



PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

PROJECT TYPE: Full-sized Project

TYPE OF TRUST FUND: GEF Trust Fund

PART I: PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Project Title:	Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management in Afghanistan		
Country(ies):	Afghanistan	GEF Project ID:	TBD
GEF Agency(ies):	UNDP	GEF Agency Project ID:	5038
Other Executing Partner(s):	National Environment Protection Agency, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock	Submission Date:	1 March 2012
GEF Focal Area (s):	Multi-Focal -Biodiversity and Land Degradation	Project Duration (months):	48
Name of parent program: For SFM/REDD+	n/a	Agency Fee (\$):	644,181

a. FOCAL AREA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK:

Focal Area Objectives	Expected FA Outcomes	Expected FA Outputs	Trust Fund	Indicative grant amount (\$)	Indicative co-financing (\$)
BD-1: Improve Sustainability of PAs	Outcome 1.1: Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas.	Output 1: New protected areas (3) and coverage (1,228,193) of unprotected ecosystems and improved management effectiveness of 60,616 ha.	GEFTF	2,807,955	22,821,660
LD3: Integrated landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape	LD3.2: Integrated landscape management practices adopted by local communities	Output 3.1: Integrated land management plans developed and implemented	GEFTF	3,318,864	15,214,440
Sub-total				6,126,819	38,036,100
Project management cost			GEFTF	315,000	2,001,900
Total project cost				6,441,819	40,038,000

b. PROJECT FRAMEWORK:

Project Objective: To establish a national system of protected areas to conserve biodiversity and mitigate land degradation pressures on habitats in key biodiversity areas, initially centered in Bamyan Province and the Wakhan corridor.

Project Component	Grant type	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Trust Fund	Indicative Grant Amount (\$)	Indicative co-financing (\$)
National PA system is established (with legal, planning, policy and institutional frameworks for expansion and management for the PA estate in the country)	TA	An Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Authority (APWA) established with capacity to deliver its mandate for an effective governance system of PA system administration including to plan, implement and monitor PA expansion and management [measured by increase in PA Systems Scorecard]. The National Protected Area System Plan (NPASP) is implemented with full policy, institutional and regulatory systems in place. New PA system established improving both	A dedicated Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Authority legally established and provided with systemic capacity to coordinate protected area management, including co-management (offices, staffing with relevant skills, work programs, etc.). Norms and standards guiding the PA management, including co-management, produced and adopted by NEPA, MAIL, and community institutions.	GEFTF	788,819	9,509,025

		<div>coverage and protection status achieving a total area under enhanced protection of 1,288,809 ha as follows:</div> <table><tr><th>Name</th><th>Ecosystem type</th><th>Baseline (ha)</th><th>Target (ha)</th></tr><tr><td>Band-e-Amir</td><td>High steppe</td><td>60,616</td><td>60,616</td></tr><tr><td>Big Pamir</td><td>Alpine steppe</td><td>0</td><td>57,664</td></tr><tr><td>Teggermansu</td><td>Alpine steppe</td><td>0</td><td>24,851</td></tr><tr><td>Wakhan</td><td>Alpine steppe</td><td>0</td><td>1,145,678</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2">Total</td><td colspan="2">1,288,809</td></tr></table> <div>These PAs will also serve as the model for protected area management in Afghanistan.</div>	Name	Ecosystem type	Baseline (ha)	Target (ha)	Band-e-Amir	High steppe	60,616	60,616	Big Pamir	Alpine steppe	0	57,664	Teggermansu	Alpine steppe	0	24,851	Wakhan	Alpine steppe	0	1,145,678	Total		1,288,809		<div>Comprehensive PA management M&E system designed and operational.</div> <div>Band-e-Amir declared a full National Park (from provisional status).</div> <div>Gazettement of 3 Protected Areas (Big Pamir Wildlife Reserve, Teggermansu Wildlife Reserve and Wakhan Conservation Area) elevating them to full protected area status and bringing them under improved management.</div>			
Name	Ecosystem type	Baseline (ha)	Target (ha)																											
Band-e-Amir	High steppe	60,616	60,616																											
Big Pamir	Alpine steppe	0	57,664																											
Teggermansu	Alpine steppe	0	24,851																											
Wakhan	Alpine steppe	0	1,145,678																											
Total		1,288,809																												
Management effectiveness is enhanced within existing and new Protected Areas and climate resilient SLM applied to reduce threats in and around PAs	TA	<div>Improved PA management effectiveness and application of climate resilient SLM delivers enhanced protection to four PAs and surrounding areas as below:</div> <table><tr><th>Name</th><th>Area under PA mgt</th><th>Estimated area under SLM¹</th></tr><tr><td>Band-e-Amir</td><td>60,616</td><td>73,616</td></tr><tr><td>Big Pamir</td><td>57,664</td><td>60,750</td></tr><tr><td>Teggermansu</td><td>24,851</td><td>29,850</td></tr><tr><td>Wakhan</td><td>1,145,678</td><td>1,145,678</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>1,288,809</td><td>1,309,894</td></tr></table> <div>[Each PA area will comprise core and adjacent community managed areas where SLM interventions compatible with BD management objectives will be applied.]</div> <div>Implementation of improved PA site management together with community adoption of SLM and Biodiversity compatible practices in the 4 PAs and surrounding areas reduces threats from poaching and land degradation (competition for grazing and water, soil erosion, degradation of hydrological functions).</div> <div>Biodiversity benefits delivered such as: i) populations of key species such as Marco Polo sheep, snow leopard, etc. remain stable or increase; ii) improved habitat integrity and connectivity across the 4 PAs and surrounding landscape.</div> <div>Appropriate climate resilient SLM technologies implemented by local communities in 1,309,894 ha resulting in: i) reduced land degradation (measured by decrease in extent of degraded areas); ii) improved productivity (measured by Net Primary Productivity and increase in rain use efficiency); iii) maintenance of ecosystem services (e.g. water availability and increased carbon sequestration); and an increase in net household income.</div> <div>Improved institutional and technical capacities</div>	Name	Area under PA mgt	Estimated area under SLM ¹	Band-e-Amir	60,616	73,616	Big Pamir	57,664	60,750	Teggermansu	24,851	29,850	Wakhan	1,145,678	1,145,678	Total	1,288,809	1,309,894	<div>Improved management and enforcement system in place for the PA cluster to address existing and emerging threats in a cost effective manner – including monitoring equipment, ranger uniforms, and information sharing among parks; with databases that are updated regularly with current information.</div> <div>Staff training program in place covering all aspects of PA operations ensuring at least 95 rangers and other field staff meet necessary competencies for planning, administration, conflict resolution, monitoring, and enforcement.</div> <div>PA management plans for Big Pamir and Teggermansu Wildlife Management Areas are written, accepted, and operationalized; and the existing PA management plan for Band-e-Amir operationalized; to provide for: (i) zonation of PAs for strict protection and sustainable use of natural resources by local communities; (ii) the regulation and management of natural resources within PAs and adjacent areas (including sustainable use of resources by communities); (iii) effective law enforcement governing wildlife poaching; shrub harvesting and other natural resource use; (iv) PA governance, including co-management and conflict resolution mechanisms; and (v) long-term ecological monitoring systems are in place for targeted species and ecosystems, establishing thresholds for resource use and informing PA management.</div> <div>Active management of the PAs implemented, such as surveys conducted to better understand wildlife habitat requirements in the context of the total ecosystem (determine wildlife ranges and movements, behavior,</div>	GEF TF	<div>Total 5,338,000</div> <div>BD 2,019,136</div> <div>LD 3,318,864</div>	28,527,075						
Name	Area under PA mgt	Estimated area under SLM ¹																												
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¹ Total areas under SLM intervention will be identified and confirmed based on consultations with local communities during the PPG

