Conservation of Iranian Wetlands

Annual Report 2012

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Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project Annual Report - 2012

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Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

bcm	Billion Cubic Meters
mcm	Million Cubic Meters
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CPD	Country Programme Document
CDR	Combined Delivery Report
DCHT	Department for Cultural Heritage and Tourism
DoE	Department of Environment
EA	East Azerbaijan
ECO-IES	Economic Cooperation Organization – Institute of Environmental Science and Technology
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GOIR	Government of Islamic Republic of Iran
IR Iran	Islamic Republic of Iran
LP	Lake Parishan
LU	Lake Uromiyeh
LUB	Lake Uromiyeh Basin
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoJA	Ministry of Jihad Agriculture
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOE	Ministry of Energy
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MRT	Ministry of Roads and Transport
MP	Management Plan
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation

NPD	National Project Director
NPM	National Project Manager
NPT	National Project Team
NRO	Natural Resources Organisation
NWCSAP	National Wetlands Strategy & Action Plan
SPAC	Office of Strategic Planning Affairs and Control of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran
SW	Shadegan Wetland
SIPA	Senior International Project Advisor
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPR	Tripartite Review
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WA	West Azerbaijan
WPA	Wetland Protected Area

Executive Summary

Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project in I. R. Iran

This project has been established through the cooperation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Iranian Department of Environment (DoE). It was brought about because of the drastically worsening condition of Iranian wetlands and to develop approaches to support Iran's implementation of its international environmental commitments, notably the 1971 Ramsar Convention.

The aim of this project is to systematically remove, or substantially mitigate threats to the biodiversity and sustainability of Lake Uromiyeh (LU), Lake Parishan (LP) and Shadegan Wetland (SW). In doing this it also aims to ensure that the lessons learned through this Project are absorbed within Iran's Wetland Protected Area (WPA) management systems. As many of Iran's wetlands face similar threats, particularly the tendency for key threats to originate within the wider river basin area outside of WPA boundaries, a demonstration of the removal of these threats will be of broad relevance.

As a result, the project places substantial emphasis on demonstrating approaches to conservation, sustainable use and threat removal/mitigation at WPAs within the Lake Uromiyeh Ecological Zone, Lake Parishan and Shadegan Wetland. The ecological zone of LU includes the 5,000 km^2 Hypersaline Lake and National Park in the highlands of north-western Iran, together with various ecologically connected and smaller satellite wetlands of international importance. Further support also goes towards ensuring conservation and sustainable use of LP and SW, which are located in Fars and Khuzestan Provinces respectively. In the final years of the project, considerable efforts were also made to roll out CIWP achievements and lessons learnt and institutionalize them within the system of WPA management.

For the last ten years, Iran has also been experiencing a severe ongoing drought. As a result, the UNDP and the DoE have collaborated to develop a Drought Risk Management System for wetlands. This has also been added as an additional component of this Project for Lake Urumiyeh demonstration site which led to a comprehensive Drought Risk Management Plan for the Lake.

Outlines of the key Project facts are noted in Tables 2 and 4.

This is an annual report for the activities of the *Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project* (the Project) for 2012. Although the headings may differ, this Executive Summary provides a breakdown of the key points from the body of this report

Major Results in 2012

Key results that have culminated in 2012 are as follows:

a) Preparation of LU satellite wetlands management plans

- The Gurigol (LU satellite wetland) Management plan was finalized and planned to be signed and notified by planning council and the Governor of East Azerbaijan Province.

- Baseline studies on Ghareghesheshlagh (LU satellite wetland) basin were carried out and a management plan was developed for this satellite wetland and is ready to be approved by EA governor.

b) Implementation and monitoring of Demonstration sites management plans

- SW 2011 monitoring report was prepared and pre-final drafts of the LU and LP reports were prepared by the secretariats.
- The bilingual integrated management plan of Shadegan Wetland was published.
- 44,500,000,000 Rls (1,600,000$, 1$=25000Rls) was allocated by DoE to support financial sustainable arrangements for implementation of management plans at demonstration sites.
- A guideline was developed by the project on methods for revising management plans in five-year periods.

~~d)~~c) Prepare and Publish bilingual summary baseline report for LU,LP and SW

- The LP summary baseline report and LU bilingual summary baseline report are finalized; a synthesis report for SW was produced by SW water and agriculture working group.

~~e)~~d) Resolution of Land Use Conflicts for LP

- The process for issuing the title deeds of disputable lands at LP started with cooperation of Kazeroun judiciary office and LP management committee and the boundaries of non-disputable areas were defined in 2012.

~~f)~~e) Completion of Boundary markers for demonstration sites

- Process of boundary marking started for SW and areas for most of the wetland were identified, markers were constructed and will be installed in 2013. For LP, although 60% of high-sensitivity zone was marked, due to land conflict issues only more than 30% of the borders were marked and the rest will be accomplished after resolution of land conflicts.

~~g)~~f) Conservation measures and monitoring of biodiversity and endangered species

- To develop a model for monitoring and conservation of endangered species following results were achieved in 2012:
    a. A comprehensive baseline study on situation of otter around LP.
    b. A participatory management plan for Otter monitoring and conservation.
    c. Training of teachers as trainers and more than 250 students and local people around LP.
    d. Training of local people on Otter monitoring skills.
    e. Publication of 3 books and 1 brochure.
- Maintenance of *in-situ* and *ex-situ* ponds for saving endangered species at LP in drought situation continued in 2012
- A MOA was signed between West Azerbaijan DOE and WA Water Authorities for restoration of LU satellite wetlands (Yadegarlu, Shurgol, Durgeh Sangi, and Sulduz) and allocating 3 mcm of water as Water right of these wetlands.
- A mutual MOA was signed with Urumiyeh University for studies on "Documentation of Lake Urumiyeh Ecological Changes".

~~h)~~g) **Alternative/Supplementary Livelihoods initiatives**

- A field survey was undertaken in 3 villages surrounding Gharagheshlagh satellite wetland and options for alternative livelihood were recommended.
- In cooperation with a local NGO, Khuzestan DOE developed and implemented an alternative livelihood assessment in two pilot villages around Shadegan Wetland.

~~i)~~h) **Shadegan Wetland Fishery Strategy**

- The final version of SW fishery strategy was prepared, agreed and approved by all the stakeholders.

~~j)~~i) **Effective role of local communities in wetland management**

- In 2012 the project held some training/consultative meetings with SW local representatives to promote their effectiveness in related decision-making processes. A similar process was practiced with local communities and NGOs of Lake Parishan.

~~k)~~j) **Support local community initiatives for wetland wise use and management plan implementation**

- To establish the eco-village concept in Yousef Abad village (around Gurigol satellite Wetland), the Project trained the "Conservation of Wildlife and Aquatics" NGO to undertake environmental evaluation in this village. This NGO then prepared 3 educational books on wetlands management and will organize some training courses and educational field visits for teachers and students near Gurigol.
- Several training courses were held for local communities of Kaniborazan satellite wetland on ecotourism related subjects, and the ecotourism management plan was developed.

~~l)~~k) **Efficient Working of demonstration site Secretariats and management structures**

- The Project has focused on ensuring effective and continuous working of these structures in its final year of implementation through the following steps: 1. Capacity building and training of secretariat staff, 2. Development of a timetable for regular meetings of working groups and committees, 3. Notifying timetables to the secretariats of related working groups and 4. Development of a post-CIWP exit action plan with secretariats
- One meeting of LU national committee, two meetings of LU technical committee and 4 meetings of LU Water and Agriculture Working Group were held.
- LP and SW local and provincial management committees had two meeting each and technical working groups had meeting according to their timetable.
- The web portal of Lake Urumiyeh was designed and activated in 2012 with cooperation of WA DoE and is available through this address ;(http://urmialake.ir/).
- The Technical committee of LU had two meetings to decide about implementation of 24 LU priority projects and water right allocation.
- The Project supported and facilitated holding several provincial meetings of LU regional council with presence of high-level managers
- Inviting representatives of environmental bureau of the Ministry of Interior to get acquainted with ongoing activities of the project.

~~m)~~l) **Monitoring Water Right and Water Share of Demonstration Wetlands**

- Water right of LU and Water share of each of the surrounding provinces has been monitored by the management committees.

- Guidelines for monitoring the amount of LU inflow were prepared by the project consultant.
- 3,000,000,000 Rls (125000 $) was allocated for establishment of two hydrometric stations in LU.
- The Drought Risk Management project was mainstreamed to identify the water allocation measures in drought situation.
- SW water and agriculture working group decided to start the study for SW water requirement but due to time-taking nature of water need studies, minimum water need of SW would be temporarily set as 1.6 bcm a year.

