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GHOSTS OF THE MOUNTAINS, GUARDIANS OF THE HEADWATERS AND THE GLOBAL SNOW LEOPARD & ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION PROGRAM (GSLEP) :

FINAL REPORT

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF CONSERVATION & ADAPTATION IN ASIA'S HIGH MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES & COMMUNITIES

September 2015
This report was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development, Bureau for Asia. It was prepared by Philanthropy Support Services (PSS), Inc. for International Resources Group.

COVER PHOTO: https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/protecting-snow-leopards-in-the-face-of-climate-change

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Asia Regional Environmental Field Support (AREFS)
Contract No.: EPP-I-00-06-00007
Task Order: AID-OAA-TO-11-00068

September 2015

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"By firelight, we talk about the snow leopard. Not only is it rare… but it is wary and elusive to a magical degree, and so well camouflaged in the places it chooses to lie that one can stare straight at it from yards away and fail to see it. Even those who know the mountains rarely take it by surprise."[1]

The Evaluation Team wishes to thank the many people who supported and contributed to this effort, including:

- Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities (AHM) project managers John Farrington and Jon Miceler.
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF) field staff who worked hard to make the country and field visits a success. We were impressed by their dedication and heartened by their candor. Special thanks to those who accompanied us on our field visits in Bhutan and the Kyrgyz Republic[2], to Ananta Bhandari and Priya Shrestha who travelled from Nepal and Sikkim to meet with the Evaluation Team in Delhi, and to Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, who shared his insights on Pakistan with us via Skype.
- WWF Chief Executive Officers and Conservation Directors in Bhutan, India, and Mongolia as well as the Director of the Central Asia Programme of WWF/Russia for meeting with the Team and sharing their insights with us.
- WWF-US senior staff who juggled schedules to meet with USAID and the Evaluation Team on July 10th to review Draft Key Findings and Recommendations.
- Kate Newman for ably chairing the July 10th meeting and Debbie Brandan for her patience as we sorted through the details of the AHM budget.
- USAID staff in Washington, starting with Mary Melnyk, whose vision and passion are the driving force behind a series of inter-linked USAID investments in Asia's High Mountains, including AHM.
- USAID staff in India, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Mongolia, whose enthusiasm for snow leopard conservation bodes well for the future.
- International Resources Group (IRG) staff for their superb backstopping under the leadership of Rich Rapier, including assistance with the online survey.
- Staff of the Snow Leopard Trust (SLT) for hosting a visit to Seattle.
- Staff and Steering Committee Members of the Snow Leopard Network (SLN), particularly Sibylle Noras and Rakhee Karumbaya, for alerting SLN members about the evaluation and the online survey.
- Staff of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) Secretariat in Bishkek and the many other groups we met with in Bhutan, India, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Mongolia.

[1] Peter Matthiessen. 1978, p.148

[2] In keeping with the practice of USAID, the United Nations, the World Bank, ADB and many others, the term Kyrgyz Republic will be used in this report rather than Kyrgyzstan.

- Each one of the 60+ individuals (not working for either WWF or USAID) who shared their knowledge of high mountain Asia, their work on snow leopards, and their views on AHM. This input was absolutely critical to the evaluation process.
- Everyone who took the time to complete the Online Survey, and, last but not least,
- All those who contributed to the successful execution of a complicated travel itinerary across South, Central, and North East Asia. The only glitch, well outside of their control, was a temporary diversion to Irkutsk when the flight from Bishkek was unable to land in Ulaan Baatar due to high winds.

Finally, the Team wishes to acknowledge and salute the Ghosts of the Mountains, the Guardians of the Headwaters, and the landscapes and communities of High Mountain Asia that provide the *raison d'etre* for the AHM project and the broader GSLEP program of which it is a part.

ACRONYMS

ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AHM	Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities [project]
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
AKRSP	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme [Pakistan]
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative [USAID]
CA	Cooperative Agreement
CAMI	Central Asian Mammals Initiative
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
CHARIS	Conservation to High Asia Runoff from Ice and Snow [project]
CII	Confederation of Indian Industry
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
FFI	Fauna and Flora International
GCC	Global Climate Change
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GSLEP	Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program
GTI	Global Tiger Initiative
HKH	Hindu Kush Himalaya
ICIMOD	International Center for Integrated Mountain Development
ICSD	Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development [Central Asia]
ILC	International Land Coalition
IRBM	Integrated River Basin Management
IRG	International Resources Group, an Engility company
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature [aka World Conservation Union]
KCC	Khanchandzonga Conservation Committee [Sikkim, India]
LHI	Living Himalayas Initiative [WWF regional project]
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSRI	Mountain Societies Research Institute, University of Central Asia
NABU	Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union [Germany]
NCF	Nature Conservation Foundation [India]
NSLEP	National Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program
NTFP	Non-timber Forest Products
NWP	Nature, Wealth & Power
PAs	Protected Areas
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PSS	Philanthropy Support Services (PSS) Inc.

RRI	Rights and Resources Initiative
SAP`	Species Action Plan
SCAPES	Sustainable Conservation Approaches in Priority Ecosystems [project]
SD4C	Social Development for Conservation [internal WWF network]
SLC	Snow Leopard Conservancy
SLN	Snow Leopard Network
SLSS	Snow Leopard Survival Strategy
SLT	Snow Leopard Trust
TAR	Tibet Autonomous Region [China]
TMI	The Mountain Institute
TRAFFIC	WWF-IUCN Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network
UCA	University of Central Asia
UNDP	United National Development Program
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. Government
UWICE	Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and the Environment [Bhutan]
WCNP	Wangchuck Centennial National Park [Bhutan]
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas [IUCN]
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WII	Wildlife Institute of India [Dehra Dun]
WWF	World Wildlife Fund (refers to WWF-US unless otherwise noted)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The title of this report -- *Ghosts of the Mountain, Guardians of the Headwaters and GSLE*P -- serves to highlight three key themes for the "reboot" of the Conservation & Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes & Communities (AHM) project:

- How little is known about these landscapes and the plants, animals, and people who live in them,
- The primordial importance of the vast area (estimated at some1.8 million square kilometers) that serves not just as home to snow leopards but as the "third pole," the headwaters of half a dozen of the planet's largest rivers, rivers that provide life-giving water to a major portion of humanity, some 2+ billion people, and
- The once-in-a-lifetime opportunity provided by the GSLEP Program, a partnership of the 12 snow leopard range countries and some 17 partner organizations, to implement the visionary goals and objectives set out in the Bishkek Declaration of October 2013.

The key challenge for AHM moving forward is to shift gears, sort out the management issues identified in this report, and refocus its efforts on three priorities:

- Learn as much as possible about the Ghosts,
- Work with the Guardians, including both snow leopards and the communities in High Mountain Asia, to promote climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat, and
- Work directly with GSLEP Secretariat, the National Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection programs, the other 15 GSLEP partners, and the recently created Global Tiger Initiative (GTI)/GSLEP Alliance to implement the GSLEP program.

The Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities (AHM) project urgently needs a reboot. On the program side, it needs to refocus on snow leopard conservation, and devote its undivided attention to the climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat with strengthened direct links to both the National Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programs (NSLEPs) and the regional Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Project (GSLEP), including the GSLEP Secretariat in Bishkek. On the management side, significant issues have been identified with project management, with communication and information sharing, with monitoring and reporting, and with working with partners. If World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-US addresses these issues in a timely and comprehensive manner, the reboot from AHM 1.0 to AHM 2.0 will put the project on track to make important contributions to the global snow leopard effort and develop a firm base that can be built on after AHM winds down in September 2017.

The reboot of AHM provides WWF-US with two additional opportunities:

- A chance to "walk the talk" on becoming "Truly Global" by directly involving eight other WWF organizations[3] in the re-launch of and Work Plan development for AHM 2.0 , and
- An opportunity to use AHM as a flagship project to start implementation of the WWF Network-wide Snow Leopard Species Action Plan (SAP).

[3] The six WWFs that implement AHM (WWF/Bhutan, WWF/India, WWF/Mongolia, WWK/Pakistan, WWF/Nepal, and WWF/Russia) as well as at least two WWFs that provide co-funding for work in the AHM landscapes in Bhutan and the Kyrgyz Republic (WWF/Finland and WWF/Netherlands).

A detailed recommendation on how to link the reboot to the "Truly Global" framework and at the same time directly link it to the GSLEP/NSLEP process is presented in Section 4.10. Rather than using the old model (i.e., decision-making in Washington by WWF-US staff halfway around the world from where the project is being implemented) there is an excellent opportunity to test the new model (i.e., decision-making with WWF country offices and key partners (including GSLEP and the new GTI/GSLEP Alliance)) at a planning workshop held in Delhi.

The credibility of both WWF-US and US Agency for International Development (USAID) in the snow leopard conservation community needs urgent attention. For AHM 1.0 to be transformed into AHM 2.0, several clearly visible changes are required. One is much better communication and information sharing. A second change is a much sharper focus on climate-smart snow leopard conservation. A third change is a clear shift from the Climate Summit for the Living Himalayas that had been based in Bhutan to the GSLEP program and Secretariat that is based in the Kyrgyz Republic. The clearest and most effective way to signal this shift will be for the AHM Project Manager to move from Thimphu to Bishkek. A fourth change is new, senior-level WWF-US management that will engage effectively with many different pieces of the WWF network and with other existing and potential project partners. If these four changes are implemented, the momentum for moving from AHM 1.0 to AHM 2.0 will have been put in place. If they are not implemented, there is a real danger that inertia will prevail and that AHM 1.0 will morph into AHM 1.1

In the view of the Evaluation Team, AHM 1.0 has developed into a bit of a "mishmash": a mix of many different activities with no clear strategic coherence and no clearly articulated plan for scaling up.[4] In three of the six AHM countries (Bhutan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Mongolia), AHM resources have been invested in relatively small geographic areas that receive equal or substantially more resources from other sources. In three of the six countries (India, the Kyrgyz Republic and Mongolia) the annual budgets for AHM field activities are between US$ 50-100k per year.

AHM was designed and launched in the last half of 2012. Then 2013 happened: the Global Snow Leopard Forum, the Bishkek Declaration, the development of National Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programs for each of the 12 snow leopard range countries, the development of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Project (GSLEP), and the establishment of the GSLEP Secretariat in Bishkek. These events transformed both the possibilities of and the priorities for work on snow leopard conservation in "high mountain Asia."

While AHM 1.0 has made some adjustments to these new developments, including the support for the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum, and gradually abandoned its hope that the Climate Summit for the Living Himalayas would provide a framework for the project, the fundamentals of the AHM project – its programs and its management – were never fully adjusted to reflect the developments of 2013. An opportunity to make this adjustment in 2014, when the project was extended with substantially increased resources, did not happen. The time has come to make those changes. If the AHM project is to be relevant to the new realities and make a significant contribution in the post-2013 world, AHM 1.0 needs to be upgraded to AHM 2.0.

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[4] A mishmash that includes cardamom farming, bee keeping, the construction of wooden bridges, water systems for pastures, maize adaptation demonstrations, citrus fruit tree seedling promotion, sustainable harvesting plans for Juniperus indica, the provision of subsidized "improved" cook stoves, support for community-managed essential oil processing enterprises, clean-up campaigns… the list goes on at some length. Annex A(2) and B provide some information on these activities. There appears to be little attention paid to underlying drivers including rights (land rights, use rights, management rights) or to governance. This echoes two questions raised by USAID about the FY 2014 Work Plan: "Are activities in each country providing or building toward achievement of objectives that are strategically linked within that country and across countries? What are the "so what?" impacts expected from the suite of actions in each location, each country, and regionally?"

The Evaluation Team recommends that the two Objectives of AHM be tweaked to reflect this new focus:

Objective #1
Old: Promoting climate-smart management of high mountain landscapes and snow leopard habitat for sustainable development.
New: *Promote climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat for sustainable development in Asia's high mountain landscapes and communities.*

Objective #2
Old: Improving transnational collaboration on climate change adaptation and snow leopard conservation in Asia's high mountain landscapes.
New: *Improve transnational collaboration on climate-smart snow leopard conservation in Asia's high mountain landscapes and communities.*

It is important to note that "water security", a theme regularly mentioned in AHM documentation, is **not** included in either objective. Water security is a higher-level long-term goal, something for which the project is not directly responsible. Water security is a **co-benefit** of improved climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat.

Moving to program substance, there is an urgent need to:

- Refocus the project on climate-smart snow leopard conservation.[5]
- Devote urgent attention to the timing of work planning, budgeting and the flow of funds to the country projects. For three years in a row, most funds have arrived *very* late with serious consequences for both project implementation and staff & partner morale… as well as AHM project credibility.
- Maintain climate change adaptation and limited work on water work in cases where this builds on work already done and can be directly linked to climate-smart snow leopard conservation.
- Set broader climate change adaptation and "water security" (including Integrated River Basin Management or IRBM) goals to the side. There will be other projects that have time frames and levels of resources commensurate with a reasonable chance of meeting these goals.
- Move AHM project management from inaccessible Thimphu to the center of GSLEP action in Bishkek, or alternatively to India[6] with regular visits to Bishkek.[7] The Evaluation Team believes that Bishkek is the preferred option. In addition to devoting more concerted attention to AHM Objective #2 in close consultation with the staff of the GSLEP Secretariat, the move to Bishkek would allow the Project Manager to engage with other donors as they develop both their GSLEP and NSLEP support projects.[8] The Project Manager could also work with the GSLEP Secretariat to update and strengthen Chapter 8 of the GSLEP document on the Global Support

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[5] Credit for this term goes to Mikhail Paltsyn currently completing his PhD dissertation at the SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry on" Climate-smart Conservation of Snow Leopard and Altai Argali in the Altai Sayan Region." Mikhail credits a WWF publication for the derivation of the term: John Morrison and Alfonso Lombana. 2011. *Climate Adaptation: Mainstreaming in Existing Conservation Plans.* WWF-US, Washington DC.

[6] Options could include Delhi at WWF/India, Dehra Dun at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), or Bangalore with the National Conservation Foundation (NCF)/Secretariat of the Snow Leopard Network (SLN))

[7] Using the new, direct connection on Pegasus Airlines being used by the Sow Leopard Trust (SLT) staffers who are supporting GSLEP

[8] For example, the Evaluation Team has received a copy of the Project Identification Form (PIF) for a proposed $5.5 million GEF medium-sized Project on Transboundary Cooperation for Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation. AHM Project Manager input into the design of this and other planned GEF projects would help to align USAID and WWF investments with those being proposed by other donors.

Components[9] and help explore links between GSLEP and the more recent Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI), part of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). The GSLEP Secretariat and Program has a very short window between now and 2020 to demonstrate its effectiveness and move snow leopard conservation forward. It is very much in the interest of both WWF-US and USAID to do whatever they can to make GSLEP a success.

- Adjust WWF-US management support of AHM either to direct oversight by a Vice President in Washington, DC or to the system of global matrix management with a stakeholder group being used by some WWF projects such as the Living Himalayas Initiative.[10] The global matrix model directly involves multiple WWF organizations in project management.
- Develop an AHM theory of change and use this to focus the AHM Work Plan for the remainder of the project.[11]
- Program, and wherever possible reprogram, available resources to support a more narrowly focused AHM 2.0
- Pay careful attention to what will happen to AHM-funded activities *after* September 2017 (i.e., sustainability and exit strategies).
- Use the WWF Network's "Truly Global" Initiative to develop county-level buy-in to AHM 2.0.
- Use the reprogramming of the last two years of AHM to provide a platform for and develop synergy with WWF's new Snow Leopard Species Action Plan as part of support for the GLSEP/NSLEP Action Plan
- Develop a proactive communications strategy. The AHM project has been *very* weak on communications across the board: no project logo or other branding, no newsletter or Email updates, no easily accessible website (unless someone is directed to www.thirdpolegeolab.org).
- People outside of the WWF/AHM project, including many in the broader snow leopard community, are not aware of what the project is working on or achieving. This needs to change, and change quickly, if there is to be any hope of broader impact or learning, much less sustainability.
- Devote increased effort and resources to working collaboratively with other groups active in the snow leopard space (e.g. the Snow Leopard Network and its members, including the Snow Leopard Trust and the Snow Leopard Conservancy).[12]
- Join the Snow Leopard Network as an institutional member. WWF/India, WWF/Nepal, and WWF/Mongolia are members, but WWF-US is not (yet).
- Keep USAID Mission staff informed about AHM progress. None of the six USAID Missions has been visited during the first 2.5 years of the project (Nepal, India, Pakistan, Regional

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[9] Chapter 8 as currently written is very weak – far and away the weakest part of the GSLEP document.

[10] Also called the Living Himalayas Network Initiative and the Living Himalayas Global Initiative. The Initiative is managed by Sami Tornikoski based in Thimphu and directed by Ravi Singh, Secretary General & CEO of WWF/India. See https://vimeo.com/23365280 and http://assets.worldwildlife.org/publications/331/files/original/The_Eastern_Himalayas_Where_Worlds_Collide.pdf

[11] Starting with a careful, critical review of the schema in the original proposal prepared with the assistance USAID's Measuring Impact project coupled with Table 4 (Threats to Snow Leopards, Wild Prey, and Their Ecosystems) in the GSLEP document (a table taken from the updated 2014 version of the Snow Leopard Survival Strategy)

[12] Initial project documentation trumpeted a collaboration with the Snow Leopard Trust. Although SLT is active in most of the AHM countries, and has substantially more experience with snow leopard conservation than WWF-US, it has been provided with only 3.5 percent of the AHM budget (261k) primarily to implement a research grants project. For additional discussion of the AHM budget see Section 2.3.

Mission/Almaty, the Kyrgyz Republic or Mongolia).[13] There has been some interaction with USAID field staff during regional meetings.

Detailed recommendations on these and other elements of the proposed reboot are presented in Section 4 below.

The evaluation process:

The evaluation process started with extensive document review, key informant interviews and a trip to Seattle to meet with WWF's AHM partner the Snow Leopard Trust (SLT). This was followed by meetings in Washington, DC with WWF, USAID, and others prior the country visits. The evaluation included country visits to Bhutan, India, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Mongolia as well as a brief stop in Almaty, Kazakhstan to meet with the USAID Regional Mission. The country visits included brief field visits with WWF staff to Bumthang (Bhutan) and Issyk Kul (Kyrgyz Republic). The stop in Delhi included meetings with staff from WWF/Nepal (in person) and WWF/Pakistan (via Skype). Overall, the evaluation included discussions with some two dozen WWF staff in seven national WWF organizations. It also included phone/Skype/email interviews with some three dozen key informants along with staff in five USAID Missions.

Evaluation results:

The overall assessment by the Evaluation Team of the various elements of the AHM project is:

- Objective #1. Promoting Climate-Smart Management of High Mountain Landscapes and Snow Leopard Habitat for Sustainable Development.
  Grade: **B+** (**A** for Bhutan & Mongolia on the geographic focus of AHM-supported work)
- Objective #2. Improving Transnational Collaboration on Climate Change Adaptation and Snow Leopard Conservation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes.
  Grade: **C**
- Snow Leopard Conservation, Climate Change Adaptation and Water Security

  Grade: **Widespread Confusion about if/how these elements fit together**
  - Snow Leopard Conservation - **B**
  - Climate Change Adaptation, - **C** (**B+** for sensitization of WWF project staff and selected partners to climate change adaptation issues)
  - Water Security – **D**
- Project Management – Thimphu, Bhutan & Washington, DC
  Grade: Thimphu – **B**, Washington – **D**
- Communications & Information Sharing
  Grade: **D** (**B+** for the website www.thirdpolegeolab.org , **B-/C+** for the two technical reports completed to date, **D** for the ease of finding AHM project information on the WWF-US website, and **D** for keeping USAID Missions and ESTH Officers in Embassies informed about what AHM has been doing)
- Monitoring & Reporting
  Grade **B+** (with an urgent need to simplify monitoring & reporting requirements and put reports where interested readers can find them)

[13] WWF notes that the USAID Regional Mission in Almaty is in Kazakhstan which is not one of the AHM countries. While this is true it is also irrelevant. AHM is supporting the 12-country GSLEP program under Objective #2. The USAID Regional Mission implements programs in 4 of these 12 countries. In addition, it is easy to pass through Almaty on the way to or from Bishkek from South Asia.

- Working with Existing and Potential Partners
  Grade: **D** (**B+** for work with existing partners)
- The Drivers and Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Snow Leopard Conservation
  Grade: **Needs urgent attention** (**D** for use of internal WWF resources)

Among the findings that emerged from the evaluation process:

- The AHM Project Manager has done a competent job of managing the AHM project.
- As noted above, some areas need significant work.
- WWF field offices have done a good job of taking (in most cases) small amounts of money, combining them with other sources of funding, and doing mostly modest things in the field that generally make sense. For reasons that are unclear, this aspect of the project (i.e. combining USAID resources from WWF-US with resources from other sources) has been mentioned but has not been clearly highlighted in WWF reporting to USAID.
- Useful work has been started on snow leopard conservation and habitat management in each of the six AHM countries.
- WWF field staff have received valued training on climate change adaptation.
- AHM has proactively supported the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) and engaged with the GSLEP Secretariat in Bishkek. Details of this support are outlined in Annex A(3). There is scope to both broaden and significantly deepen this engagement, with particular attention to the National Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programs (NSLEPs)

The overriding goal of the Evaluation Team has been to provide observations, suggestions, and recommendations that will strengthen the AHM program and help it to maximize the impact of USAID and WWF resources for the benefit of Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities. There are several AHM management and programmatic issues that require urgent attention. We are confident that once these issues have been addressed AHM will be well positioned to continue making important contributions to the climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat for sustainable development in Asia's high mountain landscapes.

In closing, as Daniel Miller, Senior Development Advisor at USAID/Mongolia during the visit of the Evaluation Team, noted in one of his several books on the people and environment of the Tibetan Plateau:

Twelve-hundred years ago, with remarkable prescience, Tibetans viewed their homeland as the "Heart of the World." A 9th century Tibetan document found in the caves of the Buddhist center at Dunhuang, along the old Silk Road just north of the Tibetan Plateau, attests to the environmental significance Tibetans attributed to their homeland over one thousand years ago:

This center of Heaven
This core of the earth
This heart of the world,
Fenced round by snow,
The headland of all rivers,
Where the mountains are high and
The land is pure.

The world now needs to ensure that the Tibetan environment remains healthy and continues to provide vital ecosystem services. Not only for the people living on the Tibetan Plateau and in the Himalaya but for hundreds of millions of people in adjoining areas whose lives are affected by what happens to this high, mountain region.[14]

[14] Daniel Miller, *Tibet From Space* https://maptia.com/danielmiller/stories/tibet-from-space

1. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, TARGET AUDIENCE AND KEY QUESTIONS

1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the performance of the Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities Project (known as Asia High Mountains (AHM) project) midway through the life of the project. The project is funded by USAID under Associate Cooperative Agreement Award No. AID-OAA-LA-12-00003 under the Leader with Associates Cooperative Agreement with World Wildlife Fund, No. EEM-A-00-09-00006-00.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this mid-term evaluation is to reflect on the design of the AHM Project and specifically, whether the sum of the various individual activities are able to amount to a larger, more significant set of impacts region-wide. Given the low population densities in these high mountain environments, the challenge for the project has been to determine whether the impacts of the various activities in the participating communities can have a significant impact on landscape management and snow leopard habitat, in particular; and, how the interplay with regional alliance building component through participation in the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) may be contributing to impact. A related objective of the mid-term evaluation is to assess lessons learned and document success stories from the AHM that could inform future program design (i.e., is there value-added when integrating biodiversity and climate change adaptation into sectoral projects (e.g. watershed management, economic growth, etc.) or are stand-alone projects focused on either biodiversity conservation or climate change adaptation more effective?

The evaluation will also help determine whether the activities under this program framework successfully have been addressing and meeting their objectives effectively and complemented one another to conserve biodiversity while also improving local livelihoods. The results of the evaluation will be relevant to other biodiversity and climate change adaptation projects and programs around the world and may feed into meta-reviews and assessments being conducted through USAID/Washington.

1.3 TARGET AUDIENCE

The primary audience for the evaluation is USAID/Asia Bureau's Environment Officer, the originator of the cooperative agreement (CA). The Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations may be used in potentially modifying the terms of the agreement to improve impacts and outcomes if needed. Other target audiences are WWF, participating USAID bilateral and regional Missions, and participating national governments and national and international NGOs. The evaluation may also be of interest to USAID's Climate Change Office and Forestry and Biodiversity Office with respect to project design and the intersection of nature conservation and climate change adaptation. It may also document success stories to contribute to outreach materials on USAID's approach and the value of integration. Lastly, the final report of this evaluation will be publically available through the Development Experience Clearinghouse so that the evaluation will be accessible to a broad range of stakeholders.

1.4 KEY QUESTIONS[15]

1. To what extent have the activities implemented under the USAID/WWF AHM project had a positive impact on snow leopard habitat management in the participating countries and sites that can be measured?

   a. How successfully has monitoring been (approach and selection of indicators) in meaningfully measuring progress towards conservation targets or reduction in threats to snow leopards and their habitats?

   b. How effectively have the activities utilized adaptive management to improve conservation outcomes?

2. To what extent have efforts to improve governance and increase capacity to manage protected areas and other land uses (1) reduced the rate and extent of ecosystem degradation to date, (2) contributed to ecologically sustainable and climate adaptive livelihood improvements in the target areas, and (3) permitted different stakeholders to work in improved collaboration towards a common goal?

3. To what extent have livelihood-based interventions (1) improved the welfare of rural inhabitants in the targeted sites, (2) altered incentives towards conservation in the focus areas of the activities, and (3) improved local capacity for climate change adaptation?

4. To what extent has WWF employed a collaborative learning strategy in the design and implementation of AHM project activities in the individual sites and across the project as a whole?

   a. Has WWF adopted an approach of collaboratively developing activities with government, NGO, and community partners and, if so, how has this been done?

   b. How has WWF contributed to models and innovations to improved water security in its adaptive management approach? How has learning been institutionalized within target sites as a component of sustainability?

   c. Has WWF utilized social and multimedia media and online tools to leverage learning and the AHM project results across the 12 snow leopard habitat countries as well as other interested parties and donors and, if so, what have been the impacts of using such tools to date? [Examples include social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and similar media; online tools such as interactive websites, webinars, and mobile phone tools (SMS, etc.); and multimedia such as videos and radio.]

5. Which types of activities seem to offer the most promise for future investments in snow leopard habitat conservation and high mountain climate change adaptation? Which have been the least effective to date and why? Does integration improve results?

6. Is the AHM project contributing to water security?

7. The Evaluation will document instances of development innovation, the effective use of science and technology, success stories and effective inclusion of women in the project whenever possible.

[15] This is the formulation of the Evaluation Questions in the Statement of Work. Some questions were tweaked to improve clarity and a few additional questions have been added. See Annex B for the revised list or go to http://goo.gl/forms/5wV3klsy7B to examine the survey.

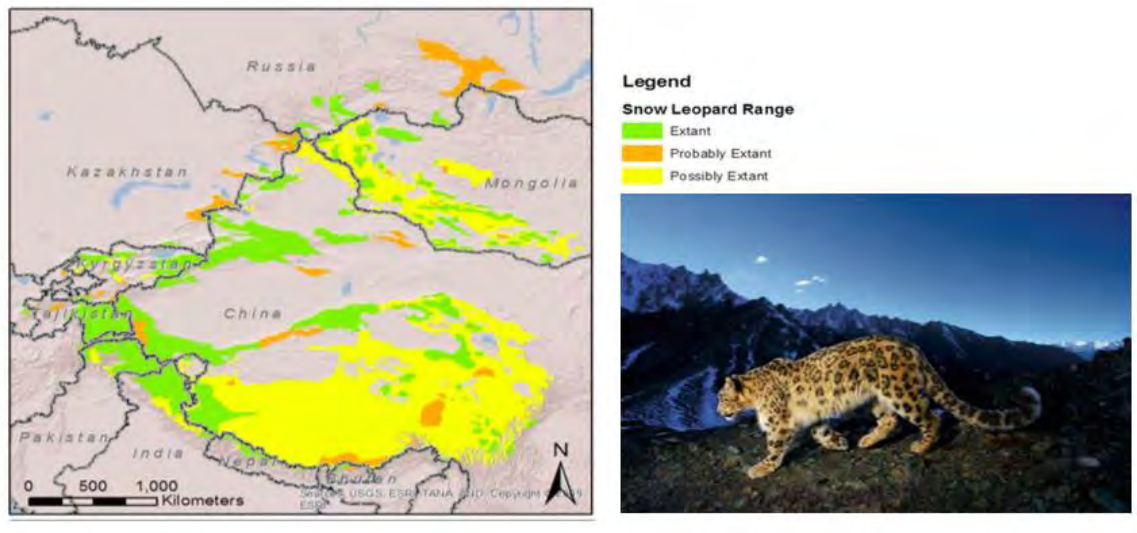
2. PROJECT CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

2.1 PROJECT CONTEXT

Asia's high mountains are critical to the survival of well over a billion people and the economies of a number of Asian countries. This is because the complex of mountain ranges, including the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH), Karakorum, Pamir, Altai-Sayan, and Tien Shan ranges give rise to some of Asia's most important river systems supplying water downstream. The mountains themselves have numerous complex and diverse ecosystems owing to the great changes in elevation, rainfall, and topography over short distances. This is especially true for the eastern HKH but is also the case for most of the rest of the mountain ranges as well.

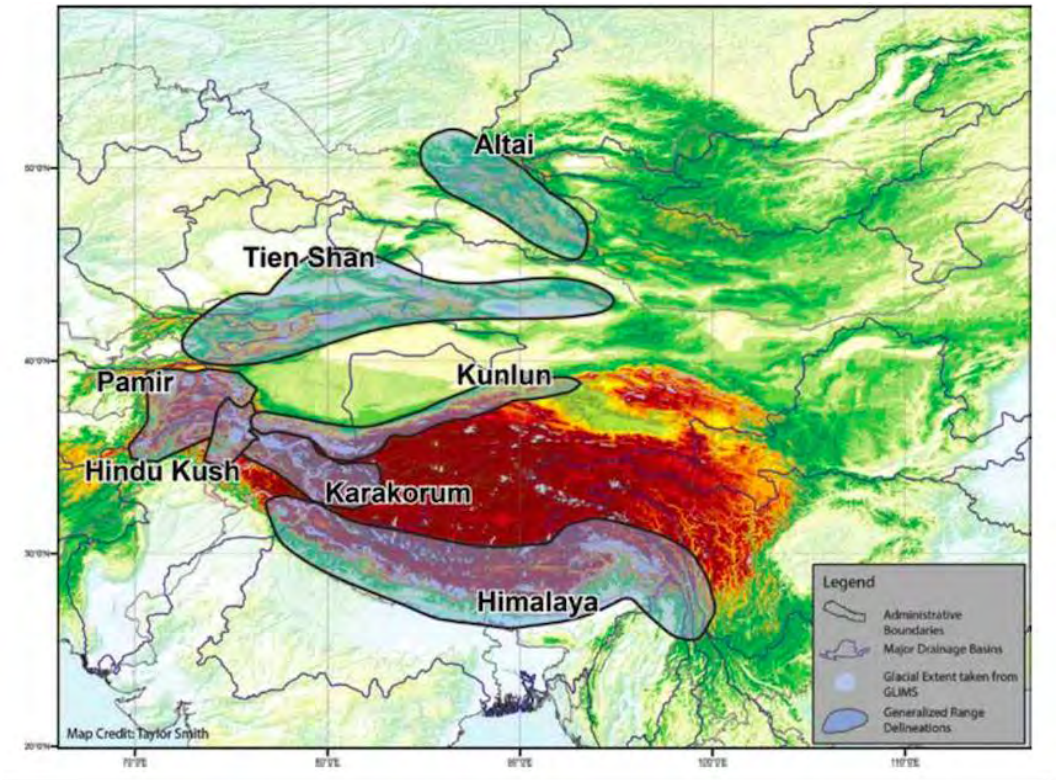
However, climate change is causing an especially rapid rise in mean annual temperature in Asia's high mountain ranges and this threatens the integrity of these upland and mountain ecosystems and also the communities in these mountains. In addition, climate change is causing changes in rainfall, snow melt, and glacier retreat that also affect the vital water supplies of the major river basins these mountains support. Finally, and of immediate concern to the AHM Project, climate change is leading to the spread of forests to higher elevations, especially in the HKH region, compressing the range of the snow leopard, which prefers alpine meadows and other pasture lands as do a number of its principal prey species. The spread of forests to higher elevations and changes in the structure and composition of pastures may also be reducing the area of pasturage for domestic animals of some mountain communities. Since very high elevations establish a limit beyond which flora and fauna cannot survive, overall habitat for open range species is being reduced. This is especially problematic for the snow leopard, which requires a very large hunting range. Because of this, any management strategy designed to promote its survival must be a transboundary effort.