		for PA management in the 4 target PAs result in increase in METT scores (baseline and target to be set during PPG).	<p>population dynamics including survival and mortality, community interactions, etc.).</p> <p>A system for monitoring biological resources and socio-economic conditions in community managed areas across the landscape is in place and provides relevant and scientifically-based information on the state of biodiversity and livelihoods in relation to sustainable use (particularly regarding adaptation, mitigation, conservation and wellbeing).</p> <p>Co-management agreements with local communities adjacent to the new PAs secured through a community-based natural resource management plan that:</p> <p>a) defines clearly the rights and responsibilities of communities; b) delineates areas where community interventions will be implemented; c) describes prescriptions for sustainable and biodiversity compatible uses such as sustainable use of NTFPs and sustainable off-take of fuelwood; d) describes resource sharing mechanisms; e) enlist appropriate management activities to be implemented.</p> <p>Participatory village land use and management plans that meet SLM standards developed and implemented, guided by assessment of community managed areas and with extension support on appropriate SLM technologies.</p> <p>Improved SLM practices applied in biodiversity rich areas outside PAs. These will include a) rehabilitation of degraded rangelands and improving management (e.g. providing adequate rest through rotational grazing); b) improved shrubland management (e.g. promoting sustainable fuelwood collection, use of fuel efficient stoves and reduced shrubland grazing).</p>			
Sub-total					6,126,819	38,036,100
Project management cost					315,000	2,001,900
Total project costs					6,441,819	40,038,000

C. INDICATIVE Co-financing FOR THE PROJECT BY SOURCE and BY NAME if available (\$)

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Amount (\$)
National Government	National Environment Protection Agency	Grant	9,960,000
National Government	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock	Grant	24,000,000
Bilateral Agency*	US AID / Mercy Corps	Grant	3,000,000
Foundation	The Asia Foundation	Grant	78,000
Implementing agency	UNDP	Grant	3,000,000
Total Co-financing			40,038,000

* To be confirmed

D. GEF RESOURCES REQUESTED BY FOCAL AREA(S), AGENCY (IES) SHARE AND COUNTRY(IES): NA

GEF AGENCY	TRUST FUND	FOCAL AREA*	Country name/Global	Project amount (a)	Agency Fee (b) ²	Total c=a+b
UNDP	GEF TF	Biodiversity	Afghanistan	2,965,455	296,545	3,262,000
UNDP	GEF TF	Land degradation	Afghanistan	3,476,364	347,636	3,824,000
Total GEF Resources				6,441,819	644,181	7,086,000

PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION**A. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSISTENCY OF THE PROJECT WITH:**

A. 1. THE GEF FOCAL AREA STRATEGIES: This project is designed to develop a national protected area system in Afghanistan to protect biodiversity and enhance ecosystem function and resilience in ecologically important areas. As land degradation is threatening biodiversity and ecosystem function, the project accordingly addresses sustainable land management as a key measure to protect biodiversity, secure ecosystem services and enhance ecosystem resilience. The project is thus designed as a combined BD and SLM intervention. The project will build programmatically on work initiated with GEF funds through a PA early action grant that led to the creation of a National Protected Area System Plan (NPASP). The project directly addresses BD-1: *Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems* and LD3: *Integrated landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape*. Biodiversity conservation received limited support in the initial years post-conflict as the government focused on addressing pressing human development issues. However, with the growing recognition that natural resource management is the foundation for reconstruction in the country, with the recent establishment of Band-e-Amir National Park as a functional model for protected area development, and the recent development of a national framework for the management of Protected Areas, this is an opportune time to move protected area development forward. The project seeks to address gaps in this process through the operationalization of a National Protected Area System Plan. It will do so by establishing the necessary institutional framework and capacity for management, establishing Band-e-Amir Provisional National Park with permanent status, gazetting and operationalizing management of the Big Pamir and Teggermansu Protected Areas, which will provide the initial heart of the PA system. These areas will be zoned into core and multiple use lands encompassing areas of highest biodiversity significance. The project will further seek to address land degradation threats that pose a critical risk to habitats and are threatening biodiversity and ecosystem function. The project will thus address sustainable land management as a key measure to protect biodiversity, secure ecosystem services and enhance ecosystem resilience. The project is thus designed as a combined BD and SLM interventions. It will promote the application of climate resilient (Sustainable Land Management) SLM methods and technologies through integrated approaches. Further it will support the documentation of lessons linking SLM actions to climate change adaptation and build capacities for provincial and local government functionaries and local communities to advance SLM. A total of 1,145,678 hectares of land will be designated as the Wakhan Conservation Area, a Protected Landscape or Managed Resource Use PA (IUCN category 6), to contain and reduce these pressures, increase biodiversity intactness and improve connectivity across the landscape, bringing the total area under protection to 1,288,809 hectares. The protected areas will be managed under co-management agreements between local communities and national authorities. SLM technologies will be promoted to combat land and accompanying habitat degradation, and reduce the vulnerability of the communities to climate change and poverty, thereby containing the threats to biodiversity in this landscape.

Having successfully conducted the recent parliamentary elections the country's ability to sustain a stable democracy has been enhanced. There is a feeling of great optimism and hope that those improvements to governance structures will bring peace and development. A number of major international conferences were held that has reconfirmed the United States and broad international support for reconstruction efforts and programs to strengthening Afghan institutions and socio-economic development in the country. The improved security, economic development, more confidence in the rule of law, and coordination support the opportunities for sustainable progress in the country. It is thus a most opportune time to take action to enmesh the necessary legislations and site improvements to set up a viable protected areas system to be placed at the forefront of biodiversity conservation efforts in the country.

A.2 NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND PLANS OR REPORTS AND ASSESSMENTS UNDER RELEVANT CONVENTIONS:

Environmental conservation is recognised as a pressing concern of the Government of Afghanistan. Article 15 of the Constitution calls for the State to "adopt necessary measures for... proper exploitation of natural resources and improvement of ecological conditions." Article 7 directs the State to abide by the UN Charter and international conventions that Afghanistan has signed. Afghanistan has signed and ratified CBD, CITES and the UNCCD. Afghanistan signed the CBD in 1992 and the

UNCCD in 1995. Under the CBD, Afghanistan's National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan (NBSAP) is now close to approval. This Plan calls for the establishment of legally recognized, adequately funded and effectively managed protected areas as one of the most important actions. The National Capacity Self Assessment (NCSA) articulated the synergies between the UNCBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC. It identified actions relevant to country capacity development for implementing the Rio Conventions.

