



Conservation of Iranian Wetlands

Annual Report 2013

Prepared By:

Mohsen Soleymani Ruzbahani
National Project Manager

Date:

Endorsed By:

Dr AhmadAli Keikha
National Project Director

Date:



Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project Annual Report - 2012

Prepared by:

Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project Office

Department of Environment

Islamic Republic of Iran

<http://wetlandsproject.ir>

Compiled by:

Sara koochaki

Project Monitoring & Evaluation Expert

sarakoochaki@gmail.com

Submitted to:

United Nations Development Programme – Iran

8 Shahrzad Boulevard, Darrous, Tehran, Iran

Phone: +98 21 22860691-4

www.undp.org.ir

Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	iii
1. Introduction	5
2.0 Progress in attaining Project Outcomes.....	7
2.1 Main achievements from January to April 2013 (the first phase)	7
2.2 Progress in implementing the CIWP scale-up phase (May-Dec 2013).....	12
3.0 Challenges and Issues	23
4.0 Lessons Learned and Good Practices.....	24
5.0 Conclusion.....	25

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CIWP	Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project
DoE	Department of Environment
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IR Iran	Islamic Republic of Iran
LP	Lake Parishan
LU	Lake Uromiyeh
LUB	Lake Uromiyeh Basin
MoJA	Ministry of Jihad Agriculture
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoA	Minutes of Agreement
MoE	Ministry of Energy
Mol	Ministry of Interior
MRT	Ministry of Roads and Transport
MP	Management Plan
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NPD	National Project Director
NPM	National Project Manager
NWCSAP	National Wetlands Strategy & Action Plan
RRC-CWA	Ramsar Regional Center for Central and West Asia
PSC	Project Steering Committee
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

SNPA	Senior National Project Advisor
TE	Terminal Evaluation
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRAC	Target for Resource Assignment from the Core
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WA	West Azerbaijan
WPA	Wetland Protected Area

1. Introduction

Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project (CIWP) is a joint initiative between the Government of Islamic Republic of Iran (led by the Department of Environment), Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which started in 2005 and was scheduled to end in April 2013. But to draw on the recommendations of Terminal Evaluation on sustainability of results for ensuring that CIWP's outcomes are systematically up-scaled both vertically and horizontally, a scale-up phase was approved by Department of Environment and UNDP to continue and fulfil the achievements of CIWP.

While the underlying aim of first phase of the project aimed at conducting a pilot and demonstration conservation operation, which could be adopted by the Government and applied to the other national wetlands, the scale-up phase will take CIWP successful pilot to a large scale and establish wetland management plans and inter-sectoral coordination structures for 11 (8 new wetlands+3 CIWP demonstration sites) important Iranian wetlands; Put in place Strong wetlands ecosystem management legislative platform and inter-sectoral administrative structures at national level supporting implementation of the "Ecosystem Approach" in important Iranian wetlands and share CIWP and other wetlands management initiatives, knowledge and lessons learnt with the entire region of South and central Asia.

An overview of the project is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Overview of the Project

Project Title	<i>Conservation of Iranian Wetlands</i>	
Project Duration	Phase 1: 8 Years and 4 months (2005 to April 2013)	Phase 2 (Scale-up): 20 months (May 2013 to Dec 2014)
Project Budget	GEF: 2,915,000 Government co-financing: 9,190,000 Netherlands Contribution: 600,000 UNDP Drought Risk Mgt: 200,000 TRAC Budget for Scaling Up: 50,000	UNDP TRAC: 298,000 Gov.IR of Iran: 500,000 Ramsar Regional Center for West and Central Asia: 50,000 (Mainly in-kind)
Total: USD\$ 12,955,000		Total: USD\$ 848.000
Executing Entity	Iranian Department of Environment (DoE)	Iranian Department of Environment (DoE)
Cooperating National Agencies	The Ministry of Energy (MoE)	The Ministry of Energy (MoE)
	Office of Strategic Planning Affairs and Control of the Government of the IR Iran (SPAC)	Office of Strategic Planning Affairs and Control of the Government of the IR Iran (SPAC)

	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)
	Ministry of Jihad Agriculture (MoJA)	Ministry of Jihad Agriculture (MoJA)
	Ministry of Roads and Transportation (MRT)	Ministry of Roads and Transportation (MRT)
	Ministry of Interior (MoI)	Ministry of Interior (MoI)
Implementing Agency	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The goal, objectives and intended outcomes of the scale-up phase are summarised in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Project's Goal, Outcome and Outputs

Project Goal	To enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of Iran's system of wetland protected areas (WPAs) as a tool for conserving globally significant biodiversity
Main Outcome	Model management system designed and being implemented by DoE and other local stakeholders at WPA demonstration sites based on CIWP achievements and lessons learnt to effectively address the most significant 'internally arising' threats
Output 1	Ecosystem based wetland management plans and inter-sectoral coordination structures established for 11(8 new wetlands + 3 demonstration sites) important Iranian wetlands through taking CIWP successful pilot to a large scale
Output 2	Strong wetlands ecosystem management legislative platform and intersectoral administrative structures are in place at national level supporting implementation of the "Ecosystem Approach" in important Iranian wetlands
Output 3	Sharing CIWP and other wetlands management initiatives, knowledge and lessons learnt with the neighboring countries

2.0 Progress in attaining Project Outcomes

The project witnessed major events in 2013; the end of the first phase and beginning of a new scale-up phase for replicating CIWP's achievements at a broader national level. This progress report covers a summary of CIWP's activities towards safe ending of the first phase, as well as a detailed progress report of the scale-up phase based on expected outputs.

