

**Internal Mission:
Preparatory Assistance to the
Northern Areas Conservation Strategy
(NACS) MTR**

30 May - 1 June, 2001

Mission Report

KEY ASSESSMENT AREA 2. What have been the steps taken to develop and sustain understanding and ownership of the NACS amongst key sectors in particular the NAs administration, NGOs and other groups? How effective have these been?

The NACS has reached out to several sectors both within government and without. Within government, P&DD, the line departments and boards such as the Tourism Board have been targeted; in addition, media agencies such as radio have been drawn in. Within civil society, the umbrella NGOs, NGO networks and CBOs, the press, and private educational institutions have been interacted with. In the private sector, the largest traders group, the NACCI has been included in consultations. Work with all of them has been initiated, with some groups more enthusiastic than others.

However, ownership* of the NACS within these partners has not reached the desired level at this point in time, perhaps, because a) the strategy document itself has not been developed yet, and b) this is a process perhaps longer than the term of the project. *See explanation of ownership.

KEY ASSESSMENT AREA 3. What have been the role, effectiveness and potential use of the consultative process?

The consultative process - and this is more than the public consultations for it includes interest groups, round tables and focal points - has allowed, for the first time in the Northern Areas, coordination both of government agencies and civil society institutions. For many it has been the first time, that several different groups have met to discuss issues and to share information. Informally, it has also been used as a mechanism for conflict resolution. The public consultations themselves allowed a specific process (speaking of causes and consequences of environmental degradation and inviting responses) to be tested besides soliciting local level input into public planning. At the community level, environmental awareness has been raised where communities played a role in the identification of sustainable development issues. Inclusion of P&DD in the process has allowed the Department to appreciate the tangible benefits of consulting with people. Together, in the future, this could mean that the communities' are offered opportunities to input into government plans and projects, with the hope that these plans become more demand-driven rather than supply-driven.

This does not mean that the consultative process is without its woes. The public consultations were time consuming to arrange – it took an average of 15 days to organise each one – and external events often affected timing. This effort may also have taken away the time required for other activities, honse eaovitiuv5(st9hrd0299 -1.1)6(s) J0 Tc - allowef0299 -1.1497 Td[other a)5(c)-3(tivitieoil76)3770

KEY ASSESSMENT AREA 5. Are the assumptions made during the project formulation still valid? Which external factors have affected/can affect the NACS most, and how can the changing co-ordination be utilised advantageously?

Most of the assumptions made at the time of project formulation are valid. However, several external factors have affected the project in different ways. Social tension has continued to rise – between Ghizer and Diامر, with Ghizer district being ‘closed’ for almost a year. The capacity of government has continued to be different from what was expected, and the number of small NGOs, with fixed capacity to integrate environment into development, have continued to grow. Though the newly formed Northern Areas Legislative Council has been given authority over subjects on the concurrent list (such as the environment) changing the operating environment, how effective this step could be in mainstreaming environment into development remains to be seen. Also as the process of devolution has not been extended to the federally administered Northern Areas as yet, it is too early to study its effect on the future implementation of the NACS.

With lesser amounts of development funds now available with the NAs administration, and more focussed priorities of a handful of donors in the Northern Areas, other sources for development funding, i.e. private sector may need to be explored.

For some, the present project co-ordination mechanisms are suitable to assist the process.

There has been a fair amount of success in building awareness of the environment and the NACS and enhancing skills in the partners of the project. Joint activities and training programmes have been organised for both the government and the civil society sector. These capacity building initiatives are however confined to a sectoral approach at the moment. The NACS project is studying the SPCS capacity development framework as a mechanism to develop a cohesive capacity development intervention in the Northern Areas context.

Building capacity within institutions is a longer-term effort, which needs to be looked at holistically. Institution building comes much after that! An example of capacity building as a long term process is the environment education related capacity building in the Northern Areas that was initiated before the start of the present NACS project, and is coming to fruition just now.

KEY ASSESSMENT AREA 9. What has been the role and significance of the pilot projects that have been initiated under the NACS, and what is their potential in future?

Pilot projects were meant to demonstrate that environment could become part of development planning. They were part of the 'two-track' approach adopted for strategy development, that while a strategy was being developed, its essential principles (of integrating environment and development) could be demonstrated through pilot projects. Of the three projects initially chosen, two are operational. In hindsight, it could be said that these pilot projects could have been initiated almost from the start of the project, as delay (foreseeable and unforeseeable) heavily affects such small-scale demonstrations.

It is however too early to comment upon the collective role or significance of the pilot projects, and of the three, only one has been completed to date and an environmental assessment report of this project is awaited. Of the other two, one is ongoing, and the other is still to be initiated because of external factors.

KEY ASSESSMENT AREA 10. Which parts of the project are on track and which ones are lagging? What have been main issues and constraints? Is there a need to extend the project beyond June 2002, or to revisit the scope of the project?

Except for the development of the Strategy, most of the project tasks are generally on track and the mid-term results that were expected to have been achieved by this point are consistent with the previous one and a half year's plans. (This has been addressed as part of task 1.) There are mixed feelings about whether the strategy development task could be achieved within the stipulated time frame of the present project, given that the writer for the strategy has still to join. Some staff feel that the strategy and the document itself will not be completed by that date, for the reasons and constraints identified above (writers for sectoral papers, capacity constraints, etc). Others feel that if the time frame for the project has to be extended to accommodate unfinished tasks, this time should be spent on preparing partners for the implementation of the Strategy, with the strategy itself ready by the end of this period.

The MTR team's guidance would be sought on this issue.

KEY ASSESSMENT AREA 11. How effectively has the project been managed? Is there a need

Co-ordination with the rest of IUCNP has improved over recent months and institutional arrangements have been put into place to enhance coordination. The Project's management has been less than optimal because of the constraints accompanying dual responsibilities of the Project manager, who was also the head of IUCN's Northern Areas Office. The two posts have now been separated, and a deputy project manager is in place to maintain the project's monitoring systems.

This is one project within IUCN's portfolio of projects in Pakistan. This, together with slow communications, has led to delayed decision-making. Efforts have been underway to improve upon such difficulties.

Next Steps

The NACS team agreed that some time needed to be sent preparing for the MTR. The project team agreed on the following steps:

To collect all reference material in one place, as much of it in soft copy as possible (action: June 4).

To ensure that facts and figures when presented were corroborated e.g. number of skills building workshops (action: June 4).

Each Co-ordinator/ Focal Point to document instances that illustrate the statements as discussed under various key task, e.g. effect of consultations, partnerships, awareness building, capacity building, linkages, partnerships and so on (action: June 6).

The NACS team to develop a collated version (5-6) pages of individual lists, to develop a comprehensive project document (action: June 7).

To prepare the presentation to the MTR. This would provide an overview of the project, with a focus on project outcomes as they relate to various sectoral/ thematic inputs and tasks, highlighting achievements, constraints, and the possible way forward. (action: June 9).

Agreed-to definitions of key terms

Objectives

For the NACS Support project only, objectives have been taken as the 10 result areas in the project proposal that have to be delivered on.

Ownership

Active participation in process, internalisation, implementation within one's own sector e.g. private sector educators, through visualisation of NACS in future work.

Partnerships

Partnerships are with those institutions with whom the project may have formal or information agreements, and with whom the project has some sustained level of work over time.