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) released in 2008 placed environment as a “cross cutting issue” to the three main pillars of Afghanistan's National Strategy: (i) Security, (ii) Governance, Rule of Law, and Human Rights, (iii) Economic and Social Development. Under environmental management, the ANDS prioritizes restoration and sustainable use of rangelands and forests, conservation of biodiversity, preservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage sites or resources, community based natural resource management, reducing pollution, and improving environmental management, education and awareness. The National Protected Area System Plan is in line with the development strategy and promotes many of its priorities. This project will contribute towards the National Priority Programs (NPP) numbers 10, 8 and 16. Presently there is development of a specific NPP on environmental conservation which is intended to address rangelands, forestry, protected areas and most importantly capacity development at all levels so that in the future citizens are trained and equipped to protect their environment and resources. The Environment Law of 2007, Articles 38 and 39 direct NEPA to develop a National Protected Area System Plan. This was approved and is in force since November 2010. This project is the initial implementation of this NPASP. Finally, in the Afghanistan Country Report to UNCCD, land degradation issues and challenges have been mentioned, many of which are going to be addressed by this proposed project.

B. PROJECT OVERVIEW

B. 1. DESCRIBE THE BASELINE PROJECT AND THE PROBLEM THAT IT SEEKS TO ADDRESS:

Afghanistan is a land-locked country of sweeping plains and high mountains covering roughly 650,000 km². Mountains make up over 65% of the landmass, with over 25% of the country above 2,500 m, including the central highlands of the Hindu Kush that grade eastward into the huge mountains of the Pamirs, with Mount Noshaq reaching over 7,400 m in elevation. The climate is continental in nature, with cold winters and hot summers. Most of the country is semi-arid or arid, with extensive deserts and semideserts in the southwest. The northern plains were once covered in dry, open woodlands of pistachio and juniper stretching to the Amu Darya River and its associated riparian tugai woodland that run along much of the country's northern border. In the southeast along the Pakistan border, remnants of once extensive forests of pine and cedar can still be found growing within the influence of the Indian Ocean monsoons.

Afghanistan is classified as having 17 ecoregions 5 of which are considered globally “critical / endangered”. This ecological complexity is partly explained by its geographic distinction of residing at the confluence of three of the earth's major realms or ecozones –the Indomalayan (from which species such as the leopard cat and Kashmir flying squirrel belong), the Afrotropical (e.g., the caracal and striped hyena, and until recently the cheetah), and the Palearctic (e.g., wolf, lynx, brown bear) – as well as greater Himalayan endemics such as the snow leopard and Marco Polo sheep. Because of this biogeographic confluence, Afghanistan has a surprising level of biodiversity – for example, nine species of wild felids can be found in the country, the same number as is found in all of sub-Saharan Africa. Afghanistan is also a critical stopover point for Eurasia's central flyway for bird migration, including for common crane, steppe eagle, waterfowl and other species. Unfortunately, many of Afghanistan's mammals and birds are now considered globally or regionally threatened or near-threatened. These include snow leopard, Persian leopard, Marco Polo sheep, urial, wild goat, markhor, Asiatic black bear, imperial eagle, greater spotted eagle, Pallas's sea-eagle, lesser kestrel, white-headed duck, marbled teal, sociable lapwing, and large-billed reed warbler. The recent disappearance of the Asiatic cheetah (Afghanistan's tenth felid) and Siberian crane highlight the need for improved protection and management of Afghanistan's biodiversity. Recent analysis² of recorded species records shows that there are 137 to 150 species of mammals, 428 to 515 birds, 92 to 112 reptiles, six to eight amphibians, 101 to 139 fish, 245 butterflies, and 3,500 to 4,000 vascular plant species native to Afghanistan. Afghanistan prepared the country's first Protected Species List in 2009 when 48 species were given protection. It is planned to list a further 90 species in 2012.

Afghanistan remains a predominately rural nation with upto 80 percent of the population involved in farming or herding, or both. Increasing human population and other factors such as impacts of climate change is putting severe pressure on the country's natural resources. Thus, not only is it essential to protect the land and the systems it supports for biodiversity conservation but it is important for these natural resources to be restored and conserved so that the ecosystem services services such as soil fertility, erosion control, crop pollination, and climatic stability, are sustained to secure the rural livelihood.

² Biodiversity Profile of Afghanistan. An Output of the NCSA. UNEP, GEF and NEPA

Threats to Biodiversity and Land Management: Unfortunately, Afghanistan’s environment has been dramatically and negatively affected over the course of the last quarter century from near-constant conflict and associated pressures related to the destruction of infrastructure, movements of large numbers of internally displaced people, an influx of modern weaponry, extreme poverty, and an almost total lack of enforcement. The results have been that rangelands have deteriorated, forests have been felled, and wildlife populations have greatly diminished from uncontrolled hunting and habitat degradation. Hunting remains a major threat to many economically important wildlife species. The rapid increase in accurate, high-powered weapons due to the years of conflict, combined with a near-complete breakdown of enforcement mechanisms related to national and even local rules and regulations on hunting, has led to highly unsustainable take of most large and/or commercially exploitable species. Another threat is the illicit wildlife trade. Birds of prey are a continued source of illegal trade from Afghanistan to other parts of the Middle East. Animal components – such as skins – are sold, too.

Land degradation has an adverse impact on Afghanistan’s economy and social welfare. Across much of the country, landscapes are characterized by moderate to severe deforestation, overgrazing, depleted ground water reserves, reduced surface water quantity and quality, erosion, salinity, lowered soil fertility, and the loss of biodiversity. These are linked to unsustainable land use practices. The amount of productive land in Afghanistan, especially at higher elevations, is highly limited and under great pressure. The continued degradation of this land threatens both the wildlife and the human communities. Many areas have been affected by overgrazing as numbers of domestic livestock throughout the region have increased sharply in recent years. This is particularly the case in the foothills and lower slopes, as well as the alpine and subalpine meadows. Similarly, overgrazing is exacerbated by drought and feedback cycles that worsen the initial effects through soil erosion and desertification, which further increase pressures on remaining rangelands. Shrubs in these areas are the primary source of fuel for heating and cooking. Shrubs are also critical food for both livestock and wild ungulates, and also protect the soil from erosion and shelter herbaceous plants from livestock grazing. The amount of time necessary for regrowth is so long that current harvests are unsustainable, leading to denuded landscapes near villages and the necessity to travel greater distances to gather shrubs. Increased vegetation cover also aids water retention. Surface run-off of rainwater is slower on vegetated surfaces and thus infiltration rate into the ground, and as a consequence also recharge rate of groundwater resources is higher. This is of special importance in an arid country like Afghanistan where groundwater resources are of crucial importance and are being currently exploited at unsustainable rates.

Protected Areas Estate: Work on Afghanistan’s protected area system began in the 1960s and 1970s, whereby fourteen areas were identified that served as hunting reserves or proposed protected areas (see table 1 below for details). However, with the exception Band-i-Amir, none of the previously proposed fourteen areas were officially gazetted, and the following decades of conflict destroyed any momentum toward environmental protection.

