

Title: Pakistan's National Conservation Strategy: Renewing the commitment to action, Report of Mid-Term Review, IUCN, November 2000

Evaluation Team: external and independent

Year: 2000

Objectives of the project: The National Conservation Strategy (NCS) in Pakistan began with a two-year start-up phase, followed by three years of preparation during which a strategy was prepared, reviewed, revised and finally approved by cabinet in March 1992. The NCS has three broad objectives: 1) conservation of natural resources, 2) sustainable development and, 3) improved efficiency in the use and management of these resources. Fourteen core areas were identified for priority implementation, which led to the design of 68 programs that included various sectors and partners of the society.

IUCN area of specialization: Conservation strategies

Geographical area covered: Pakistan

Donors: CIDA and other donors

Type of evaluation: mid-term review

Objectives of the evaluation:

- 1) To assess the progress achieved since the adoption of the National Conservation Strategy. To assess specific achievements in the core programme, the following was also reviewed: institutional development, capacity development, legal framework development, policy development, financial instruments, fiscal incentives, monetary and credit policy links and sustainable trade policy.
- 2) To analyze and collect lessons learned, draw conclusions and formulate recommendations regarding adjustments of the Pakistan NCS as an integrated strategic approach.

Evaluation Questions:

The review aimed to address the following areas:

- ***Relevance:*** Is the NCS still relevant to the country's environmental and development problems? Have important cross- and multi-sectoral linkages (population, education, communications, etc...) been developed as planned? Are the interest, commitment and capacity of the NCS partners meeting the plan's requirements? What has been the role of sub-national efforts in promoting the NCS?
- ***Efficiency:*** What is the progress of: 1) capacity development in the NGO and private sectors, 2) sector-specific policies and strategies and, 3) monitoring process in sustainable development? What are the main achievements, effects, and constraints on the NCS? Have institutional development and coordination kept pace with the demands of the NCS?
- ***Effectiveness:*** In general, how effective has the NCS been in promoting sustainable development? What are the main lessons learned? Has the NCS been effective in adapting to changing circumstances? How effective is the NCS in facilitating, identifying and addressing gender-related environmental issues through the Government of Pakistan and civil society? How strong is the interest and capacity of project partners for implementing the gender-related environment components of the NCS?
- ***Sustainability:*** Has the spirit and practice of broad-based participation carried over from strategy preparation to implementation? Have implementation strategies followed a flexible and iterative approach? What is the impact of budget reductions and donor diversification?

NCS as related to its objectives and the topics of economic growth, poverty reduction and social development and environmental sustainability. The team undertook a qualitative assessment of the 60 outcome groups of the NCS and of the processes intended to implement and communicate the NCS. To aid the review, nine background studies and assessments were prepared according to the evaluation criteria. This information was complemented by a desk study that made use of existing studies, reports, books and articles pertinent to the sectors covered by the NCS. Additionally, the review team interviewed stakeholders, including local line agencies and NGOs. The review team proceeded to

confirm their data and findings through focus groups (stakeholders, national and local agencies) and field visits. Finally, the findings were validated through a multi-sectoral meeting during which stakeholders were presented the initial findings and asked for their feedback.

Findings:

- Awareness raising and institution building are the primary achievements of the Pakistan's National Conservation Strategy (NCS) more so than improvements to the environment and natural resources.
- The NCS is not operating adequately as a national sustainable development strategy. Pakistan needs a national sustainable development strategy since the most significant improvements to the environment over the longer term are likely to come about through a combination of poverty reduction and economic improvements.
- The presence of NCS has strengthened civil society institutions and their influence.
- NCS implementation capacity requires much improvement.
- An NCS-2 should refocus the catalytic power of the NCS process.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that the NCS is fully owned by the government, the key partners and stakeholders, and by building on the concerns and needs of the people of Pakistan.
- Switch the NCS from top-down and supply driven to a bottom-up demand-driven approach. This includes reviewing the existing NCS and provincial experience with local level planning and project for applicability in the government's devolution plans; refocus NCS processes towards a demand driven approach. Ensure that government agencies work towards an enabling framework for the NCS.
- Prepare NCS-2 to serve as Pakistan's sustainable development strategy for 2002-2012, with greater emphasis on poverty reduction and economic development in addition to environmental sustainability. Gender integration should be given a much more prominent role in NCS activities.
- Develop and operationalize an effective framework for monitoring and evaluation of the NCS.
- Expand the range and scale of financial mechanisms for meeting NCS objectives, including through the use of innovative sources of funding and investment.
- Demonstrate donors' commitment to a renewed NCS through consistent and coordinated support. The government should take the lead in establishing a donor coordination forum for the NCS.

Language of Evaluation: English

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