Snow leopards, the charismatic species that tie the various elements of the AHM project together, are found in 12 range countries. Several different maps delineate the range and demonstrate that there are still significant "unknowns" with much still to be learned:



Source: USAID/WWF http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnaeb718.pdf

Source: GSLEP 2013



Generalized range boundaries for AHM, showing major drainage basins, glacial extent and administrative boundaries. Source: WWF, Guardians of the Headwaters.

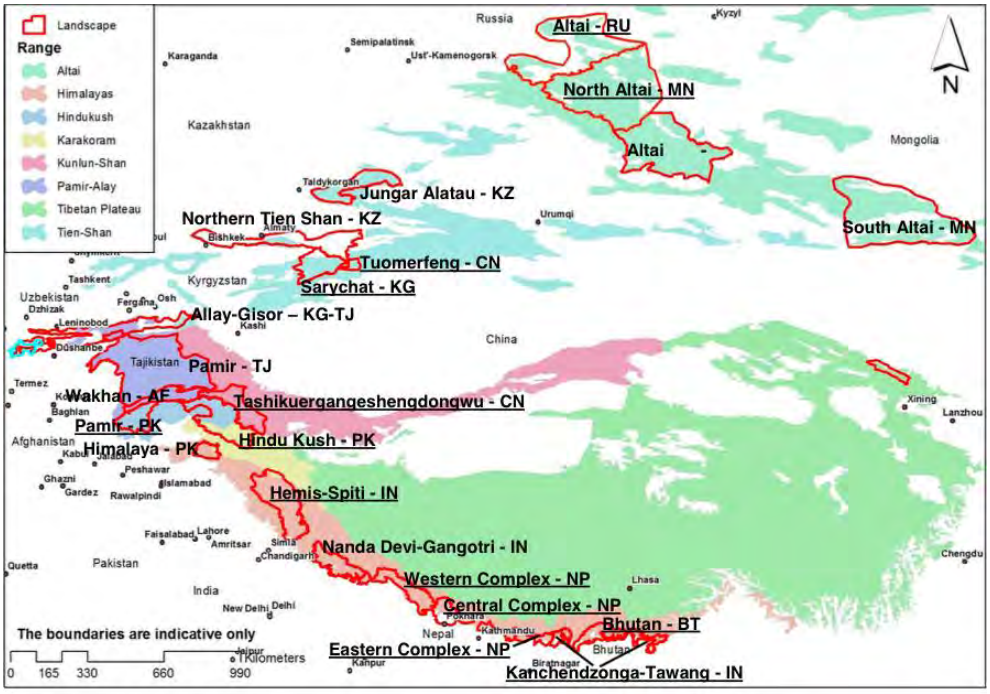
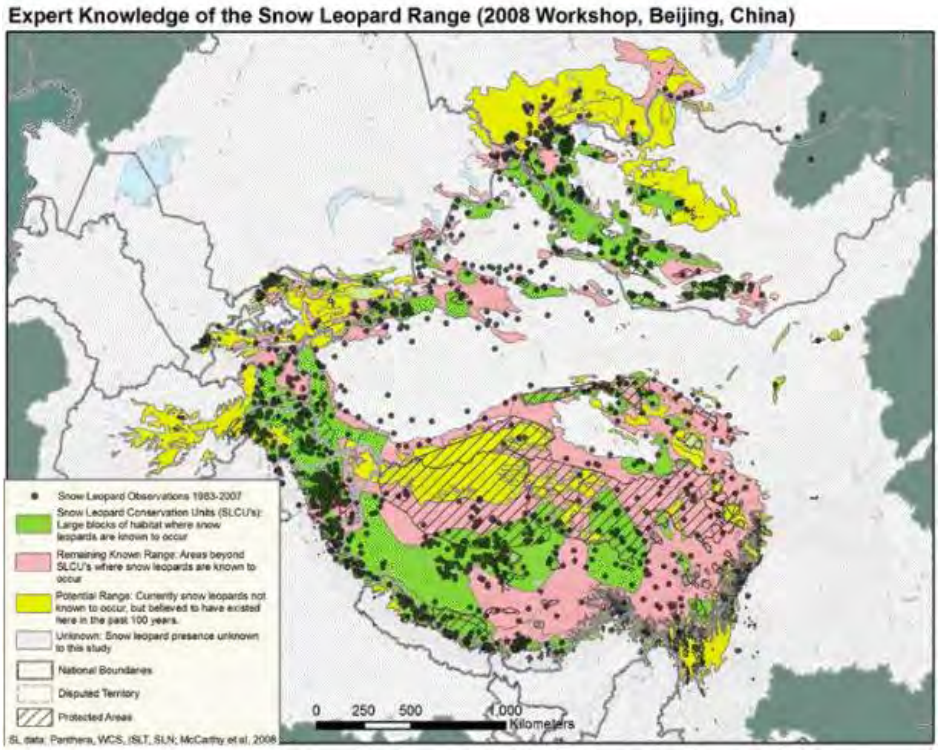


Figure 6: Snow leopard conservation landscapes of the GSLEP (WWF Landscapes underlined)

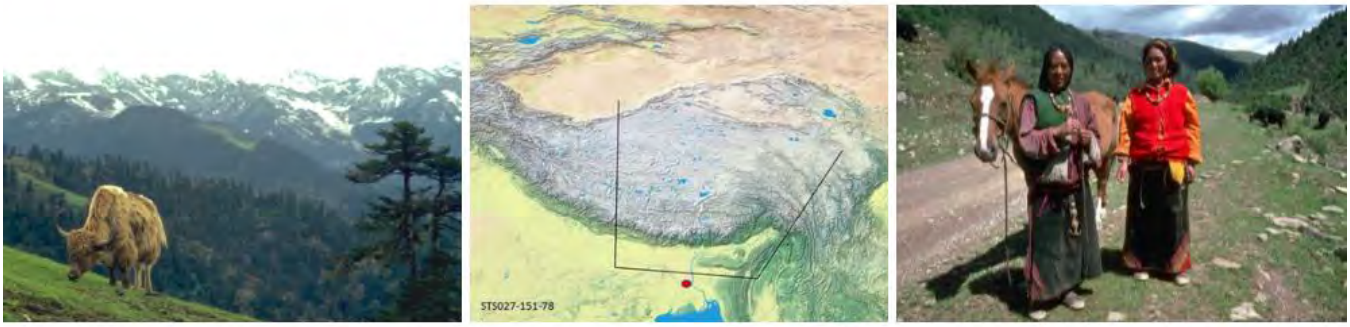
Source: WWF Draft Snow Leopard Species Action Plan (April, 2015)



Source: WWF, Guardians of the Headwaters

A view of some of the snow leopard range from space:

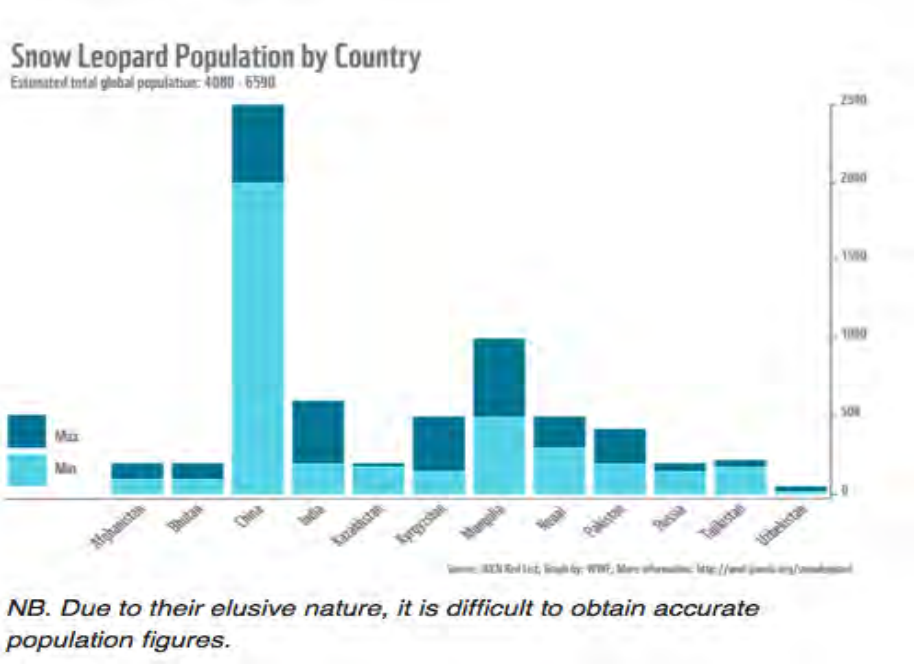
ABOVE: *The central and eastern Himalaya and southern Tibet, taken over northern India. Bhutan features prominently in the centre of the image. Photo taken on December 4, 1988. STS027-151-78.*



ABOVE: *Left: Yak in Merak-Sakten, Bhutan. Right: Ladies from Kham, Tibet with horse.*

Source: Daniel Miller, Tibet from Space

Populations of snow leopards, with "best guess" minimum and maximum numbers, are estimated to be:



Source: WWF-UK website

2.2 THE SNOW LEOPARD COMMUNITY

The snow leopard community is a special community. It is relatively small, passionate about what it does, and well networked.[16]

The Snow Leopard Network is a global organization dedicated to facilitating the exchange of information between individuals, organizations, and governments for the purpose of promoting sound scientifically-based conservation of the endangered snow leopard. Membership includes leading snow leopard experts in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. The Network was created in 2002 at the Snow Leopard Survival Summit in Seattle, Washington in 2002. Since then, membership has grown from the original 65 to over 300. These numbers are continuing to expand as more snow leopard researchers, experts, and organizations join SLN to collaborate for the ultimate goal of snow leopard conservation. The SLN works to establish and strengthen professional linkages for addressing the crucial issues affecting the survival of snow leopards and their prey species, and the livelihood opportunities of local people. The primary document used to further this goal is the Snow Leopard Survival Strategy (SLSS), revised and updated in 2014 by six eminent snow leopard experts along with 41 contributing authors. [17]

[16] An excellent introduction to the snow leopard world is Don Hunter's 2012 collection of stories by 20 key members of the community in his book *Snow Leopard: Stories from the Roof of the World*. A more technical introduction produced by a number of the same authors will be available in 2016 in a volume being edited by Tom McCarthy (formerly with the Snow Leopard Trust, now Director of Panthera's snow leopard program).

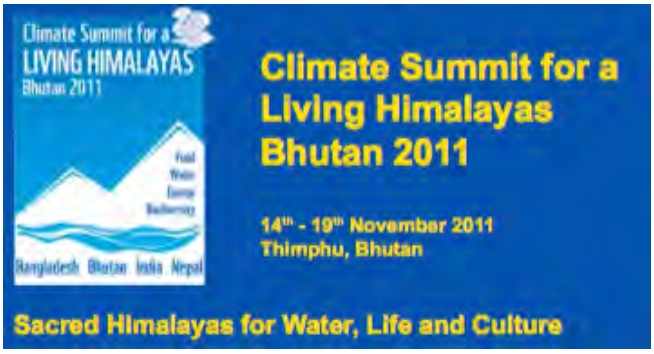
[17] http://snowleopardconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Snow_Leopard_Survival_Strategy_2014.1-reduced-size.pdf

As will be discussed later in Section 4, a key finding of this evaluation is that *very* few of the key players in this close-knit community have any idea what the AHM project has been doing. This is both surprising and troubling, as it is very easy to get word out through the SL Network listserv.[18]

Another finding is that WWF/Mongolia, WWF/India and WWF/Nepal are organizational members of the SLN, along with many other groups including the Snow Leopard Trust, Snow Leopard Conservancy, Panthera, NABU etc., but WWF-US is not (yet). This needs to be corrected.

2.3 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Designed in considerable haste, the Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities Project 1.0 was built in part around the framework of the Climate Summit for the Living Himalayas for work in Bhutan, Nepal, and India. This framework aimed to endorse and adopt a 10-year framework of action for adaptation to climate change and for ensuring food, water, and energy security while maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services.[19]



[20]

Source:
http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/eastern_himalaya/solutions2/climate_summit_for_living_himalayas/ and http://assets.panda.org/downloads/fs_10_bhutan_**2011**.pdf

[18] The Evaluation Team used the SLN to get word out about its country visits and to alert members to the two AHM technical reports. We will use it again to get the word out when the Evaluation Report is available for public distribution.

[19] http://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/bhutan_climate_summit_brochure.pdf

[20] MacArthur Foundation support to WWF (Bhutan and Nepal), ICIMOD, TMI, Inner Asian Conservation and others with a goal of developing a conservation alliance for the Eastern Himalayas go back at least as far as 2002: http://www.macfound.org/press/press-releases/the-macarthur-foundation-provides-nearly-45-million-in-grants-for-conservation-and-sustainable-development-work-in-asia-and-africa/

AHM project design was expanded beyond the Climate Summit framework to include additional program areas (e.g. snow leopards and snow leopard habitat) and other geographies (e.g. Pakistan, Central Asia and Mongolia). The WWF proposal framed this in the following terms: *"Through the lens of snow leopard conservation, we will address the linked issues and challenges of climate change adaptation and high mountain landscape management and lay a foundation for connecting these issues to water security and headwaters management."* As part of the design process, the Inter-governmental Commission on Sustainable Development in Central Asia (ICSD) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Snow Leopard Summit were drafted into the design.[21]

In the view of the Evaluation Team, AHM 1.0 has developed into a bit of a "mishmash": a mix of many different activities with no clear strategic coherence and no clearly articulated plan for scaling up.[22] In three of the six AHM countries (Bhutan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Mongolia) AHM resources have been invested in relatively small geographic areas that receive equal or substantially more resources from other sources. In three of the six countries (India, Kyrgyz Republic, and Mongolia) the annual budgets for AHM field activities is between US$ 50-100k per year.

AHM was designed and launched in the last half of 2012. Then 2013 happened: the Global Snow Leopards Forum, the Bishkek Declaration, the development of National Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programs for each of the 12 snow leopard range countries, the development of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Project (GSLEP), and the establishment of the GSLEP Secretariat in Bishkek. These events transformed both the possibilities of and the priorities for work on snow leopard conservation in "high mountain Asia."

While AHM 1.0 has made some adjustments to these new developments, and gradually abandoned its hope that the Climate Summit for the Living Himalayas would provide a framework for the project, the fundamentals of the AHM project – its programs and its management – were never adjusted to reflect the developments of 2013. An opportunity to make this adjustment in 2014, when the project was extended with substantially increased resources, did not happen.

The time has come to make those changes. If the AHM project is to be relevant to the new realities and make a significant contribution in the post-2013 world, AHM 1.0 needs to be upgraded and rebooted as AHM 2.0. Detailed Findings & Recommendations outlining how this can be done are presented in Section 4.

Project Details:
Life of Project: Oct. 1, 2012 to Sept. 30, 2017. (original end date was September 30, 2016)

Total budget: **$8,371,119** of which the USAID share is $7,343,258 and the WWF match is $1,272,720. (original Life of Project funding from USAID was $4,743,514)

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[21] See Annex I of the AHM proposal: Proposed Process Flow Chart for Building an Alliance. The flow chart posits 4 groups working together: the Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Snow Leopard Summit, a Technical Meeting of the Snow Leopard Network and the Inter-governmental Sustainable Development Commission of Central Asia. The vision was that all of these groups working together would create an Alliance on Asia's High Mountain Landscapes.

[22] A mishmash that includes cardamom farming, bee keeping, the construction of wooden bridges, water systems for pastures, maize adaptation demonstrations, citrus fruit tree seedling promotion, sustainable harvesting plans for *Juniperus indica*, the provision of subsidized "improved" cook stoves, support for community-managed essential oil processing enterprises, clean-up campaigns….the list goes on at some length. Annexes A(2) and B provide some information on these activities. There appears to be little attention paid to underlying drivers including rights (land rights, use rights, management rights) or to governance. This echoes two questions raised by USAID about the FY 2014 Work Plan: "Are activities in each country providing or building toward achievement of objectives that are strategically linked within that country and across countries? What are the "so what?" impacts expected from the suite of actions in each location, each country, and regionally?"

WWF cost share reported through March 31, 2015: $484,449[23]

Note on the AHM project budget:

WWF-US was selected to implement AHM because it had ongoing work in key countries and could "hit the ground running".[24] The Evaluation Team does not believe that the award was intended to support only WWF projects and personnel. If this was not clear in 2012 it should have been made clear when the project was extended for one year with a budget increase of some 55 percent in 2014.

Initial project documentation highlighted collaboration with the Snow Leopard Trust (SLT). See, for example, the information flyer in Annex A(2), which noted "The global network of snow leopard biologists and conservation practitioners that are part of the Snow Leopard Network will be tapped to build momentum for snow leopard conservation." The SLT logo has not appeared on subsequent AHM documentation.

Although SLT is active in most of the AHM countries, and has substantially more experience with snow leopard conservation than WWF-US, it has been provided with only 3.5 percent of the AHM budget (USD 261k) primarily to implement a program of research grants. One percent of the budget (USD 75k) was given to CARE/Nepal for work in Nepal. 3.6 percent (USD 265k) has been either provided to or budgeted for GSLEP. The rest of the budget, 92 percent, has been devoted to WWF personnel and projects, the largest of which (in Nepal; Sikkim, India; and Bhutan) have been active for 10+ years. Of this WWF share, 15 percent or so has been passed along to several local intermediary government and non-governmental groups in Bhutan, India and Nepal for project implementation.

WWF calculates that 32 percent of project funds have been allocated to partners. This figure includes all of the groups noted above plus WWF-IUCN Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network or TRAFFIC (a WWF-IUCN collaboration that has received 100k) plus all AHM funding for the Kyrgyz Republic (USD 329k or 4.5 percent). The funds for the Kyrgyz Republic are channeled by WWF/Russia through a local NGO run by a husband-and-wife team who use WWF business cards that make no mention of the NGO. In the view of the Evaluation Team, these resources should be counted on the WWF side of the ledger.

There are major disparities in the levels of AHM support to the six range countries where AHM works. 35 percent of the program budget goes to Bhutan and 30 percent to Nepal.[25] Pakistan has received 11 percent. WWF/Canada has received 3 percent to conduct a study in one part of Bhutan and some related technical support in Bhutan and Nepal, (i.e. mapping). The remaining 20 percent is split between India, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Mongolia. These budget allocations appear to reflect a project stuck in the Climate Summit for the Living Himalayas paradigm of 2012 rather than the post-Bishkek Declaration and GSLEP world of 2013 and beyond.

Objectives:

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[23] Includes 118k of staff time and travel costs for climate adaptation team & administrative staff and 366k for project activities including WWF Netherlands support for work in the Kyrgyz Republic (113k), WWF Finland support for work in Bhutan (58k) and WWF-US support for Wangchuck Centennial Park in Bhutan (195k).

[24] Point made by USAID's Mary Melnyk during the meeting at WWF on July 10th to review Key Findings & Recommendations.

[25] This includes partial support for eight staff in Bhutan and 15 staff in Nepal. (WWF Budget Notes) In the view of the Evaluation Team Bhutan joins places like Bali and Boulder, Colorado as beacons of what the world could be, but not as models that have a realistic chance of being adopted elsewhere. Inspirational examples, yes. Models, no. There are just too many special dimensions of these places that cannot be replicated.

1) Promoting climate-smart management of high mountain landscapes and snow leopard habitat for sustainable development, and

2) Improving transnational collaboration on climate change adaptation and snow leopard conservation in Asia's high mountain landscapes.

Geographic scope:

The project works in six of the 12 snow leopard range countries: Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan in South Asia, the Kyrgyz Republic in Central Asia and Mongolia North East Asia.

Key components:

1. Increase livelihoods, food and water security for high mountain communities in the face of a rapidly changing climate.
    2. Increase the resiliency of high mountain ecosystems to climate change impacts.
    3. Increase community participation in biodiversity conservation.
    4. Increase efforts to conserve the endangered snow leopard.
    5. Build transnational cooperation to address all of these issues.[26]

Principal activities include:

- Test and implement site-based conservation and sustainable development activities.
- Support establishment of the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum Secretariat and implementation of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program which will serve as a range-wide inter-governmental Alliance on Asia's High Mountain Landscapes.
- Support the Inter-governmental Sustainable Development Commission of Central Asia.
- Enhance the existing Snow Leopard Network.
- Support the implementation of the regional framework of cooperation of the Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas.

WWF works with a variety of institutions in the six participating countries, including:

- Government agencies at the national level with jurisdiction over protected areas and/or wildlife conservation.
- District or other sub-national government agencies in areas covering snow leopard habitat.
- National and/or local conservation NGOs.
- Local communities and their community-level organizations.

In addition, WWF works with a variety regional and international organizations with an interest in snow leopard conservation.

There have been a series of important developments in the snow leopard arena since the AHM project was designed in 2012. These developments include:

- The Bishkek Declaration of 2013
- National Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programs (NSLEP)

[26] AHM 2014 Annual Report, p. 1.

- The Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP)
- The updated Snow Leopard Survival Strategy (SLSS, 2014)
- The Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI), part of the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)[27]

Two of these developments have been incorporated into the AHM project extension (the Bishkek Declaration and the GSLEP program). Some modest support has been given to selected NSLEP programs. WWF provided inputs into the updated SLSS in the areas of climate adaptation and trade. CMS and CAMI do not appear to be on the AHM radar.

[27] The CMS Secretariat has been operating in Bonn since 2010. Its focus on Central Asia was significantly strengthened with the launch of CAMI at a meeting in Quito, Ecuador in 2014. The United States has not yet signed the CMS Convention.

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 EVALUATION DESIGN

In carrying out the evaluation tasks, the Evaluation Team used participatory methods to engage as many stakeholders in the implementation of the AHM Project as possible. The Team used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of sufficient rigor to produce valid and credible findings and recommendations.

The PSS conceptual approach to evaluation is strategically omnivorous – taking elements from a variety of evaluation approaches and mixing them with the "common sense" acquired over several decades of thinking about, writing about and doing development on three continents.

In addition to addressing each of the evaluation questions, the Team sought to place the AHM project in a broader context of national and regional work supported by USAID, other donors, regional organizations, civil society groups, and the private sector on biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, and water resources management. It also cast a wide net across the global snow leopard community, seeking important external input on what the AHM project has been trying to do.

Data sources for the evaluation included: document review, key informant interviews, the online survey, country visits, and limited field visits.

The Evaluation Team requested WWF to prepare a Self-Assessment. In our view, internal self-assessment and external review are two sides of the same coin. The Self-Assessment was intended to provide important context for the country and field visit portion of the evaluation. As noted in Section 3.4 below, although two Self-Assessments were eventually completed, they did not identify key implementation issues or propose mid-course corrections.

In order to ensure consistency across the Country visits, a template was developed for these visits.

In order to obtain input from as broad a cross-section of groups and individuals working on snow leopards and in snow leopard habitat, the Evaluation Team attempted to organize a session with interested members of the Snow Leopard Network in each of the countries visited. These sessions did not take place for a variety of reasons. The Evaluation Team was however able to get input from SLN members in each country who were not part of the AHM project.

Prior to briefing meetings in Washington DC with WWF and USAID and the Country visits, Key Informant Interviews have been conducted (by phone and skype in addition to an in-person visit to the Snow Leopard Trust in Seattle) with a range of stakeholders. A list of those contacted is presented in Annex D. In addition, a fairly extensive group of documents were identified and consulted. The list of these documents is presented in Annex E.

With regards to findings and recommendations,[28] these additional criteria will be used to ensure the quality of the evaluation report:

1. Findings will be based on the data sources described above, with careful triangulation when necessary.

[28] Some evaluations use a format that includes findings, conclusions and recommendations. PSS finds this format cumbersome and too often formulaic.

2. Recommendations will address key findings. Because recommendations involve interpretation of collected data, they will be carefully considered, with assumptions and additional context provided when necessary.
3. Recommendations will be action-oriented, practical and specific.

Evaluation Schedule:

The evaluation process started with extensive document review, key informant interviews and a trip to Seattle to meet with WWF's AHM partner the Snow Leopard Trust. This was followed by meetings in Washington, DC with WWF, USAID, and others prior the country visits. The evaluation included country visits to Bhutan, India, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Mongolia as well as a brief stop in Almaty, Kazakhstan to meet with the USAID Regional Mission. Nepal was included in the original list of countries to be visited but had to be removed following the devastating magnitude 7.8 earthquake on April 25th. In India, a proposed visit to the AHM office in Sikkim was removed on the advice of the AHM Project Manager. The Sikkim Field Office Manager travelled to Delhi to meet with the Evaluation Team.

The country visits included brief field visits with WWF staff to Bumthang (Bhutan) and Issyk Kul (Kyrgyz Republic). The stop in Delhi included meetings with staff from WWF/Nepal (in person) and WWF/Pakistan (via Skype). Overall, the evaluation included discussions with some four dozen WWF staff in seven national WWF organizations. It also included phone/Skype/email interviews with some five dozen key informants including staff in five USAID Missions. (see Annex D)

Following the country visits, a session was organized at WWF on July 10th to get feedback on the Draft Key Findings and Recommendations. This meeting was followed by several rounds of questions and clarifications as well as the identification of several additional WWF staff who needed to be interviewed.

The meeting on July 10th and the back-and-forth that followed were not part of the original evaluation design. The possibility of a meeting was opened up when the Evaluation Team Leader travelled to Washington on a different assignment. This assignment, which predated arrangements for the AHM evaluation, also created a hiatus of two months between the end of the country visits and the transmission of the draft Final evaluation report to WWF and USAID for review. This hiatus was the impetus for drafting the Key Findings & Recommendations as the first step in the preparation of the final report. In retrospect, this series of events has strengthened the evaluation process. It has also allowed the Evaluation Team time to think about and provide their suggestions to USAID and WWF on proposed "next steps" for implementing the Key Findings and Recommendations of the evaluation.

Months		March	April				May				June					July				August				
Week Starting on Monday (dates)		30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	31
Contract Begins																								
AHM Evaluation	Document review																							
	Development of field visit itinerary with WWF			X																				
	Consultations with key informants																							
	Survey development & finalization					X																		
	Inception Report						X																	
	Washington DC meetings																							
	Field Visits																							
	Bhutan																							
	Nepal																							
	India																							
	Kazakhstan																							
	Kyrgyz Republic																							
	Presentation of initial findings													X										
	Draft Evaluation Report																				X			
	Success Stories & Lessons Learned																				X			
	USAID & WWF comments on the Draft																							
	Final Mid-Term Evaluation Report																							X
	Presentation of Final Report - TBD																							

Completion of Deliverable or Task
Team in Field
Work
USAID Review

3.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The three key data collection methods used have been: document review, key informant interviews, and the online survey. Details on each of these methods are available in Annexes B, D, and E.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The Evaluation Team carefully reviewed all of the data collected using the three methods identified above. Triangulation was used to assess the most important points from the key informant interviews. Analysis of the Online Survey is presented in Annex B.

Grades have been used as a way of capturing and expressing the evaluators' assessment of various elements of AHM implementation. [29]

3.4 LIMITATIONS AND RISKS

Limitations encountered and actions taken to mitigate them have included:

- Length of time available for the evaluation allowed only brief, cursory visits to field sites in two of the six AHM countries.

  Mitigation: The Evaluation Team did its best within timeframe available for country & field visits.

- Timing of the evaluation during the active season for snow leopard field research and implementation of other field programs.

  Mitigation: same as above.

- AHM Project Manager not available at AHM project headquarters in Bhutan during the visit of the Evaluation Team.

  Mitigation: The Project Manager came to Washington for the initial project briefings.

- The Project Manager was not available to meet the Evaluation Team in any of the countries visited. He was in Mongolia during the visit of the Evaluation Team and in the Kyrgyz Republic with a WWF-US "communications team" shortly before the arrival of the Evaluation Team. In Mongolia, a meeting was proposed by WWF/Mongolia late on the Evaluation Team's final day in country. The Team ended up spending one of its two full days in Mongolia in Ulaan Baatar waiting for this meeting. The meeting failed to materialize when the Project Manager's arrival in Ulaan Baatar was delayed.

  Mitigation: N/A. In future, suggest WWF review the priority given to external evaluations.

- Multiple attempts over several days to talk with the WWF-US Senior Director responsible for the AHM project prior to leaving Washington for the country visits were unsuccessful.

  Mitigation: N/A. In future, suggest WWF review the priority given to external evaluations.

- Not able to visit Pakistan.

  Mitigation: Skype call with WWF/Pakistan staff from Delhi. While this call was very helpful, the Evaluation Team has not been able to do justice to the Pakistan component of AHM.

- Not able to visit Sikkim.

[29] We would appreciate feedback on the usefulness of this method of presenting results. Although it may be considered "unorthodox" by some in the evaluation community, everyone who has been through the US educational system understands these letter grades. This method would need to be adjusted in cultures that use different metrics to assess educational achievement.

Mitigation: Met with WWF/India Sikkim staff in Delhi. USAID/India staff visited Sikkim at a later date.

- The Nepal earthquake.

  Mitigation: Met WWF/Nepal staff in Delhi.

- Meetings with government officials: The Team had very few meetings with government officials. With the exception of Bhutan, government officials were not listed as "key contacts" by AHM.

  Mitigation: N/A. Recommend much higher priority in future evaluations.

- The online survey: Based on initial discussions with a range of key informants outside of the AHM project it is unclear how useful the survey will be. In virtually all cases these people (from organizations actively working on snow leopard and related projects) have had *very* limited knowledge of what the AHM project has been doing.

  Mitigation: N/A. Go ahead with the survey and assess the results.

- In 2014 USAID provided a substantial increase in funding to the AHM project and extended it until September 30, 2017. As part of the extension, a detailed Work Plan was prepared by WWF and approved by USAID. This has limited the scope for mid-course correction.

  Mitigation: N/A. In future, mid-term evaluations should be scheduled prior to substantial increases in funding.

- A number of key AHM reports are in process but not yet finalized. Examples include: Baseline Surveys for all six countries (being done 2.5 years into project implementation), a Snow Leopard Survey in Bhutan, and a report by TRAFFIC on wildlife trade. Requests to see drafts of these and other reports were denied,

  Mitigation: N/A. Recommend that in future WWF is more open and transparent with evaluation teams.

- Lessons from earlier USAID investments in the AHM landscapes: USAID's Sustainable Conservation Approaches in Priority Ecosystems (SCAPES) program ran for five years (2009-2014) in nine landscapes. Work in one of those landscapes, the Sacred Himalayan Landscape in Nepal and India, links directly with follow-on AHM-supported work in the same landscape. Work in two of the other landscapes, the Daurian Steppe in China, Mongolia and Russia (by WCS) and the Ustyurt Plateau in the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan (by a PACT Consortium that included Fauna and Flora International, BirdLife International, and ACDI/VOCA) may have included useful lessons for AHM. The Evaluation Team was provided with a copy of the Executive Summary of the SCAPES end-of-project evaluation dated February 2015. Multiple requests for copies of the detailed evaluations for the three landscapes of interest were unsuccessful.

  Mitigation: N/A. Prompt publication of evaluations by USAID will increase the likelihood that lessons learned will be absorbed and used.

- AHM Self-Assessment: As noted above, the Evaluation Team requested WWF to prepare a self-assessment as input into the evaluation process. Although the self-assessment was produced later than requested, AHM produced not one but two documents: one by the Project Manager, the second by the Senior Director for Asia. WWF staff did not identify several key implementation issues (e.g. delayed arrival of funds in the field) or things they felt needed to be adjusted or changed (e.g. USAID monitoring and reporting requirements).

  Mitigation: N/A. Recommend that in future WWF staff are encouraged to be openly self-critical with a view to promoting changes and mid-course corrections (aka internal "adaptive management").

- Social science input into AHM: The Evaluation Team asked over a period of more than three months who at WWF-US was responsible for making sure that projects like AHM had a rigorous approach to social science. Several days before finishing the draft Final Report the team learned there was an "environmental and social safeguards lead" at WWF-US. Discussions with those responsible unearthed the existence of an internal Social Development for Conservation (SD4C) group across the WWF network. The international, Asia and India leads for SD4C were contacted. None of them knew about AHM. In a parallel development, serendipity led the Evaluation Team to the WWF-US Sacred Earth program, piloted at five sites starting in the Eastern Himalayas, from 2011- 2014. There has been no connection between this program and AHM.