2.1 Main achievements from January to April 2013 (the first phase)

Since the amendment of project was not a clear option at the beginning of 2013, during the first 4 months of 2013 CIWP focused all its efforts to ensure the safe exit of the project and complete the remaining important tasks with emphasis on the recommendations of Terminal Evaluation and drawing on the main points raised during the latest PSC meeting of the project by SIPA and other board members. The following report summarises the main achievements during this phase:

a) Final Review

When a project comes close to an end, it's utterly important to overview it completely since the start, to show the path that project has taken towards achieving its objectives. For this purpose a Final Review of CIWP was prepared by SIPA in the final months of the project and was officially endorsed by National Project Director (NPD) and UNDP.

This report reviews overall project performance, assessments from the Terminal Evaluation, achievements against the project targets and performance under outcomes, project's success in achieving its Goal and Objective and performance against the project's Impact Indicators. The report then gives an insight into CIWP achievement and products at the demonstration sites and national level, overviews financial issues at project closure, describes about the way of transferring responsibilities to national counterparts and Hand-over of assets and demonstrates CIWP's lessons learned and good practices before conclusions.

b) 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. For CIWP this process was done by two independent international and national evaluators in December 2012. During this process, the consultants visited all the project demonstration sites and interviewed many stakeholder organizations and individuals using analysis methods and questionnaires to assess effectiveness of the project in different aspects. This team also met with high-level managers and experts of organizations such as MoE, MoJA, MoI, project consultants and experts and NGOs at national level. The report of this evaluation was finalized in January 2013 and was officially shared with related authorities.

c) Project Steering Committee Meeting

Since the beginning of the project, a steering committee consisting of representatives from main stakeholders of the project was appointed to overview CIWP's progress and governs the main

issues. This committee had its 13th meeting on 30th of April with presence of UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, NPD, Water and sewage deputy of MoE, and representatives from MoJA, SPAC, MoFA, National and provincial DoEs and other members of the committee. In this meeting, the final report of the project and results of terminal evaluation were presented and there were some discussions on final activities and Scale-up Proposal. At the end of this meeting, the final review and TE results were approved by members and they expressed their acknowledgement for achievements gained by CIWP during its course of action. UNDP DRR stated UNDP's willingness to allocate approximately 300 thousand dollars for scale-up of CIWP and the representative of MoFA added that his Ministry will support the scale-up proposal. Some decisions were also made on transfer of provincial assets.

d) New Publications

Documentation, no doubt plays a substantial role in ensuring the sustainability of results of a project. CIWP focused a considerable amount of energy and funds during the final months to produce several public awareness/training materials (Book, booklets, brochures, Posters, etc) for broadcasting project achievements, knowledge and lessons learnt. UNDP also allocated 50000\$ from its' TRAC budget for this purpose. The total number of these publications adds up to 14 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 most important of these publications, is a user-friendly toolkit prepared to document and classify the CIWP approach, experiences and achievements. 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 is supported by a databank of all CIWP documents presented as a multi-media CD attached to the toolkit. This toolkit was published in April and was symbolically delivered to Habitats office during closing ceremony, along with other key documents of CIWP. These publications were exhibited during the signing ceremony and the final PSC meeting.

e) LU Basin Drought Risk Management Plan

Following development and approval of LU drought Risk management plan and finalization of the related reports and software, a workshop was held from 13-14 Feb 2012 in Tarbiat Modares University's faculty of agriculture on *drought risk management planning of Lake Urmia basin* with cooperation of the Project, secretariat of Lake Urmia Basin management regional council and Tarbiat Modares University, with presence of representatives from provincial DoE's, Agricultural Jihad organizations, Water Authorities, General meteorological offices of W&E Azerbaijan and Kordestan and the representatives from Ministries of Agriculture, Interior and Energy.

Following issues were reviewed and discussed in this meeting:

- The approval of LU drought Risk management plan in water and agriculture management working group of LU regional council
- The necessity of establishment of management committees and drought risk management organizational structure
- Implementation of the plan by related stakeholders

f) Water Requirement Workshop

Given the importance of determining environmental water requirement of wetlands as a prerequisite for their management, CIWP had carried out some studies in this regard in previous years. To review the result of these studies, including guidelines and instruction for calculating environmental water requirement of wetlands, a workshop was held in April 2013 with presence of DoE's technical offices, representatives of 12 provincial DoEs with wetland sites, the major planning office of water and sewage, the water resources management company of MoE, Damoun NGO and UNDP energy, environment and disaster cluster analyst.

