

Biodiversity Loss and Conflict in Afghanistan – A Case Study

**Institutional Strengthening and
Policy Support for Protecting
Afghanistan's Natural Heritage
(2003-2018)**

Asif Zaidi, Senior Advisor, Post Conflict and Disaster Management
Branch

Afghanistan: Country Overview 1

- Revolution, occupation, war and insurgency (1978-present)
- Protracted humanitarian crises
- Least Developed Country
- Ranks among world's lowest countries for development indicators (health, education, infant mortality, etc.)
- Second largest group of migrants to Europe
- Decades of environmental degradation



The Amu Darya River, with Afghanistan on the left and Tajikistan on the right, Badakhshan.

Afghanistan: Country Overview 2



Wakhi girl caring for her cow, Badakhshan

- More than 80% of population rely on land and natural resources for livelihoods.
- Agricultural productivity severely impacted by decades of recurring droughts.
- Livestock numbers expected to decrease because of out migration and starvation
- Disaster Risk: Afghanistan suffers regular droughts, floods, landslides, avalanches and earthquakes.

Afghanistan: Country Overview 3

- Climate change: among the most vulnerable countries in the world because of low adaptive capacity (NAPA).
- Biodiversity: rich variety of native plant species, natural heritage is the wealth of the people (NBSAP).
- Land degradation: droughts, desertification and mismanagement of on/off-farm water resources.



Band-e Amir National Park, Bamyan

Afghanistan: Addressing Biodiversity Needs



Dryland wheat drops, Balkh

- 3 National Parks: Band-e Amir, Shah Foladi, Wakhan (and more protected areas in pipeline)
- Research and documentation of native species (trees, shrubs, medicinal plants, fauna)
- Red-listing of critically endangered species
- Hunting bans to protect Snow Leopards, etc
- Regional and transboundary collaboration for protected species

Afghanistan: Policies and Institutions for Biodiversity Conservation

INSTITUTIONS:

- National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA)
- Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL)
- National Biodiversity Working Group (inter-ministerial)
- Kabul University “Environmental Data Center”

POLICIES AND PLANNING:

- 15 MEAs, including: CBD, CCD, UNFCCC, CITES, CMS.
- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)
- 5th National Report to CBD
- Natural Resource Management Strategy
- Medicinal Plants Policy

Afghanistan: Lessons Learned

- Developing policies is a good start, but once they're written more support needed for their implementation
- Strengthening institutions requires political will in order to take action
- Decentralized and community-based actions often have more benefits than top-down approaches
- Harnessing local knowledge is essential to decision-making and implementation



Nili Bazaar, Daikundi

Afghanistan: Current Challenges



Farmers in the Wakhan National Park, Badakshan

- Insecurity and conflict
- Many competing national priorities
- Limited financial and technical resources, especially for putting policies into action, managing protected areas, and preventing ecosystem degradation.
- Low technical capacity and knowledge base on biodiversity conservation

Thank you