  Mitigation: N/A under the circumstances. Recommend that WWF strengthen its social science capacity and insure that it has a strong voice in project design and implementation in order to increase the odds that WWF's conservation projects will be successful and that the conservation gains made will be sustainable. (see Section 4.8 including discussion of the Nature, Wealth & Power framework. Focusing on "nature" alone has and will continue to doom many conservation projects to failure.)

4. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. AHM PROJECT ELEMENT: OBJECTIVE #1 – PROMOTING CLIMATE-SMART MANAGEMENT OF HIGH MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES AND SNOW LEOPARD HABITAT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

GRADE: **B+** (AN "**A**" FOR BHUTAN AND MONGOLIA ON THE GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS OF AHM WORK)[30]

FINDINGS

- WWF field offices have done a good job of taking small amounts of money, combining them with other sources of funding, and doing mostly modest things in the field that generally make sense. For reasons that are unclear, WWF-US's reporting to USAID does not provide this critically important context.
- In Bhutan, modest AHM funding supporting work in the Wangchuck Centennial National Park (WCNP) has been combined with funding from other sources.[31]
- In the Kyrgyz Republic, the modest USD 50,000/year provided by AHM for work in the Sarychat-Ertash State Nature Reserve is added to a similar amount provided by WWF Netherlands.
- In Mongolia, the modest USD 46,000/year provided by AHM for work in three small areas of the Mongolian portion of the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion is linked to the 100,000 Euro/year provided by WWF Netherlands. In this case, no AHM funds can be used to support WWF Mongolia staff costs.
- In each of the three years that AHM has been operating there have been serious delays in getting planned and promised resources to AHM field projects. Many of these activities are season-sensitive. Field staff have done everything in their power to either (a) make adjustments, or (b) work very hard at the last minute to maximize results from these modest amounts of AHM support. In some cases activities have had to be cancelled. Issues of this sort during the first year would be understandable as the kinks of work planning and funds transfer get worked out. Why this problem has persisted into Year 3 is a mystery. A related mystery is why this issue was not flagged in the Self-Assessment provided to the Evaluation Team.
- Field staff have also been burdened with a monitoring and reporting system that is several orders of magnitude more complicated than the reporting required by any other donors. (see discussion in Section 4.6 below)

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[30] The grades assigned to each element are derived from the system of metrics used in the US educational system. For any readers unfamiliar with this system it goes from A (excellent) through B, C, D, and F (failing). In all cases except F, "+" and "-" are used to create intermediate gradations. This method would need to be adjusted in cultures that use different metrics to assess educational achievement.

[31] AHM does not figure in the WWF-International list of WWF Bhutan projects which reportedly has not been updated since 2009. http://wwf.panda.org/who_we_are/wwf_offices/bhutan/projects/

- Both Bhutan and Mongolia have used their modest AHM resources to work in strategically important parts of the country (in Bhutan: complementing much larger resources from other sources to help ensure the creation of the critically important Wangchuck Centennial National Park which completes the Northern Forest Complex, a system of protected areas across the whole of Bhutan's northern border. In Mongolia: working in three small areas of the much larger Altai-Sayan landscape, one of two large transnational landscape projects that WWF/Mongolia is working on with Russia and China).
- Nepal, India, and the Kyrgyz Republic took an easier, less rigorous/strategic path: adding the modest AHM resources to long-running projects (in the case of Nepal and India/Sikkim) or to a protected area already being supported by another WWF donor (Kyrgyz Republic). In these three cases, a more strategic approach based on SL numbers and vulnerability would likely have directed scarce resources aimed at snow leopard habitat conservation and management to other higher-priority parts of the country (in Nepal: to the Annapurna/Kali Gandaki region or further west. In India: to Arunachal Pradesh or to Jammu & Kashmir and Kargil with the possibility of some cross-border cooperation between India and Pakistan. In the Kyrgyz Republic: away from the very popular Sarychat-Ertash State Nature Reserve to other protected areas).
- The Evaluation Team is not in a position to make a judgment about the programming of AHM resources in Pakistan. Input from field staff indicated that field projects were just getting started and that a much longer time horizon was needed for real impact to be achieved (i.e., 10 years).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. See recommendations below on focusing and upgrading/rebooting the AHM project; on project implementation – including work planning/funds management, monitoring, reporting, and communication/information-sharing; on project management and on more proactive engagement with other groups working on climate-smart snow leopard conservation.
2. Devote urgent attention to working with the national governments and other stakeholders in each AHM country on the implementation of their NSLEP plan. The requirements and potential AHM contributions will vary in each case. AHM does not have major funding to devote to implementation, but it can serve as a catalyst in a variety of ways: identifying funding, convening potential donors, mobilizing the global WWF network to support implementation, etc.[32]
3. Set "water security" to the side, including work on Integrated River Basin Management. There will be other projects that have timeframes and levels of resources commensurate with a reasonable chance of meeting these goals.

[32] WWF notes that the AHM program is currently leveraging WWF's network-wide USD 30 million snow leopard capital campaign. Unfortunately a draft of the WWF Snow Leopard Species Action Plan makes no mention of AHM. This needs to be rectified promptly.

4.2. AHM PROJECT ELEMENT: OBJECTIVE #2 – IMPROVING TRANSNATIONAL COLLABORATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVATION IN ASIA'S HIGH MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES

GRADE: **C**

FINDINGS

- The Grant Modification Funding Work Plan covering the period October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015 (submitted to USAID March 3, 2015) includes a great deal of detail on Objective 1, precious little on Objective 2.[33] Only three activities are listed under Objective 2: the UWICE "Bhutan International Glacier Symposium" (for USD 10k), the development of "a coordinated set of country-scale thematic maps," and a partnership with a private sector firm to raise awareness and funding (both items together budgeted at USD162k).
- Modest progress has been made in the last two years supporting the GSLEP Secretariat and the GSLEP action plan. Equipment provided to the Secretariat has been very much appreciated. Support provided during the run-up to the Bishkek Summit in 2013 is detailed in Annex A(3)
- The Evaluation Team was delighted to learn that the AHM Project Manager is on the Steering Committee of the Snow Leopard Network for the period 2015-2017. This was the result of proactive requests from the Snow Leopard Trust rather than an initiative by WWF. Nonetheless, the outcome is worth both noting and celebrating.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Devote much more concerted attention to this component of AHM during the remaining two years of the project, including work with national governments and each of the key supporters of the GSLEP process:

2. Drop discussion of and reporting on "launching the beginnings of an alliance for protection of Asia's high mountain landscapes." For purposes of climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat, GSLEP is that alliance. AHM could take a lead in helping to ensure that other institutions working in/on Asia's high mountain landscapes (e.g. ICIMOD, CAREC, TMI, Mountain Partnership, IUCN-WCPA etc.) are fully aware of what GSLEP is doing.
3. Take a hard look at budget priorities for Years 4 & 5 and be prepared to make adjustments. A case in point: USD160k was identified in the budget notes for the project extension for support of the GSLEP Secretariat.[34] USD180k is slated for the Ugyen Wangchuck Institute of Conservation and

[33] Unfortunately this and several other AHM documents do not include pagination, so detailed reference to the material in the documents is difficult.

[34] The most recent budget figures from WWF put projected support at USD 265,060

Environment (UWICE) in Bhutan. While the work at UWICE is important, given the key objectives of AHM, an investment in GSLEP is more important.[35]

4. Provide additional resources to the GSLEP Secretariat. The GSLEP Secretariat suggested that additional resources would be very helpful in several areas including support for the international travel of Secretariat staff (only domestic travel inside the Kyrgyz Republic is covered by their GEF funding) as well as support for the cross-cutting themes of the GSLEP project: illegal trade, knowledge sharing for institutional capacity & leadership development, transboundary cooperation, research & monitoring, and awareness & coalition building around large-scale infrastructure development.

4.3. AHM PROJECT ELEMENTS: SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVATION, CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND WATER SECURITY

GRADE: **WIDESPREAD CONFUSION ABOUT IF/HOW THESE ELEMENTS FIT TOGETHER**

FINDINGS

- Many people outside of the AHM project (i.e. those not directly involved in AHM implementation) are confused about what the project aims to accomplish and how the three elements of snow leopard conservation, climate change adaptation, and water security are connected. While part of the problem is that AHM has failed to communicate what it has been doing with others working in these arenas, two more fundamental issues are that a) water security is not a stated part of either AHM project objective, and b) without either a theory of change or a coherent and credible framework for how the three pieces fit together, how does AHM propose to work on all of these things in ways that will have a reasonable chance of being sustained after the project is finished?
- Water security is not currently part of either project objective. Given the budget levels described above, achieving water security on any meaningful scale during the life of this project is impossible. A few mountain communities can be provided with spring protection or a drinking water system or some slope stabilization/watershed management, but this only adds up to "water security" at a very micro level -- a few small dots across the immensity that is "high mountain Asia."
- Climate change adaptation is an important element of any development project in the 21st century. It can and should be treated as an integral part of climate-smart snow leopard conservation, rather than as a stand-alone piece of the AHM project.
- The situation is further complicated by AHM claims that other "key components of the project" include: "to increase livelihoods, food and water security for high mountain communities in the face of a rapidly changing climate, increase the resiliency of high mountain ecosystems to climate change impacts, increase community participation in biodiversity conservation, increase efforts to conserve the endangered snow leopard, and build transnational cooperation to address all of

[35] The relatively high investments in Bhutan and Nepal deserve some discussion. For example, Bhutan is slated to receive more than five times the level of resources under AHM Component 1 than India. It is not clear how this has been justified. India has at least five times as much snow leopard habitat as Bhutan and far more trained personnel to use whatever resources may be provided. The Evaluation Team found no strategic analysis underlying these budget allocations. Similar observations could be made comparing the budgets for Bhutan and Nepal, on the one hand, and the Kyrgyz Republic and Mongolia on the other.

these issues." Can AHM do all these things at a meaningful scale in six countries with the resources and in the time frame available?

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Rigorously apply the "keep it simple" principle for the remaining two years of AHM.
2. Articulate a theory of change for AHM that fully takes into account AHM's funding and timing constraints and adjust project objectives to reflect this theory of change.[36]
3. Refocus the project on snow leopards and the climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat in "high Asia".[37] Any impacts of this work on water security are a co-benefit to be noted and celebrated.
4. Cut the project spin that oversells what AHM is and can actually accomplish with the resources and time frame at its disposal. One example: "This is the first coordinated, transboundary project across a substantial part of the range of the snow leopard in high Asia, rather than just in isolated localities."[38] Another example: the jumble of "key components" presented above. A third example: AHM is presented as "the first project to take an integrated approach to snow leopard conservation

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[36] USAID's Biodiversity Policy requires the articulation of a Theory of Change for biodiversity funding. Ironically, USAID's flagship SCAPES project operated without a theory of change for its first three years, finally developing one near the end of the project. The SCAPES evaluation noted: "The E3/FAB office decided in SCAPES Year Four to include an evidence and learning approach to the final project evaluation. USAID requested that its Measuring Impact mechanism work with implementing partners **to retroactively develop theories of change** to describe seven key conservation interventions that were taking place in numerous SCAPES landscapes as a basis for learning across multiple sites, countries and implementing partners." (Executive Summary, SCAPES Evaluation p. 16. Emphasis added) In the case of AHM, the original proposal included a conceptual model (Proposal Annex 2) and a graphic presenting strategies and results (Proposal Annex 3). This graphic lists six strategies and 10 very wide-ranging sets of results that are combined together to come up with the two overarching Objectives and eight nested results for the AHM project. To take just one piece of this puzzle: the six strategies cover the domains of CBNRM, law enforcement, species conservation, ecosystem governance, climate adaptation and "transnational." The results flowing from these strategies range from "greater food, water, health and basic needs security," to "greater regional understanding of international, national, local and interstate demands for economic growth, industrial development, energy, and agricultural products (food and commodities)." The ambition of this conceptualization is highly unrealistic. All of this was to have been achieved in six countries in four years with USD 4 million. This helps explain the "mishmash" discussed above as well as the widespread confusion outside of the AHM project about what the project is trying to accomplish. AHM 2.0 must have its feet planted much more firmly on the ground.

[37] In one sense this is going back to the objective originally formulated for AHM. USAID's Project Description for the original SCAPES Leader with Associates Award defines that objective as follows: Build a transnational alliance that supports conservation and adaptation in Asia's High Mountain landscapes and communities **utilizing snow leopard conservation as the focal point for action.** (emphasis added)

[38] The phrase "across a substantial part of the range of the snow leopard in high Asia" is misleading. Limited resources are being deployed for work in a few relatively small areas across the vast snow leopard range. (20,559 km2 of an estimated range of 1.8 million km2) In most cases other donors (including other WWFs) are providing at least as much, in some cases considerably more, to these efforts than AHM. The WWF staff working in these areas have been effectively networked and "coordinated" by the project, but coordination with the efforts of other groups needs to be improved. Bottom line: what is happening on the ground fails to mirror the claims embedded in this statement. Other donors including the GEF and NABU could take issue with this claim. The GEF in particular is a *much* larger player in this arena having invested $55 million in 18 projects over the period 1991-2013, and poised to fund or co-fund nine projects worth well over $100 million over the next several years. Although the GEF projects (aside from the new regional project that will provide support to the GSLEP Secretariat) are technically not "coordinated, transboundary projects," there may well be levels of coordination and learning between them that match what AHM has been doing. Whether AHM is, in fact, a transboundary project is also open to debate. In normal parlance transboundary refers to work being done on both sides of a single border. An excellent example is the work that WWF Mongolia has been doing in the Altay-Sayan and Amur-Heilong ecoregions. AHM has been supporting work around Kanchenjunga on both sides of the Nepal/India border. How much credit AHM can claim for this transboundary work is an open question: it was started long before AHM and has benefited from the support of multiple donors, including MacArthur Foundation funding from at least as far back as 2002 and USAID assistance through the SCAPES/Sacred Himalayan Landscape project.

that includes climate change adaptation, water security, and promotion of international cooperation as well as wildlife research, wildlife protection, and community conservation."

4.3.1 PROPOSED REWORK OF THE TWO KEY OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE #1

Old: Promoting climate-smart management of high mountain landscapes and snow leopard habitat for sustainable development.
New: *Promote climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat for sustainable development in Asia's high mountain landscapes and communities.*

OBJECTIVE #2

Old: Improving transnational collaboration on climate change adaptation and snow leopard conservation in Asia's high mountain landscapes.
New: Improve transnational collaboration on climate-smart snow leopard conservation in Asia's high mountain landscapes and communities.

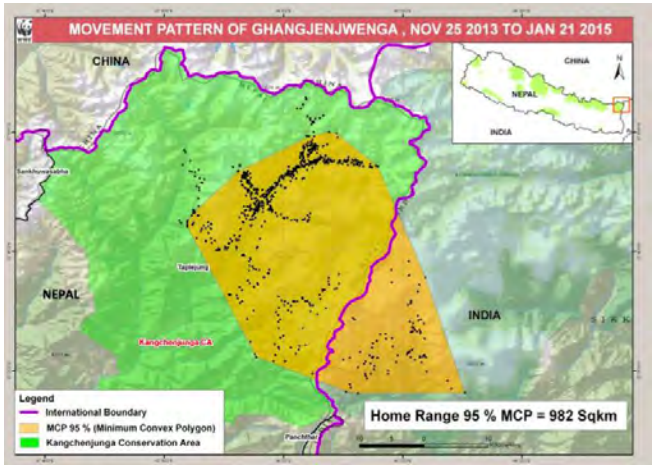
It is important to note that "water security", a theme regularly mentioned in AHM documentation, is **not** included in either objective. Water security is a higher-level long-term goal, something for which the project is not directly responsible. Water security is a **co-benefit** of improved climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat.

4.3.2 SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVATION

GRADE: **B**

FINDINGS

- Some very useful work has been started on snow leopard conservation and habitat management in each of the six AHM countries. This work needs to be brought front and center during the remaining two years of the project: building on the very important consensus developed around the Bishkek Declaration, the development of NSLEPs and the GSLEP and the establishment of the GSLEP Secretariat.



Movement patterns of snow leopard collared in Nepal

Source: AHM powerpoint presentation

- AHM has not used the Snow Leopard Network as effectively as it c/should to reach out to key partners and develop joint activities that will move global snow leopard work forward.

4.3.3 CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

GRADE: **C** (**B+** FOR SENSITIZATION OF WWF PROJECT STAFF AND SELECTED PARTNERS TO CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION ISSUES)

FINDINGS

- AHM has done a good job of sensitizing WWF project staff and selected partners to climate change adaptation issues..
- There are numerous organizations and projects working on climate change adaptation in "high mountain Asia." As with water security, this is not an area where AHM has a comparative advantage.
- Most AHM countries have high level committees made up of multiple ministries and donor organizations that have developed and are implementing national climate change mitigation and adaptation plans. AHM does not participate in any of these groups.

4.3.4 WATER SECURITY

GRADE: **D**

FINDINGS

- Water security is not part of either of the two key AHM objectives.
- It is unrealistic to think that small amounts of money devoted to "water security" are going to produce significant tangible results during the project period. Springshed protection or the provision of drinking water systems to a few communities in Central Bhutan can be spun as "enhanced water security" for a few dozen households. It can also be viewed as main line "rural development" at a micro level.
- There are many national and international projects focused on water security and water resources management in "high mountain Asia" including several in which WWF is an important player.[39]
- Work on protecting and managing snow leopard habitat has both direct and indirect connections to enhanced water security at both community and landscape scales. As a result, water security is a co-benefit.
- WWF has used water security as the rationale for funding some initial steps towards Integrated River Basin Management planning in the six AHM countries. IRBM involves much more comprehensive and long-term work than is feasible under AHM.
- WWF is supporting innovative work on water security outside of the AHM project. One example: David Reed (Ed.). 2015. *In Pursuit of Prosperity: U.S. Foreign Policy in an Era of Natural Resource Scarcity* with a Foreword by Admiral Mike Mullen and an chapter on Modern India by the current U.S. Ambassador to India Rich Verma.

[39] Including the Living Himalayas Initiative discussed above. WWF has an excellent water project in South Asia that is being supported by HSBC. For this and other potential corporate support see: http://assets.panda.org/downloads/**wwf**_corporate_partnerships_report_fy13.pdf

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Rephrase the two key AHM objectives as proposed above.
2. Drop water security as a stand-alone goal or component of AHM. Treat water security as a co-benefit of other work.
3. Drop proposed work on Integrated River Basin Management and reprogram these funds. IRBM involves much more comprehensive and long-term work than is feasible under AHM. Global experience with IRBM is clear: done right, IRBM is a complex, long-term venture. If USAID or WWF are going to support IRBM in "high mountain Asia," it needs to be done using a different vehicle: on a longer timeframe, with considerably more resources, with a rigorous review of what others are doing and planning to do, and involve a wider range of water resources management expertise. AHM needs to be moving in the opposite direction: a narrower focus on climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat, increased support for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that GSLEP has opened up for work across "high mountain Asia," and very careful attention in all the work that AHM supports (old, ongoing or new) to the exit strategy for that work two years from now. If WWF wishes to continue this proposed work, other resources should be found to support it.
4. Incorporate climate change adaptation into a revised priority focus on "climate-smart conservation of snow leopard habitat in Asia's High Mountains." Climate-smart conservation includes working with communities.
5. Remove the climate change requirement for AHM-funded, SLN-managed small research grants and refocus this element of the project on the highest priority snow leopard research topics as determined by the Network.

4.4. AHM PROJECT ELEMENT: PROJECT MANAGEMENT – THIMPHU & WASHINGTON, DC

GRADE: THIMPHU – **B**; WASHINGTON, DC – **D**

FINDINGS

- The AHM Project Manager has done a competent job of managing the AHM project from the WWF/Bhutan office in Thimphu.
- Both the Evaluation Team and some of the field staff we interacted with are unclear about the roles and responsibilities of various parts of WWF-US in AHM management and implementation.
- Neither the AHM Project Manager nor the WWF Asia Director responsible for AHM have previous experience implementing USAID-funded projects.
- The AHM Project Manager has visited WWF/India once. He has not yet visited Pakistan.[40]
- One reason for the current confusion appears to be that elements of AHM are being implemented under three Senior VPs: Forests & Water, Wildlife Conservation and Policy & Government Relations. Coordination between these groups needs attention.
- Links between the Project Managers and other WWF organizations funding parallel programs in Bhutan, Kyrgyz Republic and Mongolia appear to vary from weak to non-existent.[41]

[40] WWF has cited security concerns. USAID has many ongoing projects in Pakistan. Home office staff make regular visits. Travel up into snow leopard country is not currently advised, but meeting staff at WWF/Pakistan headquarters should be feasible.

- The two self-assessments prepared for this evaluation by AHM project managers painted a rosy picture of AHM implementation. They failed to mention any of the project management issues detailed in this report including the significant delays in the release of funding for field projects in all three years. These delays have had and are continuing to have a significant impact on project implementation at the field level.
- One of the self-assessments claimed that *"The USAID funding has created a sense of financial security within the field offices of each country office which is enabling them to think creatively about the job of actually protecting snow leopards and working with locals to steward watersheds and thinking of innovative ways to measure changes in water quality, timing and quantity as a result of climate induced precipitation changes."* The reality encountered by the Evaluation Team on the ground in the four countries it visited was very different. The amounts of money AHM is providing for field programs in these countries are *very* modest. Claiming these amounts have "created a sense of financial security" that is "enabling them to think creatively" directly contradicts the facts on the ground.
- Relationships with other key organizations involved in snow leopard conservation are not as strong as they c/should be.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Given (a) the fundamental shift in AHM away from the Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas to GSLEP and (b) the need to accelerate and emphasize implementation of AHM Objective #2 (transnational collaboration), relocate the Project Manager from Thimphu to Bishkek. A second option might be India (Delhi, Dehra Dun or Bangalore[42]) given the importance of India and Indian staff in the new GSLEP/ Global Tiger Initiative (GTI) architecture, with regular visits to Bishkek using the new, direct connection on Pegasus Airlines being used by the SLT staffers who are supporting GSLEP. The Evaluation Team believes that Bishkek is the preferred option. The GSLEP Secretariat and Program has a very short window between now and 2020 to demonstrate its effectiveness and move snow leopard conservation forward. It is very much in the interest of both WWF-US and USAID to do whatever they can to make GSLEP a success.
2. In addition to devoting more concerted attention to AHM Objective #2 in close consultation with the staff of the GSLEP Secretariat, the move to Bishkek proposed above would allow the Project Manager to engage with other donors as the develop both their GSLEP and NSLEP support projects.[43] The Project Manager could also work with the GSLEP Secretariat to update and strengthen Chapter 8 of the GSLEP document on the Global Support Components[44] and help explore links between GSLEP and the more recent Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI) under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). He and others at WWF may have useful suggestions on how to address the most glaring hole in the current plan:

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[41] In Bhutan, WWF/Finland has provided support to the Wangchuck Centennial National Park that is many orders of magnitude greater than AHM. In the Kyrgyz Republic, WWF/Netherland provides as much funding as AHM with much more flexible procurement regulations and reporting requirements. In Mongolia, WWF/Netherlands provides several orders of magnitude more funding than AHM for work in the same areas.

[42] Delhi at WWF/India, Dehra Dun at the Wildlife Institute of India, or Bangalore with the National Conservation Foundation (NCF)/Secretariat of the Snow Leopard Network).

[43] For example, the Evaluation Team has received a copy of the Project Identification Form for a proposed USD 5.5 million GEF medium-sized Project on Transboundary Cooperation for Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation. AHM Project Manager input into the design of this and other planned GEF projects would help to align USAID investments with those being proposed by other donors.

[44] Chapter 8 as currently written is very weak – far and away the weakest part of the GSLEP document.

the fact that although 50 percent+ of snow leopard range is in 26 protected areas (PAs) in China, only three very small PAs are currently included in the GSLEP work plan. [45]

3. Strengthen the coherence, credibility, and clout of WWF-US management of the AHM project. Elevate WWF-US supervision to a level that can and will directly engage with:
    a. Each of the WWF organizations involved in the six-country AHM project. In addition to WWF/Bhutan and WWF/Nepal which are still primarily subsidiaries of WWF-US, this includes:
        i. WWF India
        ii. WWF Pakistan
        iii. WWF Russia
        iv. WWF Mongolia
    b. Each of the other WWF offices involved in co-funding the country projects that AHM is supporting:
        i. WWF Netherlands – for work in the Kyrgyz Republic and Mongolia
        ii. WWF Finland – for work in Bhutan
    c. WWF/China. (China is not part of AHM as USAID's ability to fund work in China is limited.)
    d. Proactive liaison with each of the other key organizations involved in snow leopard work in the 12 range countries, including: Global Environment Fund. (GEF), UNDP, SLN, SLT, SLC, Panthera, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), NABU, Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and others.[46]

    This could be accomplished either by appointing an AHM manager who reports directly to one of the WWF-US Vice Presidents, or by using the system of global matrix management with a stakeholder group currently being used by projects such as the Living Himalayas Initiative thereby directly involving other WWFs in AHM management.

4. As an interim measure, the Evaluation Team recommends that AHM management be moved under the direct supervision of a Vice President in order to help insure that the confusions with the current setup (that spans the responsibilities of three Senior Vice Presidents) are rapidly and effectively remedied.
5. WWF needs to take the lead in mending fences and building bridges with the snow leopard community. Some of this can be accomplished through priority attention to the communication and information-sharing issues presented in Section 4.5 below. WWF-US also needs to review whether using some 92 percent of the AHM budget for its own projects and partners is in the best long-term interest of either WWF-US or of snow leopard conservation in the 12 range countries.
6. Devote urgent attention to the timing of work planning, budgeting, and the flow of funds to the country projects. For three years in a row, most funds have arrived *very* late with serious consequences for both project implementation and staff and partner morale…. as well as AHM project credibility. In Section 4.10 the Evaluation Team recommends that a single Work Plan be prepared covering the remaining two years of AHM.

[45] The Evaluation Team understands that groups including SLT, SLN, and Panthera are proactively working with Chinese colleagues on this issue.

[46] For a full list of GSLEP partners see www.snowleopard.org

4.5. AHM PROJECT ELEMENT: COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION SHARING

GRADE: **D**

- **B** for the new website www.thirdpolegeolab.org. This grade would be higher if we had found a clear articulation of (a) a strategy to get the word out about the website, (b) buy-in from other groups to add their data to the site, and (c) a clear plan for how the site will be maintained after the AHM project is completed.
- **B-/C+** for the two technical reports completed to date. See Findings below. While both contain a great deal of useful information – information that has now been brought to life through the interactive website – it is not clear who would read the reports in their printed format (i.e. who the audience was) and what actions might result. The climate change report pulls together useful information but does not appear to add a great deal to several major reports on the same topic, including the USAID 2010 report *Changing Glaciers and Hydrology in Asia*, a 2010 report *The Waters of the Third Pole: Sources of Threat, Sources of Survival* prepared for USAID/OFDA by University College and King's College, London and China Dialogue, and a 2012 National Research Council report on *Himalayan Glaciers: Climate Change, Water Resources and Water Security*. It is noteworthy that halfway into the extended AHM project, and two-thirds of the way through the original project time frame, there are no technical reports on snow leopards.
- **D** for the ease of finding AHM project information on the WWF-US website.[47]
- **D** for keeping USAID Missions and the ESTH Officers in Embassies informed about what AHM has been doing.[48]

FINDINGS

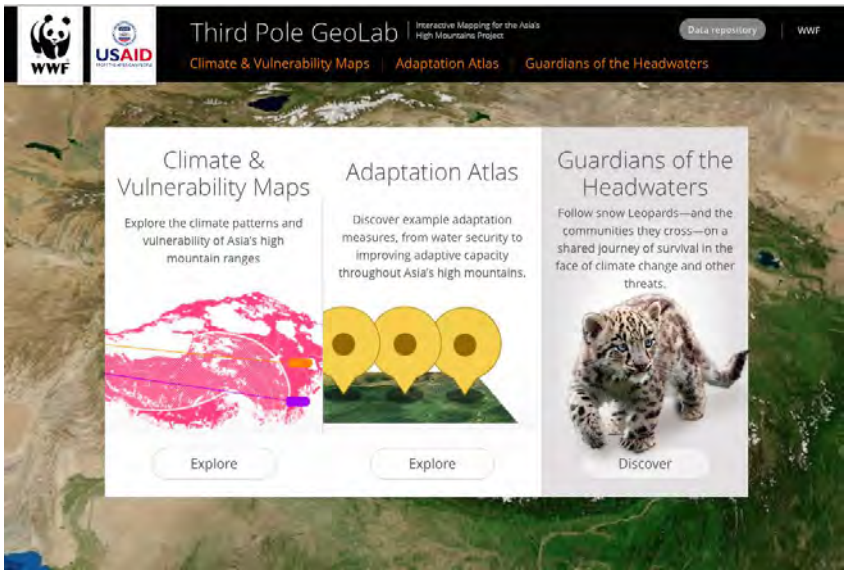
- The AHM project has been *very* weak on communications across the board: no project logo or other branding, no newsletter or Email updates, no easily accessible website (unless someone is directed to www.thirdpolegeolab.org).
- People outside of the WWF/AHM project, including many in the broader snow leopard community, are not aware of what the project is working on or achieving. This needs to change, and change quickly, if there is to be any hope of broader impact or learning, much less sustainability.
- AHM branding is weak to nonexistent. One example: the Evaluation Team found no signs of AHM at the WWF/Bhutan office – no dedicated office, no brochures, fact sheets or other handouts. This was in sharp contrast to the other WWF regional project that is housed in Thimphu: the Living Himalayas Initiative. Another example: USAID/India staff visiting Sikkim in June found that the Khanchandzonga Conservation Committee (KCC) wasn't very aware of the AHM project. They were content being a partner of WWF but didn't know much about the

[47] It is somewhat surprising that there is no dedicated website for AHM, or at least a dummy site that directs readers into the WWF-US website. The WWF-US website deserves a major upgrade: in its current form it is opaque and not very user friendly. We understand this is being worked on. On the other side of the spectrum, the website of the SLT partner in India – the National Conservation Foundation – is clean, crisp and informative. With AHM Project management based in South Asia, locally available world class (and inexpensive) talent could have been used to put up a website.

[48] None of the USAID Missions visited by the Evaluation Team – in Delhi, Almaty or Bishkek – have been visited by the AHM Project Manager. The Evaluation Team found enthusiastic audiences in all three Missions. A visit to the Regional Mission in Almaty two years ago might have led to additional funding for snow leopard work in Central Asia. Note that in all three cases it is the snow leopard that grabbed people's attention not the other elements of AHM 1.0.

overall goals and objectives of AHM, even though AHM Project Manager had made his visit to Sikkim in May.

- The two technical reports produced to date contain useful information, information that has now been brought to life through the interactive website discussed below. That said, it is not clear who would read the reports in their printed format (i.e. who the audience was) and what actions might result. The Guardians of the Headwaters report, a lengthy compilation of maps, has provided important input into the interactive website. Unfortunately, no information is provided about the three authors.
- Halfway into the extended AHM project, and two-thirds of the way through the original project time frame, there are no technical reports available on snow leopards. A survey in Bhutan and a long-delayed report from TRAFFIC on wildlife trade are being finalized. The Evaluation Team did not come across plans for additional reports.
- The www.thirdpolegeolab.org website is an excellent improvement over the two static technical reports buried in the WWF-US website. Questions remain about (a) whether others will find the website and use it and (b) what happens to the website after the AHM project wraps up in 2017.[49]



- The WWF-US website needs a major overhaul. One model, that is both informative and user friendly, is the High Altitude section of the National Conservation Foundation website: http://ncf-india.org/projectmes/high-altitudes.
- There was no evidence that any social or multimedia tools are being used by AHM, nor are there plans to use them.

[49] WWF notes they have a good track record of maintaining websites started by time-limited projects. External reviews of the website were generally positive. One reviewer suggested adding text about the AHM project, wondered how the two-way communication implied by a "knowledge sharing platform" was going to work, and was somewhat confused about the audience (i.e. the sections on water and climate change appear to be higher level aimed at practitioners while the section on snow leopards seemed to be aimed at the general public). Another reviewer suggested that a GIS for visualizing the map book GIS layers in Guardians of the Headwaters would be very useful. A third reviewer suggested WWF link the website to www.weadapt.org and other key climate change adaptation sites.