The following issues were reviewed and discussed in this workshop:

- Introducing CIWP's achievements to implement ecosystem approach in wetlands management
- The necessity of determining environmental water requirement of wetlands and CIWP's obtained results from related studies
- Emphasizing on the necessity of knowing how to calculate wetlands water requirement and also cooperation and interaction of different organizations to determine wetlands environmental water right.
- Reviewing the background of determining water requirement of aquatic ecosystems in the country by DoE and MoE.
- Presenting a case study of environmental water requirement calculation of wetlands (Lake Urmia)

g) Scale- up Proposal

The Terminal Evaluation of the project suggested to up-scale the project to ensure the sustainability of its' success at pilot sites as well as rolling out its' approach at a broader national level. Both DoE and UNDP's support for this idea, led to preparation of a Scaling- up proposal by CIWP. This scale-up project will establish wetland management plans and inter-sectoral coordination structures for 11 (8 new wetlands+3 CIWP demonstration sites) important Iranian wetlands through taking CIWP successful pilot to a large scale; Put in place Strong

wetlands ecosystem management legislative platform and inter-sectoral administrative structures at national level supporting implementation of the “Ecosystem Approach” in important Iranian wetlands and Share CIWP and other wetlands management initiatives, knowledge and lessons learnt on with the entire region of South and central Asia.

This document was finalized based on feedbacks from UNDP and SIPA and was shared with DoE office of International Affairs. This document was officially signed and endorsed in "Closing ceremony of CIWP and signing ceremony of the scale-up phase" on 7th of May. This new phase started in May 2013 and will end in December 2014.

h) WWD

On 5th of February 2013 and in a ceremony in Ahwaz, the World wetlands day was celebrated with presence of Vice president and Head of DoE. In this ceremony, the strategic document of Shadegan Wetland management aiming to protect and restore this important wetland was signed by Vice president and Head of DoE. Based on this document and after fulfillment of the 25-year vision in the management plan, Shadegan Wetland will be well known worldwide for its' beauties and values and receives healthy and adequate water and supports rich biodiversity for the welfare of local communities.

i) Sustainable agriculture

In another attempt to ensure sustainability of CIWP results at demonstration sites, the implementation phase of sustainable agricultural development project (IPM wetland) in Lake Urmia Basin was launched with support from SGP.

This sustainable agricultural development project (IPM Wetland) which fosters CIWP's objectives in Lake Urmia Basin, has the following objectives:

- Empowerment and conscious participation of stakeholders of agricultural department in management of water quality and quantity
- Reduction or elimination of industrial chemicals including pesticides and chemical fertilizers
- Agricultural waste management
- Organization of local networks for development of sustainable agricultural in Ghorigol and Siran Goli wetlands in three cropping seasons

j) Wetland Data bank

Developing a National Databank of all Iranian wetlands that could be used as a useful source of information by different levels of target groups, was one of the main tasks CIWP had pursued since the start. For this purpose, a software was designed based on MedWet databank and DoE was provided with necessary training. This wetland Database was finalized after insertion of Ramsar sites' data by the provinces under supervision of CIWP and Habitats office.

This data bank was officially launched by head of DoE during the signing ceremony of CIWP.

k) Exit Strategy and Transfer of responsibilities to the DoE

Given that the first quarter of 2013 was planned to be the last months of the project's implementation, 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 and reducing input and leadership for joint activities with stakeholders and concentrated more on documentation and production to roll out project achievements and approaches. Project's achievements were symbolically transferred to DoE Habitats Office during the signing ceremony in May.

As for the equipments, a complete list was prepared and it was decided that provincial equipment would be transferred to provincial DoE's and the equipments of central project office would remain in use by the project, until the end of scale-up phase.

CIWP also prepared the management Response of Terminal Evaluation and updated the audit management response and action plans.

l) Signing Ceremony

To celebrate 8 years of CIWP's implementation and to mark the start of a new phase, a ceremony was held on 7th of May in international conference hall of DoE with presence of head of DoE and Vice President, UNDP resident representatives and high-ranking managers of DoE, UNDP, MoE, MoJA, SPAC, National and provincial stakeholders of the project as well as NGOs and local communities .In this ceremony, Main achievements of the project including newly published books, Toolkit and DRM Plan were exhibited, National Wetland databank was launched and achievements of the project were symbolically transferred to DoE Habitats Office. The scale-up document of the project was signed by Head of DoE and UNDP Resident Representative and CIWP stakeholders and staff were acknowledged.

During this ceremony, speeches were given by National project manager, project NPD (deputy of natural environment), UNDP RR and Head of DoE, all acknowledging achievements of the project and its staff in applying ecosystem approach in wetland management, emphasizing on importance of wetlands and necessity of carrying out similar systematic, scientific and organized team work to successfully manage wetlands.

2.2 Progress in implementing the CIWP scale-up phase (May-Dec 2013)

Main Outcome: Model management system designed and being implemented by DOE and other local stakeholders at WPA demonstration sites based on CIWP achievements and lessons learnt to effectively address the most significant 'internally arising' threats.

