 Politicization of Conservation Strategies

An important reason why the area strategies have not been mainstreamed by the government in a way that was originally anticipated, has been their non-politicized nature. The entire strategy process has been completely separate from that political process which is instrumental in public decision-making at any level in Pakistan. Whether it is political agenda setting, forming of public opinion, identification of development projects or the allocation of funds to these projects, the political process is central. The level of support enjoyed by SPCS, especially during its earlier years, was in large part due to patronage from the highest level of provincial government. None of the subsequent area strategies have experienced that level of support and, consequently, the response from the government machinery has been luke warm at best. Critics argue that insufficient investment has been made in enhancing the "political appeal" of conservation strategies. Domestic champions of high political stature are needed to merge strategies with the political process at every level, and given Pakistan's political experience, it is preferable for the direction to come from the highest possible levels. There are obvious dangers of politicizing as well so that the choices made and mechanisms/institutions through which the politicization takes place should be selected with great care.

Many have argued that conservation strategy standards or expectations are too high and that they are calling for too major changes in government. Furthermore, these are sophisticated conceptual documents that may offer useful guidelines to policy makers and planners but are of little practical value to practitioners particularly at the district levels. They may be more useful once suggested organizational

reforms and other structural changes have been institutionalized. Unless there is further clarity of deliverables, many organizations find it difficult to understand what their roles should be. The idea of “action plans” is more familiar and tangible for these organizations than “strategic plans” or “policy frameworks”. Indeed the ACS, CCS and NACS should include much more developed action or implementation plans that are adjusted to specific local realities, thus making them more realistic and attainable.

Finally on a related note, one cannot escape the impression that the strategies have not been sufficiently popularized even amongst immediate stakeholders. This is more evident in, for instance, in the ACS and BCS where there is less than full understanding of what the strategies will be trying to achieve. In a predominantly “oral culture”, the language of the lords⁸ is intimidating and puts many people on the defensive. They have called for a need to translate relevant documents (strategy text, consultation reports, evaluations, etc) in to Urdu. Also, there continues to be a misinformed expectation that the strategies are going to be “projectized” and that large amounts of resources will be made available for this. All eyes and ears (even within P&Ds to a large extent – the main government counterpart) remain turned to IUCN as the guiding light. The conservation strategies continue to be viewed strongly as IUCN-led initiatives.

10.3 Inter-Strategy Exchange

There is a wealth of experience and knowledge that district and provincial strategies can gain from one another. Since SPCS is literally two steps ahead of all the others it has the most to offer and serves, literally, as a model or testing ground for the other strategies. That such a learning or cross-fertilization takes place would almost be a foregone conclusion. However, alas, there is virtually none taking place in any systematic manner (with the exception of within IUCN).

On the rare occasions that “exchange visits” have been organized (most recently by a group of 25 government and civil society representatives from Quetta to Islamabad, Peshawar and Abbottabad in November 1999) the response has been very enthusiastic. Even though such brief visits can only provide a snap-shot view, the exposure often proves to be informative, (hopefully) inspirational, and a good opportunity for networking. More involved interaction must be made possible for substantive learning to take place. This should well be considered one of a series of capacity building exercises. Another activity of considerable use would be to invite key individuals to select workshops on issues of common interest. For instance the SDC workshop (on lessons learned from SPCS in management of natural resources) attended for purposes of this study would have been immensely valuable to many people from all other area strategies – unfortunately, none were present except for IUCN staff and the DC from Abbottabad (present as a facilitator). Serious consideration should also be given to the idea of including at least some staff from a “sister” strategy as members of external monitoring or evaluation teams of other area strategies. Conversely, key staff of other strategies should be used as resource persons at strategic meetings and workshops, enabling a two-way exchange of experiences. There should be some form of representation on each others Steering Committees. It is surprising to note that there is not even a provision for anyone from SPCS to be part of the ACS and CCS Steering Committees. An Inter-Strategy Coordination Group (with broader representation than the IUCN Strategies Support Panel) should be assigned the task of investigating further opportunities for exchange on a regular basis.