~~n~~)m) Developing and practicing sustainable agriculture in demonstration sites

- In cooperation with the Ministry of Jihad Agriculture (MOJA) a program was launched to establish Field Farmer Schools and demonstration farms to demonstrate and train local farmers about water saving methods as well as sustaining agricultural procedures through optimizing the use of agricultural chemicals. This program which was implemented in 72 hectares of farm lands resulted in 50% reduction in water consumption, 44% reduction in usage of chemical fertilizers and poisons and 18% increase of farms performance in a pilot site around SiranGuli wetland (one of LU satellite wetlands).
- In Yusefabad Village around Gurigol, a project was initiated to establish an eco-village and production of organic crops. In the first phase of this project in cooperation with an organic inspection company authorized by the EU, all the crops produced in more than 100 ha of gardens were assessed from organic point of view.
- LP sustainable agriculture pilot sites are used as demonstration sites for other farmers in the region and several visits were paid to these sites by different groups including managers, experts and farmers.

~~o~~)n) Capacity development and engagement of DoE managers and experts in line with CIWP exit strategy

- A training package including 12 categories was developed for experts of DoE habitats office, 4 of which were covered in separate training sessions.
- In an extensive collaboration with the University of Environment, 7 training courses were designed for capacity building of DOE staff at different levels. These courses were included in DOE's training calendar.
- A four-week professional training package was developed by CIWP and DOE technical offices to enhance capacity of provincial DOE experts for establishing wetland management secretariats

~~p~~)o) Support DOE to apply ecosystem approach for other Iranian wetlands

- A joint work plan was developed and implemented by CIWP and the DOE habitats office for safe and smooth transferring of project responsibilities.
- A new management structure for wetlands at national and local levels was proposed and followed up through the NWCSAP and will be enforced following approval of this document.
- CIWP provided technical support to the DOE habitats office to develop action plans and (an approximately 100 billion Rls=3.5 million $) budget expenditure schemes for management and conservation of important wetlands of 18 provinces.

- Project held a number of training sessions to introduce integrated management approaches to provincial senior experts of DOE, including a side-event workshop during the "national conference on wetlands engineering and management" and a training course on the ecosystem approach, organized by Ramsar Regional Centre for west and central Asia.

~~q)~~p) **National Wetland water allocation guidelines**

- The baseline studies, guideline and codes of practice for calculating the water requirements of wetlands have been prepared and will be finalized and published.

~~r)~~q) **National wetland conservation strategy and action plan**

- Following participatory development of the NWCSAP the final version of this document and the proposed Resolution were revised by CIWP and the Legislative office of DOE and officially sent to be approved by the cabinet.

~~s)~~r) **Development of Iranian Wetland Database**

- The Beta Version of the wetland databank framework, software and data entry manual were finalized and introduced to provincial DoE's and related technical offices at national level to enable them to upload their data on the database. Based on feedbacks on data uploading process and other gaps, the needed corrections were applied to the software and an offline version of the databank was developed. To embed the ownership of the software within DoE and to maximize the security of the system, necessary steps were taken to transfer the databank to DoE's server. It was planned to officially launch the databank in early 2013.

~~t)~~s) **Sharing achievements and lessons learnt at national and international levels**

- CIWP actively supported and participated in related national and international conferences, to share achievements and lessons learnt through submission of articles, lectures, side-events, exhibitions, distribution of awareness raising materials. These events include:
    i. "Management and engineering wetlands conference" (submitting 8 articles)
    ii. Attending the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Ramsar Contracting Parties (COP11) in Romania from 6-13 July 2012 (holding a side event)
    iii. Attending International Wetlands Symposium in Nepal from 7-10 November 2012, in Nepal. (Submitting 2 Articles)
    iv. Technical support, Submission and presentation of articles in LU international conference (Urumiyeh).
    v. Attendance in a three day workshop on Climate Change in Bangkok.
    vi. Attending a Conference held by society of consultant engineers on "root cause analysis of sustainability or non-sustainability of wetlands".
- CIWP supported different groups to visit achievements of the project at site levels, these visits include:
    1. Visit of a Turkish NGO to Lake Urumiyeh.
    2. Visit of a World Bank agriculture project to Lake Parishan and sustainable agriculture pilot sites.
    3. Visit of Anzali wetland management joint project with JICA to Lake Parishan.
    4. Visit of high-level governmental managers and experts to project demonstration sites.

5. Presenting CIWP experiences and achievements at high-level national decision making bodies including presidential scientific and technological deputy and the research centre of the Parliament.

~~u)~~t) Preparation of wetland management toolkit based on CIWP experiences

- In order to document and classify the CIWP approach, experiences and achievements a user-friendly toolkit was developed by the project team, facilitated by a consultant. The framework of the toolkit includes 8 main categories with more than 30 tools covering different subjects on applying the ecosystem approach in wetland management; each toolkit describes CIWP's approach towards the related subject. The toolkit will be supported by a databank of all CIWP documents presented as a multi-media CD attached to the toolkit.

~~v)~~u) Publications, public awareness and media coverage

- Publication process for a number of technical and public awareness materials including 14 books, brochures, guidelines etc. was initiated in 2012.
- The World Wetlands Day was held on 2nd of Feb 2012, in a ceremony beside Anzali wetland, with presence of Vice president, Head of DoE, governor of Gilan province and a group of deputies and director Generals of DoE. In this ceremony, 6 nominated wetland champions at National and Local level were introduced and honored.
- To communicate achievements of the project and its future plans, two press conferences were held with presence of representatives from different news agencies, newspapers etc. Also different events of the project were covered by the media and news agencies and national project manager had several interviews about the project

~~w)~~v) Project management and regular monitoring

- National project manager changed in 2012.
- Audit process for 2011 fiscal year was carried out.
- SIPA had a mission in September 2012 to monitor project progress in 2012 and plan for priority actions to be undertaken until the end of the project.
- The 12th meeting of the project steering committee and the first meeting of this committee in 2012 was held on 19th of September 2012 to review the project's progress based on 2012 work plan and to decide about the priority actions of the remaining months.
- To meet the reporting mandates of UNDP, in 2012 project prepared 6 bilingual bimonthly reports, 4 quarterly reports, 4 QOR reports, a PIR, quarterly work planning packages and many other by-case reports demanded by DoE or other offices.

Indirect Results

a) CIWP Exit Strategy

- Given that 2012 was planned to be the last year of the project's implementation (which was further extended until April 2013), the project's exit strategy was implemented to safeguard smooth ending of the project. As a result, project concentrated more on finalizing activities in the demonstration sites, and securing national funds and budget for the national wetland management system. Also the list of project assets and proposed destinations was prepared and approved by NPD. To implement the staff exit

strategy, most of the contracts of the personnel were changed to part-time contracts and there were several negotiations to use the capacity of project staff within DoE which resulted in recruitment of 3 Assistant site coordinators in related provincial DoEs.

- To review 2011 activities and finalize 2012 work plan, a project staff meeting was held in Feb 2012 with presence of NPD, NPM and all project staff to discuss project achievements and lessons learnt in 2011.

b) CIWP Success story

To document the achievements of some of the successful UNDP projects in Iran, including CIWP, a consultant was hired by UNDP in 2012. The report writing process included some visits to project demonstration sites and also sustainable agriculture farms, several meetings with project staff, stakeholders and local communities. This report was finalized after inclusion of project comments and feedbacks and was translated in Farsi to be published in 2013.

c) Terminal Evaluation

Terminal Evaluations have a summary character and aim to assess to what extent the project has implemented the foreseen activities and achieved outputs and expected results. Given that CIWP was going to end in 2012, project and UNDP planned to carry out the Terminal Evaluation in December 2012. Following selection process and from 1st to 12th of December, the consultants visited all project demonstration sites and interviewed many stakeholder organizations and individuals using analysis methods and questionnaires to assess effectiveness of the project in different aspects. Also at national level, this team met with high-level managers and experts of organizations such as MOE, MoJA, MoI, project consultants and experts and NGOs. At the end of this mission, the initial report of the evaluation was presented in a meeting with NPD and other stakeholders and after receiving further comments and feedbacks of the stakeholders until 20 January, the final report was delivered at the end of January 2013.

d) LUB Drought Risk Management plan

- Considering the current ongoing drought crisis in Lake Urumiyeh, CIWP started a sub-project in 2009 to develop a drought risk management plan for the lake. The plan includes the following reports which were finalized in 2011:
    - A synthesis of drought characteristic (Spatial/Temporal behavior)
    - Meteorological and hydrological variables trend in LUB
    - Drought management structure (organization)
    - Agriculture situation and monitoring system reports

  The remaining reports including Agriculture and Agricultural Water Allocation during Drought, Water Allocation Model of LU Basin and Status of Provinces and Lake during Drought and Operational Component of the Plan were finalized in 2012. Also two software programs for LU drought monitoring system (UDMP) and LU water allocation model (UWAP) were also developed for the project. All the DRM products were reviewed by project consultants and water and agriculture stakeholders of the basin several times. As codes of practice for drought management of the basin, the LUB drought risk management plan was developed, raised and reviewed in the meetings of sustainable management of water and agriculture working group of the regional council and approved by the same working group. This plan was also published as a book accompanied by a multimedia CD containing all the reports and software programs.

e) Project Scale- up

The recently concluded Terminal Evaluation of CIWP confirmed the significant progress that has been made through the piloting of the innovative ecosystem

approach. However it strongly recommended that further support was needed to the main stakeholders before the results at the demonstration sites and nationally could be considered as sustainable and secure. Hence, project prepared a proposal justifying the necessity of further continuation of activities throughout the country. This two-year plan could be followed up as a scale-up project by GOIR, Ramsar Convention Regional Center for West and Central Asia and ECO-IES and other main stakeholders.