2.2.1 National Wetland Management System Model

Output 1: Ecosystem based wetland management plans and inter-sectoral coordination structures established for 11(8 new wetlands + 3 demonstration sites) important Iranian wetlands through taking CIWP successful pilot to a large scale

a. Building Capacity of Provincial DoE Staff

Following designing 3 training and capacity-building modules on «Applying the ecosystem approach in wetland management» and incorporating them in DoE's training calendar, two of these thematic workshops were held for all wetland related staff of provincial DoEs.

The first round of these workshops which focused on participatory approaches, stakeholder analysis and presenting CIWP's achievements, was held as two separate courses for northern and southern provinces of the country in June, hosted by West Azerbaijan and Khuzestan DoEs.

This was followed by the second round of the training workshops on participatory development, approval and implementation of integrated management plans, drawing on the results of the first workshops. This module was also held as two separate courses for northern and southern provinces in September and November.

The last round of these thematic workshops which will focus on institutional structures has been planned for the first quarter of 2014.

The mentioned training courses were welcomed by the wetland-related staff of provincial DoEs and will enable them to adopt a step by step approach for developing integrated management plans for their wetlands in a participatory way.

b. Close Collaboration with DoE's Habitats Office

Both in nature of responsibilities and technical capacities, DoE's Habitats office is the closest office to CIWP and the project has always cooperated with this office to build their capacities to apply new approaches in the wetland management system and pick up the responsibilities after the end of project.

With the beginning of the CIWP scale-up phase, this collaboration also entered a new phase. The manager and experts of this office were engaged in work Planning and all the steps of planning for capacity building workshops, selection of priority wetlands and other tasks of work plan, and also

allocation of national budgets to the provinces was done according to ecosystem approach and management plan priorities. The experts of this office also acted as trainers of capacity-building workshops.

Some meetings were also held between SIPA, DG and experts of this office to review the progress in 2013, lessons learned and issues for next and final year of the project.

c. Supporting Development of Management Plans for New Sites

One of the main purposes of the scale-up phase was to support a number of provincial DoE offices (other than classic CIWP demonstration sites) to apply ecosystem approach and develop and implement integrated management plans for one wetland in their provinces, based on existing models. For this purpose, 9 sites were selected for initiating management planning process in consultation with habitats office and priority sites for scale-up phase which include: **Zarivar, Choghakhor, Helle, Mighan, "Alagol, Almagol, Ajigol" complex**, Kamjan, Harraye Minab & Boujagh (the bolded ones are the priority wetlands for 2013)

Although the experts of these wetland sites had received some general training under the capacity building courses described above, they were provided with detailed, technical training on management planning in two workshops held in august and December.

In the first workshop, these provinces were asked to prepare baseline studies and do a rapid assessment on their selected wetland and the second workshop mainly focused on reviewing the previous workshops and presenting the reports of each province on stakeholder analysis and baseline studies. As a result of this workshop, the dates of Inception management planning workshop for each wetland was defined and the provincial DoEs were asked to prepare their to-do lists within a week.

d. Continued Implementation of Management Plans at Previous Demonstration Sites (LU, LP and SW)

In line with initiating the management planning process at new wetland sites, the project had to ensure sustainability of activities at previous demonstration sites. This included monitoring the implementation of management plans as well as supporting their secretariats in following up on their main tasks:

Lake Urumiyeh:

Given the critical situation of this wetland which has become a growing concern at national level, and due to the change of government and determination of the new cabinet to solve this issue, it seemed very important to brief high-level authorities about what had been done for LU. For this, CIWP accompanied the head of DoE and Cabinet on a visit to LU and attended meetings of LU technical committee for deciding about priority projects (19 projects were finalized). This involved attending the meetings of the MoE-based Working Group for Saving Lake Urumiyeh which was established by the new government. Also a meeting was held with Head of DoE (Mme Ebtekar) with presence of CIWP, experts of LU regional council and WA DoE on 18th of December, to review the status of Lake Urumiyeh and discuss the possible solutions. As a result of this meeting, it was decided to govern the issues of LU at international level, introduce and

develop the successful model of sustainable agriculture in LU, raise awareness of people for cooperating in restoration of the lake and use encouraging and discouraging policies for water usage.

NPM also accompanied UNDP Resident Representative Mr. Gary Lewis and his colleagues on a visit to Lake Urumiyeh. In this visit, Mr. Lewis visited all the parts of Lake Urumiyeh and some of its satellite wetlands and met with DoE Director Generals of East and West Azerbaijan provinces. Following visiting Kaniborazan bird-watching center, Mr. Lewis promised UNDP's support for the local communities' initiatives at this site and the project provided this visitor center with some equipment. The observations of this visit were written as an article by Mr. Lewis which was broadly reflected in national media.

Other LU related issues such as official notification of signed Gurigol and Garagheshlagh management plans and approval of the proposal for implementation of sustainable agriculture were also supported by the project.

LUB Drought Risk Management:

LUB DRM is an important component of LU management process. To continue the previous works, CIWP recruited a consultant to support implementation of the Drought Monitoring System and provided training for the LU DRM technical committees in the WA governorship.