Table 1: List of proposed protected areas in Afghanistan³

Name	Designation	IUCN Category	Biome represented	Total Area
Band-i- Amir	National Park	II	Cold winter deserts	41,000
Ajar Valley	Wildlife Reserve	IV	Mixed mountain systems	40,000
Ab-i-Estada	Waterfowl Sanctuary	IV	Cold winter deserts	27,000
Dasht-i-Nawar	Waterfowl Sanctuary	IV	Cold winter deserts	7,500
Hamun-i-Puzak	Waterfowl Sanctuary	IV	Cold winter deserts	35,000
Koli- Hashmat Khan	Waterfowl Sanctuary	IV	Cold winter deserts	191
Wakhan	Conservation Area		Mixed mountains	1,145,678
Nuristan	National Park		Mixed mountain systems	
Zadran	National Reserve		Cold winter deserts	
Imam Sahib	Wildlife Reserve		tugai vegetation	
Darqad	Wildlife Reserve		tugai vegetation	
Northwest Afghanistan	Wildlife Reserve		<i>Pistacia vera</i> forests	
Registan Desert	Wild Reserve		Warm desert	
Pamir-i-Buzurg	Wildlife Reserve	IV	Mixed mountain systems	67,938

It is encouraging to note however that a number of major protected area outcomes have recently occurred in Afghanistan, starting with a National Protected Area Gap Analysis in 2008 that was based on work done mostly in the 1970s. This was an essential step because after the years of conflict there was an almost complete lack of knowledge regarding the areas that had been proposed for protection in the 1970s and the state of the biodiversity and natural resources of the country. The result was a map of the country overlaid with a 50 x 50 km grid that showed where biodiversity was most likely to still be intact. This fed directly into the second major outcome – the National Protected Area System Plan (NPASP), a product required by Article 39 of the Environment Law which states “The National Environmental Protection Agency shall develop a comprehensive plan for the national protected areas system...” and which was designed to identify national and regional protected area targets (the

³ Source: Biodiversity Profile of Afghanistan: An Output of the NCSA for Afghanistan (UNEP, GEF and NEPA)

NPASP commits Afghanistan to protect at least 10% of its total land area while improving the livelihoods of communities living in and around protected areas) as well as provide direction for the monitoring and evaluation of the system as a whole. The third major outcome has been the creation of a benefit sharing arrangement, a critically important step needed to support protected area development. Previous government financing requirements had precluded accrual of funds generated by protected areas to the local communities or responsible management authorities – so a process of organizing communities into legal entities (under Afghan Law these are “Social Organisations”) was developed where the community organizations could then enter into concession contracts with the government for certain aspects of protected area management.

The current institutional arrangements for managing protected areas in Afghanistan is that NEPA has the overall regulatory and ultimate control over the gazettelement and development of protected areas while the Ministry of Agriculture, as the Central Management Authority or CMA, has the day-to-day management responsibility for the areas. The two organizations operate cooperatively through a signed *Tarzulamal* under Afghan Law, which is a formal agreement stating the responsibilities of each agency. This *Tarzulamal* requires that there is a protected area committee for each PA where the community representation must be in the majority. Consequently there already exists the Band-e-Amir Protected Area Committee (BAPAC) and the Wakhan Pamir Association (WPA).

The National Environment Protection Agency (NEPA) and the Central Management Authority (CMA) of the Ministry of Agriculture justify protected areas as an aspect of national development and defend the associated budgets as development spending required for proper functioning of Afghanistan’s society and economy. Under the ANDS Environmental Strategy, NEPA and the designated CMA will need to liaise with six separate Ministries in order to coordinate the implementation of Afghanistan’s protected area system: the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, responsible for forestry and rangeland management; the Ministry of Energy and Water, responsible for Afghanistan’s energy and water projects; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responsible for international agreements and regional cooperation issues; the Ministry of Economy, responsible for national strategic planning; the Ministry of Justice, responsible for reviewing and approving legislation related to the environment; and the Ministry of Finance, responsible for allocating budgets and sanctioning development plans according to environmental regulations. The project proposes to establish and/or operationalize 4 protected areas totalling an area of 1,314,225 ha as described in annex 2.

Baseline project: The baseline project is costed at around USD \$228.2 million over a period of around 5 years consisting of investments made by the national government, targeted investments by donors and investments from large cross-sectoral donor-funded national programmes as described below.

Investment from Government: Government spending consists of a) the support for the operational budget for NEPA; and b) funds to support natural resource management projects mainly led by MAIL. With a budget of \$11.5 million the operational budget support to NEPA will help fulfil its functions such as: promoting conservation and rehabilitation of the environment; developing environmental laws and regulations and implementing them; coordinating all activities related to environment including international cooperation; carry out assessments and monitoring such as EIA and pollution control. Under the various NRM projects that MAIL will support examples include conservation and development of Pistachio forests, Community-based Natural Resource Management, Afghanistan Greening Program, Establishment and re-development of tree nurseries. A total of \$ 12.9 million is estimated. In the future, MAIL expects a much larger budget in the order of more than \$50 million.

Targeted investments by Donors: USAID is the single largest bilateral donor supporting Afghanistan. USAID investments include the USAID-funded WCS projects “Biodiversity Conservation in Afghanistan” and “Governance through Natural Resource Management”. These projects have a total budget of around \$19 million and have helped build technical capacity for natural resource management at all levels (national, provincial, district, community), helped create and strengthen community governance institutions including laws, policies, and institutions affecting natural resource management while ensuring that environment outcomes for the local poor communities are improved. They were also instrumental in the declaration of the country’s first Protected Area and continue to support improved technical capacity of the park rangers and improve environment education in Band-e-Amir and the Wakhan Corridor. In addition, they support strengthening the capacity of MAIL and NEPA at the provincial level for the management of Band-e-Amir National Park. Similarly two other projects with funding from USAID, Ecodit’s “Biodiversity Support Programme for the National Environment Protection Agency” and ICIMOD’s “Afghan Biodiversity and Community Forestry” had a total budget of \$8.2 million and aimed to strengthen natural resource management by promoting institutional and policy development, improving capacities for research, analysis and monitoring. They also focussed on the institutional building and increasing the ability of the NEPA to plan and manage biodiversity conservation programmes in the country.

Investments from cross-sectoral donor-funded national programmes: A very important baseline is the National Area Based Development Programme with support from a number of donors including Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Japan,

Norway, Spain, the United States of America and UNDP. Based on the third pillar of the ANDS, the programme focusses on three themes: strengthening local governance and institutions; sustainable livelihoods through rural infrastructure; and stabilization through economic livelihoods. From the overall budget of \$294 million, NRM-focussed activities include development of local level natural resource management plans, tree planting and ecosystem rehabilitation, disaster risk management (including improving ecosystem base) and sustainable livelihoods. In addition, the “Institutional Capacity Building for Gender Equality Project (GEP)” with a total budget of \$3 million, is aimed at enhancing policy development capacity of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA). This project will provide support to strengthen sub-national institutions to promote socio-economic empowerment of women. Similarly the “Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP)” is aimed at establishing national systems, procedures and legal frameworks to implement, coordinate and monitor sub-national governance policies, and build the capacities of provincial and district governance offices and enable them to manage governance, development and security strategies in accordance with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. This programme will support integration of sustainable environmental management at the sub-national level by working Provincial Development Councils (PDC), Provincial Environmental Advisory Councils (PEACs) and District and Community Development Councils (DDAs/CDCs). The programme has a budget \$83.6 million.