10.4 Linkages with the National Conservation Strategy

The lack of coordination between area strategies discussed in the previous section holds equally true for the NCS as well. There are no functioning institutional linkages between the NCS and the district/provincial strategies. The SPCS Steering Committee does include the Joint Secretary of the NCS Unit of the Ministry of Environment as a member, but the latter has never attended a single meeting of the Committee. There are various reasons for why this may have been the case but it is still noteworthy given the mission statement of the NCS Unit calls for such interaction: “*To achieve implementation of the NCS for sustainable development in Pakistan through Federal and Provincial governments and local bodies, and by mobilizing donors, private sector and NGOs*” However, the even more distressing news is that the

⁸ .i.e., English

subsequently formed BCS Steering Committee does not even have a space for an NCS representative! Each of the strategies at the moment, therefore, is virtually autonomous or de-linked from one another. The only glue holding them together is IUCN.

The NCS Section in Islamabad has its own staffing and capacity limitations but could at least perform a more active coordination function with and between area strategies. The Inter-Strategy Coordination Group suggested in the previous section, should ideally be housed in the NCS Unit. Such a Group or Committee should facilitate synergies and complementarities with the larger NCS priorities and be able to provide comprehensive reporting on implementation throughout the country. The NCS Unit can also serve as a representative of each of the area strategies facilitating information and access to the press or other development initiatives that may be planned for those areas by the government (institutional mechanisms will have to be identified for this), donors or national NGOs.

11.0 Institutional Capacities and Linkages

The conservation strategies are extremely optimistic and ambitious and are doing their utmost to identify and establish mechanisms that will help mainstreaming of their ideas and implementation. Building institutional capacity is a gradual process that requires a great deal of commitment and resources. In the meantime, however, existing organizational strengths and institutional arrangements/mechanisms should be fully exploited. To be more meaningful, communication of the principles and ideas of conservation strategies must also be done with relevance to the work of the stakeholders for whom it is intended.

11.1 Government

Institutional weaknesses and lack of technical capacities in government departments have been identified throughout the strategy development process. These weaknesses have been shown to be especially acute in areas of environment and natural resource management. The various efforts at institutional reform, improved governance, training, strategic planning, etc, will take time before results become evident and all of which have their own limitations (see section on capacity building). Nonetheless, government will continue to be the main operational partner and must be assisted in strengthening its ability to adopt the conservation strategies effectively. Bureaucracy and the political process are the two arms of the public sector that must be brought closer together in order to achieve this end.

A reasonably positive attitude and resolve exists at senior levels of bureaucracy towards the conservation strategy process as a whole. It has been receptive to the idea of public consultations and has acknowledged its institutional and capacity short-comings and has indicated a willingness to improve even if the much-needed structural reforms have still not materialized in the way desired. Further awareness raising needs to be filtered down to lower levels in bureaucracy, especially to technical staff in line agencies of various ministries. Major extraneous constraints have included the unexpectedly drastic reduction in development funds as a result of successive years of economic decline; political turbulence and uncertainty at the national level; decline in donor support to Pakistan; and the lack of popularization of the environmental agenda. Some of the latter constraints and much of the governance and ownership issues discussed elsewhere in this report can be addressed head-on if the strategy process is married with the political process – irrespective of how turbulent it has lately been (see section on politicizing conservation strategies). Conservation of natural resources and sustainable development still needs to become firmly embedded in the agendas of politicians, political parties, bureaucracy and local government to be truly taken seriously.