- At the country level the Evaluation Team found some interesting and effective communication products and events (e.g. International Snow Leopard Day celebrations, drawing competitions for school children, snow leopard-themed calendars).
- None of the six USAID Missions has been visited during the first 2.5 years of the project (Nepal, India, Pakistan, Regional Mission/Almaty, Kyrgyz Republic or Mongolia).[50] There has been some interaction with USAID field staff during regional meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Devote substantially increased attention to communications and information sharing. The division of responsibility for this work between the Project Manager and WWF-US staff needs to be clearly delineated.
2. Upload all reports produced under AHM (technical reports, semi-annual reports etc.) to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse website https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/home. The technical reports should also be submitted to USAID Resource Management Portal http://rmportal.net. [51]
3. Address the AHM branding issue. At this late stage of the project instead of branding AHM consider branding the project as WWF and USAID support for GSLEP/NSLEP.
4. Devote systematic attention to meeting with and informing USAID Mission and US Embassy staff about the AHM project.
5. In connection with the proposed move of the AHM Project Manager from Thimphu to Bishkek, explore migrating relevant pieces of the www.thirdpolegeolab.org website onto the GSLEP website www.globalsnowleopard.org.
6. Develop a list of and implementation plan for technical and other reports to be prepared before the end of the project in consultation with the GSLEP Secretariat. The Evaluation Team has included suggestions about case studies and lessons learned in Annex C.

4.6. AHM PROJECT ELEMENT: MONITORING & REPORTING

GRADE: **B+** (WITH AN URGENT NEED TO SIMPLIFY MONITORING & REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND PUT REPORTS WHERE INTERESTED READERS CAN FIND THEM)

4.6.1 MONITORING

FINDINGS

- There is an urgent need to simplify monitoring requirements in the field. Many AHM field staff interviewed considered monitoring to be excessively onerous, considerably more so than monitoring required by other donors, including donors essentially co-funding the AHM project.
- There are 13 indicators currently being tracked, which include nine USAID indicators and four WWF custom indicators. As the project was designed in considerable haste to meet a USAID funding deadline, these indicators were adapted from a previous project.

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[50] WWF notes that the USAID Regional Mission in Almaty is in Kazakhstan which is not one of the AHM countries. While this is true it is also shows a poor understanding of how USAID works in Central Asia. AHM is supporting the 12-country GSLEP program under Objective #2. The USAID Regional Mission implements programs in 4 of these 12 countries. In addition, it is easy to pass through Almaty on the way to or from Bishkek from South Asia.

[51] Although this may not be a formal requirement in the Cooperative Agreement, it is development best practice.

- During the evaluation team's consultations, field staff stated that the monitoring requirements were, in many instances, not relevant to their field programs. In addition, a disproportional level of effort was spent monitoring irrelevant indicators with regard to the small levels of funding.
- In Mongolia, AHM funding does not support any staff costs. Staff carrying out AHM field activities, including monitoring, are being funded by sources other than AHM.

The nine USAID Indicators included in the AHM M&E Plan are:

1. Number of hectares of biological significance and/or natural resources under improved management as a result of USG assistance
2. Number of hectares of biological significance and/or natural resources showing improved biophysical conditions as a result of USG assistance
3. Number of people receiving USG supported training in natural resources management and/or biodiversity conservation
4. Number of person hours of training in natural resources management and/or biodiversity conservation supported by USG assistance
5. Number of people with increased economic benefits derived from sustainable natural resource management and conservation as a result of USG assistance
6. Quantity of greenhouse gas emissions, measured in metric tons of CO_2e [equivalent], reduced or sequestered as a result of US Government (USG) assistance
7. Number of stakeholders with increased capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate variability and change as a result of USG assistance
8. Number of USG-assisted consensus-building processes resulting in an agreement
9. Number of Civil Society Organizations receiving USG assistance engaged in advocacy interventions

The four WWF Custom Project Indicators are:

1. Number of households benefiting from human-snow leopard conflict mitigation schemes
2. Number of households that adopt water-smart technology
3. Number of wildlife trade recommendations adopted
4. Number of Institutions Participating in a Transnational Alliance

- Of these indicators only numbers 6 and 7 are required by USAID for standard reporting from regional projects with Global Climate Change (GCC) funding. However, indicator number 6 is only required for GCC-Mitigation funding and AHM is GCC-Adaptation funded.
- It is unclear whether indicator number 6 is applicable for snow leopard habitat which is predominately above the tree line. [52]
- Indicators 1, 2, 3, & 4 are recommended as applicable for biodiversity conservation.
- Baseline studies are currently underway in all of the AHM countries. There are considerable challenges both methodological and by way of funding. For example, consultants are trying to

[52] AHM has been reporting on this indicator using a standardized USAID formula without questioning its applicability and relevance. The Evaluation Team raised questions about this and asked which land category had been used by AHM to calculate the numbers that have been reported to USAID. No response was provided. In the meantime, discussions with USAID Climate Change staff appear to indicate that reporting on this indicator is not necessary first for the reason noted above (AHM is a climate adaptation project) and secondly because the formula used by USAID does not appear to have a category relevant for high mountain landscapes.

deduce the numbers of wild fauna (e.g. argali) that existed three years ago, at the start of project implementation, which is no mean feat. Other baseline data from three years ago is being collected by interviewing people. On funding for the baseline studies: in Mongolia AHM has not been prepared to pay market rates for monitoring work. The funding available for a consultant to complete the baseline – USD 5,000 – was judged insufficient by WWF/Mongolia.[53] WWF/Mongolia informed the Evaluation Team that requests for additional funding were rejected. After some begging and gentle arm twisting, an esteemed scientist agreed to do the baseline. This does not lead to sustainable, supportive relationships with local counterparts and consultants.

- The draft baseline reports were originally scheduled to be completed in April 2015. They were not started until after April 2015. As such, WWF did not have any draft baseline reports to share with the Evaluation Team.
- Attributing outcomes to AHM: In most cases, AHM support for field projects is just one part of an overall budget. For example, there is co-funding from WWF Finland in Bhutan and WWF Netherlands in Mongolia and the Kyrgyz Republic. Methods used for attribution have not been explained in AHM activity reporting. Standard protocol for indicator attribution is to allocate results proportional to the level of funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. USAID Indicators: Following discussion between WWF and the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) eliminate all indicators that are either not required as applicable or not recommended by USAID. See discussion below.
2. WWF Indicators: Re-evaluate whether the four WWF custom indicators are useful for each site and, if not, adjust the reporting requirements accordingly. Consider dropping indicator 11, the "Number of households that adopt water-smart technology." In addition, given limited work on wildlife trade, re-evaluate the relevance of indicator 12, the "Number of Wildlife Trade Recommendations Adopted." Finally, consider either dropping indicator 13, "Number of Institutions Participating in a Transnational Alliance", or reframing it to measure the breadth and quality of participation in GSLEP.

Discussion of USAID indicators:

- Only six of the nine indicators are either required as applicable or recommended.
- Either indicator 3 or 4 could be eliminated. Does collecting both indicators provide useful information on the quality of the training (e.g. how many people receive how many hours of training)?
- Clarify whether indicators 8 and 9 make sense for the AHM project.
- Indicator 6 can be eliminated as GHG reduced or sequestered is "required as applicable" only for GCC mitigation funded activities and AHM is funded through GCC adaptation funds. In addition,
- Measuring indicator 2 annually is difficult, especially in slow-growing, montane habitats. AHM could consider measuring it less frequently.
- For biodiversity, it is very important that indicators are tailored to adequately and accurately track threats. It is essential to review which indicators are relevant as this would have implications for staff time in the field.

[53] The Evaluation Team was given this figure in Ulaan Baatar. AHM Project Manager put the figure at USD 6,000 . The original request was for USD18,000 for a three-person team.

- Next step: Discussion of the points above followed by a decision on which indicators to keep, which to drop and (perhaps) which to add should included in the agenda of the two-part "reboot" workshop recommended by the evaluation team. (see Section 4.10 below)

4.6.2 REPORTING

FINDINGS

- The AHM Project Manager has spent a great deal of time and effort on USAID reporting – spending up to two months of each year producing long and detailed semi-annual and annual reports. For example, the 2013-2014 Annual Report is 193 pages long.
- These reports are read only by only a handful of people. Key pieces of information in the reports need to reach a wider audience.
- The reports are currently not available on the WWF website or on USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse website.
- There is an urgent need to simplify these reporting procedures and free up the Project Manager for other work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Periodic progress reports: Consider eliminating the Semi-Annual Report and limiting the Annual Report to 50 pages. In addition, a much more streamlined reporting structure should be explored. This could perhaps be web-based and allow USAID managers to read field reports if and as they wish without the need for substantial amounts of time to be spent pulling together a global synthesis.
2. Report accessibility: Place all reports where interested readers can easily find them. To start with, semi-annual and annual reports should be available on the WWF and USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse websites.
3. Additional reports and updates: Prepare quick-fire, one-page briefs for the media, U.S. government agencies, GSLEP member states, and non-governmental organizations that succinctly describe AHM activities and results.
4. Getting the word out: Use the Snow Leopard Network as a vehicle for getting the word out when new reports and updates become available.

4.7. AHM PROJECT ELEMENT: WORKING WITH EXISTING & POTENTIAL PARTNERS

GRADE: **D** (**B+** FOR WORK WITH EXISTING PARTNERS)

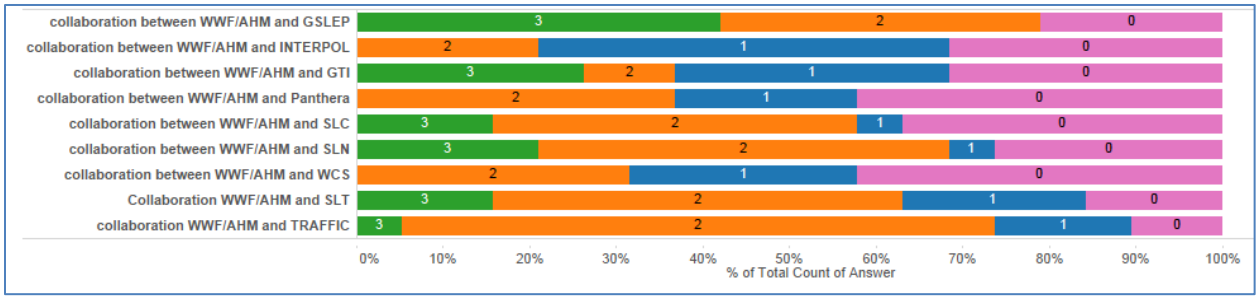
FINDINGS

- As best we can tell from brief field visits, relationships with existing local partners appear to be working well – with the important caveat that many are very frustrated yet again this year because of the major delays in receiving project funds from WWF-US.
- The AHM-CHARIS link was explored in both Bhutan and the Kyrgyz Republic. In Bhutan, the relevant link has been made with the Director of the Wangchuck Centennial National Park. In the Kyrgyz Republic, there is a potential link in the new Chon Kyzyl Suu River ("Big Red River") project area.

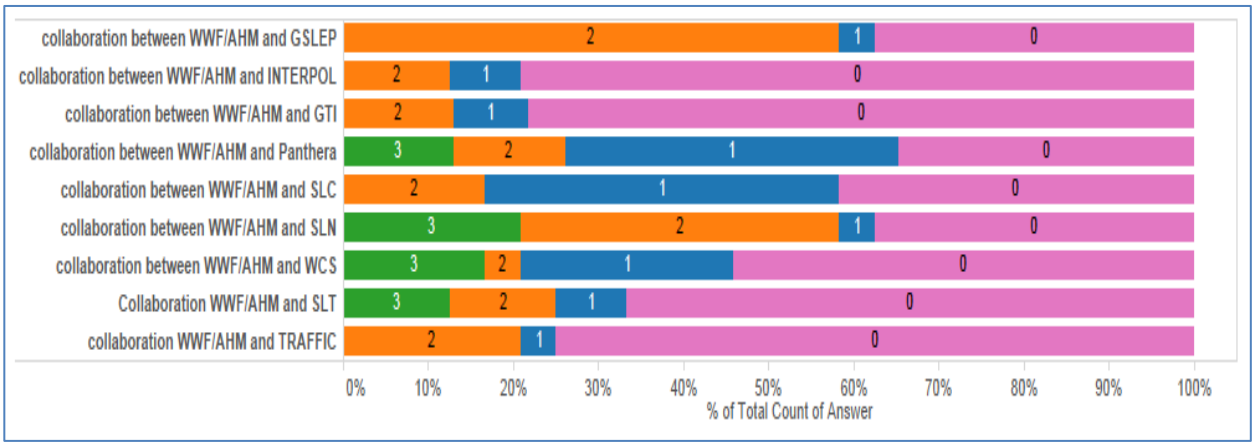
- One of the most surprising things about the AHM project is how insular it is. Other than a small amount that has been given to the Snow Leopard Trust to fund some small research projects, and supplies that have been provided to the GSLEP Secretariat, virtually all remaining resources have been devoted to ongoing WWF projects, projects that in the cases of Bhutan, Nepal, and India started long before AHM and will likely continue long after AHM.
- WWF-US is new to the world of snow leopards. Snow leopards have not been a priority species. WWF-US together with WWF-International are currently in the process of developing their global snow leopard strategy.
- Other groups, most notably the Snow Leopard Trust and the Snow Leopard Conservancy, have been working on snow leopard issues for decades. These and other US-based organizations and their collaborators in the snow leopard range states are on the cutting edge of snow leopard work. Instead of working proactively with and through these groups, AHM has decided to fund ongoing WWF projects.
- As an eminent wildlife biologist with long experience in the snow leopard range noted: *"Conservation NGOs can either collaborate or compete – I hope they will collaborate."* The Evaluation Team found only limited evidence to support this hope. WWF-US can and must do better at collaboration with key members of the Snow Leopard Network. The first step is to let other groups know what AHM has been doing.
- One example of excellent collaboration was mentioned deep in AHM's very detailed Annual Report (on page 111) but, unfortunately, not highlighted elsewhere. Prior to attempting to collar a snow leopard in Nepal, WWF requested the Snow Leopard Trust to provide training to a senior Nepali trapper. This training was arranged in Mongolia, where more snow leopards have been collared than anywhere else. The training was very successful. The trapper returned to Nepal and "the first successful satellite GPS tracking collaring of a snow leopard was achieved." The Annual Report went on to note "This event marked the first time that NGOs, government agencies, and local community groups came together to conduct high-level snow leopard research."[54]
- The Evaluation Team found several excellent examples of collaboration outside of AHM that can serve as models. One example: the 2010 document *Filling the Gaps to Protect the Biodiversity of Mongolia*. Published by WWF Mongolia in 2010 as the output of three projects (funded by the MAVA Foundation, WWF Netherlands and GEF/UNOPS), the report was prepared with the active participation of WWF, TNC, the GEF, the MAVA Foundation and the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- Other examples of collaboration highlighted by AHM staff include a kitchen garden training in Year 1 in Pakistan co-organized with the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), a trash recycling campaign organized in a village in North Sikkim in Year 2 with the Zero Waste Himalaya Group, and a collaborative expedition in Nepal in Year 3 with several government and local partners.
- In addition to other NGOs, several private foundations are active in snow leopard conservation work in Asia. Examples from the United States include the Christiansen Fund and the Weeden Foundation. An important example from Asia is the Vanke Foundation.
- From the online survey: (Key 3=high, 2=medium, 1=low, 0=unsure)

Degree of WWF/AHM collaboration with the following organizations [all respondents]

[54] AHM Annual Report 2014-2015, p. 84-5.



Degree of WWF/AHM collaboration with the following organizations [respondents not working with AHM]



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Proactively promote working with other members of the snow leopard community, giving them both resources and credit.
2. Take a long, hard look at the AHM budget for Years 4 & 5 and identify resources that can and will be used to support AHM 2.0. A key element of AHM 2.0 must be closer and more effective cooperation with the broader snow leopard community.
3. Allow for flexibility in sub-activities based on changing field conditions. Consult with the USAID Agreements Officer when partners have requests to modify sub-activities and ideas for other, perhaps more appropriate, uses of funding.
4. Align AHM snow leopard conservation more directly and explicitly to the Snow Leopard Survival Strategy.
5. Given the recommendations above about a more focused AHM 2.0, a formal, direct link between AHM and CHARIS does not need to be pursued. What does need to happen is for AHM to be much more proactive in its communications strategy: informing all potential partners, including CHARIS, about what it is doing where. If closer coordination emerges naturally from this process, it should be celebrated. If it doesn't, that should no longer be a concern.
6. Proactively pursue partnerships with private foundations active in the snow leopard space.
7. Organize and convene the Workshop with AHM Partners and Potential Partners proposed in Section 4.10 below

4.8. AHM PROJECT ELEMENT: THE DRIVERS & SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVATION

GRADE: **NEEDS URGENT ATTENTION** (**D** FOR USE OF INTERNAL WWF RESOURCES)[55]

PRELUDE

The material that follows sets the scene for the discussion of drivers and the socio-cultural dimensions of snow leopard conservation.

From the Statement to the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum by the Indigenous Cultural Practitioners (2013):

Today snow leopard range countries have a unique opportunity to create a system of snow leopard survival based on the spiritual and cultural resurgence of indigenous and local communities who share with this animal its habitat, i.e. revival of the large cultural landscapes and sacred sites. We, as indigenous cultural practitioners, are ready to strengthen educational, spiritual, and ceremonial ways to ensure return of respect to the snow leopard as an ambassador of Mother Nature. Indigenous and local communities are ready to take relevant actions to ensure sustainability of the snow leopard's prey species by banning shooting in sacred places and by enhancing traditional hunting practices.

We recognize the value of our traditional knowledge with conservation science and are ready for cooperation. We call upon our Governments to enable active, full, and effective participation of indigenous and local communities, including cultural practitioners, in the development and implementation of local, national, regional and global plans for conservation of snow leopard ecosystems through clear mechanisms of coordination, inclusion, and respect.[56]

From Marc Foggin, Mountain Societies Research Institute, University of Central Asia:

"The human dimensions of conservation have generally been overlooked, even though it is social matters directly and indirectly related to specific conservation goals that most often lead to a project's success or failure; biological considerations or technical interventions alone rarely achieve desired outcomes. In implementing this new approach, however, there is opportunity to help shape and change patterns of behaviour - and to engage a fuller cross section of society in partnership for wildlife conservation. If this approach is not fully realized, much opportunity will be lost, viz. partnerships for conservation, cost-effectiveness, support for anti-poaching, regular provision of wildlife data through observations and provision of ancillary information that can help guide conservation management decisions. It is crucial therefore to further research and trial, and to lend political support to, community co-management of natural resources." [57]

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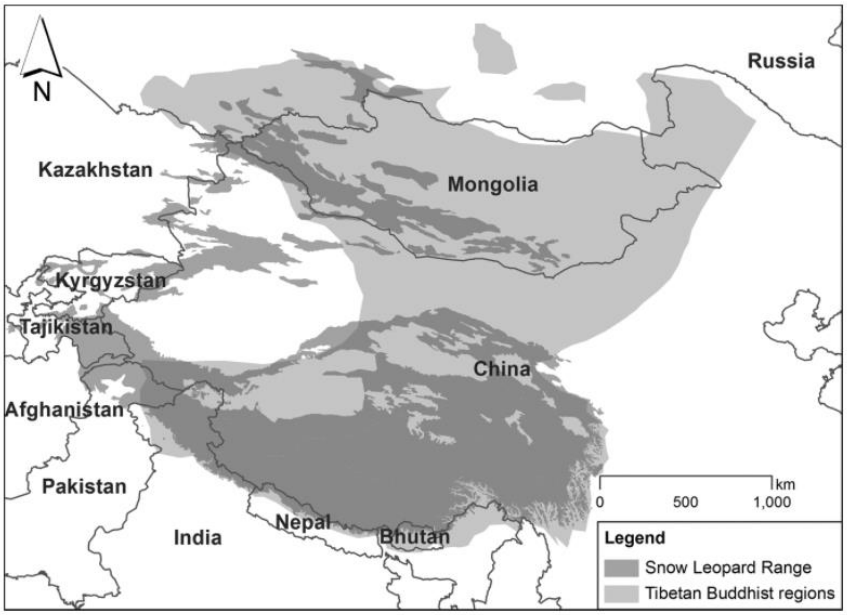
[55] Upgraded from "needs attention" and a letter grade added when (a) questions about the social science dimensions of AHM went unanswered for most of the four month evaluation process, (b) persistence led to the discovery of the WWF Network-wide SD4C group, and (c) serendipity led the Evaluation Team to WWF-US's own Sacred Earth program that had been piloted at five sites, starting in the Eastern Himalayas, from 2011-2014.

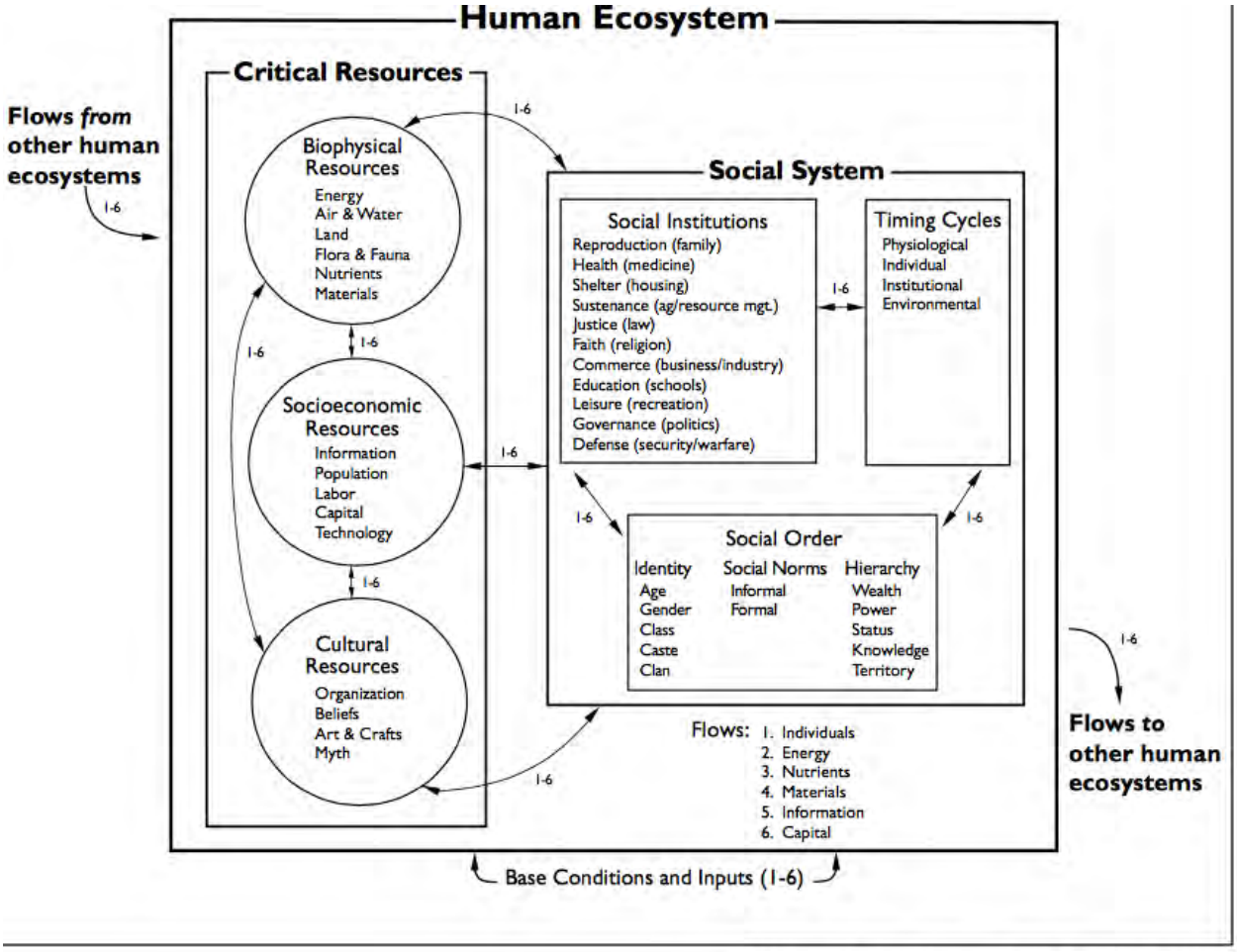
[56] Indigenous Cultural Practitioners, 2013.

[57] Foggin, 2012



Global snow leopard distribution range (Panthera 2009) and regions under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism (adapted from the Atlas of Faiths and a map of Tibetan autonomous regions in China) (Encyclopedia Britannica 2003; National Fundamental Geographic Information System 2005).

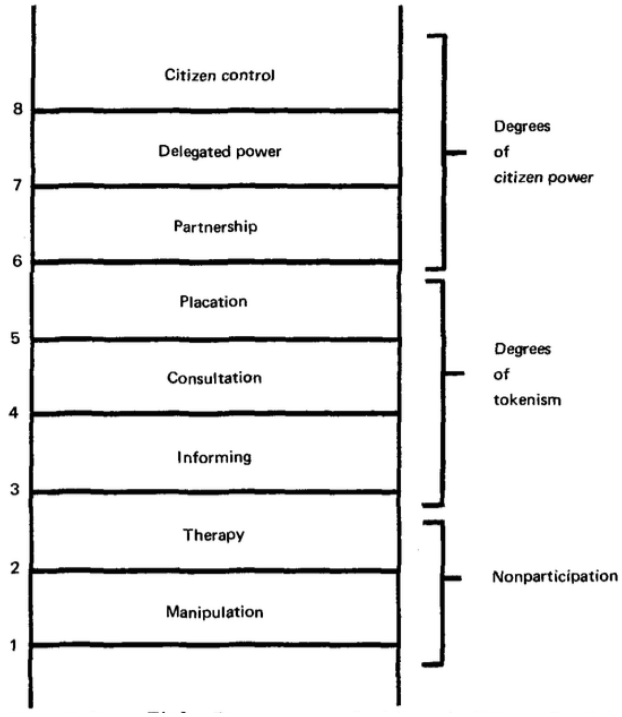
Source: Li et.al. 2013, p.7.



The Structure of Human Ecosystems, V.05.2, Machlis et al (2005)

Source: www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/hesg/model.html

Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation



Source: Arnstein, 1969, p.217

While many conservation actions require significant investment of resources and time to have the desired effect, the most successful and self-sustaining projects are those which:

- Empower local people to adopt responsible actions supporting sustainable livelihood development while also protecting the environment, particularly snow leopards, their prey, and habitat
- Focus people's attention on finding positive solutions rather than concentrating on problems of past failures
- Ensure full and equitable participation of all major stakeholders (from the beginning through each stage of project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).
- Identify and establish local mechanisms (financial and governance) for helping implement interventions and activities that are agreed upon
- Clearly and transparently articulate the roles, obligations, and responsibilities expected of each stakeholder group (local people, government, NGOs, etc.)
- Encourage leadership by entrepreneurial individuals and create or strengthen village associations responsible for implementation
- Provide a balanced set of incentives and disincentives which serve as examples for other stakeholders and communities to adopt (a process that can be facilitated through community-to-community, NGO, and government practitioner workshops, and exchanges or field study tours)
- Provide the desired level of government and/or donor support over the medium- or long-term rather than only for the short-term (three years or less)

- Recognize that "one solution does not fit all." Rather, interventions must be crafted to fit the particular conditions at hand.

Source: Snow Leopard Survival Strategy, 2014, p.77

FINDINGS

AHM is supporting a range of useful technical/biological research on snow leopards and their habitat, including engaging "citizen-scientists" in data collection. The degree to which this research is (a) linked to global priorities spelled out in the Snow Leopard Survival Strategy, (b) coordinated with the work of others, and (c) shared with others deserves further review. (see Section 4.5 above on communications & information sharing)

- No systematic work on the socio-cultural dimensions of the management of snow leopard habitat, including the religious and spiritual dimensions underpinning "management" and conservation of the natural world by indigenous communities spread across the snow leopard range, has been supported by AHM. In fact, the word "culture" does not appear in the voluminous AHM Annual Reports, except as agriculture or horticulture. Culture, the learned system of behavior, beliefs and worldview, is absolutely essential to understanding any human systems.
- A few of the reasons why these dimensions are important have been presented in the Prelude above.
- Inquiries about the current status of the CARE-WWF Alliance[58] and whether it would have something to offer AHM were met with responses ranging from blank stares to silence. CARE/Nepal was an AHM partner in Nepal in the early years of the project, but the Alliance is reported to be global in scope. The Alliance has not been used to either inform or support the work of AHM.
- As CARE has not been involved in a systematic way, the broader and more important question is: who in WWF-US is responsible for due diligence when it comes to the "social soundness" of the AHM field activities? [59]
- WWF and others have supported earlier work on bio-cultural diversity, sacred natural sites and related themes in the Eastern Himalayas.[60]
- At the very end of the four month evaluation process, the Evaluation Team stumbled across WWF-US's Sacred Earth program. This program was initiated in the Eastern Himalayas in 2011 and was piloted at 5 sites around the world from 2011-2014. In the AHM project area it worked with a network of over 55 monasteries, engaging hundreds of senior Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns in site-based conservation projects.[61]

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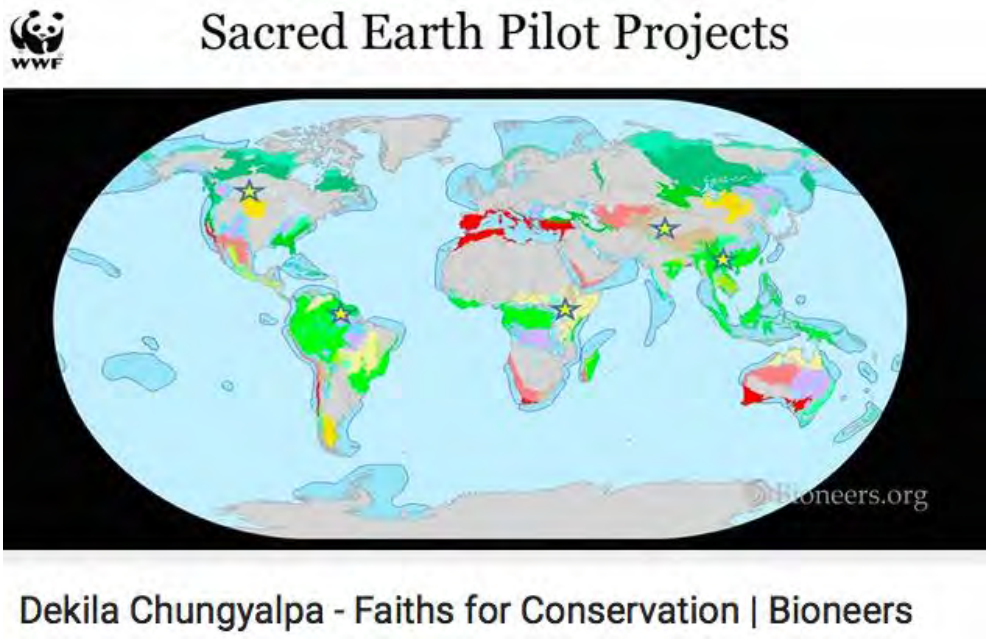
[58] https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/the-care-wwf-alliance-summit

[59] The Evaluation Team learned very late in the evaluation process that there was an "environmental and social safeguards" process at WWF-US. This is used primarily for GEF-funded projects. WWF-US gender experts and other social scientists provided input into the AHM design. It is unclear whether they have had a voice during project implementation. The SD4C group, discussed in footnote # 59 above, is not aware of AHM.