The **long term solution** proposed by this project is to operationalise the national system of protected areas in Afghanistan as a vehicle for conserving BD as well as securing ecosystem resilience, and functions in ecologically sensitive areas. PAs can only be effective in addressing threats if pressures on biodiversity and ecosystem integrity are addressed at the landscape level. The long term solution thus needs to also include application of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in the PA landscape to reduce threats. There are, however, still barriers that stand in the way of achieving this solution:

Barrier	Elaboration
Lack of policy and institutional enabling environment.	Afghanistan does not yet have the full range of policies, legislation, regulations and institutions for management of the PA estate. Although NEPA and MAIL are both mandated to work on environment and natural resource management within the country and NEPA entrusted with the responsibility to identify and declare protected areas, there are still constraints that prevent the creation of a national enabling environment for the gazettelement, creation and operationalization of the national protected area system. These include issues such as the long time it takes for policies or legislation to be enacted and the unclear responsibilities and very limited capacities. Institutional responsibility for the management of Afghanistan’s protected area system devolves to two national level agencies – MAIL and NEPA. There is a need to improve coordination between NEPA and MAIL in the development and management of PAs. While MAIL does have a PA unit it is small and understaffed with no clear budget allocation. Within NEPA there is a need to define clear responsibility for protected areas on a day-to-day basis. Institutionally the Tarzulamal which was agreed between NEPA and MAIL is a weak structure under Afghan law. It is best translated as ‘procedures’ and is inferior to regulations (<i>Leheya</i>) under the Environment Law. It was intended that this would be a <i>Leheya</i> but at the time of submission the Ministry of Justice disputed the need for such regulations. This will need to be re-visited as a priority. What is needed is a single institution with a clear mandate for the development and management of the protected area system within Afghanistan such as the proposed Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Authority (APWA). Constructing APWA will need the transfer of staff and existing budget allocations to the new body. The gap between capacity and need is great. To cover this gap, the managing bodies still need a greater understanding of actual needs, a means of incorporating this into funding requests from the central budget, and a concerted effort to secure the necessary funding. Finally, there are six categories of protected areas listed in the Environment Law that largely match the IUCN categories I to VI (but note that there is no ‘Wilderness Area’ category). However there is no explanation of the attributes of each category as in the IUCN listing. It will be necessary to establish clear guidelines for these PA categories to ensure that protection and conservation are objectives of the PAs of Afghanistan.

<p>Lack of practical systemic capacity by government to manage protected areas and limited skills and capacity for co-management and use of climate resilient SLM practices to reduce threats to biodiversity in the co-managed PA areas.</p>	<p>The policy and institutional barrier is compounded by inadequate systemic capacity and inexperience in managing protected areas. So far, the entire system has only two wardens and 24 rangers. Without protected areas to manage, the know-how for performing PA management functions still needs to be developed. Much of the information on Afghanistan's biodiversity is old and no longer reliable. Although some efforts have been made especially in training government staff and local communities to carry out research to fill in some of these gaps, this effort has only begun to complete the existing data gap for the protected area system. The result is that there is still only partial understanding of whether species and habitats identified as needing protection are adequately covered. There is little experience in planning, developing, establishing or administering protected areas, or how to engage communities and the private sector in co-management. Thus, while the process of establishing the only protected area provides some lessons, much has still to be learned about on-the-ground processes of planning, financing, establishing, managing and operating protected areas. As an extension of this, mechanisms for coordination among national institutions, and among the different levels of government and those with local communities are currently lacking. In addition, managerial and administrative capacity is low and the capacity to develop and analyse business plans for the system is largely absent. At present, the objective of securing financial sustainability across the nascent protected area system will be challenging unless this is addressed. In addition and as mentioned above, the capacities of NEPA and MAIL still require further development to ensure that they are able to perform their functions.</p> <p>The majority of the people in the four areas where the project proposes to establish protected areas are farmers and pastoralists, deriving their livelihoods out of the land whose ability to support them is declining rapidly. The decline in land productivity is largely due to a combination of factors that compound each other to create a vicious circle/cycle including population increase, resource degradation, poverty, droughts and climate change and variability. Although establishing the PAs will go a long way in securing critical biodiversity, the small percentage of land involved cannot house all the important biodiversity. There is a need to involve communities in co-management of protected areas, and to further improve production and management practices in the wider landscape, in order to mainstream conservation considerations while improving livelihoods and reducing their vulnerability to poverty and climate change and variability. The heavy reliance on natural resources in the face of poverty and uncertainties of a changing climate make the need for intensification of production in a sustainable manner imperative. However, while there are several SLM technologies for doing this, most land users and the extension service have limited capacities to adopt them.</p>
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B.2. INCREMENTAL COST REASONING AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS TO BE DELIVERED BY PROJECT:

The project objective is to establish a national system of protected areas to conserve biodiversity and mitigate land degradation pressures on habitats in key biodiversity areas, initially focused in the Bamyan/Band-e-Amir and Wakhan regions. To achieve this objective, the project will finance measures to strengthen the PA system by creating a capacitated PA authority, gazetting three new protected areas and operationalizing management at four sites, and testing different management measures to address threats. While the realization of the NPASP is realistically a long term endeavour, the project is designed to make a major contribution towards achievement of the long-term objective, but will only take the first step in this regard—consistent with available resources and absorptive capacity. This will build strong foundations for the future. The project has three components that directly address each barrier:

Component 1: National PA system is established in Afghanistan.

This component will facilitate the formation of an Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Authority (APWA) with a legal basis, mandate and operational capacity to manage the National Park and Reserves. This will enhance the management effectiveness of the protected area system and clearly define roles, responsibilities and institutional mandates with respect to PA management among the various departments and agencies. In order for Afghanistan to effectively administer and manage its protected area system, a management body requires unambiguous legal authority. The development of APWA will be modelled on existing structures of parastatal companies and the municipalities in Afghanistan. These are the only apparent legal entities existing so far that allow for an independent body with clearly defined legal responsibilities and powers. This gives them the ability to set their own targets for development and action and allows them to respond faster to local conditions, including entering into contracts with communities for various park development activities. This is crucial if community-based natural resource management of protected areas, which is already established as a requirement under the Environment Law and also now recognized as a pillar of the Afghan Government's Peace and Reintegration initiative, is to succeed. It will be an essential development action to have the Tarzulamal revisited and promulgated as Leheya in order to give unambiguous authority and responsibility to APWA.

In order for APWA and the protected area system to become sustainable, Afghanistan will need to pursue a diverse funding strategy. This means that Afghanistan will need to plan to create many different revenue sources to fund the APWA. When a structure such as the existing parastatals and municipalities is achieved, then revenues deriving from protected areas can be used directly by APWA for other conservation actions (with over four thousand tourists visiting Band-e-Amir during each summer weekend since the park was established, this can be a significant source of funding). MAIL has already made an enormous budget request increase for its CBNRM work for the upcoming year; if this is accepted, then a precedent will be set for the required government funding for this work. Once the structure of the APWA is approved and its legal structure confirmed, a priority will be to establish its funding strategy and begin working on its implementation.

