

Establishing & Strengthening Conservation Co-management Institutions: A Case Study from Afghanistan



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Presentation Outline

- 1. Introduction to protected areas in Afghanistan.**
- 2. Definition of collaborative management.**
- 3. Legal & policy framework for collaborative management.**
- 4. Institutional mechanisms for collaborative management**
- 5. Enhancing collaborative management effectiveness.**
- 6. Challenges to achieving effective collaborative management.**
- 7. Lessons learned.**

Protected Areas in Afghanistan: Introduction

- Establishment of Afghanistan's PA system began in the 1960s & 1970s. During this time 14 areas were designated as hunting reserves, proposed protected areas, or wildlife sanctuaries.
- None survived the three decades of conflict that followed.
- In 2009 the travertine lakes of Band-e-Amir and their surrounding landscape were designated as Afghanistan's first national park.
- Three additional PAs are currently being established, two in the Pamir Mountains of the NE and one in the central highlands of Afghanistan; Big Pamir Wildlife Reserve, Teggermansu Wildlife Reserve and Shah Foladi Nature Reserve.
- The National Protected Area System Plan (NPASP, 2010) identifies a further 11 sites which should be surveyed as a priority to determine if they are suitable for PA designation.

Band-e-Amir National Park



Collaborative Management

Collaborative management of protected areas is when one agency has the authority and responsibility for decision-making, but is required by law or policy to formally engage other stakeholders to obtain advice or to undertake prescribed actions.



Legal & Policy Framework for Collaborative Management



A commitment to collaborative management is enshrined in the laws and policies of Afghanistan:

- **Environment Law (2007)**

- NEPA responsible for all aspects of PA;
- NEPA to cooperate with relevant local/central institutions and communities in PA planning.

- **Interim Protected Area Tarzulmal (2009)**

- Management of PAs delegated to Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation & Livestock (MAIL);
- Multi-stakeholder Protected Area Committees (PACs) to be established in each PA;
- Collaborative Management Agreements required specifying roles and responsibilities of main stakeholders.



- **National Protected Areas System Plan (2010)**

- Highlights community participation and benefit as objectives of the PA system;
- Underlines community involvement in PA management as ‘critical’ to success.



Institutional Mechanisms for Collaborative Management

Protected Area Committee

- Principal mechanism for ensuring stakeholder input into managing PAs.
- Comprises representatives from each community, provincial and district councils, NEPA and MAIL, private sector/CSOs.
- Management authorities must seek advice and agreement of PAC on all matters related to on-the-ground management of the PA.
- PA management can reject PAC decision but in practice decisions are binding, unless NEPA/MAIL at national level object prior to next meeting.
- Issues of staffing, budget, policy do not require such consultation.

Collaborative Management Agreement: signed by all members of PAC, representatives of CMA and NEPA.

Management planning: including demarcation processes.



Enhancing Collaborative Management Effectiveness



- Improving PAC performance:
 - Persuading key persons to provide leadership;
 - Mentoring and capacity building.
- Devising clear and simple Management plans that are understood by all.
- Establishing transparent and democratic community institutions legally registered and governed by own by-laws (BACA & WPA):
 - Encouraged in seeking direct engagement with local authorities (sub-national government, police etc);
 - Supported in implementing own conservation and development initiatives;
 - Facilitated in transition to financial sustainability via links to private sector and donors.



Challenges to Achieving Effective Collaborative Management

- Pressure from widespread poverty to exploit natural resources for short-term gain.
- Low capacity at subnational level.
- Opposition to new institutions from local elites.
- Reluctance of local authorities to recognise community institutions.
- Participation of some authorities in illegal natural resource use.
- Lack of familiarity with concept of PAs.
- Ethnic divisions within communities.
- Continuing conflict:
 - exacerbating physical isolation of stakeholders;
 - Postponing generation of benefits.



Lessons Learned

- National buy-in is essential but not sufficient; local government must be committed too.
- Engage broadest spectrum of stakeholders possible.
- Organisations representing many communities are more effective than individual villages.
- Tangible benefits are preferable than promises.
- Benefits resulting from wise NR management most likely to generate support for PAs.
- Establishing a shared vision among external agencies helps avoid mixed messages.



Thank you