[60] Examples include: WWF-International. 2012. *High Ground: Bio-cultural Diversity and the Conservation of Sacred Natural Sites in the Eastern Himalayas*. Inspired by at 2010 Workshop in Bhutan on Sacred Natural Sites, Bio-Cultural Diversity and Climate Change in the Eastern Himalayas. WWF-International, Gland, Switzerland. Also Verschuuren, Bas, Robert Wild, Jeffrey McNeely and Gonzalo Oviedo. (Eds.) 2010. *Sacred Natural Sites: Conserving Nature and Culture*. (55 authors) Earthscan, London/Washington DC for International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

[61] See http://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/sacred-earth-faiths-for-conservation and Dekila Chungyalpa presentation at 2014 Bioneers Conference: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZSD7zb9evo See also: http://www.khoryug.com and http://environment.yale.edu/news/article/dekila-chungyalp-mccluskey-fellow-merges-religion-and-conservation/



The key drivers of the Sacred Earth program are:

World Belief Systems

- Over 80 percent of people in the world follow a spiritual faith
- Collectively, faiths own almost 8% of total habitable land surface
- Together, they constitute the world's third largest category of financial investors
- Faiths set up, run or are otherwise involved in half of all schools worldwide

Source: Dekila Chungyalpa presentation at 2014 Bioneers Conference: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZSD7zb9evo

- The Evaluation Team was unable to assess the degree and quality of local participation in AHM project activities. Project documents provided to the Team did not outline the processes used to determine priorities and decide on which activities would be supported.
- The Evaluation Team was unable to assess the degree to which gender is incorporated into AHM project activities.
- The Evaluation Team found no echoes in AHM project documentation of either (a) USAID-funded work on land tenure and property rights in the six AHM countries,[62], or (b) Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)-supported work with the International Land Coalition's (ILC) Global Rangelands Initiative on pastoral land rights.[63]

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[62] See http://usaidlandtenure.net and http://usaidlandtenure.net/country-profiles/asia (includes country profiles for 5 of the 6 AHM countries: India, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan). Additional country level documentation includes, for example http://usaidlandtenure.net/content/land-tenure-and-property-rights-assessment-kyrgyzstan Chapter 6 is on Unsustainable Natural Resources Management.

[63] See, for example, http://www.landcoalition.org/en/resources/sustainable-pastoralism-and-post-2015-agenda and Rijsberman 2014.

As noted by Victor Squires in *Rangeland Stewardship in Central Asia: Balancing Improved Livelihoods, Biodiversity Conservation and Land Conservation*:

"Contested access to and conflicts over pastures along with ecological degradation has resulted in heightened land-tenure insecurity. ..Tenure insecurity has four broad dimensions: first, conflict over rights to pastures among groups of village residents and mobile groups; second, differences of opinion about the preservation of pastures between farmers with access to farmland and those without access to farmland but with a dependence on livestock; third, contra- dictions between governmental agencies empowered by formal law establishing state ownership of pastureland and local communities which, by custom and necessity, use the pastures; and fourth, land-grabbing by powerful elites who establish control over pastures." and,

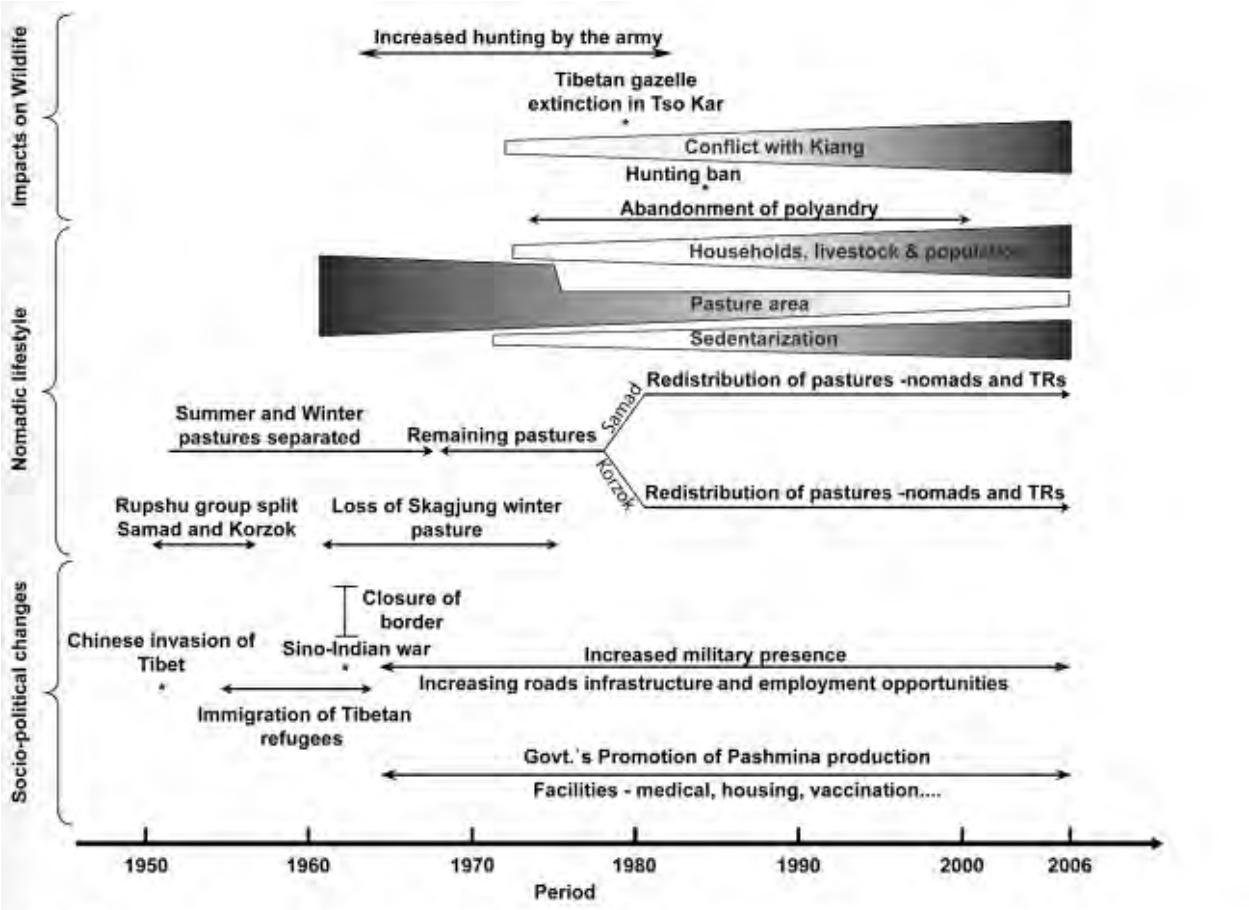
"A key aspect of the work is that of achieving balance. Technical approaches can address improved livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, and land protection individually, but balancing these is the negotiated outcome of social processes. Ultimately, it is these social processes which are the hard part, and often the stumbling block, for improving resource stewardship and sustainable land management."[64]

- AHM documentation mentions herders and herding but not pastoralists and pastoralism. Although these terms are used interchangeably in some situations (e.g. the Tibetan Plateau), they are not interchangeable in others (e.g. the Kyrgyz Republic, where herders may be hired laborers rather than owners). There is an extensive literature on the cultural dimensions of pastoralism. There is some work comparing pastoral systems, and the pressures that have been brought to bear on them, in China, Mongolia, Russia, and Central Asia. Drivers that are threatening pastoralists and their way of life include: climate change, land degradation, intensification, privatization, fragmentation, livelihood diversification, sedentarization, and resettlement.[65] All of this has both direct and indirect impacts on snow leopard habitat. It also defines parameters within which snow leopard conservation must function if it is to be successful.

  One view of changing dynamics and drivers for pastoral communities over time:

[64] Squires, 2012, p. x and xi

[65] Julia Klein et.al. 2012.



Chronology of events in the Changthang region from the 1950s onwards and their consequences. The changes occurred at three levels in parallel- at socio-political, Nomadic pastoralists' lifestyle and local flora and fauna.

Singh *et al. Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice* 2013 **3**:16 doi:10.1186/2041-7136-3-16

- AHM has been in touch with but not developed ongoing, collaborative working relationships with groups in South and Central Asia that have been studying and advocating for mountain communities and mountain development (e.g. International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN))
- Two US-based philanthropies, the Christiansen Fund and the Weeden Foundation, fund projects that link biodiversity conservation with cultural heritage. Examples include: Recent funding for SLT in the Kyrgyz Republic by the Christiansen Fund, earlier Christensen Foundation support for SLC work in Central Asia[66] and Weeden Foundation support for the work of The Altai Project of the Earth Island Institute in the Altai-Sayan region of Mongolia/China/Russia/ Kyrgyz Republic.
- In at least one AHM country, India, the private sector has started to support wildlife conservation. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has launched the India Business and

[66] Rodney Jackson and Nandita Jain. 2007. *Mountain Cultures, Keystone Species: Exploring the Role of Cultural Keystone Species in Central Asia.* Final Report (Grant 2005-2019) Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC)/ Cat Action Treasury, Sonoma, California. http://www.snowleopardconservancy.org/pdf/Final_Report_Tajikistan_ChristensenFund_2006.pdf

Biodiversity Initiative.[67] The Government of India has recently sought funding from the private sector through the initiative described below:

Budget cuts make govt turn to PSUs: save snow leopard, gharial

MoEF gives corporates chance to adopt endangered species

JAY MAZOOMDAAR
NEW DELHI | APRIL 4

SNOW LEOPARDS for Rs 35 crore, gharials for Rs 80 crore, whale sharks for Rs 10 crore and black-necked cranes for Rs 5 crore — these are among 14 endangered species put up for corporate sponsorship by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. Between great Indian bustards going for Rs 104.5 crore and olive ridley turtles for a meagre Rs 4.60 crore, the total conservation cost of these species over the next five years is pegged at Rs 400 crore.

Under the scheme — Developing partnerships and funding conservation initiatives under Corporate Social Responsibility — piloted by the Wildlife Institute of India

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

The Indian EXPRESS epaper editions Sun, 05 April 2015 epaper.indianexpress.com/c/4915370

[67] http://businessbiodiversity.in

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen WWF's social science capacity and insure that this group has a strong voice in project design and implementation in order to increase the odds that WWF's conservation projects will be successful and that the conservation gains made will be sustainable. As noted in the Nature, Wealth & Power framework presented below, focusing on "nature" alone has and will continue to doom many conservation projects to failure.[68]
2. Articulate the processes used to nurture, support and evaluate local participation in AHM activities, including the involvement of women.
3. Build on earlier WWF-supported and other work on the religious and spiritual dimensions underpinning "management" and conservation of snow leopard habitat.
4. Engage with those working on key drivers that directly and indirectly impact snow leopard habitat including land tenure, property rights, the political economy, and an understanding of the changing dynamics of pastoral systems. [69] Build on the USAID and CGIAR/ILC work described above.[70]
5. Explore support for proposed joint work between the GSLEP Secretariat and the University of Central Asia's Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) in areas including research & monitoring, spatial analysis, training in a variety of subjects including the human dimensions of snow leopard conservation, and knowledge & information management support.[71]
6. Explore developing formal collaborative working relationships with the mountain development community, including ICIMOD, the Mountain Partnership (housed at FAO),[72] the Mountain Institute (TMI), the Aga Khan Development Network, the University of Central Asia's Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) and the IUCN-WCPA Mountains Network. On the donor side, explore potential links and synergies with the Christensen Fund and Weeden Foundation. On the private sector side, explore potential sources of support.
7. Examine recent work by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) on Protected Areas and the land rights of indigenous peoples and local communities[73] for its relevance to AHM 2.0 as well as the new International Land and Forest Tenure Facility being catalyzed by RRI[74] as a potential partner for WWF work on tenure issues.
8. Incorporate work on key drivers of development in mountain regions into AHM programming. One formulation:

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[68] For a somewhat different take on the human dimensions of wildlife management, suggest WWF explore recent work by Shafqat Hussain and colleagues on "coexistence landscapes".

[69] See, for example, Reid et.al. 2014, Humphrey & Sneath 1996, Daniel Brown et.al. 2013,, and China Dialogue 2011.

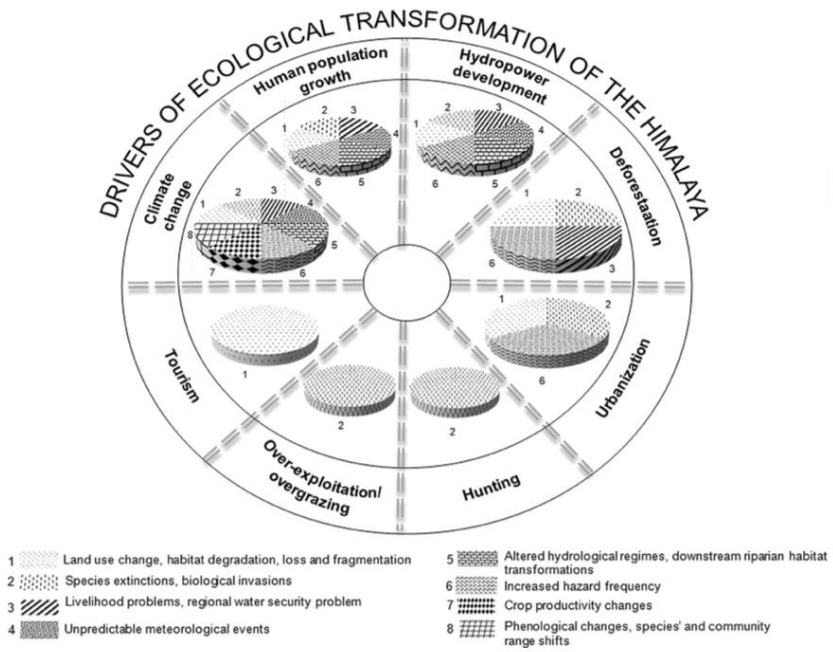
[70] http://conservationconnectivity.org/mountains-wcpa/about.htm

[71] Contacts: GSLEP Koustubh Sharma and UCA/MSRI J. Marc Foggin. The University of Central Asia (UCA) was founded in 2000 to offer an internationally recognized standard of higher education and prepare graduates to contribute leadership, ideas and innovation to the economies and communities of the region. The International Treaty and Charter establishing this private, secular University was signed by the Presidents of Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Kazakhstan and His Highness the Aga Khan, ratified by the parliaments of the founding states and registered with the United Nations. UCA's mission is to foster socio-economic development of Central Asia, particularly its mountain societies, while helping the peoples of the region preserve and draw upon their rich cultural heritages as assets for the future. UCA also brings with it the long term commitment and partnership of the Aga Khan Development Network.

[72] The Central Asia hub of the Mountain Partnership has been hosted by the University of Central Asia since 2010 and by UCA's Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI) since the Institute was established in 2011.

[73] Springer & Almeida, 2015

[74] http://www.rightsandresources.org/how-we-create-change/by-global-initiative/strategic-initiatives/international-land-and-forest-tenure-facility/



The major drivers of ecological transformation in the Himalaya. The effects of the respective drivers are represented in the form of pie charts, and the numerical annotations alongside the pie charts give the different effect categories. Each effect has been assigned an equal weight. On the basis of the cumulative number of effects, climate change can be considered the predominant driver of change, followed by human population growth. [75]

9. Consider using USAID's Nature, Wealth and Power (NWP) Framework to more systematically consider and incorporate the economic and governance dimensions of natural resources management into AHM's work.[76]

[75] Maharaj K. Pandit, Kumar Manish and Lian Pin Koh. 2014. *Dancing on the Roof of the World: Ecological Transformation of the Himalayan Landscape*. BioScience v.64 n.11, p.982.

[76] WWF's long-running LIFE project in Namibia (supported in its early years by USAID) was cited as a key case-study both in the original NWP document as well as in NWP 2.0. Although longtime LIFE Project Manager Chris Weaver has visited both Central Asia (Tajikistan) and Mongolia, and multiple Mongolian delegations have travelled to Namibia, none of this Southern Africa-Central Asia interaction has been reflected in the AHM project to date.

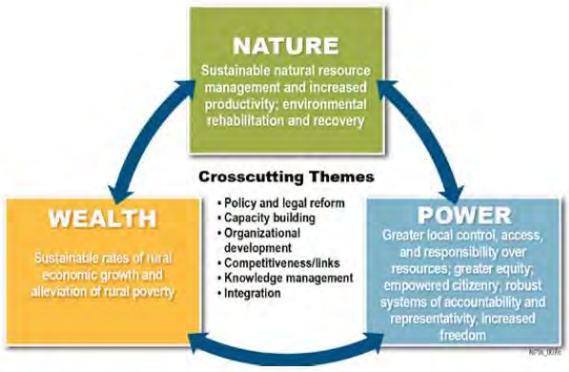


Figure 1. Nature, Wealth, & Power: Outcomes and Cross-Cutting Themes

Source: Adapted from USAID, 2002, p. 35.

Nature, Wealth, & Power: Outcomes and Cross-Cutting Themes

Source: Adapted From USAID, 2002, P. 35

4.9 RESPONSES TO THE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS IN THE EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK

In summary, the responses of the Evaluation Team to the specific questions in the Evaluation Statement of Work are:[77]:

- Positive and measurable impact on snow leopard habitat management?

Positive – yes. Measurable – To be determined. Baseline studies have not yet been completed.

[77] WWF-US comments have been added in cases where they either illuminate or complete the assessment of the Evaluation Team.

From the online survey:

1. To what extent have the activities implemented under the USAID/WWF AHM project had a positive and measurable impact on snow leopard habitat management in the participating countries and sites?

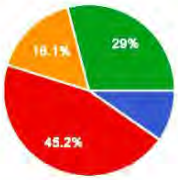
Overall degree of positive, measurable impact on snow leopard habitat management

High	4	12.9%
Medium	12	38.7%
Low	9	29%
Unsure; N/A	6	19.4%

- Monitoring system meaningfully measuring progress towards conservation targets? Project currently constrained by USAID's nine "standard/required" indicators plus four indicators added by WWF. This appears to be excessive for very small amounts of funding support. The M&E system needs to be reviewed and, if at all possible, simplified. Detailed suggestions have been included in Section 4.6.

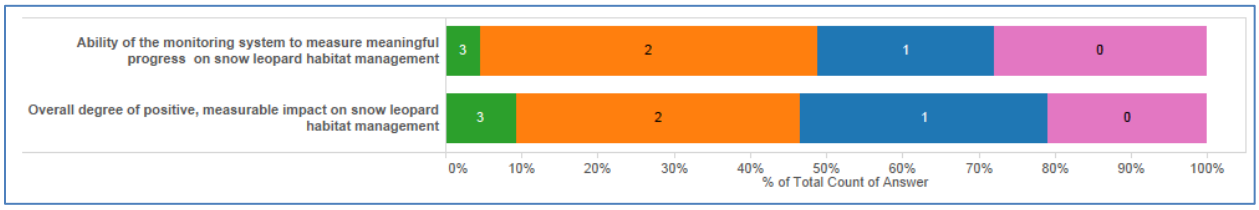
From the online survey:

Ability of the monitoring system to measure meaningful progress on snow leopard habitat management



High	3	9.7%
Medium	14	45.2%
Low	5	16.1%
Unsure; N/A	9	29%

In a different format: (Key 3=high, 2=medium, 1=low, 0=unsure)



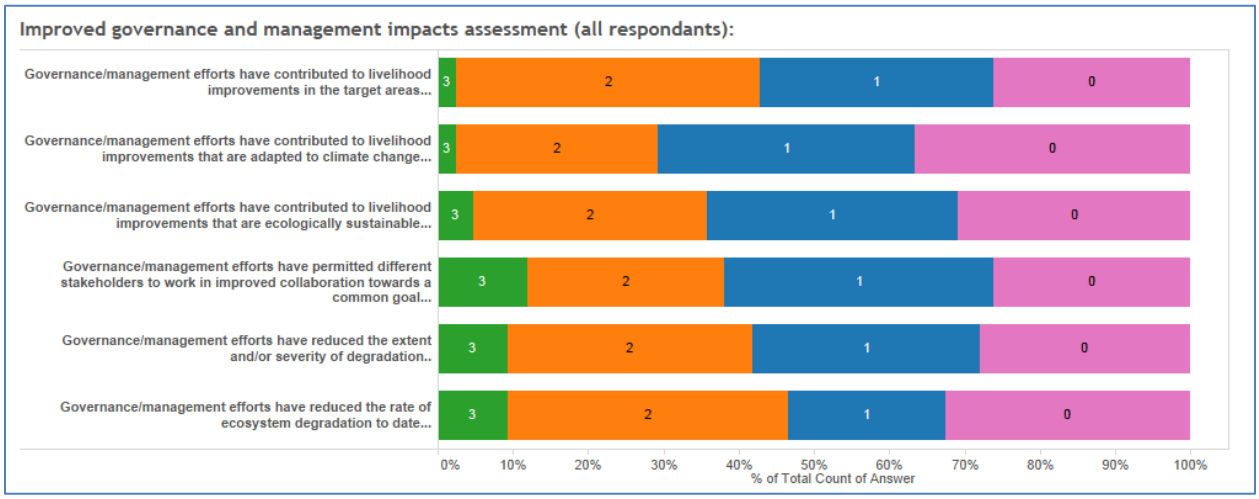
- Use of adaptive management?

  The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system of the project feels very target-driven.[78] Field staff report limited flexibility. They also reported much more flexibility with other donor funding (e.g. WWF Netherlands, WWF Finland). WWF notes that the AHM design used the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation promoted by USAID's Measuring Impact project. As noted in the section on Monitoring, AHM implementers accepted a large number of indicators without questioning whether they were either required by USAID and/or were measuring useful parameters. The same thing happened with Reporting: a great deal of time and effort spent on lengthy reports. These two things have led to the opposite of adaptive management: constricted or constrained management. Remedies have been proposed in Section 4.6.

- Improved governance and capacity building to manage protected areas?

  Modest progress in line with modest resources. Need to be realistic about how much "improvement" can be expected with less than 100k USD/year in funding, all the more so when those funds usually arrive late.

From the online survey: (Key 3=high, 2=medium, 1=low, 0=unsure)



- Reduced rate of ecosystem degradation?

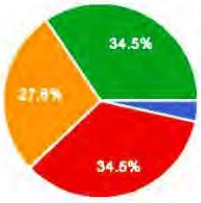
  Perhaps. How much can be attributed to USAID $s (and expected, given the budgets) is an open question.

- Contributions to livelihood improvement?
  A wide range of examples in project documentation. Not clear (a) what the sum of these contributions are, or (b) whether they have been introduced in ways that will spread to other communities without outside/project support.

[78] This is ironic, given this was a major USAID and other donor critique of government development projects 30 years ago.

From the online survey:

Governance/management efforts have contributed to livelihood improvements in the target areas...



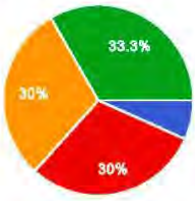
Greatly	1	3.4%
Moderately	10	34.5%
Slightly	8	27.6%
Unsure; N/A	10	34.5%

- Are these improvements ecologically sustainable and adapted to climate change?

  Hard to tell. The Evaluation Team has no first hand knowledge, just what is available in project reports.

From the online survey:

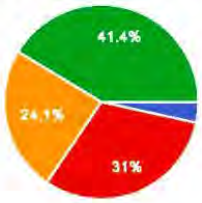
Governance/management efforts have contributed to livelihood improvements that are ecologically sustainable...



Greatly	2	6.7%
Moderately	9	30%
Slightly	9	30%
Unsure; N/A	10	33.3%

and

Governance/management efforts have contributed to livelihood improvements that are adapted to climate change...



Greatly	1	3.4%
Moderately	9	31%
Slightly	7	24.1%
Unsure; N/A	12	41.4%

- Altered incentives towards conservation?

  Anecdotal evidence suggests some positive changes. How widespread this is beyond direct project beneficiaries is an open question.

- Improved local capacity for climate change adaptation?

  Anecdotal evidence of improvement in the small areas touched by the project. WWF notes that these are "first generation climate change adaptation activities" modeled on other USAID-supported WWF activities in Nepal (e.g. Hariyo Ban, Sacred Himalayan Landscapes under the SCAPES project) that are intended to be tested for further scaling and replication.

- Use of a collaborative learning strategy in the design and implementation of activities?

  Unclear. Project activities and support are requested by project partners. The process used to determine local, village and household level priorities has not been articulated.

- Contribution to models and innovations to improved water security?

  No significant innovations noted. Techniques derived from other rural development projects.

- Is water security a key element of AHM project activities?

  There was much talk about water security in project documentation for the extension period. Little work on the ground to date. As noted earlier, the Evaluation Team does not consider the work on Integrated River Basin Management to be realistic and recommends that it be dropped. Water security needs to be treated as a co-benefit of the climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat.

- Has water security been improved?

  For a few people in a few places.

- Innovations in water management?

  None encountered. Techniques derived from other rural development projects.

- Learning about water security institutionalized as a component of sustainability?

  Doubtful, but impossible to tell at this point. Not clear that the "water security" narrative is much more than one of the latest development buzzwords (along with resilience, a buzzword that hasn't yet crept into the AHM narrative).

- Use of social and multimedia and online tools to leverage learning?

  No evidence that any social or multimedia tools are being used by AHM, nor that there are plans to use them. As noted below, the AHM project has been very weak on communications

across the board (no project logo or other branding, no newsletter or Email updates, no easily accessible website (unless one knows about or is directed to www.thirdpolegeolab.org)) Given this state of affairs with 20th century communications technologies (e.g. branding, dedicated website, newsletter or Email updates), it is not surprising that the 21st century technologies of social media, multimedia and online tools to leverage learning have also not been deployed.

- Future AHM project investments?

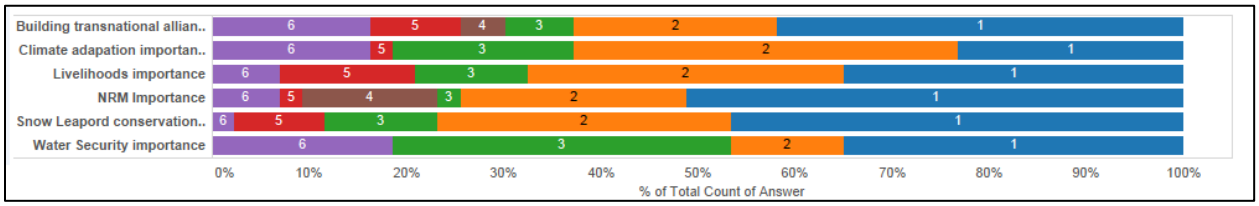
  Detailed recommendations have been provide by the Evaluation Team in Sections 4.1-4.8. For suggestions generated by the online survey see Annex B.

- Most promising activities/least promising activities?

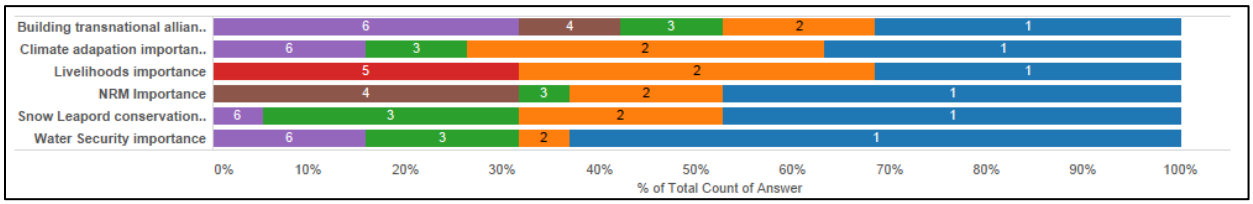
  Detailed recommendations have been provide by the Evaluation Team in Sections 4.1-4.8. For suggestions generated by the online survey see Annex B.

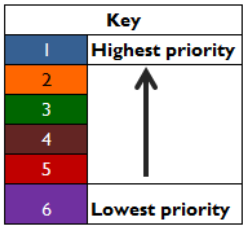
Responses to the online survey question that asked about the importance of the various themes of the AHM project:

Graph A. AHM Priority Theme Importance Rankings [all respondents]



Graph B. AHM Priority Theme Importance Rankings [respondents working directly with AHM]





- Degree to which project activities have been integrated and does integration improve results?

  With the very small amounts of money going into field projects in a few very limited geographies across six of the 12 countries in the snow leopard range, it is unrealistic to expect much evidence of the things that are expected of much larger development projects (e.g. integration, replication, sustainability etc.). As noted earlier, one type of integration that has been both widespread and very successful is the creative integration by WWF Conservation Directors and field staff of modest AHM resources with other resources at their disposal. This deserves to be highlighted.

Note: WWF reports that the area covered by AHM interventions in the 6 countries totals 20,559 square kilometers broken down as follows:

4914 km² Wangchuck Centennial Park (WCP) [Bhutan]
2610 km² Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve [India]
1491 km² Sarychat-Ertash State Reserve [Kyrgyz Republic]
8500 km² Khar Us Nuur National Park [Mongolia]
2035 km² Kangchenjunga Conservation Area [Nepal]
929 km² Laspur Valley [Pakistan]
80 km² Rumbur sub-valley [Pakistan]
20559 km² Total (not including the reserve buffer zones)

This represents 1% of the estimated 1.8 million square kilometers of snow leopard range.

WWF has also noted that they have been selective about the geographic distribution of their support, optimizing the use of cost-share or leveraged funds wherever possible. In Nepal and India, although the project may have been selective (i.e. deciding to focus AHM exclusively in areas where WWF had been working for many years) there is no evidence that these decisions were strategic (i.e. based on an analysis of all of the snow leopard landscapes).

- Documentation of successful examples of development innovation, effective use of science & technology, success stories or other communication products, effective inclusion and engagement of women in the planning and implementation of project activities.

  Based on the country field visits the Evaluation Team found:

  – No major development innovation.[79]

  – Effective use of science & technology (e.g. camera traps, collaring, DNA analysis of scat) to advance understanding of snow leopards.

  – Interesting and effective communication products and events at the country level (e.g. International Snow Leopard Day celebrations, drawing competitions for school children, snow leopard-themed calendars).

  – Inclusion and engagement of women appeared to be widespread and effective in each of the countries visited by the evaluation team.

For a more detailed and nuanced view on a number of these questions based on the results of the Online Survey, see Annex B.

4.10. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE "REBOOT" OF AHM AND THE LAUNCH OF AHM 2.0

A meeting was held on July 10, 2015 at WWF in Washington DC to discuss the Draft Key Findings & Recommendations from this evaluation. Attendees included WWF senior staff, AHM project staff, the Evaluation Team and senior USAID Asia Bureau staff. Key WWF responses to the Findings & Recommendations are presented in Annex A(1). WWF and USAID agreed that an important next step was a workshop to review and confirm the key objectives and expected outcomes of AHM 2.0 that had been discussed at the July 10th meeting as well as to initiate more detailed planning for the remainder of the AHM project in light of the results of the evaluation.

[79] WWF has argued that "Innovation can be also seen in taking solutions tested elsewhere and implemented in new, remote areas with new contexts, as proposed in our program description and work plans." Using this definition, virtually any development project anywhere could claim it was innovating.

The Evaluation Team has recommended the following next steps:

AHM 2.0 "Reboot" Workshop Part 1: The big-picture issues
Venue: WWF-US, Washington DC
Duration: Half day
Timing: ASAP
Participants: Senior WWF and USAID staff
Facilitator: Kate Newman, WWF Vice President, Public Sector Initiatives
Purpose: Clarify the big-picture issues (theory of change, project objectives, relative importance of project components (i.e. the two project objectives), role of water security, support for the GSLEP Secretariat etc) and review the management and other changes proposed by WWF.
Key Outcomes:

1. Agreement on the big-picture issues.
2. Agreement on the management and other changes proposed by WWF.

AHM 2.0 "Reboot" Workshop Part 2: Development of a detailed Work Plan 2015-2017
Venue: WWF/India, New Delhi
Duration: 2 days. As soon after the DC Workshop as feasible.
Participants:

- Key WWF-US and USAID staff.
- Evaluation Team member Hari Swaminathan (on rotation at RDMA in Bangkok)
- Conservation Directors from each of the five AHM countries with Country Offices + a representative of WWF/Russia.
  Rationale: There are multiple reasons for this. Among them:
  - turning AHM around is going to require high-level support in each of the WWF country offices,
  - the Conservation Directors need to hear from WWF-US what the "adaptive management" game plan is for AHM 2.0,
  - the Work Plan that is agreed to needs to dovetail with broader plans for implementation of the WWF Snow Leopard Species Action Plan, and
  - USAID needs to hear from each country how they plan to continue the work supported by AHM after September 2017.
- Leader of the WWF global Snow Leopard Species Action Plan
- Project Manager for the WWF/USAID Hariyo Ban project in Nepal and former lead on People & Conservation at WWF-US.
- WWF field staff from the 6 countries?? TBD, depending in part whether a gathering of AHM field staff is being planned for later in the year.
- Partners
  - GTI/GSLEP Alliance: CEO (1st half of Day 1)[80]
  - GLEP Secretariat: Chief Technical Advisor (Days 1 & 2)
  - SL Network: Executive Director (1st half of Day 1)
  - Snow Leopard Trust: Executive Director

Facilitator: AHM Project Manager with senior WWF-US staff
Purposes:

1. To take the outcomes from Part 1 and operationalize them in a detailed Work Plan.
2. To lay the initial groundwork for what will come after AHM ends in September 2017.