Finally the project will elevate the existing provincial national park to full PA status, support zonation and boundary demarcation (including mapping and public consultation), and shepherd through applications for full status for three new PAs. The project will work to strengthen enforcement, monitoring and other PA functions in all four PAs by facilitating the development and implementation of management plans with the participation and consent of local communities that will also establish resource use thresholds in different zones and provide technical support in terms of training for wildlife surveys and rangeland assessments. A staff training program will be put in place covering all aspects of PA operations, ensuring rangers and other field staff have necessary competencies for planning, administration, conflict resolution and enforcement.

Component 2: Management effectiveness is enhanced within existing and new protected areas and SLM practices applied to reduce threats in and around protected areas.

The project will operationalize the management of provisional Band-e-Amir National Park covering 60,616 ha, the Big Pamir Wildlife Reserve comprising 57,664 ha, and the Tegghermansu Wildlife Reserve covering 24,851 ha. The Wakhan Conservation Area covering 1,145,678 ha will also be designated as a Protected Landscape or Managed Resource Use PA, to increase intactness and improve connectivity across the landscape. The project will also facilitate the staffing of the National Park and Reserves, ensuring that the staff have or acquire relevant skills to cover all management and conservation functions (enforcement, policing, reporting, survey/monitoring work, participatory management and climate change risk management). It will also provide local communities adjacent to or within the National Park and Reserves with awareness, structures and capacity to negotiate and implement co-management agreements and implement management actions. Community co-management governance structures already exist in both Band-e-Amir (BAPAC, including duly elected members from all 14 communities in and around the park) and Wakhan (WPA, consisting of duly elected members of all 42 Wakhi communities in Wakhan). BAPAC is already fully operational in terms of actively co-managing the National Park, while WPA is actively managing the land and is developing a draft management plan for the proposed Big Pamir Reserve.

The project will seek to reduce the threats to biodiversity in the National Park and the Reserves by involving communities in co-management and adoption of climate resilient SLM practices to increase land productivity and contain threats in the wider landscape. It will start by increasing the protected area system by a further 1,145,678 ha by facilitating the creation of the Wakhan Conservation Area. It will then facilitate a consultative process to formulate management plans for the PAs, including co-management with local communities. Because of the economic dependence of local residents on livestock, it will not be possible to introduce management actions that significantly reduce livestock numbers. Consequently, the following management approaches will be introduced to indirectly reduce grazing over the longer term: ensuring that only residents, or authorized traditional users, have access to grazing within the PA's; establishing clearly defined and generally accepted exclusive community grazing areas resulting in greater resource stewardship; and where possible and appropriate facilitating a shift towards alternative livelihoods resulting in less reliance on livestock. The following management approaches will be implemented to reduce shrub use: introduction of alternative fuel options; introduction of fuel-efficient stoves; ensuring that no shrubs are exported from the PAs; and initiation of a monitoring program to determine trends in shrub use. As called for under the draft National Rangelands Plan, there is a pressing need for baseline information on rangeland condition in Afghanistan. An integral component of the project will be the ability to quickly determine range condition by appropriate methods by expert-trained community members – WCS field projects have proven that communities are able to collect necessary environmental data if they are fully trained in using appropriate methods. This project will also work closely with the rangeland community environmental data collection project Community Action Rangeland Program (CARP) of Mercy Corps and Texas A&M University to ensure appropriate data collection methods and applications.

Global benefits arising from project. The project will result in a number of global benefits. First, with the establishment of protected areas in and across the Wakhan, viable populations of endangered species such as the snow leopard and Marco Polo sheep will be secured. The region will also become a stronghold of species that have become rare across the region, including wolf, brown bear, lynx, Himalayan ibex, and urial. This protection will also secure important breeding populations of several bird species, including the golden eagle, Himalayan griffon, lammergeier, peregrine falcon, bar-headed goose, ruddy shelduck, Himalayan snowcock, Tibetan snowcock and snow partridge, as well as other high-elevation specialists including the alpine and yellow-billed choughs, redstarts, accentors, larks, pipits, rosefinches, and snowfinches. The PAs are also part of important flyways for bird migration, and the Wakhan's and Band-e-Amir's wide valleys with lakes are key corridors for these

migrations. Finally, the expansion of the PA estate and strengthening management effectiveness catalysed by this project will lead, in the future, to other globally important sites elsewhere in the country and the region being secured. In addition the adoption of SLM practices will reduce land degradation and ensure ecosystem services over a landscape of more than an estimated 1,309,894 ha as follows:

Current Practices	Alternatives to be put in place by the project	Selected benefits
Degradation of rangelands and steppe ecosystems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> indiscriminate cutting of shrub for fuel wood over-grazing and no attention paid to carrying capacity open-access regimes with no efforts in rangeland management increase in less palatable species 	Improved rangeland management and sustainably managed steppe ecosystem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustainable shrub fuel wood collection reduce grazing and encourage stall feeding re-seeding or planting of palatable species introduction of regulated grazing regimes including rotational grazing, seasonal enclosures promotion of alternative livelihood options 	i) Improved SLM implemented over 800,000 ha result in reduced soil erosion, halt / reverse land degradation process and continued provision of ecosystem services ii) Improved productivity as measured by increase in Primary Productivity, reduced erosion rates and/or enhanced RUE (Rain Use Efficiency) iii) Enhanced carbon sequestration in soil and vegetation across landscape in project sites iv) Increase in net income of local communities

B.3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO BE DELIVERED BY THE PROJECT AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS, INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF GENDER DIMENSIONS, AND HOW THESE WILL SUPPORT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ENVIRONMENT BENEFITS

Natural resource management is the foundation for reconstruction in an agrarian society such as Afghanistan. In a country where 80% of the populace depends directly upon the natural resource base for their survival and livelihoods, and where 30 years of conflict has badly degraded the environment, sustainable resource management is critical to improving lives and livelihoods and providing long-term socio-economic stability across the country. If environmental conditions continue to degrade in Afghanistan, people will no longer be able to carve a living out of mountain and desert-steppe landscapes as they have for centuries. Poverty will spread, communities will dissolve, and rural migration will further erode cultural connections and negatively affect neighboring communities, regions, and the global community. At the same time, natural resource management provides an opportunity to build and strengthen rural governance structures and link them to the central government, a process that greatly strengthens the reach and rule of law in Afghanistan. Protected areas in Afghanistan will help facilitate environmental recovery and stimulate social and economic development after decades of war, including “significant multiplier effects across a national economy,” with the greatest economic impact on the poorest and most vulnerable members of society (the distant and isolated rural poor).