Recommendations from Lessons Learned and Good Practices

a. Project exit strategy and safe ending

Developing an exit strategy for the final years of the project, provided a good basis for a gradual shift of project technical responsibilities to related stakeholders and a plan for staff exit from the project.

b. Management plans as a basis for common understanding

The Project followed up and facilitated the process of developing management plans in a participatory approach and with cooperation with local community, governmental and non-governmental organizations. This process brought the sense of ownership that is urgently required to address the environmental situation for the wetlands. The management plans provide a very good common basis for further actions and decision.

c. Gradual change

Sometimes projects tend to start and insist on big changes within IA and partner organizations in a short period which may normally cause resistance from those agencies and reduce the effectiveness and speed of activities. Changes in a longer period are more acceptable and sustainable. The extended duration of the project has therefore been highly advantageous.

d. Community Engagement

If projects are to be successfully implemented and the outcomes to be long lasting, it is critical that local community leaders are assured of the motives of the project and agree with the proposed activities. To achieve this, the support and networks of local NGOs can be obtained and utilised. The Project's experiences and commitment to implementing a plan that was based on participation and integration, coupled with its successes to date, are an example of the benefits of community engagement.

Conclusion

Over the last eight years of implementation, the Project has come a long way towards achieving its objective of establishing an effective management system that addresses the threats to the Project Sites in cooperation with the main stakeholders at national and provincial levels. What is more, it is working to ensure the lessons learned from this experience are absorbed within WPA management systems throughout Iran.

It is very important to support the DoE in the replication of pilot activities and in rolling out the NWCSAP model over other Iranian wetlands. The intention should not be to finance the replication and rolling out process, but to continue building the managerial and technical capacity of the DoE and other stakeholders including civil society and private sector organizations.

1. Introduction

The Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project (CIWP) is a joint initiative between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (led by the Department of Environment), GEF and UNDP, which started in 2005 and based on resolutions of the Project Steering Committee on August 2012 and approval of NPD and UNDP, will end in April 2013.

Iran has numerous important wetlands including 83 protected areas and 24 Ramsar sites. CIWP's Goal is "to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of Iran's system of wetland protected areas (WPAs) as a tool for conserving globally significant biodiversity", and its Purpose is "to systematically remove or substantially mitigate threats facing globally significant biodiversity and sustainability at three WPA demonstration sites, while ensuring that the lessons learned are absorbed within WPA management systems throughout Iran".

The underlying aim of the Project was to conduct a pilot and demonstration conservation operation, which could be adopted by the Government and applied to the other national wetlands. Two pilot sites were initially selected for this: Lake Uromiyeh Basin (LUB) and Lake Parishan (LP). The LUB, as part of a larger wetlands ecological zone, includes Lake Uromiyeh (LU), several satellite wetlands of international importance and a national park. Lake Parishan is a fresh water lake located in Arjan & Parishan Protected Area in Fars Province. In 2009, following a Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE), it was also decided that Shadegan Wetland (SW), which had previously been considered as a replication site for the Project, be considered a pilot site on its own.

An overview of the project is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 1: Overview of the Project

Project Title	Conservation of Iranian Wetlands
Project Duration	8 Years and 4 months
Project Budget	USD$12.355 million
Executing Entity	Iranian Department of Environment (DoE)
Cooperating National Agencies	The Ministry of Energy
	Office of Strategic Planning Affairs and Control of the Government of the IR Iran (SPAC)
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)
	Ministry of Jihad Agriculture (MJA)
	Ministry of Roads and Transportation (MRT)
	Ministry of Interior (MoI)

Implementing Agency	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The goal, objectives and intended outcomes of the Project are summarised in Table 3 below:[1]

Table 2: Project's Goal, Objectives and Outcomes

Project Goal	To catalyse the sustainability of Iran's system of wetland protected areas (WPAs), thereby enhancing its effectiveness as a tool for conserving globally significant biodiversity.
Project Objective	To establish an effective management system to systematically remove or substantially mitigate threats facing globally significant biodiversity and sustainability at two WPA demonstration sites, while ensuring that the lessons learned are absorbed within WPA management systems throughout Iran.
Outcome 1	Model wetland management system designed and being implemented by DoE and other local stakeholders at demonstration sites to effectively address the most significant 'internally arising' threats to globally significant biodiversity.
Outcome 2	Model intersectoral coordination demonstrated at provincial and basin level enhances the sustainability of the wetland conservation system by, inter alia helping to address threats arising at ecosystem level.
Outcome 3	National level wetland management and inter-sectoral coordination structures possess and utilize enhanced capacities, and the model system developed through Outcomes 1 and 2 above is applied to wetlands throughout Iran through strategies, replications, tools and exchange of knowledge and lessons learned.

1.2 Drought Risk Management Project

The LUB is facing a critical threat from a persistent drought and increased demands on local water resources, which have lowered water levels and increased salinity, with impacts on the local microclimate, biodiversity and socio-economic conditions. The worsening situation has posed a major challenge to the relevance and effectiveness of the overall Project.

In light of this critical situation, joint UNDP and Project team visits were undertaken in early July 2008. Discussions were held with local stakeholders including local officials, NGOs and communities. It was agreed to develop a drought risk management plan to be integrated into the Project.

[1] Ibid, p.17. Please note that the wording for the outcomes above differ from those in the original Project Document. This is because they were revised after the Mid-Term Evaluation conducted by Peter Hunnam and Raya Benis.

As a result, the *Lake Uromiyeh Drought Risk Management Project for Sustainable Livelihoods, Biodiversity and Microclimate Management Project* was created. The rational of the project is to provide technical support that would "focus on building a critical technical knowledge base around climate change and its impacts on microclimates, persistent droughts and biodiversity."[2]

Table 4 outlines the key facts of the DRM project that differ from the original CIWP Project. Table 5 states the DRM project goal and objective; it also contains the four outputs required of it.

Table 3: Key facts of DRM Project

Project Title	*Lake Uromiyeh Drought Risk Management Project for Sustainable Livelihoods, Biodiversity and Microclimate Management Project*
Project Duration	2 Years
Project Budget	USD$200,000.00 (UNDP) TRAC Funding

Table 5: Goal, Objective and Outputs of DRM Project

Project Goal	To establish an ecosystem based management for the lake and its satellite wetlands within the context of sustainable development with effective involvement of all stakeholders including local communities.
Project Objective	Effective drought risk management for sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity in the environs of Lake Uromiyeh.
Output 1	[**X**] Public officials, technical experts and NGO representatives benefited from national and international knowledge/experience exchange visits and other learning opportunities.
Output 2	International technical research and capacity building support provided to relevant public agencies for scientific research around causative links/scientific evidence for climate change, persistent drought and local development interventions and threats to Lake Uromiyeh, including identification of opportunities for sustainable resource use.
Output 3	[**X**] Multistakeholder demonstrative projects developed and implemented for improved /diversified livelihoods and natural resource management.
Output 4	[**X**] Knowledge management/reflection sessions/researches organised to produce lessons learned documents/reports and wide distribution for replication.

Table 4

[2] UNDP, as no.6 above, p2.

1.3 TRAC Budget

Due to the importance of publication and distribution of results and achievements of CIWP, especially in its final stages, UNDP agreed to allocate 50,000 $ for this purpose, based on a proposal drafted by project. Following approval of this budget in September 2012 the project developed a plan for expenditure of this budget in the final 3 months of 2012 in the framework of related activities of the work plan. Main activities included publishing books, reports, manuals, toolkit and holding a number of training workshops based on contracts and MOAs.

2.0 Progress in attaining Project Outcomes

This section of the report discusses the overall progress towards achieving the Project outcomes. Each section begins by stating the respective target outcome or objective and is followed by the key results for that outcome that have culminated in 2012. This is followed by a general overview regarding the Project's progress towards the overall objective.

2.1 Local Model Wetland Management System

Outcome One: *Model wetland management system designed and being implemented by DoE and other local stakeholders at demonstration sites to effectively address the most significant 'internally arising' threats to globally significant biodiversity.*

a. Preparation of LU satellite wetlands management plans

- To embed application of the ecosystem approach throughout the LU basin, developing integrated management plans for LU satellite wetlands was initiated by the project in previous years. In 2012, under a joint collaboration with EA DOE and as a result of several participatory meetings with stakeholders, the Gurigol Management plan was finalized and planned to be signed and notified by EA Governor with the project's support. Also based on a joint MOA among EA DOE, Damoon NGO and CIWP, baseline studies on Ghareghesheshlagh (LU satellite wetland) basin were carried out and a management plan was developed for this wetland based on the afore-mentioned studies, an evaluation of wetland values and threats and a series of collaborative workshops (5 sessions) with presence of related stakeholders. The baseline studies and the management plan for this wetland are ready to be published in 2013.
- Following finalization and approval of Shadegan Wetland management plan, the bilingual management plan was printed and necessary coordination was done for official signature of this plan in WWD Celebrations.

b. Implementation and monitoring of demonstration sites management plans

- In order to embed preparation of annual monitoring reports within DOE based on monitoring plans and protocols of demonstration sites, preparation of the reports by provincial DOEs was followed up through the Natural Environment Deputy and habitats office. As a result, the necessary budget was allocated for this purpose, SW monitoring plans and protocols were prepared and finalized by technical working groups, SW 2011 monitoring report was prepared and pre-final draft of LU and LP reports were prepared by the secretariats.
- Following collaboration with DOE Habitats Office to allocate required budget for finalizing sustainable arrangements for implementation of management plans at demonstration sites and implementing related urgent actions, 44,500,000,000 Rls (1,600,000$, 1$=25000Rls) was allocated for this purpose.