[80] Another potential invitee from the Alliance is WRI, a member of the GTI/GSLEP Alliance Support Team. The purpose would be to get WRI/Global Forest Watch 2.0 support for the snow leopard habitat mapping that AHM is proposing to develop and test in South Asia later this year.

Key Outcomes:

1. Detailed Work Plan for the remainder of the project (through September 30, 2017). In other words, a detailed plan for the "reboot" and launch of AHM 2.0
2. Initial discussions about what comes after AHM.
3. If USAID is able to attend, an approved Work Plan.
4. Agreement on AHM support to the GSLEP Secretariat and the broader GTI/GSLEP Alliance.
5. Agreement on how the final 2 years of AHM fit into WWF's new Snow Leopard Species Action Plan.
6. Agreement on the role(s) of WWF partners SLT & SLN in AHM 2.0

AHM 2.0 "Reboot" Workshop Part 3: With AHM Partners and the broader GSLEP/Snow Leopard Community

Venue:
Option #1 – Continuation of the earlier workshop in Delhi
Option #2 - A separate workshop held later in the Fall of 2015 in either Bishkek or Kathmandu
Duration:
Option #1 – 1 day
Option # 2 - 2 days, if held in conjunction with the next gathering of AHM field staff
Participants:

- AHM 1.0 Partner organizations
    - Snow Leopard Trust
    - TRAFFIC
- New AHM 2.0 partner organizations
    - GTI/GSLEP Alliance
    - GSLEP Secretariat (informal partner under AHM 1.0, formalized under AHM 2.0)
- Any other members of the Snow Leopard Network (SLN) who wish to attend (at their own expense), including:
    - Members of the Snow Leopard Network Steering Committee
    - GEF & UNDP/GEF
    - Snow Leopard Conservancy
    - WCS
    - Panthera
    - NABU
    - CMS
    - Everest Snow Leopard Conservation Center
    - Flora & Fauna International
    - TRAFFIC
    - Interpol

Facilitator: AHM Project Manager
Purpose: To inform the Snow Leopard community about the AHM 2.0 reboot, build bridges with other groups, and identify synergies going forward that will support the NSLEP/GSLEP process
Key Outcomes:

- Information exchange on what AHM has been up to and what the plans are for AHM 2.0
- Trust & confidence building
- Exchange of experience & lessons learned
- Better coordinated programs across the 12 range states

5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The title of this report *Ghosts of the Mountain, Guardians of the Headwaters and GSLE*P serves to highlight three key themes for the "reboot" and rebirth of the Conservation & Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes & Landscapes (AHM) project:

- How little is known about these landscapes and the plants, animals and people who live in them.
- The primordial importance of the vast area (estimated at some1.8 million square kilometers) that serves not just as home to snow leopards but as the "third pole," the headwaters of half a dozen of the planet's largest rivers, rivers that provide life-giving water to a major portion of humanity, some 2+ billion people.
- The once-in-a-lifetime opportunity provided by the Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Program, a partnership of the 12 snow leopard range countries and some 17 partner organizations, to implement the visionary goals and objectives set out in the Bishkek Declaration of October, 2013.

The key challenge for AHM 2.0 is to shift gears, sort out the management issues identified in this report, and refocus its efforts on three priorities:

- Learn as much as possible about the Ghosts.
- Work with the Guardians, including both snow leopards and the communities in High Mountain Asia, to promote climate-smart management of snow leopard habitat.
- Work directly with GSLEP Secretariat, the National Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection (NSLEP) programs, the other 15 GSLEP partners, and the recently created GTI/GSLEP Alliance to implement the GSLEP program.

In closing, as noted by Daniel Miller, Senior Development Advisor at USAID/Mongolia during the visit of the Evaluation Team, in one of his several books on the people and environment of the Tibetan Plateau:

Twelve-hundred years ago, with remarkable prescience, Tibetans viewed their homeland as the "Heart of the World." A 9th century Tibetan document found in the caves of the Buddhist center at Dunhuang, along the old Silk Road just north of the Tibetan Plateau, attests to the environmental significance Tibetans attributed to their homeland over one thousand years ago:

This center of Heaven
This core of the earth
This heart of the world,
Fenced round by snow,
The headland of all rivers,
Where the mountains are high and
The land is pure.

The world now needs to ensure that the Tibetan environment remains healthy and continues to provide vital ecosystem services. Not only for the people living on the Tibetan Plateau and in the Himalaya but for hundreds of millions of people in adjoining areas whose lives are affected by what happens to this high, mountain region.[81]

[81] Daniel Miller, *Tibet From Space* https://maptia.com/danielmiller/stories/tibet-from-space

ANNEX A. WWF DOCUMENTS

ANNEX A(1) WWF RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To: Mary Melnyk, USAID Asia Bureau, Environment Team Leader

From: Kate Newman, WWF Vice President, Public Sector Initiatives

Date: July 24, 2015

Re: Asia High Mountain Mid-term Evaluation: WWF Response

We greatly appreciate the feedback on *Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities program,* the team approach to adaptive management, and the opportunity to respond to the discussion draft of the mid-term evaluation.

As we understand from the written evaluation and the conversation on July 10th, the most important and time-sensitive findings among the recommendations are to:

- Clarify and rearticulate the program scope, key strategies and expected outcomes
- Improve external and internal communications about the program objectives, results, and alignment with other partners, programs and processes (e.g., GSLEP)
- Improve the speed of funding flows to AHM country offices and partners
- Clarify and streamline program oversight and management structure

We are preparing for an adaptive management workshop, tentatively set in Washington on September 2-3, 2015 to explore the best way forward to confirm the expected outcomes of the program and any shift in weight for the key strategies and aligned activities. We expect to send you a draft agenda and participant list by August 15th.

Going into that workshop, we would like to ensure a common understanding between USAID and WWF of the regional biodiversity, climate adaptation, and water security context, the re-articulated program scope and theory of change, and the anticipated highest-level outcomes. Clarifying the AHM snow leopard conservation and climate change adaptation results over the next two years – in light of the long-term, transboundary policy, water security and high altitude river-basin management context and co-benefits – will be key to adaptive management of the program as well as to establish ecological and social sustainability after the program closes. We will send a summary of this framing to discuss with you as part of workshop preparations.

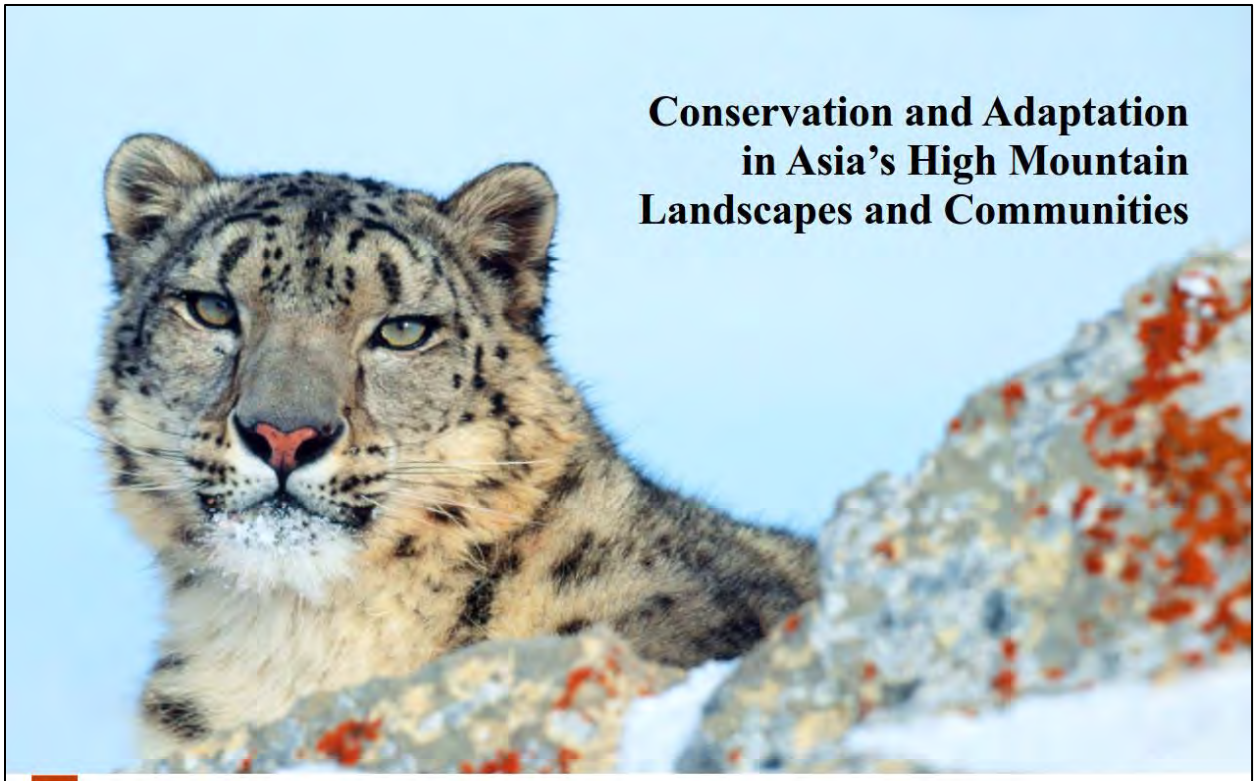
For the communications, operations, and management recommendations, we have already begun to work with our staff to evaluate processes, create action plans for the remaining period of the agreement, and devise a management response.

We look forward to exploring these questions with you to ensure that the final two years of the AHM grant are productive and generate lasting results.

ANNEX A(2) AHM SEMI-ANNUAL AND ANNUAL REPORTS & INFORMATION FLYER

The following AHM periodic reports are now available on the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) website:

Year 1 Semi-Annual Report:
https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQtM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDBmY2Uy&rID=MzY2MDcy
Year 1 Annual Report:
https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQtM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDBmY2Uy&rID=MzY2MDc1
Year 2 Semi-Annual Report:
https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQtM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDBmY2Uy&rID=MzY2MDgw
Year 2 Annual Report:
https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQtM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDBmY2Uy&rID=MzY2MDgy
Year 3 Semi-Annual Report:
https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQtM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDBmY2Uy&rID=MzY2MDg0
Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities Summary Flyer http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnaeb718.pdf. See next pages for flyer.



Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities

Adapting to a changing world

In the face of a changing climate, rapid glacier retreat in alpine regions is altering river flows and seasonal availability of water, and is affecting species, people, economies and regional stability.

Poor water resources management, land degradation, fragmentation and loss of forests and grasslands, poaching, and overgrazing of livestock is further exacerbating pressure on high mountain ecosystems while increasing human-wildlife conflict with species like the endangered snow leopard.

These elusive mountain cats are a flagship species that are indicators of the health and vitality of entire ecosystems across their range. Snow leopard habitat supports a rich array of other biodiversity.

It also overlaps with the headwaters of some of the world's most important rivers that originate in the high mountains of central Asia. One-third of the world's population rely on these mountain systems for freshwater.

Through the lens of snow leopard conservation, this program will address the linked issues and challenges of climate change adaptation and high mountain landscape management.

Program Goal

To galvanize greater understanding and action at local, national and regional levels across the snow leopard range countries to help conserve this iconic and endangered species, and to connect snow leopard conservation to a broader set of environmental, economic, and social issues with consequences for Asia's future sustainability, namely local livelihoods, water and food security, and climate change adaptation.

Program Objective 1:

Promote climate-smart management of high mountain landscapes and snow leopard habitat for sustainable development.

With warmer temperatures and wetter conditions projected in the Himalayas, forests will ascend to higher elevations in alpine regions posing significant challenges for snow leopards and pastoralists as higher tree lines will put them in greater competition for resources.

Our program will take stock of climate vulnerabilities across the high mountain landscapes of Asia to identify regional threats and opportunities for addressing climate adaptation and water resource needs.

Priority landscapes across six countries will integrate snow leopard conservation with climate-smart sustainable development, local governance and citizen science capacity, and incentives for adaptation to climate change. A strong emphasis will be placed on sharing lessons with small-grants investments in other range countries.

Project activities at the site-level will help improve livelihoods and motivate local communities to engage in both conservation of snow leopards and prey species as well as sustainable management of high mountain landscapes. This will strengthen community institutions and mechanisms related to management, equitable benefit sharing and access to natural resources. Empowering indigenous, poor, marginalized and vulnerable communities, especially women, will be an important aspect of our work. The program will support alternative livelihoods to reduce dependence on natural resources, which will include ecotourism development.

Representation of activities based on existing snow leopard strategies:

Bhutan: implementing adaptation actions identified by climate change vulnerability assessments in Bhutan's Wangchuk Centennial Park and Nepal's Kangchenjunga Conservation Area; promoting better agricultural and grazing practices that are climate-smart and maintain healthy pasture for local livelihoods and wildlife.

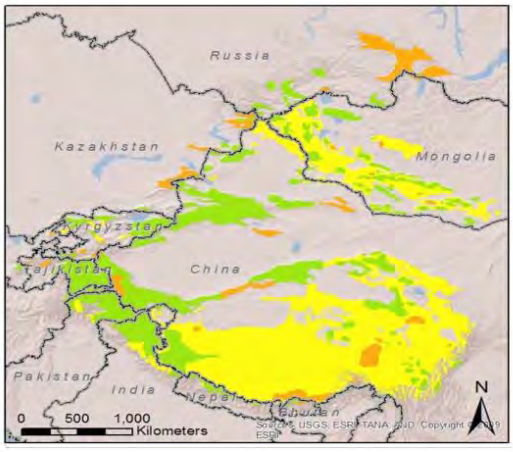
India: Conducting a study on the severity of livestock depredation to develop and implement a comprehensive snow leopard-human conflict mitigation program including livestock insurance schemes when feasible.

Kyrgyzstan: snow leopard population survey to protected area system for snow leopard conservation considering recent and predicted changes in key habitats; supporting anti-poaching teams; engaging local communities in species conservation activities through conservation education and training.

Mongolia: Snow leopard distribution survey; satellite GPS telemetry to better understand snow leopard ecology; building on lessons and best practices from successful livestock insurance scheme and sharing with stakeholders and decision makers.

Nepal: Developing a monitoring protocol for the selected field sites to assess abundance and distribution of snow leopards and their prey base; training local communities in monitoring, surveys, and anti-poaching efforts; provide technical and financial support to forest departments and communities for tangible measures to protect habitat.

Pakistan: Snow leopard population survey and GIS-based species distribution maps; conservation plan with partners including the district government; establishing a "watch and ward" system against hunting and poaching and expanding on existing tribe-based traditional resource management groups.



Legend

Snow Leopard Range

- Extant
- Probably Extant
- Possibly Extant

Program Objective 2

Improve transnational collaboration on climate change adaptation and snow leopard conservation in Asia's high mountain landscapes.

Fostering the formation of inter-governmental alliances for the sustainable management of Asia's high mountain landscapes is a key objective for this program. International support for sustainable headwater management, climate change adaptation and Asian water security will be galvanized by leveraging our partnership strengths through the charismatic snow leopard.

Dialogue will be started and sustained across a wide array of fora like the Snow Leopard Network, Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas Inter-governmental Body, the Inter-Governmental Sustainable Development Commission of Central Asia, and a regional Alliance on Asia's High Mountain Landscapes.

- Leading research and educational institutions will be tapped to establish a system to test the correlation between our headwater ecosystem conservation efforts and downstream benefits for water supplies. For example, we will coordinate with the USAID-funded University of Colorado project that assesses the role of glaciers and seasonal snow in the water resources of High Asia.
- Innovative partnerships garnered through WWF's Freedom to Roam initiative to engage international outdoor retailers and their customers will elevate awareness and support for high mountain conservation strategies.
- Illegal trade in snow leopards will receive sharpened attention by engaging directly with the South Asian Wildlife Enforcement Network and coordinating with INTERPOL through the USAID-funded Project PREDATOR.
- The global network of snow leopard biologists and conservation practitioners that are part of the Snow Leopard Network will be tapped to build momentum for snow leopard conservation.

Snow leopard conservation will be an important starting point for much broader, richer regional dialogue to foster agreement among all the snow leopard range countries to form an Alliance on Asia's High Mountain Landscapes.

PHOTOS: Front page: snow leopard © Klein & Hubert / WWF; Page 2 banner image and Bhutan © Tashi Tshering/WWF Bhutan, India © National Geographic Stock / Steve Winter / WWF : Page 3 Kyrgyzstan © naturepl.com / Reinhard / ARCO / WWF-Canon,Pakistan © WWF Pakistan, Nepal © WWF Nepal ; Mongolia © Anton Vorauer / WWF-Canon, Snow leopard © National Geographic Stock/Steve Winter / WWF. Page 4 © BOGOMOLOV Denis / WWF-Russia

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Snow Leopard Trust

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

WWF

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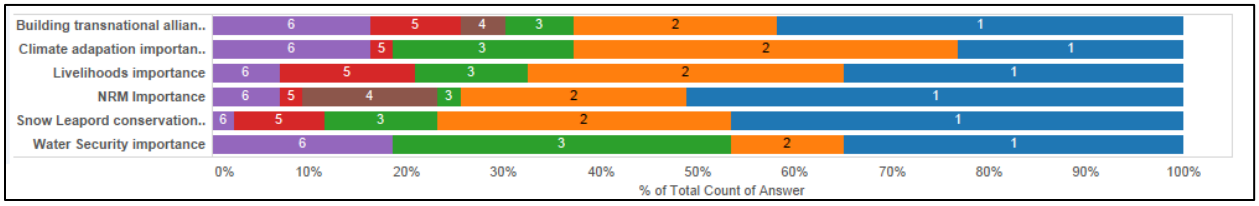
ANNEX B. AHM ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Note: The online survey protocol is included at the end of this Annex.

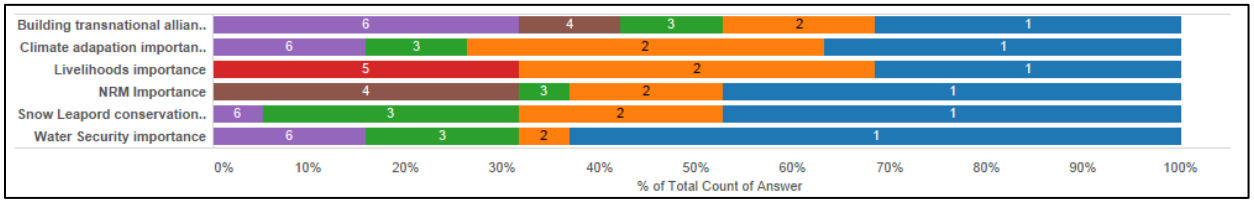
33 people responded to the survey protocol with representation from all six AHM countries. Of those, 14 were directly involved with the AHM project and 18 were members of the Snow Leopard Network.

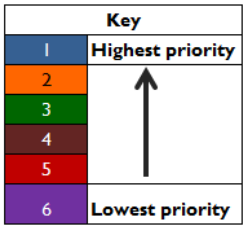
AHM Priority Theme Importance Rankings

Graph A. AHM Priority Theme Importance Rankings [all respondents]



Graph B. AHM Priority Theme Importance Rankings [respondents working directly with AHM]

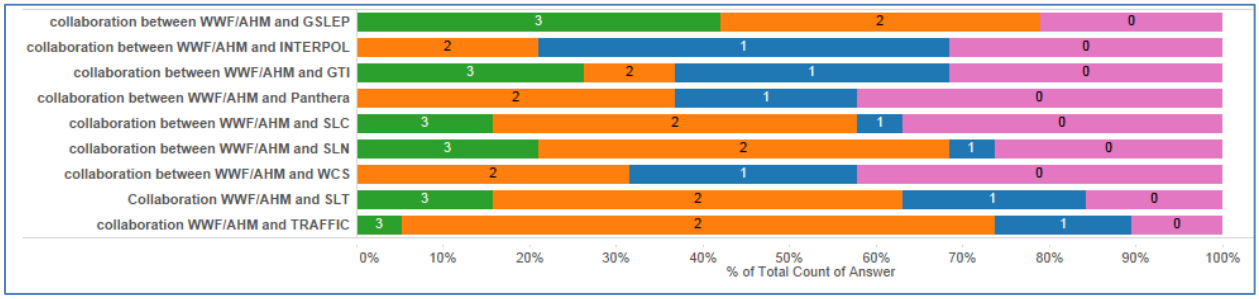




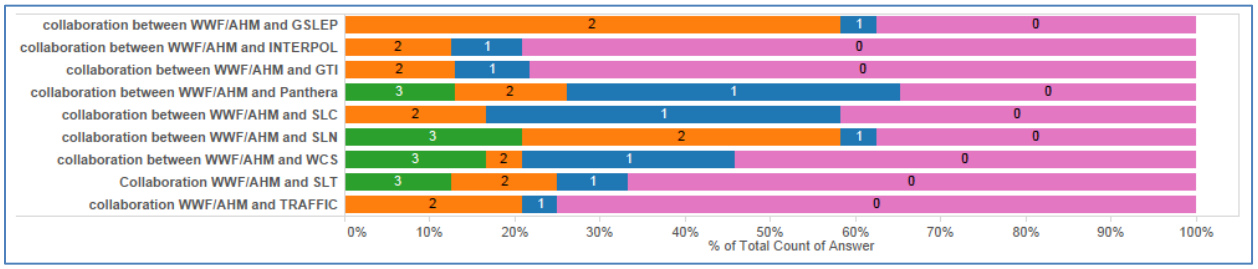
Graph A: Among all respondents, the greatest importance was given to natural resources management followed closely by snow leopard conservation and building transnational alliances. Among the highest priorities, climate change adaptation scored the lowest with livelihoods being the second lowest. Among the lowest ranked priorities, water security had the highest percentage, with 18%, followed by a tie between building transnational alliances and climate adaptation importance, around 16% each of their respective totals.

Graph B: Interestingly, among respondents directly working with AHM, water security seems the most polarizing. On the one hand, it led among the highest importance priority themes, with 60%. 16% also gave the lowest priority to water security and climate adaptation. Snow leopard conservation and natural resources management tied for second amongst highest priority importance. Building transnational alliances and livelihoods were the lowest priority importance, just over 30%, for respondents working directly with AHM.

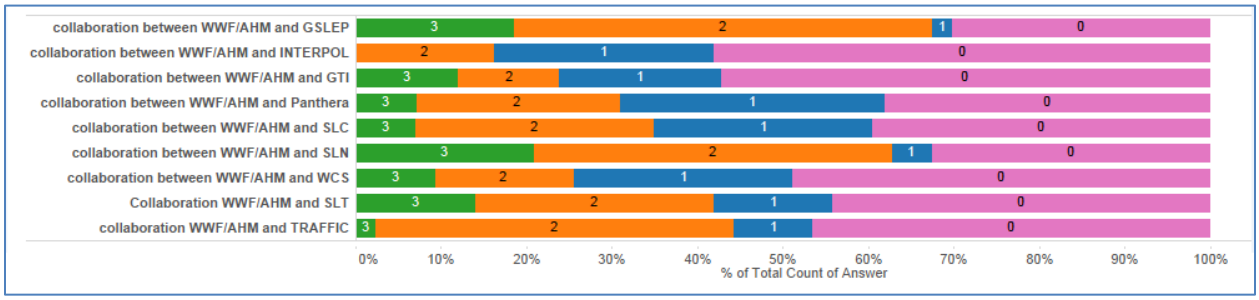
Degree of WWF/AHM Collaboration with other organizations [all respondents]



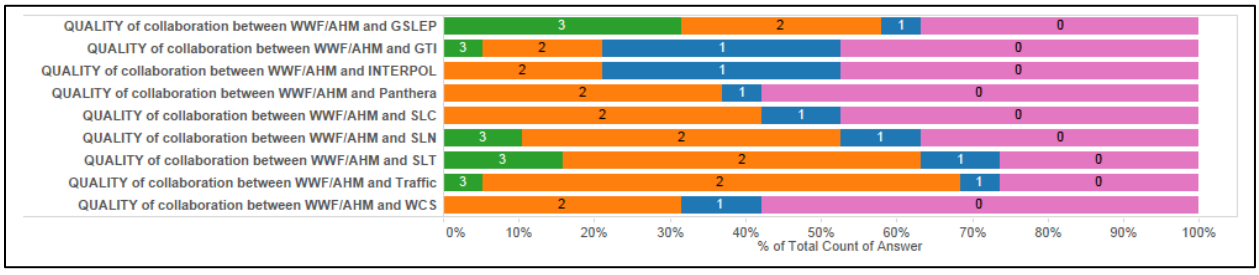
Degree of WWF/AHM Collaboration with the following organizations (respondents not working with AHM):



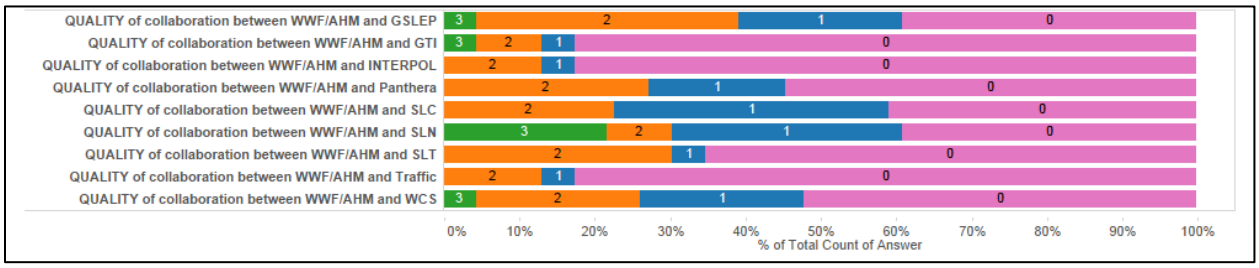
Degree of WWF/AHM Collaboration with the following organizations (respondents working with AHM):



Quality of WWF/AHM Collaboration with the following organizations (all respondents):



Quality of WWF/AHM Collaboration with the following organizations (respondents directly working with AHM):



Are there other regional or international organizations that the AHM project should be working with? If so, please list in priority order and indicate why.

Respondents highlighted several organizations for potential collaboration. ICIMOD was cited three times as an obvious partner due to its work on the Hindu Kush Himalaya and its strong research components on climate and water security.

The importance of working with federal and local governments, including wildlife departments, was cited for long term sustainability. In addition, scientific organizations and local NGOs were cited, such as the Academy of Sciences in Mongolia, Irbis Mongolia, Baltistan Wildlife Conservation and Development Organization, Snow Leopard Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Fund in Srinagar, and the G.B. Pant Institute.

The United Nations was broadly cited due to its climate adaptation and rural livelihoods work. Specifically, the UNDP and GEF were cited for leveraging funding/financing opportunities for regional work at scale. In Bhutan, WWF is working with GEF on the "Bhutan for Life" campaign and long-term protection and sustainable management of the park system. WWF is working with UNEP on natural capital valuation and freshwater management and assessment.

Collaboration with USAID local offices and missions as well as the State Department was cited. GIZ, IUCN – Pakistan, CMS's Central Asian Mammals Initiative and CITES were also cited as potential partners.

1. To what extent have the activities implemented under the USAID/WWF AHM project had a positive and measureable impact on snow leopard habitat in the participating countries and sites?

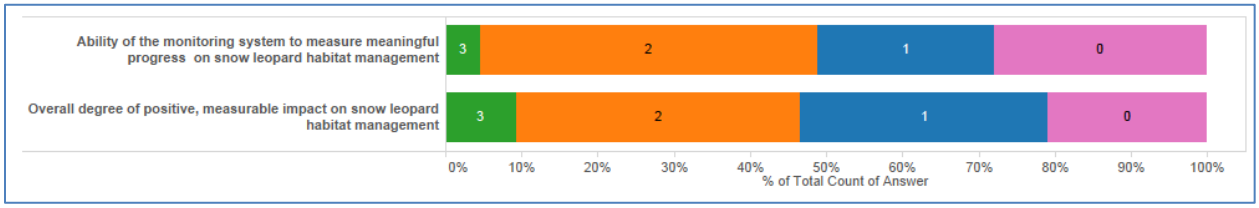
1a. Overall degree of positive, measurable impact on snow leopard habitat management.

Modest progress overall. 51.7% of respondents said that the AHM project has had a high or medium (12.9% and 38.7%) overall positive impact. There was a high percentage (19%) of respondents who are unsure and 29% who say the project has had a low positive overall impact.

Examples of positive impact include using science and technology with citizen scientist engagement for initial snow leopard and prey base studies as well as population growth of wild ungulates using census data. Controlled grazing practices were introduced in project sites which contributed to reduction in human-snow leopard conflicts, improved pasture quality, and decreased competition between wild ungulates and livestock. Herders, some of them former poachers, are carrying out snow leopard and prey base monitoring in project sites. Through changing the attitudes of local people, there are fewer disturbances to wild prey and greater awareness about the snow leopard and its conservation significance among yak herders and highlanders.

Examples of low impact and challenges include that in some areas work has just begun and it is too early to measure the impact of the intervention. In Nepal, the project is a continuation of SCAPES, which has modest progress in improving natural resources management by local communities. One respondent cited that AHM had yet to achieve any significant breakthroughs.

1b. Ability of the monitoring system to measure meaningful progress on snow leopard habitat management.



Modest ability to measure meaningful progress on snow leopard habitat management. 54.9% of respondents stated that the ability to measure meaningful progress was either high (9.7%) or medium (45.2%). A high percentage of respondents were unsure/not applicable (29%) and 16.1% stated low ability to measure meaningful progress.

Examples of positive progress include the use of science and technology such as camera trapping, collaring one snow leopard, and capable staff such as park staff in monitoring population and habitats. AHM has supported a community watch system, training, and payment of partial salaries, which has allowed people to monitor the snow leopards and other wildlife contributing to improved protection. Respondents also cited the excellent participation of citizen scientists to monitor snow leopard, their prey base and habitats.

Challenges cited include that baseline data is being collected three years after the beginning of the project by interviewing people. In addition, local community engagement in some areas has just been started, for example, the SLCC and the training of its members. There is the question of monitoring in adjacent areas where poaching is more common, but where there is less capacity, such as just outside the Sarychat Ertash reserve.

1c. Effectiveness of adaptive management of snow leopard habitat.

Adaptive management is at best weak**.** Almost half of respondents, (48.4%) said the effectiveness of adaptive management was either low or were unsure/not applicable. 9.7% and 41.9% of respondents said adaptive management was high or medium respectively.

There were no examples cited of adaptive management with respondents citing that they have not really seen examples of adaptive management in place due to insufficient data and information on this topic. One survey respondent did not know the meaning of adaptive management and one cited the need for more NGO involvement and training workshops to solicit input and disseminate lessons learned.

2. To what extent have efforts to improve governance and increase capacity to manage protected areas and other land uses accomplished AHM objectives?

2a. Governance/management efforts have reduced the rate of ecosystem degradation to date.

There has been some progress made. 48.4% of respondents stated that efforts have either greatly or moderately reduced the rate of ecosystem degradation (12.9% and 35.5%) respectively. In addition, 12.9% stated that efforts have slightly reduced the rate of ecosystem degradation. A very large percentage, 38.7%, responded unsure/not applicable.

Certain efforts were highlighted, such as capacity building for Public Hearing and Public Audits (PHPA). Natural Resources-based Community-based Organizations are conducting PHPAs regularly, which has

increased resource governance. In Sikkim, AHM has funded work with the Lachen Dzumsa, a local governing body in the village, to assess their NRM practices and work towards improvement. Examples include garbage management, which has improved conditions as well as regular monitoring exercises by Himal Rakshaks. Park staff have been trained by AHM to monitor the ecosystem. In the Kyrgyz Republic, rangers have kept poachers at bay in certain areas although outside these areas poaching persists.

Community organizations established by the project and their training in management skills has led to results. For example, a lynx was captured by a community in Chitral district, Pakistan and was handed over to the wildlife department. In addition, a snow leopard cub was recovered and handed over to the Gilgit-Baltistan Wildlife Department. Community organizations have also banned hunting and have started respecting this ban. In addition, local communities are organized in groups to undertake water conservation, tree planting, and forest fire protection activities.

2b. Governance/management efforts have reduced the extent and/or severity of degradation.

Some progress has been made. 41.9% of respondents stated that efforts have reduced the rate of degradation either greatly or moderately (16.1% and 25.8% respectively). 22.6% said slightly and a large proportion, 35.5%, said unsure/not applicable.