11.2 Civil Society

The area conservation strategies have provided unprecedented opportunities for NGOs, media, private sector and academia to be integrally involved in district and provincial level policy dialogue. Most of these organizations have never had this kind of exposure or opportunities in the past and, thus, expectedly come with varying degrees of readiness for their new-found role. Just as for government, conservation strategies, the “process”, strategic planning, etc, are new concepts to most of civil society with the exception perhaps

of only a few larger NGOs in Peshawar and Gilgit. Government's criticism is justified to some extent when they question civil society's ability or even understanding of public development planning and decision-making processes. There continues to be a sense of mutual mis-trust and lack of appreciation for the strengths and qualities of one another and an apparent unwillingness to cooperate or seek advice from one another.

Some have criticized the strategy process as too focused on government functions and that it is not designed to take advantage of the comparative strengths of civil society organizations. While there may be some truth to this, these organizations should have been able to (and still can) influence the process and programmes. It is only natural that different organizations have differing styles, pace, and capacity of work in their respective areas of expertise. Partnerships and alliances of likeminded organizations should be identified at the earliest to capitalize on the goodwill and to spread the message. Skillful coordination and facilitation will be necessary to provide a common orientation and dovetailing of existing/new programmes with conservation and development. For the sake of efficiency and effectively, the strategies may now consider narrowing the range and type of civil society organizations to work with.

11.3 Donors

International donors have provided virtually all financing for the district and conservation strategies with only minimal in-kind support from government and some NGOs. While donor coordination groups exist at the national level and occasionally at the provincial level (usually around a specific sector), their coordination record has been abysmal. Also the conspicuous absence of the World Bank from the conservation strategy process⁹ must be reviewed. The World Bank's recent initiative of its Strategy Review and inclusion on the external NCS-MTR team are indicators of possible change on this front. Without going into the politics of donor coordination, it is sufficient to suggest that EAD, Ministry of Environment and Provincial Governments should be requested to rally the National and Provincial Strategies as the operational guidelines or framework within which donors will be allowed to provide programme support. The realities of development aid programmes are more complex than this, but serious thought must be given to this point considering that donor interest/support to Pakistan is waning and that the need of the day is to maximize complementarities. The NCS Unit is uniquely placed to play this coordinating function between donors, concerned ministries and the provincial governments.

11.4 IUCN

Q: "What would life be for conservation strategies without IUCN?" A: "Nothing!" IUCN is the unquestionable champion of all conservation strategies in Pakistan. In fact the two have become virtually synonymous. It has provided immense dedication and commitment to the effort without which the environmental agenda in the country would have been completely different. Having said this (and many more complements could be bestowed upon it), IUCN must quickly start consolidating the gains made and directly address some of the "implementation expectations" of the strategies.

IUCN has now established a credible methodology or model for developing conservation strategies. Circumstances in each situation are unique which can either help expedite or delay the process. Although the "process" itself holds significant value and importance, stakeholders in government, civil society and other practitioners fear that the emphasis is too much on the "process" and not enough on implementation mechanisms. This notion should be dispelled initially by more effective use of the dual-track concept (implementation of demo projects and formulation of the strategy at the same time), and secondly, by indeed changing gears where the strategy is ready and facilitating implementation where possible. This will require viewing the strategy agendas critically with consideration to available resources. Choices need to be made for selection of sectors, institutions, partnerships/mechanisms or reforms that can realistically be supported. The conservation strategies have mapped the playing field but which may have turned out to be much broader than can be managed by IUCN in one go.

⁹ There are various reasons given for this including fundamental differences in approach to addressing environmental concerns; financing mechanisms that only allow provision of loans to a sovereign guarantor, etc

IUCN has utilized the same senior staff to support the development of different strategies in different parts of the country. This has the advantage of utilizing experienced staff, further building their expertise or capacity in this area. Some of this effort should preferably have been made through secondment of staff, or some other arrangements that included other non-IUCN staff in strategy development in other areas. At the moment learning is taking place within IUCN because of its immensely central management role and overview of the strategies. Even so, however, several counterparts are pointing to the lack of IUCN's *technical expertise*, especially on the various sector RTs in SPCS that prevents sound advice from being heard. Such sector specialists would have to be either inducted into IUCN or identified from amongst the stakeholders to provide necessary guidance.