- In order to implement priority projects of LU management plan, project facilitated one meeting of LU national committee with presence of vice president and two meetings of LU technical committee and 4 meetings of LU Water and Agriculture Working Group.
- Project facilitated budget allocation to the DOE related MP activities at demonstration sites.
- Since all management plans (including integrated wetland management plans) should be periodically revised for better adaptive management, a guideline was developed by the project on methods of revising management plans in five-year periods.

c. Prepare and Publish bilingual summary baseline report LU, SW

- To document the current status of the project demonstration sites based on existing reports, preparation of baseline reports for 3 demonstration sites was initiated. The LP summary baseline report which was prepared in 2011 is in final printing stages. The LU bilingual summary baseline report was prepared and finalized after including feedbacks from related stakeholders and will be published and distributed in 2013. Also, coordinated by CIWP, a synthesis report of SW was produced by SW water and agriculture working group.

d. Resolution of Land Use Conflicts for LP

- To come up with a solution for land use conflict around LP, and after a series of participatory meetings in previous years, a plan was prepared and approved by LP management committee to solve this problem. Based on this plan several activities such as continued negotiations with stakeholders, starting the process for issuing the title deed of the lake with cooperation of Kazeroun judiciary office and LP management committee, defining boundaries of non-disputable areas etc. were implemented in 2012. Many of these actions were fulfilled and the title deed will be issued in early 2013 which could further solve the conflicts.

e. Completion of Boundary markers for demonstration sites

- The process of boundary marking of demonstration sites was started in cooperation with provincial DOEs for better management of wetland ecosystems. Following completion of LU boundary marking in 2011 this process started for SW in 2012 during which marking areas for most of the wetland were identified, markers were made and will be installed in 2013. For LP, although 60% of high-sensitivity zone was marked, due to land conflict issues only more that 30% of the borders were marked and the rest will be accomplished after resolution of land conflicts.

f. Conservation measures and monitoring of biodiversity and endangered species

- To develop a model for monitoring and conservation of endangered species with participation of local communities, cooperation was initiated between an NGO and CIWP in 2010 to monitor Otter in LP. Following a series of awareness raising activities and baseline studies, following results were achieved in 2012:
    a. A comprehensive baseline study on situation of otter around LP.
    b. A participatory management plan for Otter monitoring and conservation.

c. Training of teachers as trainers and more than 250 students and local people around LP.
d. Training of local people on Otter monitoring skills.
e. Publication of 3 books and 1 brochure.

- To carry out urgent actions to save endangered species in drought situation, some small projects including construction of in-situ and ex-situ ponds and transferring endemic fish species to these ponds were started in previous years. In 2012 maintenance of these ponds and monitoring the situation of endangered species continued in cooperation with provincial organizations and local communities.
- For restoration of LU satellite wetlands (Yadegarlu, Shurgol, Durgeh Sangi, Sulduz) a MOA was signed between West Azerbaijan DOE and WA Water Authorities to allocate 3 million m^3 of water as Water right of these wetlands.
- To support research centers and universities for conservation measures, a mutual MOA was signed with Urumiyeh University for studies on "Documentation of Lake Urumiyeh Ecological Changes". This initiative was formed to continue and support a comprehensive study on ecological aspects of LU and documentation of recent researches carried out in this field.

g. Alternative/Supplementary Livelihoods initiatives

- To carry out a study on alternative livelihoods to be integrated in the management planning process of Gharagheshlagh wetland, based on a mutual MOA with Damoon NGO and under supervision of project socio-economic consultant, a study plan was developed and a field survey was undertaken in 3 villages surrounding this wetland and options for alternative livelihood were recommended. Based on the afore-mentioned surveys, Damoon NGO submitted a proposal for alternative livelihood initiatives at this site.
- Based on preliminary studies by CIWP, Khuzestan DOE in cooperation with a local NGO developed and implemented an alternative livelihood assessment in two pilot villages around Shadegan Wetland and the results will be used in related planning processes in 2013.

h. Shadegan Wetland Fishery Strategy

- In a step towards wise use of SW resources, preparation of SW fishery strategy started in 2011 through close involvement of main stakeholders, namely the local fishing cooperatives and fishery-related authorities. This participatory process continued in 2012 through several meetings and workshops with CIWP facilitation and supports of Khuzestan DOE. This led to the final version of SW fishery strategy which was agreed and approved by all the stakeholders.

i. Effective role of local communities in wetland management

- In previous years some steps were taken to ensure and strengthen civil society representation in SW management, including negotiations with local communities and villagers, and support selection and membership of their representatives in management committees. To maximize this involvement, in 2012 the project continued the process by

holding training/consultative meetings with local representatives to promote their effectiveness in related decision-making processes. A similar process was practiced with local communities and NGOs of Lake Parishan.

j. Support local community initiatives for wetland wise use and management plan implementation

- To establish eco-village concept in Yousef Abad village (around Gurigol Wetland), the Project trained the "Conservation of Wildlife and Aquatics" NGO to undertake environmental evaluation in this village. This evaluation was carried out by the NGO and the results were finalized after receiving feedbacks of the project's consultant.
- Based on a MOA with CIWP, this NGO has prepared 3 educational books on wetlands management and will organize some training courses and educational field visits for teachers and students near Gurigol.
- As a result of an initiative by local communities and local NGOs around Kaniborazan wetland, this area has welcomed ecotourism and bird watching activities in recent years. Since this initiative needed more development through capacity building, equipment and other facilities, a MOU was signed among West Azerbaijan DOE, CIWP and the local NGO. Implementation of this MOU had the following results; several training courses were held for local communities on ecotourism related subjects, an ecotourism management plan was developed by local stakeholders and this visitor centre was provided with some equipment.

2.2 Provincial Level Model Intersectoral Coordination

Outcome Two: *Model intersectoral coordination demonstrated at provincial and basin level enhances the sustainability of the wetland conservation system by, inter alia, helping to address threats arising at ecosystem level.*

a. Efficient Working of demonstration site Secretariats and management structures

- Efficient working of wetland management structures such as secretariats, working groups and management committees triggers dynamic implementation of management plans at the 3 demonstration sites. Hence, the project especially focused on ensuring effective and continuous working of these structures in its final year of implementation through the following steps: 1. Capacity building and training of secretariat staff, 2. Development of a timetable for regular meetings of working groups and committees, 3. Notifying timetables to the secretariats of related working groups and 4. Development of a post-CIWP exit action plan with secretariats.
- Since establishment of a website is essential for providing information and sharing knowledge, the web portal for Lake Urumiyeh (http://urmialake.ir/) was designed and activated in 2012 with cooperation of WA DoE. This portal includes information about LUB related projects and up-to-date data about salinity level, water level and area of this lake.
- There has been ongoing support from the project to hold meetings of the technical committee of LU national committee. In 2012 this committee had two meetings with

attendance of deputies of DoE, MOE, MOJA to decide about implementation of LU 24 priority projects and water right allocation.