Project also contributed to preparing a proposal for a UNDP project entitled "promotion of climate change risk management in wetlands of Iran".

Some meetings were also held with insurance experts and a representative from the parliament's research center to discuss insurance and recompensation of losses endured by farmers in drought situation. It was decided that CIWP's consultant would prepare a draft of possible solutions and these meetings will continue with presence of representatives from private and governmental insurance companies to discuss the details.

Lake Parishan:

Although like other lakes in Iran Lake Parishan suffers issues such as drought and unsustainable use, 2013 had some good news in hand for this lake. Land conflict was always a great issue in this lake but thanks to a great cooperation among DoE, judiciary authorities and local people, more than 1085 hectares of illegally occupied lands were repossessed and Lake Parishan is now the first wetland in Iran with a title deed.

Also 46 kilometers of LP boundaries were defined through embankments and Fars DoE dredged the canals pouring into the wetland before the raining season.

The working groups and local committee of this lake are active and CIWP supported LP secretariat in publishing LP baseline studies.

Shadegan Wetland:

The secretariat and local structure of Shadegan Wetland is a very active and automotive secretariat. In 2013 this secretariat was fully equipped by Khuzestan DoE, about 80% of SW was benchmarked and SW working groups had several meetings.

In the last days of December, CIWP NPM and technical expert accompanied UNDP RR deputy on a visit to Shadegan wetland. In this one day event, Mr. Murali visited Shadegan Wetland and its secretariat and took part in the local management meeting of SW. After hearing reports on boundary marking of SW, transferring the waste depots outside the wetland area and construction of SW visitor center, this high-level authority acknowledged these activities as best practices for applying ecosystem approach in wetland management.

e. Introducing Ecosystem Approach to NGOs, Universities and Private Sector

NGOs and civil society groups are driving forces behind public support for environmental initiatives. Hence they are the right target groups for introduction of ecosystem approach, because they could apply this knowledge to their work with different levels of society. Recognizing this fact and in pursuit of previous collaborations with NGOs, a two-day workshop was held in October in Zibakenar, near Anzali wetland, bringing together representatives of NGOs from more than 25 provinces of the country, experts of DoE's Education and Public Participation office and CIWP. During this workshop, participants discussed their successful and unsuccessful environmental experiences, their problems and challenges, their knowledge of high-level laws of the country, the place they could gain according to these laws and the ways they could safeguard financial, human and other resources for their organizations. Also one session of this workshop was allocated to the project to introduce a summary of project's achievements, how it has cooperated with several NGOs and CBDs and some publications including toolkit which could be of use to the participants.

In the final session of the workshop, participants suggested practical ideas to promote the cooperation between NGOs with governmental organizations and with each other in wetland-related issues.

Universities and private companies were other target groups for this activity. CIWP introduced its achievements to University of Environment and held a 1 day workshop in May for professors and students of water resources faculty of Tarbiat Modarres University. But to cover a broader range of audience, a 1 day consultative workshop entitled "Role of Universities and Research Centers in Applying Ecosystem Approach in Management of Wetlands" was held in December with presence of NPD, DoE's Education deputy, SIPA, UNDP representative and more than 25 university professors from universities and research centers across Iran. In this workshop which was opened by speeches from DoE's Education deputy, followed by presentations from UNDP representative, SIPA, NPM and Tarbiat modarres university, it was discussed about the necessity for more cooperation between scientific bodies and Department of Environment in applying new approaches for education of environmentalists and doing research on emerging fields of studies, regarding the issues and problems of wetlands.

A similar 1 day workshop was held for consulting companies in December with presence of CIWP, DoE, UNDP and 50 representatives from 35 consulting engineer companies. During this workshop the ecosystem approach was introduced, experts discussed their experiences and challenges for

implementing the environmental projects and it was emphasized on necessity of applying sustainable and environmental-friendly approaches in by these companies.

f. Community of Practice among UNDP Environmental Projects

UNDP projects in Iran have many commonalities in the nature of their activities and processes. They also face similar problems during their implementation. This was the main idea behind formation of a community of practice among natural resources and environmental projects of UNDP, aiming to join forces for solving common problems and initiate joint activities to cover similar objectives.

Two meetings of this knowledge-sharing platform were held in 2013 and the following activities were initiated:

- A MOU among these projects was prepared by MENARID Project and signed by project managers.
- A financial & monitoring software for all projects is under development. CIWP attended several meetings in this regard and provided needful guidance.
- CIWP provided training on financial/admin procedures to one of the new UNDP projects.
- CIWP attended RBM workshops.
- Some joint activities on alternative livelihoods and management of Hamoun Wetland were proposed by CIWP and MENARID Project and were included in the 2014 annual work plans.

g. Awareness Raising and Media Engagement

During the scale-up phase, cooperation with DoE's public awareness office continued and news related to the wetlands were regularly updated on CIWP and DoE websites. Some of the news were also reflected on the official website of UNDP Iran. National project manager had several interviews with visual and written media to raise awareness on wetland issues.