Finally, as mentioned before, IUCN's principal counterpart in the strategies exercise is the Government of Pakistan (GOP). Each strategy is submitted to the Provincial Cabinet for endorsement and consequently becomes a joint GOP-IUCN document. Since there is no such approval required from civil society (through any kind of formal or informal arrangement), IUCN is popularly associated with or seen too close to government¹⁰. IUCN is in the position to and should forge linkages with both government and civil society and continue playing a more active role in bringing the two together.

12.0 Gender, Environment and Development

Gender was never a central theme for any of the district or provincial strategies and as such has left everyone at somewhat of a loss about how to integrate it into the strategies. There has been a growing realization, nevertheless, of its relevance and particularly of the importance of women and natural resource use. Women have been negatively impacted by development policies and activities that have invariably been skewed to favor men. This has not been a conscious effort but a result of men who have been in the forefront of development, both as recipients as well as implementers. A number of donor and NGO initiatives to redress this situation have been attempted in NWFP and Balochistan but with only marginal impact.

As far as the strategies are concerned, women must also be involved as collaborators and decision makers. This could be done, for example, through more effective representation of women or their concerns on Interest Groups or Round Tables. This will not, however, be a sufficient condition since earlier discussions have cast some doubt on the effectiveness of RTs/IGs in influencing *real* decision-making. Given the socio-cultural sensitivity of the issue¹¹, gradual and non-threatening (to men) changes should be introduced which do not directly challenge traditional gender roles. Collaboration with men should extend to implementation of resource management and conservation programmes in addition to the expansion of women's role into new areas of production and community management¹². Further technical assistance is required, nevertheless, to help develop a clear, comprehensive yet sensitive approach for mainstreaming gender concerns. Care should be taken in the case of ACS and NACS not to repeat the mistake of marginalizing gender into the strategy text itself.

13.0 Missing Links

Once developed, conservation strategies should periodically be revisited, as the NCS-MTR is doing, to review evolving circumstances, reprioritizing, identifying gaps, building new partnerships and monitoring progress. In fact the SPCS and BCS have already identified areas that had not been underscored by the

¹⁰ The extensive institutional support to PE&DD in Peshawar, for example, is possibly a larger reason for this impression

¹¹ Less of a problem in the NAs particularly amongst the Ismaili communities

¹² Additional suggestions including institutional support for gender and development are given in the BCS, Final Draft. November 1999. p.208-209)

NCS such as governance, land reform and human rights¹³. Two or three areas that have been omitted or underemphasized by all the area strategies including the NCS are discussed below.

13.1 Environment and Security Linkages

Just as there has been an increasing understanding or merger of environment and development linkages, there is a growing body of literature exploring the linkages of environment and security. The concept of security has evolved in the recent past (following the end of the Cold War era) from security of national boundaries or national sovereignty from outside threat to human security or security of societies, communities and individuals. The concept of environmental security provides an alternative paradigm for assessing and addressing threats in an increasingly interdependent and environmentally degrading world. There is a growing agreement that environmental degradation can and does trigger, amplify or cause instability, or is at least a *contributor* to human insecurity.

The Pakistan Environment Programme (PEP) has recently undertaken a study, at the request of the Frontier Government, on environment and security linkages in the NWFP¹⁴. A number of “flashpoints” and “hotspots”¹⁵ have been identified that could imminently have a drastic impact on the communities and natural resources in these areas. Two *flashpoints* identified in the report include Dir because of the long standing forest disputes and Peshawar due to the air and water pollution. Two of the *hotspots* include Abbottabad and Chitral districts. In the case of the former, the Afghan refugee factor has become a significant issue from the point of view of land access, and in marketing and labor conflicts. In the case of Chitral, a number of points of concern are mentioned, for example, grazing rights in Gold National Park, undefined nature of land rights, including forests and pasture use, and water rights. District and provincial strategies need to be sensitive to manifestations of such threats and be prepared for mitigative action.