In many parts of Afghanistan, the lives of men and women have historically been governed by deeply engrained gender roles. Because of this, special efforts will be made to ensure that women’s voices and concerns are heard and acted upon at every stage of the project. In both Bamyān and the Wakhan, the Hazara and Wakhi cultures have much less divided gender roles than most other parts of the country, allowing for greater input, influence, and participation from women. For example, in Band-e-Amir gender participation will be facilitated by BAPAC’s chairperson, who is also Afghanistan’s only woman governor. In the Wakhan, the project will build on an innovative environmental education program currently implemented in every school in the Wakhan that has proven its ability to attract and involve girls in local resource management. (This is a hands-on program that gets the students out in the communities conducting research and actively engaging in outreach activities.) At the national level, NEPA has already indicated its support for working to increase participation of women in many areas of natural resource management.

Institutional and financial sustainability: Sustainability of the project’s interventions will be promoted through a mix of strategies, principally building on the development of a strong appreciation within the government institutions on the importance of managing an appropriate PA network combined with long-term realisation of the economic and other benefits of PAs. The approval and implementation of the NPASP is expected to generate institutional support and finance for the PA system. The project will focus on establishing a dedicated institution at the national level (APWA) with local level representation for PA governance that will remove the confusion and overlapping mandates among the two key institutions (NEPA and MAIL). It will engage with and encourage participation of local institutions and local community based organisations in the management of PAs and will ensure that these institutions are able to deploy the necessary technical and financial services that will be required for PA site management. Co-management approaches will be tested and promoted to ensure local communities participate in and benefit from the PAs. Ultimately the success and viability of the PA estate will depend on their integration into national development policies and plans. Efforts will be made by the project to involve relevant

national planning authorities in the project activities, particularly those related to development of management plans, norms and standards etc. so that broad support is achieved. The project will finally take a highly participatory and consultative approach in the design and implementation of its SLM outputs (e.g. village and district land use plans, selection of SLM techniques and approaches) to foster ownership over project strategies and results especially from local communities.

B4; RISKS, INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS, THAT MIGHT PREVENT THE PROJECT OBJECTIVE(S) FROM BEING ACHIEVED, AND RISK MITIGATION MEASURES THAT WILL BE TAKEN:

This is a high-risk, high-reward project. However, with the lessons learned from previous projects and most importantly incorporating the WCS biodiversity and governance projects lessons into project design, risks will be mitigated.

Risk	Rate	Risk Mitigation Measure
Resurgence of conflict in Afghanistan and lessened internal security	Medium	This is a potential risk in the country. In recognition of this, the two areas chosen for this project (Wakhan and Bamyan) are considered some of the most secure areas in Afghanistan; they have little social conflict and potential for conflict is low. In addition, the project's reliance on community management structures will enable continuation of conservation measures and other field activities.
The Government of Afghanistan fails to allocate sufficient resources, both human and financial, to operationalize and maintain the protected area system	High	The Government of Afghanistan has expressed its commitment to the project; the project falls within a number of the government's priorities (see section A2 above); PA system co-management will be driven by invested local people trained by this project; the project will also construct linkages between communities and Government to encourage continued government allocation and provide institutional mechanisms for direct participation by civil society in communication of needs and requests for sufficient support. Protected area work has already catalyzed agency and ministry interest and commitment to the process, and MAIL has asked for a significant annual budget increase for forestry, rangeland and PAs in upcoming years (\$40-56 million/yr).
Institutional agreements among key agencies, ministries and other stakeholders and partners do not function properly, thereby undermining protected area governance	Medium	This is one of the central pillars to the project: the formation of resilient and sustainable partnerships among stakeholders – this is strongly supported and has emerged independently from the government; mechanisms for conflict resolution will be established from the outset; the monitoring and evaluation framework will be sufficiently sensitive to determine partnership functionality.
Participation of all key stakeholders, particularly communities, is not achieved; meaningful and effective partnerships not achieved	Medium	The monitoring and evaluation framework will be sufficiently sensitive to determine partnership functionality including that with local communities; strong and supportive framework for the project management team with a meaningful M&E framework that feeds back into annual work plans.
Climate change creates increasing pressures for already food-insecure populations, thereby accelerating depletion of natural resources	High	By including stakeholders, especially local communities, into protected area management, the project will increase capacity to manage such changes. This project will establish landscape-scale buffer areas connecting PAs, which can act as a safeguard for PAs against the undesired effects of climate change by allowing biodiversity to alter distribution patterns in response to climate change effects.
Livelihood dependency of resource user communities may be detrimental to the conservative initiatives	High	Community based collaborative management approach will comprehensively address the issue by specific programmatic interventions that work to maintain or improve environmental services while simultaneously identifying socially acceptable and environmentally benign income opportunities for community members.
Absorptive capacities especially within the relevant government apparatus may be limited and will delay implementation of project activities	High	UNDP recognizes this as a real risk. To supplement national capacities, deliberate partnership with a technical organisation such as WCS was sought. WCS will play an on-site implementation support function and mentor the new PA administration. WCS has a well-established base in the country and excellent relationships with both national and local stakeholders including the government agencies. They also have extensive understanding of context and excellent technical capacities.

B. 5. KEY STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT AND THEIR RESPECTIVE ROLES:

Stakeholder	Roles and responsibilities
National Environment Protection Agency (NEPA)	It is the government body with overall regulatory power on environmental issues in Afghanistan. It will be a close collaborator in this project. NEPA was established in 2005, the same year that Afghanistan's first Environmental Law was drafted and signed by President Hamid Karzai; this law defines the agency's function as well as its powers. NEPA serves as Afghanistan's environmental policy-making and regulatory institution. Its role is to regulate, coordinate, monitor and enforce environmental laws. NEPA plays a major role in environmental protection and is the central point in dealing with the management of Afghanistan's environment so that it benefits all the citizens of Afghanistan. In the international context of this GEF project is NEPA's role to coordinate Afghanistan's environmental affairs, additionally to its coordination role of local and national coordination.
Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL)	It is a partner with NEPA in the development of protected areas in Afghanistan. MAIL's mission is to restore Afghanistan's licit agricultural economy through increasing production and productivity, natural resource management, improved physical infrastructure and market development. The Department of Natural Resources Management of MAIL is partnering with NEPA in the development of protected areas in Afghanistan. Through a joint agreement with NEPA (<i>Tarzulamal</i>) MAIL has the role of Central Management Authority in protected areas. This means that the day-to-day administration and management of protected areas is a MAIL responsibility. Therefore they will also be a close collaborator and partner in all levels of this project.
The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)	It will be the executing agency partner for the project on behalf of the Government of Afghanistan. WCS has had a presence in Afghanistan since 2006, working closely with NEPA and MAIL on biodiversity conservation, landscape management and protected area development. WCS was the implementer of the GEF-funded "Program of Work on Protected Areas" project which led to the development of the National Protected Area Strategy Plan for Afghanistan that was officially adopted by NEPA in November 2010. WCS currently works with over 55 communities in the landscapes under consideration by this project, facilitated the creation of BAPAC and the WCA as overarching landscape management institutions, and was instrumental in developing Band-e-Amir as Afghanistan's first Provisional National Park in 2009.
Local Communities	They are the custodians and beneficiaries of the natural landscapes. Local communities will participate directly in every level of planning and management, especially identifying and implementing adaptation and SLM techniques, income-generating activities and monitoring.
Private sector (local groups)	They will be responsible for advancing business, particularly in tourism and other income-generating activities. The project will cultivate the participation of the private sector as a critical sustainability mechanism.