Notable examples include controlled grazing systems adopted by communities through the village organizations that have helped reduce the degradation of pastures. Increased community ownership of natural resources reduced unsustainable use and degradation. One respondent stated that regular monitoring and strong engagement of local people as well as neighboring countries such as China and India have helped to protect the species at the regional and transboundary levels. In another comment, no poaching had taken place in the project area. Regulations have been put into place including those for *Cordyceps*, or caterpillar fungus, extraction and also for garbage management.

Challenges stated included that actions have not been fully assessed and evaluated and funding restrictions which limit the number of sites where the project team is able to operate thus reaching only a few local communities.

2c. Governance/management efforts have contributed to livelihood improvements in the target areas.

37.9% of respondents replied with either greatly contributed of moderately contributed to livelihood improvements in targeted areas. 27.6% responded with slightly contributed and a large proportion responded unsure/not applicable.

Examples of activities contributing to livelihoods included vocational centers and training for women as well as gardening and distribution of poultry units to women that have enabled them to reduce their household expenditures and save money for other purposes. These activities were implemented through the village organizations that have now submitted proposals to other donors as well. Several trainings were provided on how to effectively manage community funds that will support conservation activities initiated by herder communities. AHM provided the seed money.

Twelve volunteer rangers were trained on monitoring techniques and their activities such as patrolling, collecting data, and conducting observations. In the Kyrgyz Republic, the rangers in Sarychat Ertash come from the villages of AkShirak and Uchkochkon. Their salaries and additional bonuses, from being involved in different research activities, contribute greatly to the livelihoods of many people in these villages.

AHM supports the development of alternative forms of income generation such as felt production but at the moment there is insufficient marketing of the products. Investments have been made to meet community needs. One respondent stated that their work plan did not have a direct livelihood component; however, they hope their vulnerability assessment will lead to action in this regard.

2d. Governance/management efforts have contributed to livelihood improvements that are ecologically sustainable.

36.7% of respondents stated that efforts have contributed greatly or moderately, 6.7% and 30% respectively, to livelihood improvements that are ecologically sustainable. 30% stated that efforts have been slightly successful and a third, 33.3%, were unsure/not applicable.

Examples of activities included planting fruit trees and forest plants, livestock vaccination, and fodder cultivation by village organizations. These examples were stated to be ecologically sustainable. In addition, fencing pastures in reserves were received positively by local communities. These pastures will be used during harsh winters by local herders. This action was initiated by herders themselves. Promotion of natural resources-based ecologically sustainable livelihoods is also being promoted, such as non-timber forest products and ecotourism.

2e. Governance/management efforts have contributed to livelihood improvements that are adapted to climate change.

34.4% stated that efforts have contributed either greatly or moderately, 3.4% and 31% respectively, to livelihood improvements that are adapted to climate change. 24.1% said efforts slightly contributed and a very large proportion, 41.4% were unsure/not applicable.

Examples provided include promoting adaptation activities as per the prescriptions of local adaptation plans prepared by local communities with most of the interventions being agriculture based. In Nepal, LAPAs/CAPAs guide communities to make sound livelihood decisions in the face of climate change. Another example is the installation of alternative forms of energy-sources such as wind generators.

Challenges included limited support given to high priority community demands, limited investment, and insufficient assessment and evaluations of action. One respondent stated that efforts to increase livestock by AHM, namely yaks in the Kyrgyz Republic, is not ecologically sustainable and may generate human-wildlife conflict.

2f. Governance/management efforts have permitted different stakeholders to work in improved collaboration towards a common goal.

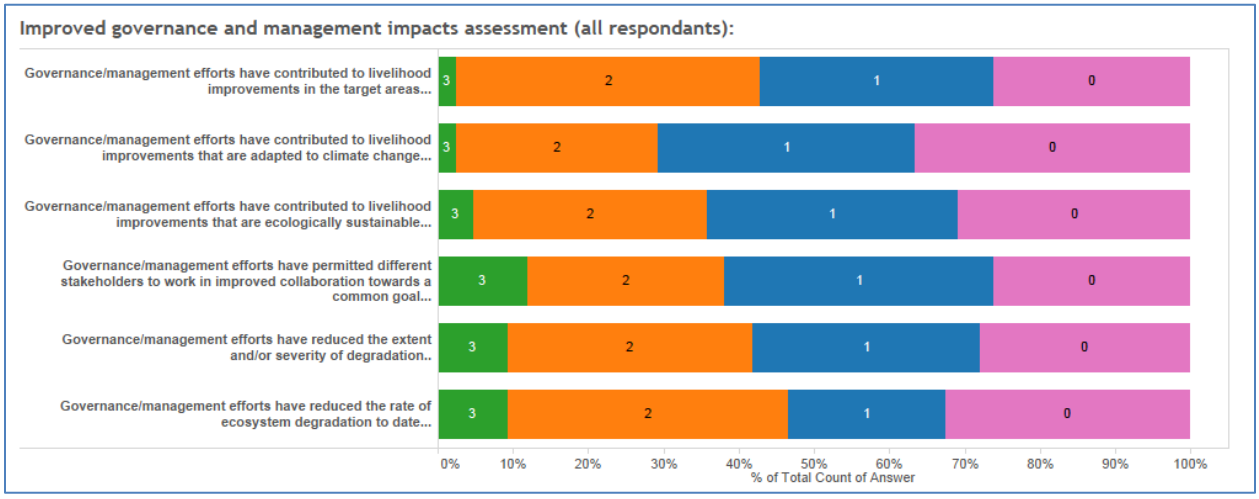
37.9% of respondents said that efforts either greatly or moderately, 20.7% and 17.2%, respectively, have permitted different stakeholders to work in collaboration towards a common goal. 37.9% said slightly and 24.1% were unsure/not applicable.

Examples included collaboration between the Lachen Dzumsa and community groups in Sikkim to look at sustainable practices. In addition, the KCAMC is leveraging funds from different organizations. Crafting of LAPA/CAPAs brings all stakeholders together. In addition, village level organizations established by the project have established linkages with other organizations, such as the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) and the Provincial Wildlife and Forest Departments. The wildlife department has established a protected area management body and has extended support in paying salaries of the community watchers. In addition, the Forestry Department is planning to carry out plantations, establish nurseries, and carry out some landslide and flood protection works.

One respondent stated that there is good collaboration with local communities and administration but not enough with some international organizations. The respondent states that sometimes international organizations seem to be more interested in the authorship of activities and small-scale results rather than cooperation.

In Mongolia, scientists from Khovd University, the Mongolian Academy of Science, WWF-Mongolia, local community organizations, school children's club, herders, protected area administration staff, and local

government authorities are all working towards improving pasture and water resources, which includes snow leopard habitat. In addition, parks engage with district authorities and local communities in the execution of climate change adaptation works.



3. To what extent have livelihood-based interventions accomplished AHM objectives?

3a. Livelihood-based interventions have improved the welfare of rural inhabitants in the targeted sites.

35.6% of respondents stated that interventions greatly or moderately, 7.1% and 28.6% respectively, improved the welfare of rural inhabitants. 25% stated slightly improved and a very large proportion, 39.3% were unsure/not applicable.

Examples noted include helping households increase their income and establishing goodwill among the local communities. These communities have accepted planned interventions aimed at conserving snow leopards and their habitat. In addition, alternative livelihoods have reduced pressure on the snow leopard habitat with respect to grazing, fuel wood cutting and improved the conditions of pastures. There are indirect linkages as well. For example, local initiatives to improve water resources and pasture condition have been supported through the project and herders have realized that pasture and water are their fundamental basis of livelihood.

Others note that actions have not fully been assessed and evaluated yet. In addition, welfare improvement is a long-term process and on-going thanks to project interventions, but step by step.

3b. Livelihood-based interventions have altered incentives towards conservation in the focus areas of the activities.

40% of respondents stated that interventions have altered incentives towards conservation in the focus areas of the activities either greatly or moderately, 6.7% and 33.3% respectively. 26.7% of respondents replied slightly and a third, 33.3% were unsure/not applicable.

Respondents noted that livelihood-based interventions have resulted in reducing dependency on forest resources for subsistence living. Positive examples include that there is “practically no poaching” from communities due to the involvement of local communities, especially ladies’, and that alternative forms of income generation are helping to control poaching.

Another example is that livestock vaccination has helped communities to reduce livestock morbidity and mortality. This has compensated them for their losses due to depredation by snow leopards. Finally, the project is viewed positively by local communities as locally-driven initiatives are fully supported by the project. This allows locals to contribute towards conservation and have ownership over the actions.

3c. Livelihood-based interventions have improved local capacity for climate change adaptation.

36.7% of respondents stated that livelihood interventions either greatly or moderately improved local capacity for climate change adaptation. 23.3% said slightly and a very large proportion, 40%, marked unsure/not applicable.

Respondents noted that local communities are choosing better options to reduce climate change impacts. Community-based local adaptation plans, prepared and implemented by the communities, helped them build capacity and increase their resilience. Other examples noted the excellent work of citizen scientists as well as livelihood related trainings and establishment of demonstration plots. The latter have helped beneficiaries acquire skills to adapt and utilize the new interventions. New activities included kitchen gardening of improved vegetables, planting for fruit trees, use of vaccines for livestock, controlled grazing, and vocational skills for women, which have helped them diversify livelihood options. In addition, the AHM also supports local initiatives aimed at protecting open water sources. Open water sources are vital resources for herders and many streams and springs are very vulnerable to climatic events such as drought.

Challenges include that actions have not been fully assessed and evaluated yet. In addition, one respondent noted that capacity is being built and the process is on-going, but additional measures could speed up the process.

4. To what extent has WWF employed a collaborative learning strategy in the design and implementation of AHM project activities in the individual sites and across the project as a whole?

4a. Has WWF adopted an approach of collaboratively developing and implementing activities with government, NGO and community partners?

63.3% of respondents said WWF adopted a collaborative approach, 16.7% said no, and 20% responded unsure/not applicable. 61.6% said this collaboration has been done either very well or moderately well (23.1% and 38.5% respectively). 15.4% said this collaboration needs improvement and 23.1% marked unsure/not applicable.

Examples include that WWF Mongolia has attended the national forum called "Community Based Natural Resource Use" in 2015. All parties discussed challenges, achievements, and legislative gaps as well as shared lessons learned. In FY14, the project drew inspiration from the farmers' school implemented in Langtang National Park, Nepal, and supported piloting a "farmers' school" in Dungkar, Kurtoe Geog in Bhutan. The formation of SLCC in WCNP was a lesson learned from the KCA to combat poaching and retaliatory killing as well as conduct monitoring and raise awareness about the snow leopard.

Collaboration has helped to identify the then 22 landscapes for the GSLEP and assisted in drafting the Bishkek declaration. WWF-Nepal's partnership with the government of Nepal is highlighted by a joint project called Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Project (KCAP). AHM is being implemented within this mechanism. In addition, there is partnership with community-based organizations to implement activities at the grass roots level.

In Sikkim, there is strong collaboration with the Lachen Dzumsa and the Lachen Tourism Development Committee in North Sikkim. In the West, Himal Rakshak work is conducted in coordination with the

Forest Department has been strengthened through AHM. In addition, WWF is working with the State Tourism Department and ECOSS for promotion of tourism. A partnership with "Zero Waste Himalaya" has also been strengthened through AHM support.

One respondent noted that the work plan was shared with all stakeholders during the inception workshop and their input was incorporated. In addition, the plan of activities was shared with the communities and their input incorporated.

4b. Has WWF contributed to models and Innovations to Improved water security as part of an adaptive management approach?

Almost half responded yes, with 46.7%. 16.7% responded no, and 36.7% of respondents marked unsure/not applicable.

4c. Is water security a key element of AHM project activities?

Of all the respondents, 50% said yes, 16.7% said no, and 33.3% said unsure/not applicable.

4d. If yes, has water security been improved?

12% said yes, 28% said no, and 60% said unsure/not applicable.

Examples: water-smart communities have been promoted for optimal and multiple uses of water resources for drinking and irrigation.

WWF Mongolia conducted a nationwide assessment on delineation on headwater, riparian, and forest areas to identify mining free zones using a set of specific scientific methods. The respondent mentioned that this will be good justification for preventing rivers and riparian zones from becoming polluted from any activities or extractive industries. In Bhutan, there is springshed management by communities in Dungkar village that benefits 65 households in WCNP.

One respondent noted that the project area is not the key territory for water security. They mentioned that melting glaciers cannot be improved by the project activities. For the next 2-3 years they hope to change the territorial focus of the project and develop an IRBMP for a small river.

4e. Have there been innovations in water management?

13.8% said yes, 27.6% no, and 58.6% unsure/not applicable. There is a very high proportion of unsure/not applicable.

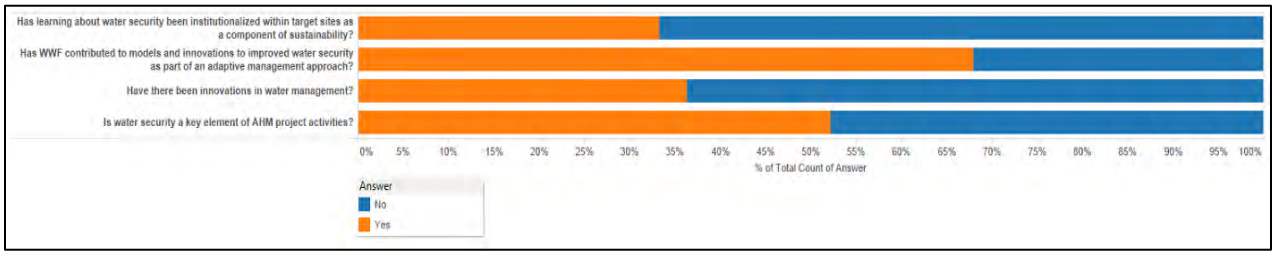
There is not much evidence for innovations in water management. The few examples included mostly future plans, for example, planning to introduce drip-irrigation in agriculture in the lower reaches of a small river and planning to develop IWRM through a river-basin approach. The only action that was mentioned, which is currently taking place or has taken place, is community involvement in spring-shed restoration.

4g. Has learning about water security been institutionalized within target sites as a component of sustainability?

20.7% said yes, 24.1% no and 55.2% were unsure/not applicable.

One example included carrying out climate change vulnerability assessments in targeted local communities and planning and execution of the adaptation measures. Another example was that a total of 26 river basin administrations was established in Mongolia and the Altai Sayan is comprised of 12 River Basins. Finally, program training integrated knowledge about the role of high-mountain areas as water resources for lower regions.

Water Security and Management: All responses excluding unsure/not applicable



4g. Has WWF utilized social and multimedia media and online tools to leverage learning and the AHM project results across the 12 snow leopard habitat countries as well as other interested parties and donors and, if so, what have been the impacts of using such tools to date?

WWF needs a concerted social media strategy and urgently needs to improve communication. 70% of respondents were either unsure/not applicable or said that WWF has not utilized social and multimedia media and online tools (36.7% and 33.3% respectively). Of those who responded yes, 58.3% were unsure of its impact with 12.5% saying it had low impact and 16.7% stating medium impact.

Positive examples of media include regular news released to the public using media such as Facebook, a website, and a quarterly newspaper. A snow leopard-themed calendar has been produced. A member of the SLN and a field professional was not aware of any outreach.

Challenges include that social media engagement needs to be in local languages, especially in Russian, and also in Chinese. One respondent has not seen this being done and asks if there has been engagement, for example, on the Chinese equivalent of Facebook? Due to language barriers, international media tools in English can only be accessed by certain specialists in some countries e.g. in the Kyrgyz Republic.

5. Future AHM Project Investments

5a. Which types of activities seem to offer the MOST promise for future investments in snow leopard habitat conservation and climate change adaptation by high mountain communities?

Several activities were cited as promising for future investments. These included coordination with range countries via the GSLEP and implementing plans to support the conservation of the priority landscapes.

Community-based conservation, including citizen scientists, monitoring of snow leopards, and threat alleviation for snow leopard prey, including poaching and conflict, were mentioned multiple times. Scaling of snow leopard monitoring will help to inform policy decision makers. Activities to reduce human-wildlife conflict were also cited multiple times. These include livestock insurance schemes, improved domestic livestock herding, and new techniques for construction of pens.

Support for alternative forms of income generation and the installation of alternative energy-sources and investments in ecotourism were cited multiple times including high-altitude tourism.

Investments in studies were also cited and included mapping of key water sources, headwater resources, and glaciers. Continued monitoring of vulnerability of local populations to the impact of climate change as well as climate monitoring including snow cover, melt, permafrost, precipitation, and temperature rise.

Learning – Creating an interactive website where ideas and lessons can be learned more quickly and effectively shared was cited along with holding participatory workshops on key topics. Capacity building

and awareness – community education about snow leopards and climate change through ecological education.

Climate change adaptation activities with a food-water-energy nexus. Adaptation measures cited include flood protection measures such as protection from GLOFs and avalanches, and improved agricultural practices such as irrigation systems.

5b. Which activities have been the LEAST effective to date and why?

"The conservation sector is full of shelved reports" – AHM survey respondent

Monitoring and reporting – Stand-alone report creation was cited as being among the least effective activities. The format of the semi-annual report should be simplified and made more reader friendly. As an alternative there could be a comprehensive report for donors and a short report for project implementing countries. The 13 indicators were cited as unfeasible to measure and unclear to monitor and evaluate project progress. It was noted that communication is lacking between the six countries except for a one-time event, such as the AHM sharing and learning meeting. There is demand for activities that engage stakeholders as well as rapid exchange of information, lessons learned, and recommendations.

In the field – The remote management of communities by agencies and individuals, such as managers who live far away and are not fluent with local languages and cultures, was also cited. One respondent stated that all activities focusing on water and climate change "*are not making a difference for snow leopard conservation.*" The promotion of alternatives to fuelwood is reported to be tedious for communities to adopt. This includes promotion of bio-briquettes in the WCNP as their fabrication is time-consuming.

5c. To what extent have AHM project activities been Integrated?

46.4% of respondents stated that projects were either very integrated or moderately integrated (21.4% and 25% respectively). 10.7% stated that activities have not been integrated and a large percentage of respondents, 42.9%, were unsure/not applicable.

Examples of integration cited include stakeholders' sensitization and mobilization, which are closely linked with livelihoods, conservation, and climate change adaptation. Livelihood activities both reduce pressure on natural resources and increase the resilience of communities towards climate change. Snow leopard monitoring has been integrated with rural livelihoods and climate change.

One respondent stated that failure to integrate activities due to funding delays has occurred in all three years.

5d. Does integration of activities improve results?

50% of respondents stated that integration has improved results. 3.8% said integration has not improved results and 46.2%, a very large percentage, were unsure/not applicable.

Successful examples of integration cited included planting fruit trees and forest plants that improved the vegetation cover on the watersheds and also improved livelihoods. Others included the construction of a protection spur at the head of the irrigation channel which provided both protection from avalanches and diverted water into the irrigation channel. In addition, livelihood activities focusing on women increased their income, empowered them, and motivated them and their families to support project activities for snow leopard conservation. Development of the system of Protected Areas as a component of the overall ECONET Central Asia approach as well as snow leopard monitoring by methods that can be used for different species, and improving pasture and water resources were also cited.

6. The evaluation seeks to document examples of activities undertaken successfully by AHM in the following categories

6a. Development Innovation (new ways of doing development).

There were examples such as improved collaboration for conservation as well as sustainable tourism. This led to drafting a tourism policy for Sikkim. In addition, alternative sources of energy, camera trapping, and sophisticated equipment provided to rangers were cited. Other examples included homestays, handicraft promotion, sensitizing communities, community-based insurance schemes, and formation of the SLCC to monitor snow leopards. Community based snow leopard conservation was cited multiple times. In addition, strengthening the institutional capacity of CBOs such as KCAMC was mentioned.

6b. The effective use of science and technology.

Examples of the effective use of science and technology included the use of modern wind generators, photo-traps, and genetic analysis by DNA sequencers. GPS, GIS, and camera traps were mentioned several times. Maintenance of a GIS Database for biodiversity and protected areas, initially prepared in "Econet," was mentioned. One adult male snow leopard was collared by a team of experts and scientists in the KCA and its movement is being regularly monitored through GPS. Telecommunications use, including mobile phones for communication with the local communities as well as Skype software for planning meetings, were cited as examples. Automatic Weather Stations were set up and led to improved data collection. Quantitative and qualitative studies of the impact of *Cordyceps*, or caterpillar fungus, on snow leopard habitats were conducted. Camera trapping survey revealed new threats to snow leopards. For example, a legless snow leopard was caught by camera trap technology. Climate vulnerability assessments were also mentioned.

6c. Success stories or other communications products.

There has been active engagement of AHM with regard to communications in the field. Examples cited include celebrating snow leopard day with local school children and engaging them in various creative activities such as drawing, storytelling, and "ecological" theatre – focused on nature and environmental issues. Local media was also used to reach out to communities. Snow leopard festivals in high mountain areas were held and project activity and snow leopard films were shown.

A newsletter released an article on "Citizen Scientists saving Snow Leopards." As a result of this article, children initiated advocacy events to increase awareness on the dangers of marmot traps. They counted the total number of traps owned by families in Jargalant Khairkhan mountain. In only one month, the children collected and removed over 100 traps.

Other cites in success stories included stopping an illegal mine in the Kyrgyz Republic and the development of homestays in Bhutan and Sikkim. The best performing Himal Rakshak was given an award from the State Government for their contributions to biodiversity monitoring. Community watch systems were improved and in Gilgit-Baltistan, due to a strict ban on hunting, professional hunters gave up hunting. Vocational centers and training in Laspur valley has helped women initiate their own businesses.

6d. Effective inclusion and engagement of women in the planning and Implementation of project activities.

There is anecdotal evidence of inclusion and active participation of women in programming and implementation. Respondents cited several examples of the effective engagement of women in the planning and implementation of project activities. These include women leading community livelihood initiatives as well as actively engaging in climate change and water resources programs. For example,

women have been involved in a strategy development workshop on human and snow leopard conflict management, a community-managed training fund, and snow leopard and prey species monitoring.

In Nepal's Kanchenjunga Area (KCA), 35 mother's groups are engaging in planning and implementation activities within the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council (KCAMC). Women participate in AHM-funded training and indirectly benefit from good governance practices implemented by community-

based organizations. In addition, women conservation and development organizations have been established in villages. Awareness and sensitization activities for girls' schools are also being implemented.

AHM has supported women communities of high mountain settlements in felt production and marketing of products. In addition, the WWF office in the Kyrgyz Republic has been led by a woman for 14 years. She has successfully integrated WWF's ideas in environmental policy, such as ECONET, despite frequent rotations of government officials and even through revolution.

The Online Survey Protocol

Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities (AHM) – Survey Protocol

Purpose of the Survey

With support from USAID, WWF-US has been implementing the AHM project in six countries (Bhutan, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Mongolia) since October 2012. (https://www.worldwildlife.org/projects/conserving-snow-leopards-securing-water-resources-and-benefiting-communities)

We are conducting a mid-term evaluation to review project progress to date and recommend any mid-course adjustments that may be required to help the project meet its ambitious goals and objectives between now and the project completion date of September 30, 2017.

We invite you to provide your insights and suggestions as an important part of the evaluation process.

Thank you for your valuable participation.

Confidentiality Statement

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Respondent confidentiality will be strictly maintained. All data generated by the survey will be used in an aggregate form that will make it impossible to determine the identity of the individual responses. Access to raw data will be restricted to the members of the evaluation team.

Objectives of the AHM Project

10. Promote climate-smart management of high mountain landscapes and snow leopard habitat for sustainable development.

    1.1 Strengthen local natural resource institution's governance and capacity

    1.2 Increase community resilience to climate change impacts

    1.3 Enhance community engagement in conservation

    1.4 Conserve the snow leopard and its habitat in priority sites

1. Improve transnational collaboration on climate change adaptation and snow leopard conservation in Asia's high mountain landscapes

   2.1 Build cooperation through the Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas and its regional "Framework for Cooperation" for protection of Asia's high mountain landscapes and snow leopard conservation. (Note: This sub-objective has been modified. Support is now being provided to the Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP))

   2.2 Facilitate discussions on climate change and snow leopard conservation among the range countries.

   2.3 Update range-wide information on snow leopard trafficking and provide trafficking information to enforcement efforts at the national and regional network levels.

   2.4 Build momentum through a range-wide network of snow leopard conservation.

   2.5 Launch the beginnings of the Alliance on Asia's High Mountain Landscapes.

BACKGOUND INFORMATION

11. Country in which you work – pls. check all that apply

    - Bhutan
    - Nepal
    - India
    - Pakistan
    - Kyrgyzstan
    - Mongolia

12. Sex: Male, Female

13. Do you work directly with the WWF/AHM project? Yes/No

14. If No, how familiar are you with the work of the WWF/AHM project?

15. very familiar/moderately familiar/not familiar

16. Are you a member of the Snow Leopard Network (SLN)?: Yes/No

A. Overview: Progress to date on AHM priority themes

A.1. The AHM project has six priority themes. Pls. rank the importance of the 6 themes in priority order (1=highest, 6=lowest).

1) Water security

2) Climate adaptation

3) Natural resource management

4) Livelihoods

5) Snow leopard conservation

6) Building transnational alliances for conservation of high Asia's endangered species.

A.2. The AHM project has six priority themes. Pls. assess how much progress has been made to date on each theme (high/medium/low/don't know)

1) Water security

2) Climate adaptation

3) Natural resource management

4) Livelihoods

5) Snow leopard conservation

6) Building transnational alliances for conservation of high Asia's endangered species

B. Overview: AHM principal activities

The principal activities of the AHM Project are listed below. Pls. indicate your assessment of progress to date. (significant/modest/limited/don't know)

1) Test and implement climate-smart, site-based conservation, and sustainable development activities

2) Support establishment of the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum Secretariat and implementation of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) which will serve as a range-wide inter-governmental Alliance on Asia's High Mountain Landscapes

3) Support the Inter-governmental Sustainable Development Commission of Central Asia (ISDC)

4) Enhance the existing Snow Leopard Network (SLN)

5) Support the implementation of the regional framework of cooperation of the Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas

C. Overview: AHM work with other regional and international organizations:

Please assess the degree and quality of collaboration between WWF/AHM and the following organizations.

C.1 The degree of collaboration (high, moderate, low, don't know)

1) The Snow Leopard Trust (SLT)

2) TRAFFIC

3) INTERPOL

4) The Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC)

5) Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

6) Panthera

7) The Snow Leopard Network (SLN)

8) The Global Tiger Initiative (GTI)

9) The Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP)

C. 2. The quality of collaboration (excellent, OK, needs improvement, don't know)

1) The Snow Leopard Trust (SLT)
2) TRAFFIC
3) INTERPOL
4) The Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC)
5) Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
6) Panthera
7) The Snow Leopard Network (SLN)
8) The Global Tiger Initiative (GTI)
9) The Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP)

C.3. Are there other regional or international organizations that the AHM project should be working with? If so, please list in priority order and indicate why (how will the collaboration benefit the project and/or benefit the other organization)

a.

b.

c.

D. The 7 AHM Mid-Term Evaluation Questions:

1. To what extent have the activities implemented under the USAID/WWF AHM project had a positive and measurable impact on snow leopard habitat management in the participating countries and sites?

1.1 Overall degree of positive, measurable impact: high/medium/low/don't know

Examples_____

1.2 How successful has monitoring (approach and selection of indicators) been in meaningfully measuring progress towards the AHM project conservation targets including reduction in threats to snow leopards and their habitats?

Ability of the monitoring system to measure meaningful progress: high/medium/low/don't know

Examples _____

1.3 How effectively have the activities utilized adaptive management to improve conservation outcomes?

Effectiveness of adaptive management: high/medium/low/don't know

Examples:_____

2. To what extent have efforts to improve governance and increase capacity to manage protected areas and other land uses accomplished AHM objectives?

2.1 Reduced the rate of ecosystem degradation to date?

greatly reduced/moderately reduced/little reduced/don't know

Examples_____

2.2 Reduced the extent and/or severity of degradation to date?

greatly reduced/moderately reduced/little reduced/don't know

Examples_____

2.3 Contributed to livelihood improvements in the target areas?

high/medium/low/don't know

Examples_____

2.4 Contributed to livelihood improvements that are ecologically sustainable?

high/medium/low/don't know

Examples_____

2.5 Contributed to livelihood improvements that are adapted to climate change?

high/medium/low/don't know

Examples_____

2.6 Permitted different stakeholders to work in improved collaboration towards a common goal?

high/medium/low/don't know

Examples_____

3. To what extent have livelihood-based interventions accomplished AHM objectives:

3.1 Improved the welfare of rural inhabitants in the targeted sites?

high/medium/low/don't know

Examples _____

3.2 Altered incentives towards conservation in the focus areas of the activities?

high/medium/low/don't know

Examples_____

3.3 Improved local capacity for climate change adaptation?

high/medium/low/don't know

Examples_____

4. To what extent has WWF employed a collaborative learning strategy in the design and implementation of AHM project activities in the individual sites and across the project as a whole?

4.1 Has WWF adopted an approach of collaboratively developing and implementing activities with government, NGO and community partners and, if so, how well has this been done?

a. Used a collaborative approach?

e. Yes/No/Don't Know

b. If yes, how well has this been done?

f. Very well/OK/needs improvement/don't know

g. Examples_____

4.2 Has WWF contributed to models and innovations to improved water security as part of an adaptive management approach?

a. Is water security a key element of AHM project activities?

Yes/No/Don't Know

b. If yes, has water security been improved?

Yes/No/Don't know

Examples_____

c. Have there been innovations in water management?

Yes/No/Don't know

d. If yes, pls. provide examples.

Examples_____

4.3 Has learning about water security been institutionalized within target sites as a component of sustainability?

Yes/No/Don't know.

If yes, **how** has this been done?

Examples_____

4.4 Has WWF utilized social and multimedia media and online tools to leverage learning and the AHM project results across the 12 snow leopard habitat countries as well as other interested parties and donors and, if so, what have been the impacts of using such tools to date? [Examples include social media such as Facebook, Twitter and similar; online tools such as interactive websites, webinars and mobile phone tools (SMS, etc.) and multimedia such as videos and radio.]

a. Used social media/multimedia/online tools?

Yes/no/don't know

Examples_____

b. If yes, the impacts of using these tools has been:

high/medium/low/don't know

Examples_____

5. Future AHM project investments.

5.1 Which types of activities seem to offer the most promise for future investments in snow leopard habitat conservation and climate change adaptation by high mountain communities?

Three most promising types of activities, in priority order:

a.

b.

c.

5.2 Which types of activities have been the least effective to date and why?

Three least promising, in priority order:

a.

b.

c.

Why are these types of activity not effective?

a.

b.

c.

5.3 To what extent have AHM project activities been integrated?

Very integrated/moderately integrated/not integrated/don't know

Examples_____

5.4 Does integration of activities improve results?

Yes/No/Don't Know

If yes, please provide your top three examples: of integration and the improved results.

a.

b.

c.

6. The Evaluation seeks to document examples of activities undertaken successfully by AHM in the following categories. Please provide examples in as many categories as you can:

6.1 Development innovation (new ways of doing development),

Examples:

a.

b.

c.

6.2 The effective use of science and technology,

Examples

a.

b.

c.

6.3 Success stories or other communications products

Examples

a.

b.

c.

6.4 Effective inclusion and engagement of women in the planning and implementation of project activities

High/medium/low/don't know

Examples.

a.

b.

c.

Thank you for your valuable input and for providing suggestions on how the WWF/AHM project can be more effective during its remaining 3.5 years.

If you have any questions or would like to provide additional input into the evaluation process, pls. contact George Taylor at taylor.pss@gmail.com

ANNEX C. CASE STUDIES & LESSONS LEARNED

CASE STUDIES

The evaluation team recommends that AHM compile a series of case studies between now and the end of the project in 2017. Five case studies that we believe merit further analysis, synthesis, and dissemination are discussed below. These case studies will build on AHM's comparative advantage, serve as a basis for future programming, inform the public, and add to the literature. Material could be collected in each of the six AHM countries and then synthesized with special attention to the similarities and differences between countries (or regional within countries)

17. Citizen Scientists
18. Transboundary coordination
19. Climate Adaptation interventions
20. Ecotourism & Alternative livelihoods
21. Youth awareness and training

Citizen scientists

Citizen scientists are an important part of the AHM project, engaging community members in patrols, research, and monitoring. How collaboration with citizen scientists will be sustained after AHM funding is a great concern. This case study would describe and analyze the program including management, funding and formal links with government institutions, non-governmental organizations, research organizations and other development networks. Linking these factors to conservation outcomes in AHM will help to identify challenges and opportunities.