13.2 Climate Change

Per capita emissions of Green House Gases in Pakistan may be relatively low, but the country cannot escape the impact of global warming. In 1998 the Ministry of Environment led a UNEP case study of Pakistan on the socio-economic impacts of climate change until the year 2050. Projections were for different scenarios of warming on meteorological change and its impact on forests, agriculture productivity, water supply and socio-economics of urban and rural populations. In each instance the prognosis was grim and remedial measures are necessary before the situation becomes a security risk (see section above). Conservation strategies should remain forward-looking in this respect and factor in mitigative measures into concerned environmental plans [Note: more details required from report]

13.3 Environment-Economic Linkages

The use of economic instruments as incentives or disincentives for certain kinds of behavior has been talked about in the SPCS and BCS, however, the ideas have not been sufficiently explored or tested on the ground. This can be one of the useful tools for the attitudinal change that the conservation strategies are trying to bring about. Further research is required to identify the most suitable forms of instruments and modalities of their implementation in the provinces and districts where revenue generation and its utilization are such complex issues. The only serious attempt at adopting such an instrument has been in the case of enforcement of the NEQS. Discussions are at an advanced stage on the use of a pollution charge (polluter pays principle) for industrial discharge in excess of nationally permissible pollution limits. The pollution charge concept has been developed through public consultations with the private sector,

¹³ Pioneers of the NCS have provided various reasons for these omissions including political choice at the time, or that it was not a donor or development trend at the time, etc.

¹⁴ *In the Balance ... Environment and Security in the NWFP: A scoping Mission for the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and IUCN Pakistan, 1999*

¹⁵ “Flashpoint areas are those likely to erupt into serious violence situations over the course of the next five years. They require urgent attention to reduce stresses and social tensions, and better programmes to address problems more effectively. Hotspot areas are those likely to be problem areas from an environmental and security perspective in the near future, if not already. They deserve attention to enhance capacity and reduce vulnerability”. Ibid, p.9

government and NGOs, and serves as a good case study for developing similar instruments for use in other circumstances (in municipal waste collection, for example).

14.0 Implementation Frameworks

What does it take to implement a conservation strategy? If one already has a strategy document, a long way towards implementation has already been covered because of all the steps it has taken to get to the document itself. The social and institutional mobilization that takes place in the initial stages of the strategy are some of the most critical steps towards environmental awareness and attitudinal change. But the momentum gained during the initial stages must be sustained to maintain credibility with the people and organizations involved. Implementation sections of the strategy documents especially in the districts need to be explicit and realistic. It will be these parts of the documents that will serve as the guiding frameworks than any other, for example. The BCS document is an excellent compilation of information and conservation/development challenges facing Balochistan. The implementation chapters, however, do not provide the same rigorous analysis and prescription that the remainder of the text does.

14.1 Institutionalizing the Strategy Process

One of the most valuable contributions of the NCS and areas strategies has been the introduction of public consultations and stakeholder participation in policy dialogue and planning. Such multi-stakeholder dialogue has almost become a tradition of sorts in the area of environment and natural resource management. And for the most part, any actions or traditions that make a useful contribution or have been appreciated, tend to take on a legitimacy of their own. Even if this is the case, it cannot be taken for granted. It is crucial that these elements of the process are given formal legitimacy through legislative and regulatory recognition and support. Not only will this serve to institutionalize these mechanisms, but at the same time, the act would give them much-needed institutional homes in the public domain,

14.2 Politicizing Development

Strong efforts are needed to bring development and conservation strategies high on the political agenda of government. This would happen more readily if there was a more effective and truer representation of civil society in the district and provincial political process. Grooming of leaders and opinion makers will be worth the effort, and creative ways of doing this will have to be found. A success story in the NAs can serve as an inspiration: during the recent local government elections (Nov 1999) several successful candidates were members or leaders of ARSP-organized village organizations. As a result now, there is now a cadre of development sensitized counselors in place. The same should be the goal of conservation strategies (see section on politicizing of conservation strategies).

