



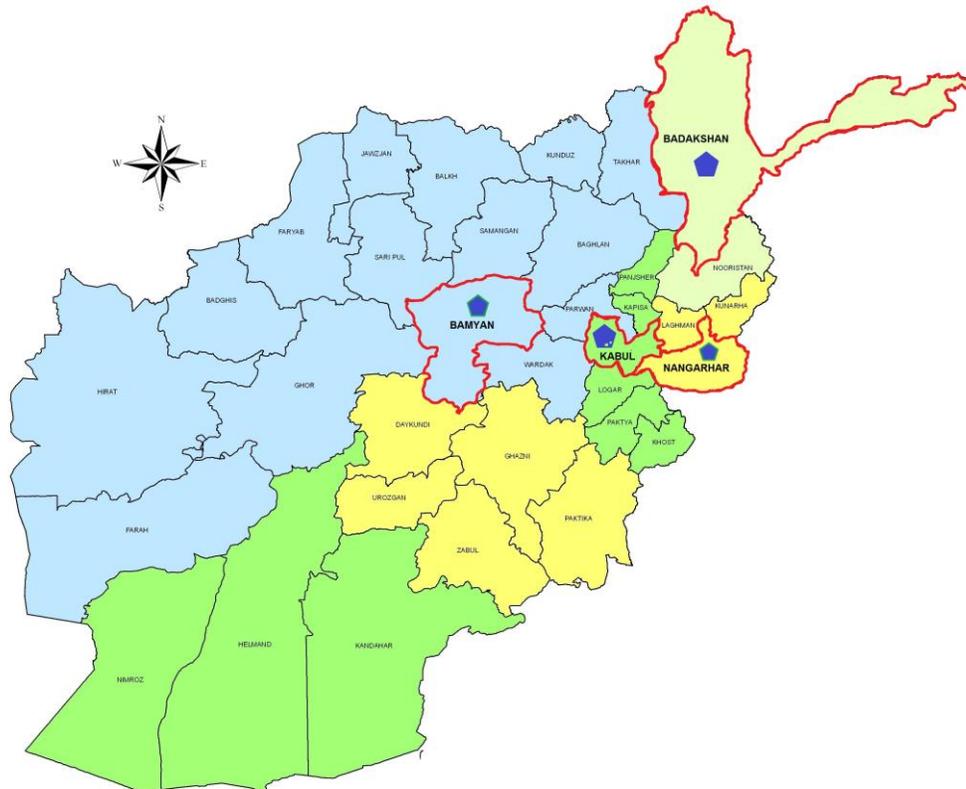
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Draft

Afghanistan

**Small Grants Programme  
Country Programme Strategy**

2013 – 2014



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## Acronyms

ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
BD	Biodiversity
CBOs	Community-based Organizations
CC	Climate Change
CDCs	Community Development Councils
CPS	Country Program Strategy
DDAs	District Development Assemblies
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IW	International Waters
KM	Knowledge Management
LD	Land Degradation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NC	National Coordinator
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSC	National Steering Committee
PEACs	Provincial Environment Advisory Councils
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RAF	Resource Allocation Framework
SGP	Small Grants Program

## **1. Introduction**

Small Grants Programme has been promoting grassroots actions to address global environmental concern. It is a corporate programme of the GEF, implemented by UNDP. SGP aims to deliver global environmental benefits in the GEF focal area of biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, protection of international waters, prevention of land degradation (primarily desertification and deforestation), and elimination of harmful chemicals through community-based approaches. As of today, SGP is operational in more than 130 countries, having provided more than \$350 million to communities through more than 14,000 projects.

Subsequent to the capacity assessment for the SGP Programme in Afghanistan, the Director General of the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) who is also the GEF operational focal point - sent the letter of interest and commitment for small grants Programme on 7th October 2007, in which he principally agreed on the utilization of resources allocation framework (RAF resources) to the SGP Programme.

Supporting the government's letter of interest, the UNDP Afghanistan Country Director sent the SGP endorsement letter on 10th October 2007 to the SGP Global Manager – which sought the approval of the GEF-4/RAF resources for SGP.

The SGP appraisal and startup assessment mission took place on 3rd – 7th June 2008. Following the mission, GEF Operational Focal Point endorsed the utilization of 1.4 million of funds from the biodiversity focal area under the GEF Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) made available to Afghanistan from the GEF-4 (2006-2010) cycle in order to cover the immediate implementation of the SGP in Afghanistan and its associated management services (10% of the RAF allocation to SGP) through the endorsement letter dated 21 October 2008. Afghanistan also had 1million from GEF SGP core resources.