I. Regular Planning & Reporting

- In 2013, Quarterly and bimonthly reports of the project were prepared and regular planning meetings held with staff
- SIPA had a mission to Iran in December 2013. During this mission, he carried out a review of scale-up achievements against 2013 work plan in consultation with project team and habitats office, he supported preparation of 2014 work plan, contributed to the workshop for University professors, participated in the Project Steering Committee meeting and provided recommendations and conclusions of his mission to UNDP and NPD. As a result of his mission, some of the targets of the work plan were adjusted and his recommendations were included in the 2014 work plan.
- The 14th Meeting of PSC was held in December to review 2013 progress and approve 2014 work plan.
- Contracts were signed with SIPA, SNPA and Socio-economic Consultants and a MoAs was signed with Tarbiat Modarres University to follow up on LUB DRM tasks.

2.2.2 National Wetland Structures and legislative platform

Output 2: Strong wetlands ecosystem management legislative platform and intersectoral administrative structures are in place at national level supporting implementation of the “Ecosystem Approach” in important Iranian wetlands

a. Embedding and Advocating CIWP Guidelines at National and Local Levels

Production of several technical publications during the course of CIWP demanded a plan to distribute the publications among key stakeholders. This was done in different ways;

- Posting the book packages to provincial DoE offices, related national and provincial organizations, international projects, universities, national ministries etc;
- Delivering books to some of the national and provincial DoE offices and University of Environment through face to face meetings with their managers and describing the background and use of each publication. In these meetings, the related managers were asked to distribute these publications among interested key groups;
- Uploading project's Toolkit (including all the publications) on related websites such as DoE, Ramsar regional center and UNDP Iran;
- Exhibiting and distributing publications in different meetings, workshops, exhibitions; and
- Sharing the Toolkit with NGOs, Universities and provincial offices of DoE through DoE's Education and Public Participation office.

Some of these produced guidelines (including Wetlands water need and rapid assessment) were summarized as Terms of References and sent to provincial offices of DoE.

Project also started the republishing process of some useful publications of CIWP such as Toolkit, A Children's Story book, LU baseline studies and report, DRM Package, LU management plan and LP baseline studies.

b. Alternative Livelihoods

The Terminal Evaluation suggested that effectiveness of the Alternative livelihood activities, natural resources-based conflict settlement and advocacy by civil society organizations must be increased by the project. For this, project followed up on continuation of some of the tasks that had been started in the first phase. Sustainable Agriculture Program was one of the successful activities practiced in some of the demonstration sites which proved useful to the people (promoting their products and incomes) and to wetlands (by using less water and pesticides). Project followed up on signature of a MoU between MoJA office of agricultural extension and WA Agricultural Organization to replicate the sustainable agriculture pilots in a number of farms around LU. Project also supported preparation of sustainable agriculture ToRs for 7 cities in West Azerbaijan province which was followed by allocation of 2 billion Rials by WA governorship for implementation of this project.

In addition, a Socio-economic consultant was recruited and some Joint activities on alternative livelihoods were planned with MENARID and other UNDP projects. As the first step, this activity aims to collect and introduce the best practices in this field.

c. Reviewing Existing Wetland Laws and regulations in Cooperation with High-level Decision-Making Structures

During the first phase, project led the participatory development of a National Wetland Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (NWCSAP) with cooperation of stakeholders. This document was officially sent to the cabinet for approval, though the process was halted due to change of government.

However, the critical situation of wetlands led to development of another important legal document which upon approval will be one of the exemplary high-level laws ever developed for Wetlands. Project had a major contribution to preparation and finalization of this parliament's act proposal on "Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable use of wetlands based on ecosystem approach" through participating in numerous meeting with members of the water, agriculture and natural resources commission of the parliament, MoE, MoJA and other stakeholders. Preparation of NWCSAP was also provisioned in one of the articles of this document. This proposal was approved in the technical working group of water and agriculture commission of the parliament and will be delivered for parliament's approval after modifications.

d. Institutionalizing Implementation of Management Plans in National Budgeting Mechanisms

Financial provisions are probably one the most important factors in implementation of management plans. In other words, lack of budget could be the biggest hurdle site managers have to deal with. For this, project had to ensure that the priority activities of the management plans were fed by necessary funds. This was mainly done by supporting DoE habitats office in allocating national budget in line with the activities of management plans.

There were also some negotiations with SPAC about possibility of allocating national budget to governmental entities based on management plan activities.

Institutionalizing implementation of management plans in budget planning of responsible governmental organizations was also considered in the parliament act proposal described above.

2.2.3 Knowledge Sharing at Regional Level

Output 3: Sharing CIWP and other wetlands management initiatives, knowledge and lessons learnt with the neighbouring countries

a. Exchanging Knowledge & Experiences with Neighbouring Countries

One of the main outputs of CIWP during the scale-up phase aimed at knowledge-sharing at a regional level. In this process and in cooperation with RRC, a list of related projects, governmental organizations, UN-based agencies and NGOs of the Central and West Asia were identified the English publications of CIWP and useful references which are uploaded on project's website, were shared with these wetland experts. These publications mainly included English documents and reports of CIWP, management plans and baseline reports for pilot sites and some technical guidelines on wetland zoning, management of wetland biodiversity etc. Also the Toolkit developed based on experiences and

achievements of the first phase of the project was introduced to these experts and they were invited to exchange links with CIWP and share their best practices and successful cases with the project.