- LP and SW local and provincial management committees had two meeting each and technical working groups had meeting according to their timetable.
- As a result of collaboration with DoE Habitats Office to allocate the required budget for applying the ecosystem approach and equipment and activation of demonstration sites secretariats, 2,350,000,000 Rls was allocated for this purpose.
- For establishment of intersectoral governance and institutional mechanisms, CIWP supported and facilitated holding regular meetings of LU regional council in West Azerbaijan, in a way that after establishment of the regional council in 2011, several provincial meetings were held with presence of high-level managers related to integrated management of LU. An important outcome of these meetings was the conclusion that the amount of water flowing into the lake was2 times bigger compared to the previous hydrological year.
- Since management of established structures for wetlands integrated management is part of responsibilities of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) (at national level) and governorships (at local and provincial levels), representatives of environmental bureau of MoI were invited to several meetings and workshops organized by the project and were briefed about the ongoing activities.

b. Monitoring Water Right and Water Share of Demonstration Wetlands

- Water right of LU and Water share of each surrounding province were monitored in management committees.
- One of the main steps towards allocation of LU water right is monitoring the amount of water flowing into the lake. With efforts of the project, this issue was raised in the sustainable management of water and agriculture working group and the related guideline has been prepared by project's consultant.
- In collaboration with DOE Habitats Office to allocate required budget for applying the ecosystem approach, 3,000,000,000 Rls (125000 $) was allocated for establishment of two hydrometric stations in LU.
- Due to recent drought occurrences across the LU basin, the Drought Risk Management project was mainstreamed to identify the water allocation measures in drought situation.
- SW water and agriculture working group decided to start the study for SW water requirement but due to time-taking nature of water need studies, minimum water need of SW would be temporarily set as 1.6 bcm a year.
- SW synthesis report including 13 chapters was finalized as a basis for further water requirement studies.

c. Developing and practicing sustainable agriculture in demonstration sites

- Studies have revealed that while the agricultural sector consumes more than 95% of the basin's water resources, there is a great potential to increase water application efficiencies at farm level and save a considerable volume of water for restoring and sustaining the Lake without hampering agricultural production and farmers' incomes. This potential source of

water can even replace in part the need for constructing new storage dams. Based on the above considerations, CIWP in cooperation with MOJA launched a program to establish Field Farmer Schools and demonstration farms to demonstrate and at the same time teach local farmers of the ways that can result in saving water at farm level as well as sustaining agricultural procedures through optimizing the use of agricultural chemicals i.e. fertilizers and pesticides. The program succeeded to show the farmers that this potential is achievable. This program achieved the following results in West Azerbaijan pilot site around SiranGuli wetland (one of LU satellite wetlands); 50% reduction in water consumption, 44% reduction in usage of chemical fertilizers and pesticides/herbicides and 18% increase of farm productivity.

- In Yusefabad Village around Gurigol the goal of this project was to establish an eco-village and production of organic crops. In the first phase of this project in cooperation with an organic inspection company authorized by EU for the first time in the country, all the crops produced in the village were assessed from organic point of view. A corrective management plan was developed to be implemented in the second phase of this project.
- LP sustainable agriculture pilot sites are used as demonstration sites for other farmers in the region and several visits were paid to these sites by different groups including managers, experts and farmers.

2.3 National Wetland Management and Coordination

Outcome Three: *National level wetland management and intersectoral coordination structures possess and utilize enhanced capacities, and the model system developed through Outcomes 1 and 2 above is applied to wetlands throughout Iran through strategies, replications, tools and exchange of knowledge and lessons learned.*

a. Capacity development and engagement of DoE managers and experts in line with CIWP exit strategy

- For capacity building of habitats office staff and based on a previous needs assessment, a training package including 12 categories was developed for experts of this office, 4 of which were covered in separate training sessions. The rest of the sessions will be included in the training courses to be held for all DOE offices.
- In an extensive collaboration with University of Environment, 7 training courses were designed for capacity building of DOE staff at different levels, including high-level managers, experts and guards. These courses were approved and included in DOE's training calendar. These courses include training DOE staff on subjects such as new management and conservation approaches, wetland ecosystem services and wetland functions and benefits.

- To enhance capacity of provincial DOE experts for establishing wetland management secretariats, a four-week professional training package was developed by CIWP and DOE technical offices and approved by DOE education office. Budgets are secured and the training package will be enforced by 2013. The trainees will support establishment of the ecosystem approach in important wetlands across Iran.

a. Support DOE to apply ecosystem approach for other Iranian wetlands

- In 2012 a joint work plan was developed and implemented by CIWP and the DOE habitats office, aiming to develop management structures and capacities to apply the ecosystem approach for wetland management. The work plan includes tasks such as transferring project responsibilities, developing new management plans for important wetlands, developing wetland databank and approval and implementation of the National Wetland Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (NWCSAP). This was followed by several joint training and consultative sessions between the project and habitats office, to implement the work plan.
- A new management structure for wetlands at national and local levels was proposed and followed up through NWCSAP and will be enforced following approval of this document.
- CIWP provided technical supports to habitats office to develop action plans and (an approximately 10 billion Tomans-3.5 million $) budget expenditure schemes for management and conservation of important wetlands of 18 provinces.
- CIWP provided DOE natural environment deputy with a detailed plan for a national budget to establish secretariats and ecosystem-based management for important wetlands of the country.
- CIWP attended two get-togethers of all provincial DOE natural environment deputies to introduce project achievements and lessons learnt, and the way forward to implement the ecosystem approach for Iranian wetlands.
- In an effort to introduce integrated management approaches to provincial senior experts of DOE, CIWP held a number of training sessions, including a side-event workshop during the “national conference on wetlands engineering and management” and a training course on the ecosystem approach, organized by the Ramsar Regional Centre for west and central Asia.

b. National Wetland water allocation guidelines

- As wetlands are completely dependent on water resources of their basin, extraction of water resources from wetland basins in many ways and water development schemes cause major problems for wetlands in receiving enough water. Hence it is necessary to develop appropriate and scientific methodology for calculating the water need of wetlands. With cooperation of a professional consultancy group and using international experiences, the project is developing a practical and user-friendly guideline and codes of practice for calculating wetlands water need, considering the baseline-data gaps on most

of the wetlands in Iran. The baseline studies, guideline and codes of practice have been prepared and verified by the project in different stages and will be finalized and published.

c. National wetland conservation strategy and action plan

- Following participatory development of NWCSAP with cooperation of stakeholders and inclusion of feedbacks from technical offices of SPAC the final version of this document and the proposed resolution were revised by CIWP and Legislative office of DOE and officially sent to be approved by the cabinet.

d. Development of Iranian Wetland Database

- In 2012, the Beta Version of the wetland databank framework, software and data entry manual were finalized and introduced to provincial DOEs and related technical offices at national level through several training sessions, to enable them to upload their data on the database. Based on feedbacks on data uploading process and other gaps, the needed corrections were applied to the software and an offline version of the databank was developed to facilitate data uploading in cases of slow connection. To embed the ownership of the software within DOE and to maximize the security of the system, necessary steps were taken to transfer the databank to DOE's server. It was planned to officially launch the databank in early 2013.

e. Sharing achievements and lessons learnt at national and international levels

- CIWP actively supported and participated in related national and international conferences, to share achievements and lessons learnt through submission of articles, lectures, side-events, exhibitions, distribution of awareness raising materials. These events include:
    a. Submission of 8 articles to "Management and engineering of wetlands conference"
    b. Attendance of NPD and NPM of CIWP in the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Ramsar Contracting Parties (COP11) in Romania from 6-13 July 2012 in the Parliament Palace of Romania (Bucharest). CIWP and Ramsar convention regional center in West and center of Asia attended the side event (exhibition) of the COP to present their achievements and pave the way for better communication with international experts.
    c. Attendance of project manager in an International Wetlands Symposium in Nepal from 7-10 November 2012 in Nepal, with presence of 13 countries from all over the world especially Asian countries, with the purpose of exchanging knowledge and experiences in management and conservation of wetlands among developing countries as south-south cooperation. In this symposium which was held following the workshop in Bari-Urumiyeh on October 2010, CIWP NPM presented the project achievements as two key speeches on "development of Lake Urumiyeh Basin drought risk management plan" and" establishment of ecosystem approach in management of Iranian wetlands".

d. Submission and presentation of articles in LU international conference (Urumiyeh).
e. Attendance of CIWP's expert in a three day workshop with presence of representatives of international and governmental organizations of 16 countries from Asia-Oceania, university professors and researchers on climate change adaptation theme, UNDP and AIT University in Bangkok, with the purpose of developing technical skills inside the related national organizations and also exchanging regional knowledge in the field of adaptation programs to support planning for resilience and sustainability of climate in ecosystems.
f. Attendance of NPM in a Conference held by society of consultant engineers on "root cause analysis of sustainability or non-sustainability of wetlands" to present the achievements of CIWP.

- CIWP supported different groups to visit achievements of the project at site levels; these visits included:
  a. Visit of a Turkish NGO to Lake Urumiyeh.
  b. Visit of a World Bank agriculture project to Lake Parishan and sustainable agriculture pilot sites.
  c. Visit of Anzali wetland management joint project with JICA to Lake Parishan.
  d. Visit of High-level governmental managers and experts to project demonstration sites.
  e. Presenting CIWP experiences and achievements at high-level national decision making bodies including presidential scientific and technological deputy and the research centre of the Parliament.

f. Preparation of wetland management toolkit based on CIWP experiences

- In order to document and classify CIWP approach, experiences and achievements a user-friendly toolkit was developed by the project team, facilitated by a consultant. The framework of the toolkit includes 8 main categories with more than 30 tools covering different subjects on applying ecosystem approach in wetland management. These 8 categories include the main principles of ecosystem approach, Baseline studies based on ecosystem approach, Developing integrated management plans for wetlands, Establishment of institutional and financial mechanisms for wetlands, Implementation of management plans, CEPA, Embedding, development & distribution of achievements and Project management. Each toolkit describes CIWP's approach towards the related subject in 8 steps: 1-The reason why this tool is applied. 2-How CIWP has approached this subject. 3- The main components/process of applying this tool. 4-Details of the process. 5- Some executed examples. 6-Challenges. 7-Lessons Learned. 8- Recommendations and 9-resources.