B6. COORDINATION WITH OTHER RELATED INITIATIVES:

Past GEF investments in the country focussed on: a) putting in place the enabling conditions for biodiversity conservation such as the WCS-executed "Programme of Work for Protected Areas"; b) linking natural resource management to livelihoods and poverty alleviation objectives such as the "Natural Resources Management and Poverty Reduction" project; c) and strengthening capacities of key national agencies such as NEPA namely the UNEP-GEF "Capacity Building and Institutional Development Programme" with co-funding support from the European Commission. The programme has succeeded in establishing key national institutions such as NEPA, helped formulate important policies such as the National Environment Strategy, Environment Law, sectoral laws for Forestry, Livestock etc., EIA guidelines and environmental awareness. The total investments from these projects amounted to around \$ 7.5 million.

The project will also build on the lessons and achievements of past GEF investments such as the UNEP Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building Programme – especially important outcomes such as in environmental coordination, development of environmental legislation, etc. It will also coordinate with other on-going initiatives such as the UNDP implemented Strengthened Approaches for the Integration of Sustainable Environmental Management Project (SAISEM). SAISEM promotes the formulation of suitable policy and strategic frameworks and implementation guidelines with due consideration of the environment-poverty linkage, integrating environmental considerations in the national and sub-national planning process. It is important to note that the PIF has been carefully designed to complement the SAISEM project. Although related, there will be no overlap with respect to capacity building activities in both projects. The development and implementation of both projects is being closely coordinated by NEPA and UNDP to ensure that planned activities are complementary. In addition, Collaboration with other initiatives, programmes and projects will be ensured in order to mobilise not only co-financing to the project, but wider government support, including from the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW). Finally at the level of pilot sites, synergies will be sought with different sustainable and integrated natural resources/land management and

biodiversity conservation projects, programmes and initiatives, which include the Aga Khan Foundation, Mercy Corps and others.

C: DESCRIBE GEF AGENCIES' COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE TO IMPLEMENT THIS PROJECT:

C-1 -- Co-Financing from the GEF Agency:

UNDP's comparative advantage lies in its capacity to leverage finance from national and international sources, to assist countries to meet their environmental funding needs. UNDP will provide co-finance of US\$3.0 million mainly from the National Area Based Development Programme.

C.2: Project Fit With UNDP's Development Program and Staff Capacities:

The designed project will directly contribute to;

- Outcome: 5 of UN Development Assistance Framework. Improved capacity to manage natural resources to support poverty reduction and dispute resolution and reduce vulnerability to natural disasters.
- UNDP Country Programme Document Outcome: 5. Capacities of national and local governance bodies are improved for better natural resource and disaster risk management.
- Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) Outcome: 5. Capacities of national and local governance bodies are improved for better natural resource and disaster risk management.

UNDP is supporting the Government of Afghanistan in the environmental and natural resources management sector as described previously. UNDP will ensure that lessons learned from the project currently under implementation, but also lessons learned in the environment sector by other UN agencies such as UNOPS, FAO, UNEP and WFP, are applied in the project under consideration. Sustainable Natural Resources Management and Protected Areas are two of UNDP's signature programmes and the agency is implementing a large variety of these kinds of projects across the globe, dealing with institutional and management strengthening, as well as policy and regulatory framework formulation. These projects implement strategies attuned to the respective country's reality. The UNDP Country Office in Afghanistan Environment team consists of 2 international and 5 national professional staff.


PART III: APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT BY GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT(S) AND GEF AGENCY(IES)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S):

NAME	POSITION	MINISTRY	DATE
Mr Mostapha Zaher	Director General / GEF Operation Focal Point	National Environment Protection Agency	26 Feb 2012

B. GEF AGENCY(IES) CERTIFICATION

This request has been prepared in accordance with GEF policies and procedures and meets the GEF criteria for project identification and preparation.

Agency Coordinator, Agency name	Signature	Date	Project Contact Person	Telephone	Email Address
Yannick Glemarec, GEF Executive Coordinator, UNDP		1 March 2012	Doley Tshering, Regional Technical Adviser – EBD, UNDP	+66-2-304- 9100 Ext 2600	doley.tshering@ undp.org

ANNEX 1: Afghanistan's Provisional and Planned Protected Areas



Annex 2: Description of areas where the project proposes to establish or strengthen protected areas

Band-e-Amir covers 60,616 ha and is defined by its six lakes, with their crystal-clear, azure water separated by unique, natural travertine dams and surrounded by spectacular red cliffs. It comprises one of the world's most beautiful natural landscapes and has long been a destination for Afghan and international visitors. Following the development and approval of the Preliminary Management Plan in 2008, Band-e-Amir was designated in April 2009 as a Provisional National Park for a period of three years. Governance of Band-e-Amir National Park is through collaborative management in which the Band-e-Amir Protected Area Committee (BAPAC), consisting of members of all local communities and provincial government officials, has a formally-defined role in guiding management, but ultimate decision-making and responsibility remains with the national government, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA).

Wakhan Conservation Area encompasses 1,145,678 ha in the Badakhshan Province. The main vegetation is typical of arid alpine steppe with a ground cover of usually 20% or less consisting mainly of dwarf shrubs (*Artemisia*, *Ceratoides*) and graminoids, particularly the grass *Stipa*. The region is treeless except around irrigation which ceases at about 3,500 m. Willow (*Salix*) and buckthorn (*Hippophae*) occur naturally along some streams. The Wakhan contain a large number of birds and mammals that are high-elevation specialists, and the region is a stronghold of species that have become rare or even extinct in neighboring areas. Two species are considered flagship species for the Wakhan: the Marco Polo sheep and the snow leopard. Primary threats to biodiversity in the Wakhan include habitat destruction and overgrazing, unregulated hunting and wildlife trade, collection of plants, livestock-wildlife competition, and disease transmission. Many of these pressures not only threaten the wildlife of the Wakhan, but also the human communities that inhabit this region.

Big Pamir Wildlife Reserve covers approximately 57,664 ha in the Pamir alpine desert and tundra ecoregion. The Wakhan Pamir Association (WPA), a community social organization is responsible for managing community interests across much of Wakhan District in relation to biodiversity conservation and management. The WPA, with assistance from provincial NEPA and MAIL, graziers, other community representatives, and WCS, defined and demarcated key sections of the protected area

boundary in August 2009. Community rangers began patrolling the area and initiating on-ground community management in July 2009. Management planning has begun and a draft management plan is expected to be completed soon.

Teggermansu Wildlife Reserve is estimated at 24,851 ha in the Karakoram/West Tibetan Plateau and alpine steppe ecoregion. Discussions with the Community Development Councils (CDCs) have commenced about establishing this protected area. The Kyrgyz communities who live in the Little Pamir have traditionally been distrustful of outside approaches, but in 2011 they came forward to request assistance in developing Teggermansu as a protected area after having seen the community-led process in the proposed Big Pamir Wildlife Reserve. This is a breakthrough and needs to be followed up with consistent and sustained contact and assistance.