14.3 Resourcing

Mobilization of financial resources will continue to be a major issue in the implementation of a provincial and district strategies. Development expenditure by the government has plunged dramatically over the past few years out of which even smaller portions can be expected for natural resource protection and management, for example. Funding requirements seem even more daunting to those who hold the continued and persistent understanding that the conservation strategies are going to be “projectized”. Perhaps the strategy consultations have taken place without reference to resources available or the revenue that can be generated by the district or provinces. Donor funding cannot and must not be relied upon – a pint that has been reluctantly recognized at the provincial level. BCS has the following practical four pronged suggestions for resource mobilization:

- (a) releasing resources through improvement in efficiency and effectiveness
- (b) re-assessing and re-orienting existing programmes and projects
- (c) reviewing the public sector development planning process
- (d) raising and allocating additional funds

A potential opportunity to access at least some government funds may be on the horizon. The government has just announced a poverty alleviation programme with an allocation of Rs.35 crores to each district of the country. Although mechanisms for use of this money are not yet clear, the Chief Executive General Pervaiz Musharraf, has said it would be spent on issues identified by the communities. If the strategy process has been effective in its consultations and prior identification exercises, local leaders and communities may be able to access some of these resources for strategy implementation purposes.

15.0 Information and Monitoring

Environmental information or indicators for measuring environmental trends are not sufficiently developed in Pakistan. Such information is necessary in to enable understand the existing situation and its implications for matters of public interest. Peter Hardi has conducted a very useful exercise to list the kind of information that would be useful for environmental monitoring¹⁶ in the country. It is imperative that an accurate baseline be developed as soon as possible in all the strategy areas against which progress can be monitored. Such data should be collected by relevant organizations, but there has to be a single agency (for example P&D) that processes and organizes the data so that it can be useful for policy makers, managers and technical experts as required. Subsequent efforts should be to ensure that relevant data is collected consistently, reliably and over regular intervals to ensure comparability. The area-strategies must set for themselves measurable, achievable and, to the extent possible, time bound targets. The SPCS has listed against each priority area a set of short-term (3 years) and long-term commitments for implementation. However, there does not appear to have been any monitoring of progress against these promises. It is recommended that future reviews of the SPCS make an assessment of how closely on track implementation is progressing, and to explain the circumstances if there have been any shifts.

16.0 Punjab and Sindh Conservation Strategies

Note: There have been initial contacts with IUCN by the provincial governments of Sindh and Punjab to assist in strategy formulation. This has not been possible for various reasons. The second draft of this report will provide some discussion for why there has not been any further progress in these two provinces.

¹⁶ *Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy: Indicators for Sustainable Development*, Dr Peter Hardi, International Institute for Sustainable Development, Canada, 25 June 1998

Annexes

Annex A

Terms of Reference

**A Study of District and Provincial Conservation Strategies
In the context of NCS Implementation
As part of the Mid Term Review of the
Pakistan National Conservation Strategy**

Following TORs will be used as a guideline while conducting this review.

- Finalise the TORs in collaboration with the MTR Coordinator
- Chalk out a detailed workplan/itinerary in consultation with IUCNP
- Review strategy documents and recent monitoring reviews, progress reports relating to SPCS, BCS, NACS and the two district strategies, i.e. ACS and CCS
- Focus on developing an analysis of process indicators
- Map the relationship between NCS and provincial conservation strategies and the various sectoral and planning agencies
- Review and analyse the contribution of provincial, sub-national and district strategies towards institutional strengthening, governance, gender equity and other development processes at the provincial level
- Review and analyse the relationship between provincial line departments and provincial EPAs under different core areas recommendations
- Review and analyse how these local provincial and district strategies have been internalised for development planning systems in the provincial governments
- Review and analyse the level of input/participation of civil society institutions (private and NGO sector) in the development and implementation of these strategies
- Use the analytical framework to map out linkage between significant outcomes and processes.
- Prepare a report (not more than 30 pages) encompassing all of above