The toolkit will be supported by a databank of all CIWP documents presented as a multi-media CD attached to the toolkit.

g. Publications, public awareness and media coverage

- Aiming to distribute and provide easy access to products of the project and as a basis for project scale-up with direct support from UNDP, publication process for a number of technical and public awareness materials including books, brochures, guidelines etc. was initiated in 2012. This included 14 titles which are listed below:

  i. Guidelines for management of wetlands biodiversity
  ii. Guidelines for river assessment
  iii. LU baseline studies report
  iv. Project success story report
  v. Wetland Zoning guidelines
  vi. Ecosystem approach manual- 5 steps for implementation (re-publishing)
  vii. Freshwater wetlands biology
  viii. Gharagheshlagh wetland baseline studies
  ix. LU Drought risk management plan
  x. Teaching basic wetland concepts to trainers
  xi. Baseline information of Otter in Lake Parishan
  xii. A toolkit for application of ecosystem approach in integrated management of wetlands
  xiii. Sustainable agriculture development strategy for management and conservation in
  xiv. Project Brochure

- The World wetlands day was held on 2nd of Feb 2012, in a ceremony beside Anzali wetland, with presence of Vice president, Head of DoE, Gilan governor and a group of deputies and director Generals of DoE.
  In this ceremony, 6 nominated wetland champions at National and Local level were introduced and honoured.
  At Local level: Shahram Hasanpanah(DoE Guard), Sasan Akbarpour(Head of Astara DoE), Mohammad Mohammadian (Kiashahr Environmental pioneers institute)
  At national level: Sirous Zare (in section of community based organization) from Fars for his activities in Kamjan Wetland, Hojat Jabari in executive section (coordinator of national secretariat of Lake Urumiyeh ecosystem management project) from West Azarbaijan, Kmabiz Bahram Soltani in education and research section.
- To communicate achievements of the project and its future plans, two press conferences were held with presence of representatives from different news agencies, newspapers etc. Also different events of the project were covered by the media and news agencies and national project manager had several interviews about the project.

h. Project management and regular monitoring

- Following resignation of former National Project Manager, a Ceremony was held by the NPD to acknowledge the activities of Dr. Nazaridoust during his period as NPM, and Mr. Soleymani, the former DNPM of the project was introduced as the new project manager.

- Based on UNDP Regulations, the Project was audited by an independent company for the fiscal year 2011. This process started in February 2012 and included desk reviews, review of work plans, contracts, HR documents, petty cash and financial records. The final audit report and management letter were submitted on May 2012 and project has since prepared and sent 3 updates on the actions demanded by the Audit team.
- To monitor project progress in 2012 and plan for priority actions to be taken until the end of the project, Dr. Michael Moser, the Senior International Project Advisor had a mission to Iran from 15 to 20 September. During this mission, besides reviewing project activities and planning for priority actions of the final months, SIPA visited Shadegan wetland and took part in the PSC meeting and a press conference on wetlands. In the end of this mission SIPA recommended the following steps to be taken until the end of the project:
    a) Hold exit and sustainability meetings for each demonstration site, and continue sustainable exit process with DOE Habitats Office
    b) Hold end of project celebration, including launch of NWCSAP, National Committee and Secretariat, DOE project for 50 new wetlands, CIWP Wetlands Toolkit, Wetland database and Drought Risk Management reports
    c) Consider high-level international publication on LU and work carried out through CIWP
    d) Mandate the NPM to adjust job titles of project staff from Technical assistant to Technical expert, where appropriate

- To review project's progress based on 2012 work plan and to decide about the priority actions of the remaining months, the 12th meeting of the project steering committee and the first meeting of this committee in 2012 was held on 19th of September 2012 with presence of key members, NPD, UNDP RR deputy and SIPA. In this meeting, NPM and SIPA presented a detailed report of project activities in the first 3 quarters of 2012. In this meeting, UNDP RR Deputy recommended extension of the project for a few months to finalize the remaining activities of the project which resulted in 4 months extension until the end of April 2013.
- In order to meet reporting mandates of UNDP, in 2012 project prepared 6 bilingual bimonthly reports, 4 quarterly reports, 4 QOR reports, a PIR, quarterly work planning packages and many other by-case reports demanded by DOE or other offices.

Indirect Results

a. CIWP Exit Strategy

- Given that 2012 was planned to be the last year of the project's implementation (which was further extended until April 2013), priority was given to implementation of the project's exit strategy to safeguard smooth ending of the project. As a result, the project concentrated more on finalizing activities in demonstration sites, securing national funds and budget for national wetland management system through developing national programs, close cooperation with related DoE offices to deliver responsibilities, development and implementation of staff exit plan, reducing input and leadership for joint activities with stakeholders, concentrating more on documentation and production to roll out project achievements and approaches. Also, the list of project assets and proposed destinations was prepared and approved by NPD. To implement the staff exit strategy,

most of the contracts of the personnel were changed to part-time contracts and there were several negotiations to use the capacity of project staff within DOE which resulted in recruitment of 3 Assistant site coordinators in related provincial DOEs.

- To review 2011 activities and the 2012 work plan and discussing project achievements and lessons learnt in 2011, a project staff meeting was held in Feb 2012 with presence of NPD, NPM and all project staff.

b. CIWP Success story

- To document the achievements of some of the successful UNDP projects in Iran including CIWP, a consultant was hired by UNDP in 2012. The report writing process included some visits to project demonstration sites and also sustainable agriculture farms, several meetings with project staff, stakeholders and local communities. This report was finalized after inclusion of project comments and feedbacks and was translated in Farsi to be published in 2013.

c. Terminal Evaluation

- Based on rules and regulations of GEF projects, all of the ongoing projects should be evaluated twice during their course of action. One Mid Term Evaluation is held in the middle of the project duration, which aims to review progress based on the project document and provide some recommendations to improve its implementation in future years; and one Terminal Evaluation is held at the end of the project. Terminal Evaluations have a summary character and aim to assess to what extent the program has implemented the foreseen activities and achieved outputs and expected results. Moreover, knowledge has been generated in terms of best practices and lessons learned which serve the purpose of taking them to scale and of replication. The observations and conclusions of the evaluation have been taken into account in assessing the impact of the project at a national and international level. Given that CIWP was going to end in 2012, the project and UNDP planned to carry out the Terminal Evaluation in December 2012. Following selection of national and international consultants and preparing the mission agenda, the terminal evaluation process started with a mission of the consultants between 1st and 12th of December. During this mission, consultants visited all project demonstration sites and interviewed many stakeholder organizations and people using analysis methods and questionnaires to assess effectiveness of the project in different aspects. Also at national level, this team met with high-ranking managers and experts of organizations such as MOE, MOJA, MOI, project consultants and experts and NGOs. At the end of this mission, the initial report of the evaluation was presented in a meeting with NPD and other stakeholders and after receiving further comments and feedbacks of the stakeholders until 20 January, the final report was prepared at the end of January 2013.

d. LUB Drought Risk Management Plan

Objective: *Effective Drought Risk Management for Sustainable Livelihoods and Biodiversity in the Environs of Lake Uromiyeh.*

Considering the current ongoing drought crisis in Lake Urumiyeh , the Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project started a sub-project since 2009 to develop a drought risk management program for this lake. The main objective of preparing LUB drought risk management plan is to identify LU water right provision circumstances in drought situation. Since in recent years drought has affected LUB water resources, there was a question on how LU water right should be provided in drought conditions in which the water resources are reduced. The DRM project has developed a comprehensive scientific project and liaises regularly with basin stakeholders.
The project objectives are:

- To evaluate temporal and spatial patterns of drought in the LU basin
- To evaluate methodologies to monitor drought
- To identify types of drought and measures to alleviate loss and meet LU water requirements
- To institutionalize measures for drought management

The project output comprises:

- Report 1: Study Area and Data
- Report 2: February 2010 Workshop on LU Drought Risk Management
- Report 3: Trends of Hydro-Climatic Variables in LU basin
- Report 4: Drought Behavior in LU basin
- Report 5: Drought Management Organization for LU basin
- Report 6: Drought Monitoring System for LU basin
- Report 7: Agricultural Water Allocation Model for Drought
- Report 8: Agriculture and Agricultural Water Allocation During Drought
- Report 9: Water Allocation Model of LU Basin and Status of Provinces and Lake During Drought
- Report 10: Operational Component of the Plan

Two software programs were also developed for the project:

- The LU drought monitoring system (UDMP)
- The LU water allocation model (UWAP).

Some of the above-mentioned reports (1 to 7) were prepared in 2011 and the rest of the reports and software programs were developed, finalized and published in 2012. These reports include "Agriculture and Agricultural Water Allocation during Drought", " Water Allocation Model of LU Basin and Status of Provinces and Lake during Drought" and" Operational Component of the Plan" which are described below:

Report 8: Agriculture and Agricultural Water Allocation during Drought
Deficit irrigation and reducing the area under cultivation are major measures that can be taken to mitigate drought impact on the agricultural sector in the current status of the basin. The report implements an approach based on optimization methods to manage agricultural water demand during water scarcity to minimize damage. Two strategies for water allocation to Lake Urumiyeh were considered. The first meets almost the entire 3100 MCM allocation per year LU water requirement, except for severe drought, when

water may be diverted for orchards. The second reduces the LU water allocation up to 35% according to drought severity. These strategies have been shared with the stakeholders during project workshops. The second strategy puts less pressure on the agriculture sector. In this strategy, the remaining available water can be used to meet agricultural needs.