A similar step was taken to approach members of Ramsar Forum and detailed description of CIWP's achievements and a link to project's toolkit was shared with UNDP regional offices through UNDP Iran.

b. Supporting Management of Trans-boundary Wetlands

As the first step towards supporting co-management of a trans-boundary wetland in Iran, a consultative meeting was held with habitats office and Hamoun wetland was selected as suitable trans-boundary wetland to start the work.

Since this complex of wetlands is fed by hirmand river in Afghanistan, its' management demands talks and negotiations with the neighbouring country. For this, several meeting were held with UNDP Resident Representative in Iran who showed great interest in cooperating for restoration and management of this wetland.

This was followed by the visits of head of DoE and UNDP RR to this area and meetings with high-level authorities of the Sistan and Balouchestan province.

Also a joint meeting was held with representatives of MENARID project (who has Sistan & Balouchestan as a pilot site), MoE, UNDP and habitats office and experts of Sistan & Baluchestan DoE to review the status of Hamoun wetland and define future steps for management and restoration of this important international wetland.

c. Exchange Visits

Following the visit of a Turkish NGO to Iran in 2012, CIWP participated in an "International gathering on saving drying lakes" held by this NGO in Burdur, Turkey and presented the project achievements.

This international gathering was held from 16 to 18 September was hosted by Doga Dernegi Society (Birdlife Turkey) and welcomed representatives from France, Greece, Turkey, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Jordan, Iraq, Kenya and Iran.

The following issues were presented by CIWP in this gathering:

- Achievements of CIWP in integrated management of wetland basins, wetlands environmental water rights and the methods of supplying water right in drought situation.
- The newest publications of CIWP including wetlands management technical books and awareness brochures
- The role of dam construction policies and irrigation in drying the wetlands
- The impacts of drying wetlands on human and biodiversity
- Management of wetland basins
- Water requirement of wetlands
- The successful experiences in wetlands restoration and wise use
- Introducing successful practical experiences in wetlands restoration
- Management and sharing the wetlands knowledge

It is noteworthy that, according to the previous visit of Doga Dernegi Society from Lake Urmia and their acquaintance with performed activities in establishment of ecosystem approach and presentation of CIWP achievements in this gathering, this society will apply the approaches used by CIWP for saving and restoration of Burdur wetland.

In another attempt, project's achievements on sustainable agriculture were presented by DoE's delegate in the 5th Meeting of the South and Central Asian MAB Network (26-28 November 2013) in Islam Abad, Pakistan.

d. Close Cooperation with International Organizations for Exchanging Best Practices

- During the scale-up phase, project had close cooperation with Ramsar Regional Center for Central and West Asia for joint activities. These activities were also included in the project work plan. Project also had several communications with Ramsar Secretariat, Wetland Link International and other related international organizations for knowledge sharing.
- Following several communications with authors, CIWP was invited to provide some articles for an encyclopaedia of wetlands which will be published by Springer Publications. Project prepared 3 articles on LU, LP and Shadegan wetland.
- Several meetings were held with Japans International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to discuss issues about Anzali Wetland and future collaboration of this agency with CIWP, specifically on LU sustainable agriculture.
- UNDP Iran nominated CIWP for the SOUTH SOUTH COOPERATION section of Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific Award. The nominated activity was "community of practice for National Managers of wetland conservation projects" which was sent to the RBAP along with supporting documents.

e. Regional Community of Practice on Wetland Management

In order to promote international best practice tools and approaches for use in wetland management, to enable sharing of regional experiences in the practical application of wetland management approaches across the region and to foster a regional network of wetland managers under the RRC-CWA a Regional workshop on "Knowledge Sharing on Integrated Wetland Management in Central and West Asia" was initially planned for December 2013. The workshop program finalized in consultation with SIPA and Ramsar experts, announcement was published and invitations were sent but due unavailability of some of the invitees and other reasons, the event was postponed to June 2014.

3. Financial Overview

The information below is a break-down of the Project finances to date (Dec2013) and includes all fund resources. In 2013 Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project finished it's phase I period and the scale-up phase started from May.

In current year the main donors were IRI. Government and UNDP which supported conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project scale-up phase. Also the GEF budget was fully utilised until the end of April 2013.

This table provides overall information on the total amount of government, TRAC and GEF funding budgeted (from 2005 to late 2013) 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.