The duration of this study would be 4 weeks

Annex B

Individuals Interviewed During the Review

SPCS and District Strategies

Ammanullah Khan	IUCN Abbottabad
Baseer Khan	Planning, Environment & Development Department
Dr. Jehanzeb Khan	Deputy Commissioner, Abbottabad
G.M. Khattak	IUCN Consultant
Gul Najam Jamy	IUCN Sarhad Office
Hameed ul Hassan	Physical Planning and Housing Department
Ikramullah Jan	Sarhad Rural Support Corporation
Intikhab Amir	Frontier Forum of Environmental Journalists
Irma Malik	IUCN Sarhad Office
Khrshid Abbasi	Wildlife Department, Ayubia
Maryam Bibi	Khendo Kor
Mohammad Bashir	Environmental Protection Agency
Mustafa Aziz	Frontier Resource Center
Nadeem Yaqub	Frontier Forum of Environmental Journalists
Noman Wazir	Frontier Foundry
Shabir Hussain	Forestry Sector Project
Shaukat Shafi	Swiss Development Corporation
Shujah ur Rehman	IUCN Sarhad Office

Balochistan Conservation Strategy

Abdul Latif Rao	IUCN Balochistan Office
Abdul Rauf Kansi	Environmental Protection Agency
Ameen Chaudhry	Secretary, Irrigation Department
Arif Ansari	Agriculture Department
Dr Masoom Yasinzai	University of Balochistan
Fauzia Deebea	IUCN Balochistan Office
Haji Rasheed	Planning and Development Department
Hamid Sarfaraz	IUCN Balochistan Office
Haroon Rashid	Journalist
Masroor Alam Khan	Pakistan Television Corporation
Mudassir Asrar	University of Balochistan
Muhammad Ahmad Gondal	Environment Protection Foundation of Balochistan
Muhammad Ali Batur	Environmental Protection Agency
Qari Arshad Yameen	Jamia Islamia Alhuda
Salahuddin Nasik	Daily Jang
Salma Jaffer	University of Balochistan
Surriya Allahdin Piracha	Tanzeem Idara Bahali Mustehqeen
Syed Iqbal Kidwai	UNDP Area Development Programme Balochistan
Taj Faiz	UNDP Area Development Programme Balochistan
Tauseef Akhtar	University of Balochistan

Northern Areas Conservation Strategy

Dawar Shah	Aga Khan Education Services
Dr Ahsanullah Mir	IUCN Gilgit Office
Dr Farman Ali	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
Dr Tehmina Roohi	IUCN Gilgit Office
Ghulam Abbas	Aga Khan Health Service
Ikramullah Baig	Planning and Development Department
Iqbal Hussein	Agriculture Department
Irshad Khan	World Wildlife Fund
Julian Inglis	Technical Advisor, IUCN Gilgit Office
Wazir Ghulam Mehdi	Secretary, Food and Agriculture

Islamabad Based Persons

Ayub Qutub Research	Pakistan Institute for Environment Development Action
Dr Asif Zaidi	IUCN Islamabad Office
Maheen Zehra	NCS MTR Coordinator, Ministry of Environment
Najib Murtaza	World Bank
Syed Asad Sibtain Development	Min. of Environment, Local Government & Rural

Karachi Based Persons

Aban Marker Kabraji	IUCN Karachi
Ali Qadir	IUCN Karachi
Ali Raza Rizvi	IUCN Karachi
Dhunmai Cowasjee	IUCN Karachi
Fazal Nizamani	Environmental Protection Agency
Khizar Farooq Omar	IUCN Karachi
Nargis Alavi	IUCN Karachi
Nikhat Sattar	IUCN Karachi

Annex C

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