Report 9: Water Allocation Model of LU Basin and Status of Provinces and Lake during Drought

Urumiyeh Water Allocation Package (UWAP) was developed to evaluate the LU Drought Management Organization. The model used data for the last 50 years of data recorded throughout the basin. All results of the agricultural water allocation optimization model were also embedded in the package, so it is possible to apply an inflow strategy to evaluate its impact on water allocation at the basin, provincial, or river system scale.

Report 10: Operational Component of the Plan

The operational component identifies both long and short term actions that can be implemented to mitigate the impact of drought. Such actions are essential to the development of specific drought planning and response efforts. The operational component of the DRM, which is based on different international and national guidelines as well as analysis of the different project's workshops, includes six facets that require continuous feedback:

- Communication and supervision of DRM by the regional council or the basin governors
- Formation of the DRM and respective committees
- Operation of the basin drought monitoring system
- Definition of conditions and thresholds for the drought levels and identify priorities and mitigation measures
- Preparation for affirmation of the level of drought and implementation of mitigation measures in basin organizations
- Technical and public evaluation of the plan

All the DRM products were reviewed by project consultants and water and agriculture stakeholders of the basin several times and as a codes of practice for drought management of the basin, the LUB drought risk management plan was developed, raised and reviewed in the meetings of sustainable management of water and agriculture working group of the regional council and approved by the same working group. This plan was also published as a book accompanied by a multimedia CD containing all the reports and software programs and was distributed in LU international conference and international environment exhibition and about 200 books were sent to LU secretariat to be further distributed among related stakeholders. Also an article titled "Conservation of wetlands in drought situations, considering integrated water resources management case study; Lake Urumiyeh Basin Drought Risk Management Plan" was submitted by the project to this conference and presented on the first day of the event.

In addition to the above-mentioned tasks, a complementary research was carried out on estimation of the lake's area under implementation of LUB Drought risk management plan

in two different scenarios of the lake water allocation in 10, 20 and 50 years perspectives. Also since this LUB DRM plan would be under implementation by different stakeholders such as water authorities, MOJA and DOE, a workshop was planned to be held in 2013 to coordinate executive structures of this plan and provide training on using related software programs.

e. Project Scale- up

During the 8-years implementation of CIWP, Integrated wetland management has been introduced at the three demonstration sites, with a shift from sectoral top-down decision-making by government agencies, to more integrated and participatory approaches involving all stakeholders including local communities and NGOs. At national level, the project has supported roll-out of the ecosystem approach through development of a National Wetland Strategy and Action Plan, and formation of a National Wetland Committee, various policy and financing mechanisms and development of a range of tools and guidelines. These will be used to improve wetland management throughout the country.

The recently concluded Terminal Evaluation of CIWP confirmed the significant progress that has been made through the piloting of this innovative approach. However it strongly recommended that further support was needed to the main stakeholders before the results at the demonstration sites and nationally could be considered as sustainable and secure. This is required:

a) At the project demonstration sites, to ensure that the local institutional and governance mechanisms are fully able to drive the process forward so that these are model examples of the ecosystem approach in practice which can be used for demonstration and training purposes nationally.
b) Geographical/Horizontal Up-sailing at a further 12 wetland sites throughout the country
c) DOE and other government stakeholders as well as NGOs, local communities and CBOs capacity building to ensure sustainable roll out the new approach to all Iranian wetlands.
d) Vertical Up-scaling Nationally, where laws, regulation, strategies, plans and institutional arrangements need to be further developed, approved and implemented

Hence, project prepared a proposal justifying the necessity of further continuation of activities throughout the country. This two-year plan could be followed up as a scale-up project by GOIR, Ramsar Convention Regional Center for West and Central Asia and ECO-IES and other main stakeholders.

2.4 Progress towards the Overall Objective

Overall Objective: *To establish an effective management system to systematically remove or substantially mitigate threats facing globally significant biodiversity and sustainability at two WPA demonstration sites, while ensuring that the*

lessons learned are absorbed within WPA management systems throughout Iran.

The Project has now completed its eighth year of operation and has made substantial progress towards its objectives both at the demonstration sites and at national level. It is currently working to complete the remaining objectives of Outcomes. For the next 4 months, its focus will be on rolling out the wetland management framework beyond the project sites and to all the other Wetland Protected Areas (WPAs) and it will be working to ensure the sustainability of the Project's activities by following up on official endorsement and establishment the National Wetlands Strategy Committee and having the DoE act as a secretariat for this committee. It will also look to build the capacities of partners so that they may assume responsibility for the wetlands. For this, the project will ensure distribution of its toolkit and all the related products at all levels and pave the way for a safe and smooth Exit.

3.0 Financial Overview

The information below is a break-down of the Project finances to date. Please note that unless stated otherwise, all figures are given in US Dollar denominations. [3]

Table 7 below provides overall information on the total amount of government, TRAC and GEF funding budgeted and utilised by the Project.

Since expenditure of government budget has always been challenging and estimations are hard to understand, the following description will help clarifying this issue:

- National budget includes all cash and in-kind expenditures. In this report, in-kind expenditure refers to infrastructures, accommodation and transportation facilities, meeting venues etc.
- It should be noted that the national budget is part of government's commitment to the project and partner organizations such as MoJA and MOE have allocated their budgets based on project work plans.

Table 5

Fund	Total Fund USD $	Year	Funds Utilised (2005-2012)	Balance
IRI. GOV	9,190,000	2005-2013(Apr)	41,674,422	Over expenditure
GEF	2,915,000	2005-2013(Apr)	2,852,657	62,343
UNDP-Drought component (TRAC)	200,000	2009-2011	200,000	0
UNDP- TRAC	50,000	2012: Sept-Dec	50,000	0
TOTAL	**12,355,000**	----------	**44,777,079**	----------

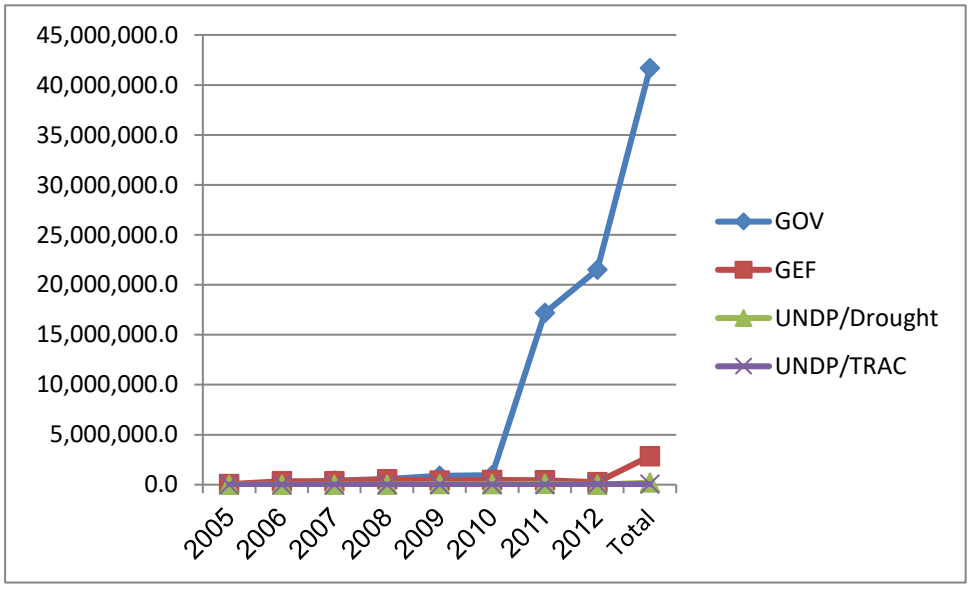
[3] Financial overview of the project was prepared based on annual CDRs.

In order to clarify expenditure based on budget categories normally used by UNDP, Table 8 provides a summary of how the TRAC and GEF funding lines have been spent.