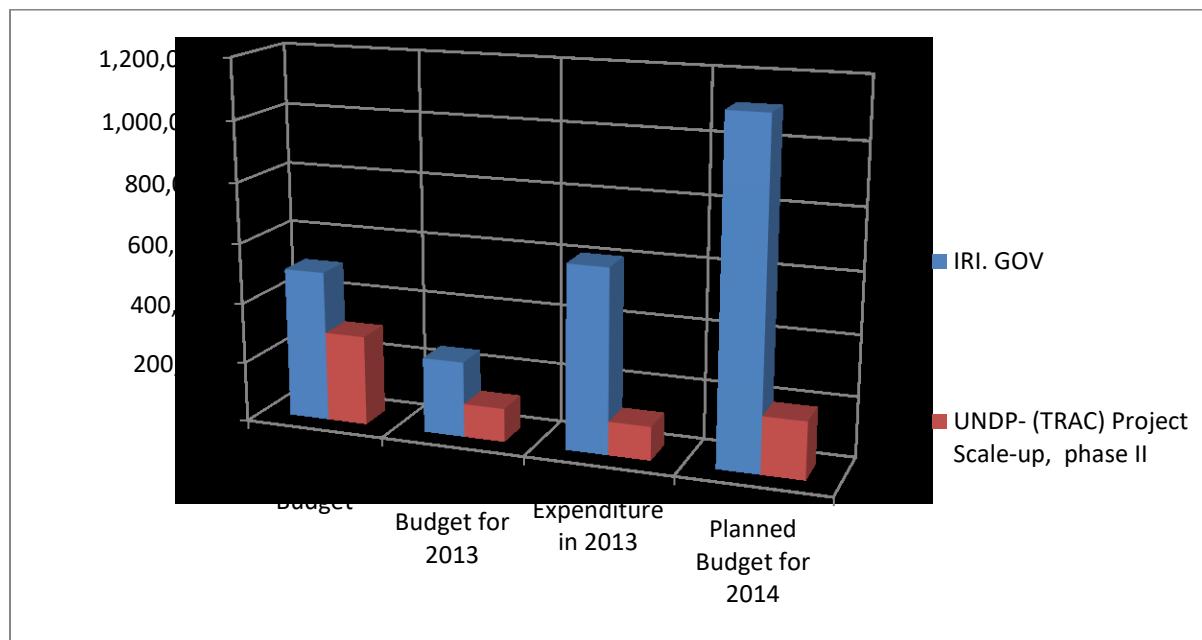
Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project, Phase I & Scale-up (phase II)					
Fund	Total Fund USD \$	Duration of project	Funds Utilised (2005-2013)	Balance	Status
IRI. GOV	9,190,000	2005-2014	42,281,000	Over expenditure	On Going
GEF	2,915,000	2005-2013(Apr)	2,915,000	0	Done
UNDP-(TRAC): Drought component	200,000	2009-2011	200,000	0	Done
UNDP- TRAC	50,000	2012: Sept-Dec	50,000	0	Done
UNDP- (TRAC) Project Scale-up, phase II	298,000	May 2013 – Dec 2014	110,000	188,000	On Going
TOTAL	12,653,000	-----	45,556,000	-----	

Scale-up phase: In order to clarify expenditure, the table below shows the budgeting and expenditure of the Project Scale-up phase (May to Dec 2013):

Scale-up phase started from May 2013 and will finish in Dec 2014. The Government contribution showed over expenditure which reflected complete support of Iran Government and UNDP TRAC was also fully utilised.

The Government of Iran has approved a national plan/scheme entitled “Conservation and Restoration of Iranian wetlands” which helped the project during the Scale-up phase to allocate national budget in-line with embedding the project achievement to other Iranian wetlands.

Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project, Scale-up (phase II)						
Fund	Total Budget	Planned Budget for 2013	Expenditure in 2013	Expenditure %	Planned Budget for 2014	Status
	USD\$	USD\$	USD\$			
IRI. GOV	500,000	250,000	607,000	+242%	1,110,000	On Going
UNDP- (TRAC) Project Scale-up, phase II	298,000	110,000	110,000	100%	188,000	On Going



3.0 Challenges and Issues

4.0 Lessons Learned and Good Practices

5.0 Conclusion

2013 was an important year in the lifetime of CIWP. During the first months of the year, project focused most of its' energy on smooth closure of the project which was due to happen in the end of April 2013. This included ensuring a safe exit, both technically and physically. For this purpose, several technical products of project were published, among which the CIWP Toolkit which covers different subjects on applying ecosystem approach in wetland management stands out. Moreover, a ceremony was held to celebrate 8 years of CIWP's implementation and to mark the start of a new phase.

With the start of the scale-up phase, project was able to target wetland sites beyond the classic demonstration sites of CIWP. While the capacity-building courses on applying the ecosystem approach in wetland management were held for wetland experts of all DoE offices throughout Iran and also several target groups of NGOs, universities and private sector, a special attention was focused on prioritizing 8 important wetland sites for starting the management- planning process. DoE habitats office played a crucial role in the planning process and addressed these priorities in the budget allocation to provincial offices.

In the meanwhile at national level, the critical situation of wetlands led to development of an important legal document which will be one of the exemplary high-level laws ever developed for Wetlands. Project had an important role in guiding the development of this document which covers NWCSAP and all the important issues of wetlands and will be approved by the parliament.

Project also started a knowledge-sharing process at a regional level by sharing the English documents of the project with related international projects, organizations, UN-based agencies and NGOs and by introducing the project achievements in international gatherings.

Project will follow up on all of these activities to attain tangible results until the end of scale-up phase in December.