Transboundary coordination

Transboundary coordination is an explicit objective of AHM. A case study would capture successes, challenges, and opportunities. Examples of transboundary collaboration include support for GSLEP and the transboundary work in the Kanchenjunga landscape between Nepal and Sikkim. WWF has been working for many years with the governments of both India and Nepal, who have very different approaches for conservation in the Kanchenjunga landscape. What has been learned under AHM? What was learned under earlier USAID/SCAPES support for the Sacred Himalayan Landscape project?

An analysis of transboundary coordination would also outline future possibilities post-AHM. This case study could be carried out under the auspices of the GSLEP Secretariat. It should capture the dialogues and joint planning between WWF Mongolia, WWF China, and WWF Russia that is already taking place.

Climate Adaptation

Climate adaptation is an important element of AHM. As a substantial portion of the project is funded through USAID's Global Climate Change Adaptation funds and targets Asia's High Altitude mountain communities as beneficiaries because they are very vulnerable to climate change.[82] AHM's investments in

[82] Malone et al. 2010, p.64

vulnerability assessments and interventions, including pilot interventions, such as greenhouses, bio-briquettes, spring shed restoration, pasture management, promoting climate resilient livestock, such as yaks, a local essential oil processing plant, and safe waste disposal and recycling schemes could be studied holistically. Pilot interventions that have been successful would be highlighted underscoring their direct climate change adaptation relevance for the concerned beneficiaries. This case study would explore questions such the extent to which interventions support and take into account local and indigenous knowledge and existing adaptive mechanisms which may be critical for future long-term adaptation to changes in glaciers and climate.[83]

Linking climate change adaptation activities to impact as well as indicating scale would be useful. In addition, cross-referencing these activities to data found in the vulnerability assessments and mapping these areas with headwater areas and snow leopard habitat would elucidate important links. A holistic analysis is necessary. For example, the failure to adopt bio-briquettes in Bhutan, due to transportation issues, stands in contrast to Sikkim, where bio-briquettes have been more successful. Analyzing and documenting the factors behind adaptation cases like this is important as it allows for previous interventions in different landscapes to inform future investments.

Ecotourism & Alternative livelihoods

Ecotourism's potential for improving livelihoods and conserving wildlife has been promoted by WWF in AHM and other projects. AHM's support for alternate livelihoods such as homestays in Bhutan and Sikkim, community-based tourism, tourism policy support, as well as interventions such as safe waste disposal and recycling merit further study. This case study would analyze the alternative livelihoods promoted, such as felt products, non-timber forest products, and nature-based tourism. Analysis should include market analysis and consumer acceptability studies to ensure that future investments are evidence-based. Case studies would provide valuable information on whether these alternatives are viable as a significant source of income.

Youth awareness and training

Youth awareness and training activities such as AHM's investments on International Snow Leopard Day have included art competitions, skits, and environmental awareness activities. A case study on engaging youth in conservation and environmental protection would describe what impact this has had over the life of the project. For example, have the youth gone on to become citizen scientists, or participated in further conservation actions? In addition, are trainings and awareness building activities identifying skills gaps where insufficient knowledge is the most serious impediment to behaviors and actions being promoted? For example, in Bhutan, what effect is community training and awareness building on Cordyceps harvesting having both on methods used and on economic benefits including benefit sharing? A case study would highlight these linkages and inform future programming on effective practices for engaging youth and targeting this element of the population for more effective outcomes.

LESSONS LEARNED

AHM, an integrated regional activity with collaboration between diverse actors, provides a valuable opportunity for WWF to compile lessons learned in the field to inform future programming for the wider snow leopard conservation, climate change adaptation and broader environment & development communities.

Important lessons have been learned in two domains: *field programs* and *program implementation*.

1) Field Programs

[83] Malone et al 2010, p.6

The evaluation team recommends that WWF prepare lessons learned from the AHM field programs as a deliverable for 2017. An outline would be developed later this year and field staff assigned to provide their inputs in 2016. This could be done in conjunction with the preparation of the Case Studies discussed above.

2) Program implementation

The evaluation has highlighted a number of issues with and lessons for program implementation in the areas of:

- Project management
- Communications & information sharing
- Monitoring & Reporting
- Working with existing & potential partners
- The socio-cultural dimensions of snow leopard conservation

Details have been provided in the evaluation report and will not be repeated here. It is important to note that these are the areas highlighted by a quick visit to four of the six AHM countries with very limited time spent outside of capital cities. AHM experience in terms of lessons learned is much richer than what has been captured in the evaluation report. AHM staff should be given the opportunity to think carefully about what has been learned and transmit that learning to the broader community with the goals of a) learning from mistakes, and b) building the groundwork for stronger and more effective programs in the future.

ANNEX D. PEOPLE CONTACTED

NAME		TITLE	ORGANIZATION	COUNTRY	M/F
First	Last			(location)	
Brad	Rutherford	Executive Director	Snow Leopard Trust	USA	M
Charudutt	Mishra	Executive Director, SLN	SLT & NCF	India	M
Sibylle	Noras	Executive Committee Member	Snow Leopard Network	Australia	F
Rakhee	Karumbaya	Program Coordinator	Snow Leopard Network	India	F
Rodney	Jackson	Founder/Director	Snow Leopard Conservancy	USA	M
George	Schaller	Vice President	Panthera	USA	M
Tom	McCarthy	Director, Snow Leopard Program	Panthera	USA	M
Rana	Bayrakcismith	Program Manager	Panthera	USA	F
Tanya	Rosen	Country Director	Panthera	Kyrgyz Republic	
				& Tajikistan	F
Joe	Walston	VP, Field Conservation	WCS	USA	M
Peter	Zahler	Snow Leopard Cordinator	WCS	USA	M
David	Mallon	Independent consultant	SLN, Panthera etc	UK	M
Shafqat	Hussain	Professor	Trinity College	USA	M
Mikhail (Misha)	Paltsyn	PhD candidate	CESF, Syracuse NY	USA/Russia	M
Ruby	Ajanee	Assoc. Director for Programs	Aga Khan Dev. Network	USA	F
J. Marc	Foggin	Acting Director	MSRI, Univ. of Central Asia	Kyrgyz Republic	M
Christiane	Roettger	Officer for SL Conservation	NABU	Germany	F
Jim	Sanderson	Consultant	MBZ Conservation Fund	UK	M
Richard	Armstrong	Project Director	CHARIS, CU Boulder	USA	M
Mark	Williams	CoDirector	CHARIS, CU Boulder	USA	M
Vance	Martin	President	The Wild Foundation	USA	M
Eric	Dinerstein	Director, Biodiversity & WL Solutions	RESOLVE & WRI	USA	M
Yoko	Watanabe	Senior Biodiversity Specialist	GEF	USA	F
Emily	Yeh	Professor & Department Chair	University of Colorado,Boulder	USA	F
Maria	Fernandez-Gimenez	Professor, Range Stewardship	Colorado State University	USA	F
Mike	Heiner	Conservation Scientist	TNC	USA	M
Erjen	Khamaganova	Program Officer, Central Asia	Christensen Fund	USA	F
David	Bonnardeaux	NRM Director	PACT	USA	M
Rinjan	Shrestha	Conservation Scientist	WWF/Canada	Canada	M
Stefan	Michel	Biodiversity conservation & NRM	Independent consultant	Tajikistan	M
Yufang	Gao	Executive Director	Everest SL Conservat.Center	China	M
Dekila	Chungyalpa	McCluskey Fellow	Yale Umiversity	USA	F
Jenny	Springer	Director, Global Programs	Rights & Resources Initiative	USA	F

WWF-US					
Tom	Dillon	Senior VP, Forest & Freswater	WWF/US	USA	M
Kate	Newman	VP, Forest & Freshwater	WWF/US	USA	F
Jon	Miceler	Senior Director, Asia Programs	WWF/US	USA	M
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Todd	Shelton	VP, US Government Relations	WWF/US	USA	M
Shaun	Martin	Sr. Director, Climate Adaptation	WWF/US	USA	M
Ryan	Bartlett	Sr. Prog. Officer, Climate Adaptation	WWF/US	USA	M
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Kimberley	Marchant	Director, Public Sector Partnerships	WWF/US	USA	F
Anushika	Kardnaratne	Sr. Program Officer, Safeguards	WWF/US	USA	F
Ginette	Hemley	Senior VP, Wildlife Conservation	WWF/US	USA	F
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Nilanga	Jayasinghe	Prog. Officer, Wildlife Conservation	WWF/US	USA	F
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Michele	Thieme	Sr. Freshwater Scientist	WWF/US	USA	F
Crawford	Allan	Sr. Director, TRAFFIC	WWF/US	USA	M
Debbie	Brandan	Financial Manager, AHM	WWF/US	USA	F
USAID/Washington					
Mary	Melnyk	Env. Security & Resilience Team Leader	USAID/Asia Bureau	USA	F
Todd	Johnson	Forestry & Climate Change Specialist	USAID/Asia Bureau	USA	M
Jerry	Bisson	Director, Technical Support Office	USAID/Asia Bureau	USA	M
USAID/NEPAL					
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USAID/INDIA					
Mark	Newton	Environment Officer	USAID/India	India	M
Varghese	Paul	Senior Forestry Advisor	USAID/India	India	M
Soumitri	Das	Forestry Specialist	USAID/India	India	M
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USAID/CENTRAL ASIA					
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Robyn	McCutcheon	ESTH Officer	U.S. Embassy	Kazakhstan	F
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Amy	Lovejoy	Director, Economic Development	USAID/Central Asia	Kazakhstan	F
Jeremy	Williammee	Deputy, Democracy & Governance	USAID/Central Asia	Kazakhstan	M
Kristine	Smathers	Director, Financial Management	USAID/Central Asia	Kazakhstan	F
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USAID/MONGOLIA					
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BHUTAN					
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Sither	Tenzin	Program Officer (M&E)	WWF/Bhutan	Bhutan	M
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Tshering	Dhendup	Chief Forest Officer	WCNP	Bhutan	M
Tenzin		Sr. Forest Officer	WCNP	Bhutan	M
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Tenzin	Choigay	Research Officer	UWICE	Bhutan	M
Kinley	Choden	Research Officer	UWICE	Bhutan	M
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Tshering	Gyeltshen	Principal Research Officer	Watershed Mgmt Division	Bhutan	M
Nidup	Tshering	Assit. Livestock Officer	Watershed Mgmt Division	Bhutan	M
Soman	Wangchuk	Chief	Wildlife Conservation Div.	Bhutan	M
Dechen	Lham	International Conventions Section	Wildlife Conservation Div.	Bhutan	F
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NEPAL					
Ghana	Gurung	Conservation Director	WWF/Nepal	Nepal	M
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INDIA					
Ravi	Singh	Secretary General & CEO	WWF/India	India	M
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Prerna	Bindra	Environmental journalist	Freelance	India	F
PAKISTAN					
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KAZAKHSTAN					
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KYRGYZ REPUBLIC					
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Farida	Balbakova	Project Leader	WWF/Russia	Kyrgyz Republic	F
Azat	Alamanov	Central Tien Shan Project	Consultant	Kyrgyz Republic	M
Kyial	Alygukova	Head of Secretariat	GSLEP	Kyrgyz Republic	F
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Koustubh	Sharma	Deputy Head of Secretariat	GSLEP	Kyrgyz Republic	M
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Tolkunbek	Asykulov	Director	NABU	Kyrgyz Republic	M
Lira	Joldubaeva	National Coordinator	FLERMONECA	Kyrgyz Republic	F
Aitkul	Burhanov	General Director	Kyrgyz Assoc of Forest &		
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OTHER WWFs					
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Cristina	Eghenter	Asia Coordinator, SD4C Team	WWF/Indonesia	Indonesia	F

ANNEX E. SOURCES CONSULTED

Note: Any exploration into the fascinating world of snow leopards should begin by consulting three key resources:

- the bibliography maintained by the Snow Leopard Network http://www.snowleopardnetwork.org/sln/ListBibliography.php with 1100+ references and 1000+ full text documents,
- a Snow Leopard Blog curated by Sibylle Noras http://snowleopardblog.com , and
- an extensive list of snow leopard links http://www.snowleopardnetwork.org/sln/Links.php

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WWF/snow leopards: https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/snow-leopard

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Global Tiger Initiative: http://globaltigerinitiative.org/who-we-are/

University of Colorado/Contribution to High Asia Runoff from Ice & Snow (CHARIS): https://nsidc.org/charis/

Glaciers, Climate and Society: http://glaciers.uoregon.edu/index.html

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ANNEX F. EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK

Mid-term Program Evaluation of the Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities Project

Statement of Work

1. Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is for the Consultant to assess the performance of the Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities Project (known as Asia High Mountains (AHM) project) midway through the life of the project. The project is funded by USAID under Associate Cooperative Agreement Award No. AID-OAA-LA-12-00003 Under the Leader with Associates Cooperative Agreement with World Wildlife Fund, no. EEM-A-00-09-00006-00.

2. Objectives

The primary objective of this mid-term evaluation is to reflect on the design of the AHM Project and specifically whether the sum of the various individual activities are able to amount to a larger, more significant set of impacts region-wide. Given the low population densities in these high mountain environments, the challenge for the project has been to determine whether the impacts of the various activities in the participating communities can have a significant impact on landscape management and snow leopard habitat, in particular; and how the interplay with regional alliance building component through participation in the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program may be contributing to impact. A related objective of the mid-term evaluation is to assess lessons learned and document success stories from the AHM that could inform future program design (i.e., is there value-added when integrating biodiversity and climate change adaptation into sectoral projects (e.g. watershed management, economic growth, etc.) or are stand-alone projects focused on either biodiversity conservation or climate change adaptation more effective).

The evaluation will also help determine whether the activities under this program framework have been successfully addressing and meeting their objectives effectively and complemented one another to conserve biodiversity while also improving local livelihoods. The results of the evaluation will be relevant to other biodiversity and climate change adaptation projects and programs around the world and may feed into meta-reviews and assessments being conducted through USAID/Washington.

Though this is primarily a learning focused mid-term evaluation, the Consultant shall also incorporate innovative methods in knowledge management, especially identifying instances or the potential for using USAID's collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA) methodology in order to better understand underlying correlations or causal relationships, potential program impacts, and the reasons for the project's successes and/or shortcomings.[85]

3. Background Information

[85] For more information about the CLA methodology, see the video at this link: http://usaidlearninglab.org/library/collaborating-learning-and-adapting-more-effective-development-programs

3.1 Project Setting. Asia's high mountains are critical to the survival of well over a billion people and the economies of a number of Asian countries. This is because the complex of mountain ranges, including the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH), Karakorum, Pamir, Altai-Sayan and Tien Shan ranges give rise to some of Asia's most important river systems supplying water downstream. The mountains themselves have numerous complex and diverse ecosystems owing to the great changes in elevation, rainfall and topography over short distances. This is especially true for the eastern HKH but is also the case for most of the rest of the mountain ranges as well.

However, climate change is causing an especially rapid rise in mean annual temperature in Asia's high mountain ranges and this threatens the integrity of these upland and mountain ecosystems and also the communities in these mountains. In addition, climate change is causing changes in rainfall, snow melt and glacial retreat that also affect the vital water supplies of the major river basins these mountains support. Finally, and of immediate concern to the AHM Project, climate change is leading to the spread of forests to higher elevations, especially in the HKH region, compressing the range of the snow leopard, which prefers alpine meadows and other pasture lands as does a number of its principal prey species. The spread of forests to higher elevations may also be reducing the area of pasturage for domestic animals of some mountain communities. Since very high elevations establish a limit beyond which flora and fauna cannot survive, overall habitat for open range species is being reduced. This is especially problematic for the snow leopard, which requires a very large hunting range. Because of this, any reasonable management strategy for its survival must be a transboundary effort to be at all effective.

WWF has been working in the Asia high mountain region for many years on protected areas management and conservation of fragile ecosystems as well as climate change adaptation.

The AHM Project. The AHM Project has a life of project from Oct. 1, 2012 to Sept. 30, 2017. The project's total estimated budget is $8,371,119 of which USAID's share is $7,343,258 and WWF's match is $1,272,720.

The AHM Project targets high mountain landscapes and associated communities and snow leopard habitat in six of the twelve known snow leopard range nations, specifically Bhutan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, and Pakistan. All six of these nations are currently suffering from ecological threats such as overgrazing of alpine meadows, poaching and retaliatory killing of wildlife, declining availability of water resources, climate change impacts, and poorly planned infrastructure as well as other more localized issues. In addition, the montane forests in the Himalayan nations suffer from a variety of other threats, including deforestation, unsustainable harvest of non-timber forest products (NTFP), and heightened forest fire danger.

The principal objectives of this project include: 1) promoting climate-smart management of high mountain landscapes and snow leopard habitat for sustainable development, and 2) improving transnational collaboration on climate change adaptation and snow leopard conservation in Asia's high mountain landscapes.

This is the first coordinated, transboundary project across a substantial part of the range of the snow leopard in high Asia, rather than just in isolated localities. Key components of this program will be to increase livelihoods, food and water security for high mountain communities in the face of a rapidly changing climate; increase the resiliency of high mountain ecosystems to climate change impacts; increase community participation in biodiversity conservation; increase efforts to conserve the endangered snow leopard; and build transnational cooperation to address all of these issues.[86]

The principal activities of the AHM Project include the following:

[86] Taken from the 2014 Annual Report of the AHM Project, p. 1.

- Test and implement site-based conservation and sustainable development activities;
- Support establishment of the Global Snow Leopard Conservation Forum Secretariat and implementation of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program which will serve as a range-wide inter-governmental Alliance on Asia's High Mountain Landscapes;
- Support the Inter-governmental Sustainable Development Commission of Central Asia;
- Enhance the existing Snow Leopard Network; and
- Support the implementation of the regional framework of cooperation of the Climate Summit for a Living Himalayas.

In the six participating countries, WWF is working with a variety of different institutions. These include:

- Government agencies at the national level with jurisdiction over protected areas and/or wildlife conservation
- District or other sub-national government agencies in areas covering snow leopard habitat
- National and/or local conservation non-government al organizations (NGOs), and
- Local communities and their community level organizations.

In addition, WWF works with regional and international organizations with an interest in snow leopard conservation. These include:

- The Snow Leopard Trust (SLT), an NGO based in Seattle Washington.
- TRAFFIC, which is the joint WWF-IUCN wildlife trade organization based in Gland Switzerland.
- INTERPOL, the International Criminal Police Organization
- The Snow Leopard Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society, and Panthera, which are three long running US-based NGOs with programs dedicated to snow leopard conservation.
- The Snow Leopard Network (SLN), which is a virtual network of snow leopard researchers and conservation workers that serves as on online forum for discussing the latest news and developments on the research and conservation of snow leopards.
- The Global Tiger Initiative (GTI), which is an alliance of governments, international organizations, civil society organizations, the conservation and scientific community, and the private sector committed to working together toward a common agenda to save wild tigers from extinction.

To achieve Objective 1: *Promote climate-smart management of high mountain landscapes and snow leopard habitat for sustainable development*, the WWF work plan has utilized climate change vulnerability assessments, to identify risks, threats and opportunities for climate change adaptation in high mountain communities. It is focusing on governance related activities and also targeting poor and marginalized communities as well as women for improved natural resource management and snow leopard habitat conservation. It expects to leverage the results of the activities in the six target countries to extend them to the other six through a small grants initiative.

To achieve Objective 2: *Improve transnational collaboration on climate change adaptation and snow leopard conservation in Asia's high mountain landscapes,* WWF will scale up community-based conservation and promote transboundary cooperation and agreements. WWF is also working with the above-mentioned

regional and international partners. In targeting these particular organizations, the aim is to improve knowledge by increasing the availability of data, sharing lessons, and supporting implementation of climate-smart conservation efforts across the snow leopards' range.

The activities to be undertaken to achieve the two objectives have been grouped into six "primary themes." These include:

22. Water security
23. Climate adaptation
24. Natural resource management
25. Livelihoods
26. Snow leopard conservation
27. Building transnational alliances for conservation of high Asia's endangered species

WWF is employing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for the AHM Project. Activities associated with the M&E system include the following:

- Preparation of a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for the entire project period (prepared as a separate stand-alone document) which closely adheres to WWF's standards for Conservation Project Management;
- Designation of at least one WWF staff member in each participating project office who will be responsible for conducting internal project M&E;
- Creation of a centralized database for project monitoring data, reports, and other output;
- Submission of semi-annual project progress reports to the project donor;
- Submission of an annual report with Performance Management Plan (PMP) to the project donor;
- Periodic site visits to project offices by WWF US staff members external to the project to check individual project achievements against project objectives and perform financial auditing;
- Periodic collection and sharing of lessons learned and best practices with all project offices and partners;
- Implementation of adaptive management as needed to achieve project goals, objectives, and targets.

The structure of project M&E activities will be multi-level. At the ground level, monitoring of results in each project country will be conducted by on-site field staff and will include interviewing project participants about both project benefits and shortcomings as well as quantifying results in terms of pre-selected project indicators; both those specified by the donor and custom indicators developed by WWF. The intermediate level of oversight will be conducted by the central project management staff, who will compile monitoring data and lessons learned from all project countries, prepare semi-annual and annual reports based on these findings, manage the project database, and conduct periodic site visits to all project countries to verify project achievements. The third and highest level of project monitoring will be conducted by WWF-US staff external to the project, who will conduct intermittent project

progress and budget checks. Based on findings of project monitoring, project activities will be adapted as necessary to insure successful achievement of the projects goals and objectives.[87]

This M&E system describes a conventional client reporting oriented M&E Plan and not necessarily one that involves collaborative learning between WWF and project participants with a focus on outcomes. This will be addressed in the mid-term evaluation tasks, below.

Additional background information on the AHM Project can be found from the following sources:

WWF. 2014. Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities: 2014-2015 Work Plan. Washington, DC.

WWF. 2014. Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities: Annual Report 10/01/2013 - 09/30/2014. Washington, DC.

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The Bishkek Declaration on the Conservation of Snow Leopards, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, October 2013

4. Target Audience

The primary audience for this mid-term evaluation is USAID/Asia Bureau's Environment Officer, the originator of the cooperative agreement (CA), and the results may be used in potentially modifying the terms of the agreement to improve impacts and outcomes if needed. Other target audiences are WWF, participating USAID bilateral and regional missions and participating national governments and national and international NGOs. The mid-term evaluation may also be of interest to USAID's Climate Change Office and Forestry and Biodiversity Office with respect to project design and the intersection of nature conservation and climate change adaptation. It may also document success stories to contribute to outreach materials on USAID's approach and the value of integration. Lastly, the final evaluation report will be publically available through the Development Experience Clearinghouse so that the evaluation will be accessible to a broad range of stakeholders.

[87] Taken from the AHM Project FY 13 Work Plan, p. 95.

5. Tasks

The Consultant shall conduct a mid-term evaluation and analysis of the AHM Project to document actual individual and cumulative results. The specific evaluation questions should be used as a guide to the development of the evaluation questionnaire and do not necessarily need to be addressed in the order set out in this scope of work.

1.1 **Evaluation Questions.** The Contractor shall at a minimum, address the following **questions** in the mid-term evaluation report:

1. To what extent have the activities implemented under the USAID/WWF AHM CA had a positive impact on snow leopard habitat management in the participating countries and sites that can be measured?
    a) How successfully has monitoring been (approach and selection of indicators) in meaningfully measuring progress towards conservation targets or reduction in threats to snow leopards and their habitats?
    b) How effectively have the activities utilized adaptive management to improve conservation outcomes?
2. To what extent have efforts to improve governance and increase capacity to manage protected areas and other land uses (1) reduced the rate and extent of ecosystem degradation to date, (2) contributed to ecologically sustainable and climate adaptive livelihood improvements in the target areas, and (3) permitted different stakeholders to work in improved collaboration towards a common goal?
3. To what extent have livelihood-based interventions (1) improved the welfare of rural inhabitants in the targeted sites, (2) altered incentives towards conservation in the focus areas of the activities, and (3) improved local capacity for climate change adaptation?
4. To what extent has WWF employed a collaborative learning strategy in the design and implementation of CA activities in the individual sites and across the CA as a whole?
    a) Has WWF adopted an approach of collaboratively developing activities with government, NGO and community partners and, if so, how has this been done?
    b) How has WWF contributed to models and innovations to improved water security in its adaptive management approach? How has learning been institutionalized within target sites as a component of sustainability?
    c) Has WWF utilized social and multimedia media and online tools to leverage learning and the CAs results across the 12 snow leopard habitat countries as well as other interested parties and donors and, if so, what have been the impacts of using such tools to date? [Examples include social media such as Facebook, Twitter and similar; online tools such as interactive websites, webinars and mobile phone tools (SMS, etc.) and multimedia such as videos and radio.]
5. Which types of activities seem to offer the most promise for future investments in snow leopard habitat conservation and high mountain climate change adaptation? Which have been the least effective to date and why? Does integration improve results?
6. Is the CA contributing to Water security?
7. The Evaluation will document instances of development innovation, the effective use of science and technology, success stories and effective inclusion of women in the project whenever possible.

1.2 **The Mid-term Evaluation Report.** The Contractor shall submit a mid-term evaluation report (5 hard copies and an electronic copy in Microsoft Word and PDF) no later than 10 days after receipt of comments on the draft report by USAID and partners. The final report format will comply with the requirements set forth in the Agency's 2011 Evaluation Policy, and shall at a minimum include:

a) USAID branded cover page

b) Executive summary: 3-5 pages summarizing key points, including activity purpose and background, key evaluation questions, methods, findings, conclusions, and recommendations

c) Data Methods and Analysis

d) Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

e) Appendices as appropriate

1.3 **Deliverables.** The Contractor shall be responsible for the following Deliverables and Reports:

28. Mid-Term Evaluation Inception Report
29. Presentation of initial findings
30. Draft Evaluation Report
31. Documentation of two (2) Success Stories and Lessons Learned
32. Final Mid-Term Evaluation Report
33. Preparation and submission of a PowerPoint Presentation, and
34. Final Report uploaded to USAID's the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC).

2. Evaluation Methodology

In carrying out the evaluation tasks, the Contractor shall use participatory methods that will engage all relevant stakeholders that have been involved in the implementation of USAID/WWF AHM Project. The evaluation team shall utilize a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of sufficient rigor to produce valid and credible conclusions.

The Contractor shall use the defined methodology to address each evaluation question. Illustrative activities and corresponding methods of data collection and analysis must be clearly linked to each evaluation methodology. Innovative or established methods for better understanding how program activities are correlated with or cause conservation and climate change adaptation results (and outcomes if available) must be described where appropriate. The evaluation team's level of effort shall be in line with the corresponding timeline, the evaluation methodology, data collection and analysis, and subsequent report.

USAID's 2011 Evaluation Policy requires relevant USAID Monitoring and Evaluation Specialists to participate in the evaluation of USAID funded projects by working along with the Contractor. The Evaluation Policy also strongly encourages the participation of host country partners in the evaluation. The Evaluation Contractor will confer with the USAID/Asia Environment Officer and relevant Asia Missions staff on the practical participation and form of participation of USAID staff and partners. This participation may extend to include Biodiversity and/or Climate Change Experts from USAID/Washington. The USAID staff will be part of the evaluation team in-line with the Agency's efforts to strengthen learning from its own experience. They will participate in:

- Approving the final evaluation design and implementation plan,
- Instrument development and piloting,
- Data Collection,
- Data Analysis, and

- Synthesis of Results.

It should be noted, however, that only the Contracting Officer or the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) will have the authority to provide direction in terms of execution of the evaluation work. The Contracting Officer is the only warranted USAID official with the authority to make decisions that affect the scope, purpose, or price of the work ordered.

With regards to findings, conclusions, and proposed actions generated through the evaluation, these additional technical requirements and criteria to ensure the quality of the evaluation report shall observed:

35. Findings must have sufficient evidence and documentation that a reader of the findings can be confident that the findings are based on strong quantitative or qualitative evidence. Evaluators should take into consideration economic, political, and environmental contexts.
36. Evaluation conclusions must be presented based on the evidence collected by the evaluation team. Because conclusions involve interpretation of collected data, they should be explicitly justified. If and when necessary, the evaluator should state his/her assumptions, judgments and value premises so that readers can better understand and assess them.
37. Findings, results, and conclusions must be disaggregated by gender, and gender-specific impacts of the activities should be discussed. In particular, livelihood impacts of the program activities should be disaggregated by gender, and relevant conclusions and recommendations should be made with regard to these gender-specific impacts. Likewise, the evaluation of improved governance efforts should consider the extent to which women were involved and empowered to make decisions and/or contribute to decision-making processes.
38. The evaluation report must represent a thoughtful, well-researched and well organized effort to objectively evaluate what has worked to date in the project, what did not and why.
39. The evaluation report shall address all evaluation questions included in the scope of the evaluation.
40. The evaluation report must include the scope of the evaluation as an annex. All modifications to the scope of the evaluation, whether in technical requirements, evaluation questions, evaluation team composition, methodology or timeline need to be agreed upon in writing by the COR.
41. Evaluation methodology shall be explained in detail and all tools used in conducting the evaluation such as questionnaires, checklists and discussion guides must be included in an Annex in the final report.
42. Limitations to the evaluation shall be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, where used, etc.). Sufficient information must be provided so that a reader can make an informed judgment as to the reliability, validity and generalizability of the findings.
43. Evaluation findings must be presented as analyzed facts, evidence and data and not based on anecdotes, hearsay or the compilation of people's opinions. Findings must be specific, concise and supported by strong quantitative or qualitative evidence.
44. Recommendations must be supported by a specific set of findings.
45. Recommendations must be action-oriented, practical and specific, with defined responsibility for the action.
46. Sources of information shall be properly identified and listed in an annex.

3. Reporting Relationship and Contact Person

The Consultant will report to the AREFS Chief of Party, Richard Rapier at richard.rapier@engilitycorp.com. The USAID Contract Officer Representative (COR) and their representatives will provide guidance as needed. Various in-country points of contact will be identified by the COR.

4. Evaluation Logistics

The USAID Contract Officer Representative (COR) will arrange for an initial introductory meeting with appropriate staff of AHM Project partners. The COR or her representative may participate in meetings with AHM Project partners. A general list of relevant stakeholders and key partners will be provided to the evaluation team by the COR.

5. Performance Standards

The Contractor's performance will be measured according to the following standards:

i. Timeliness of response

ii. Quality of work

iii. Adherence to Inception Report or Scope of Work

6. Performance Period

The assignment will begin on or about May 15, 2015 until on or about July 15, 2015

Anticipated Level of Effort

Task and Deliverable	Time (Work Days)
Mid-Term Evaluation Inception Report	3
Field work and Presentation of initial findings	25
Draft Evaluation Report	5
Documentation of two (2) Success Stories and Lessons Learned	5
Final Mid-Term Evaluation Report	5
Preparation and submission of a PowerPoint Presentation, and Final Report upload to USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse	2
Total	45

7. Required Qualifications for the Consultant

A. Education: Master's degree or equivalent degree required.
B. Experience:
   i. At least 15 years of experience related to monitoring and evaluation of international development programs
   ii. Advanced knowledge of environmental, biodiversity, climate change, and natural resource management programming
   iii. Development experience in South and Central Asia Region
   iv. Working on interdisciplinary and/or multi-cultural team environments
   v. Fluency in spoken and written English
   vi. Strong interpersonal skills
C. Other Requirements:
   i. Ability to work during the performance period

ii. Ability to travel and conduct field work
iii. Ability to obtain medical clearance

8. Selection Criteria

Successful offeror will be selected through a review of the CV provided. The following criteria will be used to evaluate the applications:

(30%) Demonstrated advanced knowledge of environmental, biodiversity, climate change, and natural resource management monitoring and evaluation

(30%) Demonstrated geographic experience in South and Central Asia

(30%) Demonstrated advanced knowledge in USAID monitoring and evaluation methodologies

(10%) Demonstrated writing ability.

9. Application Submission Instructions

Send your proposal by email to: richard.rapier@engilitycorp.com

The proposal must include the following:

- Current Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Reference list, including most recent three assignments
- An expression of interest and your proposal to accomplish deliverables not to exceed two pages
- Completed cost proposal using cost proposal template and documentation to support proposed rate and other associated costs such as travel, per diem, etc. with one page cost narrative.

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