Table 8

Budget Categories	TRAC and GEF Funds Utilised in 2005-2012*	Percentage of Total TRAC & GEF Utilised ($3.1mil)
Human Resources (including consultants)	1,899,098.1	61.2%
Travel	377,862.1	12.1%
Equipments	524,950.3	16.9%
Others**	306,406.6	9.8%
Gain & Loss	-6,098.6	-0.1%
Total	**3,102,218.5**	**100%**

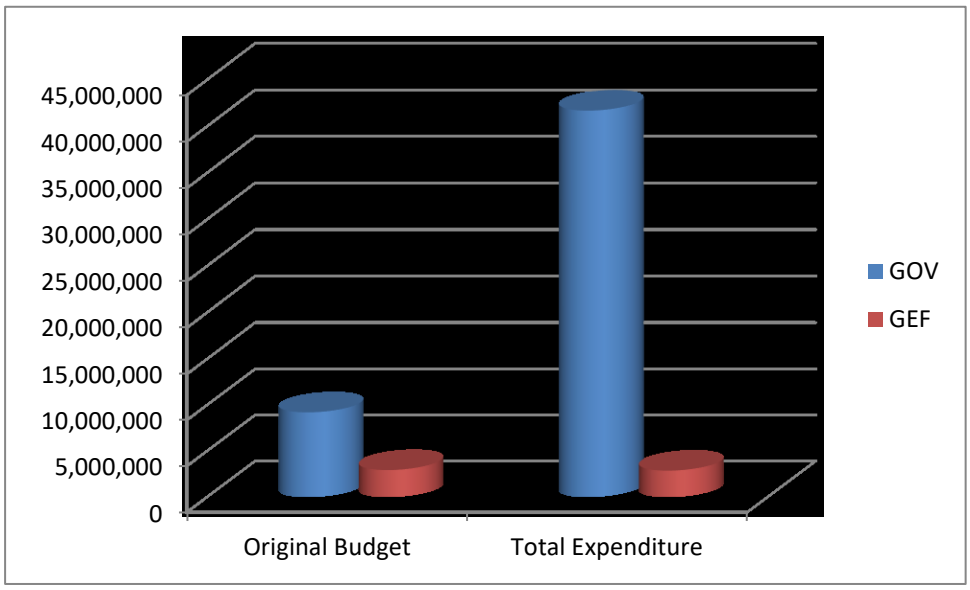
Figure 1



* Figures for 2012 are indicative and subject to change with the completion of 2012 End Year financial closure processes.

** Others includes: Sundry, Audit, Supplies, Hospitality, Professional Services and ISS.

Figure 2



For 2013, the Project will finalise the implementation of its exit strategy. As such it will focus its activities and expenditure on the achievement of Outcome 3 and the rolling-out of the Wetland Management System nationally.

4.0 Challenges and Issues

a. Institutionalisation of Budgets and Management Structures

Although the Project has not had any direct budget problems itself and funds have been allocated by some national and local stakeholders for implementation of the management plans, a challenge faced by the Project has been in having the budget allocations for the LU, LP and SW Management Plans institutionalised within national systems. As such, this has also meant that there is a challenge in ensuring these budget allocations are sustained into the future.

Related to this is the challenge of ensuring management structures are sustainable. The Project has been successful in having key management structures created for the sustainable management of the Project Sites. However, it will be important to ensure that these entities are able to be maintained by national partners into the future. The secretariats have a very important role for sustainability of these management structures, but still need capacity development for implementing their role.

These will be issues that will need to be overcome if the successes achieved to date are to continue after the Project has closed.

b. Transferring Responsibilities

Over the life of the Project, many new and innovative activities have been attempted and these have, by and large, been successful. The Project is now moving into its final stage of ensuring the work done can be adopted into the wetland management system for the whole country. As such, a challenge faced by the Project is having the newly created responsibilities transferred over to national partners and carrying out the national roll-out strategy.

c. Managerial challenges

During implementation of projects, constant managerial changes at different levels and lack of proper knowledge about concepts of joint projects take considerable amount of time and energy from the project.

One of the other challenges has been the injection of new national/international budget for rolling out project activities which is an opportunity that could easily turn into a threat if there is not enough capacity among the executive team.

d. Wetlands Databank

One of the main achievements of the project was remodelling a national databank for Iranian wetlands which could be a good reference for experts, scientists and enthusiasts to find reliable information on a specific wetland. But given that some of the categories of wetlands databank do not fall into responsibilities of DOE, it was somehow challenging to attain the needed data from other organizations. Also due to the necessity of assessing the development of databank by experts of different offices in different phases, change of related staff would be time-consuming. It must be considered that

customization of the data bank demands lots of energy and even if similar data banks exist, remodelling them for the country needs regular collaboration with consultants to integrate concepts and develop a suitable framework agreed by all related experts. This might take a considerable time and lack of proper planning for this might become a great challenge.

E. Toolkit

Developing a toolkit that documents and classifies all project documents, achievements and approach is a demanding task which should not be planned for the final months of the project when lack of access to related data and experts could affect the quality of work. Also, since the contents of the toolkit are important outcomes of the project during its implementation, they should be carefully verified by one of the highest authorities of the project and this time-taking task could not be fulfilled in last months of the project. It should be noted that sometimes thematic overlap of tools needs detailed work to prevent repetition.

5.0 Lessons Learned and Good Practices

a. Project exit strategy and safe ending

Developing an exit strategy for the final years of the project, provided a good basis for a gradual shift of project technical responsibilities to related stakeholders and a plan for staff exit from the project.

b. Management plans as a basis for common understanding

The Project followed up and facilitated the process of developing management plans in a participatory approach and with cooperation with local community, governmental and non-governmental organizations. This process brought the sense of ownership that is urgently required to address the environmental situation for the wetlands. The management plans provide a very good common basis for further actions and decision.

c. Some win-win small projects could accelerate the process of management plan implementations

Implementing some win-win small projects in demonstration site in an earlier stage of the project could have had a good effect on MPs implementation in later steps and even the sense of MP effectiveness by local communities and local authorities.

d. Close cooperation with implementing agency offices and governmental stakeholders

It could be a risk for the project to focus on project activities without establishing useful and effective links with the experts of the IA and other governmental organizations. Developing such links and establishing inter-sectoral management mechanisms may prevent large changes within project management body itself and established mechanisms due to political and managerial changes in these organizations.

e. Gradual change

Sometimes projects tend to start and insist on big changes within IA and partner organizations in a short period which may normally cause resistance from those agencies and reduce the effectiveness and speed of activities. Changes in a longer period are more acceptable and sustainable. The extended duration of the project has therefore been highly advantageous.

f. Community Engagement

If projects are to be successfully implemented and the outcomes to be long lasting, it is critical that local community leaders are assured of the motives of the project and agree with the proposed activities. To achieve this, the support and networks of local NGOs can be obtained and utilised. The Project's experiences and commitment to implementing a plan that was based on participation and integration, coupled with its successes to date, are an example of the benefits of community engagement.

g. Dispute Resolution

A key challenge that the Project Team has learnt to overcome is how to manage disputes with locals at project sites. These often occurred because there were disagreements about the boundary of the lakes and wetlands, and how the land should be used. To overcome this, the Project team established a structured dispute resolution mechanism at LP where grievances could be aired and addressed. This was done with the cooperation of key partners, including the judiciary. This mechanism is still a work in progress though it is assisting in the gradual resolution of disputes.

h. Establishing a Community of Practice

A good practice implemented by the Project was a site visit by an expert team from Pakistan. This visit was an example of south-south cooperation and brought a good amount of knowledge exchange for both sides due to common cultural and environmental basis of experiences.

6.0 Conclusion

Over the last eight years of implementation, the Project has come a long way towards achieving its objective of establishing an effective management system that addresses the threats to the Project Sites in cooperation with the main stakeholders at national and provincial levels. What is more, it is working to ensure the lessons learned from this experience are absorbed within WPA management systems throughout Iran.

On a national level, the urgent need to address the threats to wetland ecosystems has been taken to the highest levels of Government through developing the national wetland conservation strategy and action plan and LU national management committee. The Wetland data bank has been developed and is ready to be used by DoE, and a project toolkit has been developed for further application by stakeholders. Furthermore, national budget has been secured for five years for application and roll out of CIWP experiences and new management system for important wetlands around the country.

On a provincial and basin level, LU and LP integrated Management Plans implementation had a good progress in the Project sites. Three demonstration sites Management committees and technical working groups had several meetings and a reasonable function. Further, a water distribution model has been developed for LU and approved by management committees. This should ensure that the provinces surrounding LU release adequate water into LU to maintain its ecological integrity in the future. Sustainable agriculture was introduced to LU and LP basin and demonstration farms established in LP and LU.

At the local level, Shadegan wetland management plan along with the mapping, zoning and codes of practice have been developed and finalized. This has been possible through the active engagement of the local community and authorities. The efforts of the Project team have also helped to establish mechanisms for the resolution of land use disputes between the DoE and locals. Gurigol and Gharagheshlagh satellite wetlands management plans were finalized. In collaboration with NGOs and the UNDP, participatory approaches to wetland rehabilitation and management have also been advocated to local communities.

In spite of these successes, the persistent drought continues to be a major threat to Iran's wetlands. Of particular concern is that it has resulted in the drastic diminishing of the water levels of LU and LP and, as a result, both lakes are on the brink of desiccation. The Drought Risk Management component of the Project is finalized and approved and its implementation will help addressing this problem in future.

As a final step, it is very important to support the DoE in replication of pilot activities and in rolling out the NWCSAP model over other Iranian wetlands. The intention should not be to finance the replication and rolling out process, but to continue building the managerial and technical capacity of the DoE and other stakeholders including civil society and private sector organizations.