UNDP CO received the confirmation letter regarding the startup of the SGP on 28th October 2008. Due to security situation in the country, the SGP could not be started as planned.

Subsequently, SGP was operationalized in Afghanistan by UNDP by recruiting National Coordinator and establishing National Steering Committee (NSC), and the program was formally launched on 23 October 2012 in National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA).

## **2. Rationale and Justification for the Selection of the Geographic and / or Thematic Focus**

Geographic Focus:

During the course of the appraisal and start-up mission (June 2008), the geographic focus area of Bamyan province as pilot and prospective extension to Badakhshan province, was discussed and agreed upon by the GEF Operational Focal Point. The key criteria that resulted in selection of the mentioned geographical focus included the high bio-diversity value and the security-wise feasibility for community interventions. However, during that interim period from June 2008 to June 2012, Bamyan itself has

received a lot of national and international interest and interventions. On the other hand the challenges of visibility and value-additions for the SGP Afghanistan have increased manifold. Creating a niche for this otherwise a very small program among the giants is one of the fundamental questions for the success and sustainability. In November 2012 the SGP team undertook a series of meetings with key stakeholders and also held one “National Stakeholders Consultation Workshop” at NEPA. The workshop was attended by key CSOs, conservationists and NSC members. The consensus decision came for the following geographic areas to get the 80 percent of the funds:

1. Kabul city and province
2. Bamyan
3. Badakhshan
4. Nangarhar

The total funding is \$1.26 million from the RAF and \$1 million from core resources and these funds are indicative, and there will global release of grant allocation on annual basis.

Afghanistan Small Grants Programme will be focused on interventions which have much larger impacts than local community scale. There was a consensus to have some strategic interventions, especially in Kabul, which can lead to program’s visibility and attract co-financing from the private, bilateral, multilateral and government agencies.

Hence the allocation has been agreed as under:

80 percent of total allocation will be spent in the geographic focused areas and other areas shall get 20%. Further distribution among the focused region will be as under:

34% for Kabul and 22% each for Bamyan, Badakhshan and Nangarhar

### **Kabul**

Kabul is the 5th fastest growing city in the world and the world's 64th largest city. According to latest estimates, the population of the Kabul metropolitan area is about 5 million. The city itself carries a lot of potential for innovative SGP interventions which can lead to globally significant results and visibility.

In his famous memoire, Babur the Mongol prince who conquered Kabul in 1504 quotes the following poem about this city by an Indian poet Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat:

بخور در ارگ کابل می، بگردان کاسه پی در پی  
که هم کوه است و هم دریا و هم شهر است و هم صحرا

*Translation: Dine and drink wine in Kabul citadel, cup after cup // which is the city of mountains, river, and desert*

Unfortunately the city of roses and pines is now a worst example of land, air and water pollution. The Kabul River which in the above Persian couplet is referred as “sea” has almost become a sewerage stream. The city of Kabul suffers from poor air quality and overcrowding. In recent years, the ambient air quality in the city has deteriorated so much that it can be ranked among the dirtiest cities in the world. The once unlimited visibility in the 1980s is down to less than a hundred meters in most days. The Qurukh, Paghman and Shomali Plain mountains that once were part of the beautiful snow capped landscape of the city are very rarely visible today.

Kol-e-Hashmat Khan is a seasonal wetland located within the city of Kabul. It is an important staging area for waterfowl and was used as a hunting ground for Afghan royalty for nearly 500 years. The westerners in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century used to there for ice-skating. Areas around the wetland has been illegally occupied by the people and used for the construction of houses and shops. Droughts and climate change and other factors also badly affected the wetland.

### **Bamyan**

Bamyan province is located in the central highlands of northern Afghanistan surrounded by Samangan, Dai Kundi, Wardak, and Baghlan provinces. All water resources originate from the central highlands. Apart from holding the fame for ancient Giant Buddha statues – which were partially destroyed by Taliban – Bamyan is rich in biodiversity and scenic beauty. The Band-e-Amir lake complex needs not only some interventions for eco-tourism to save the virgin lapis-lazuli waters from solid and liquid waste emanating from tourism but also community based interventions for minimizing the pressure on natural resources. The multinational cultural religious interests in Bamyan require a wheel for community based activities on environment-poverty nexus.

Bamyan now boasts the only woman governor in the history of Afghanistan, Habiba Sorabi. The governor has taken interest, participates in and is supportive of the mandates of the various coordinating forums at the provincial level.

### **Badakhshan**

Badakhshan, like most of northern Afghanistan, lies in the rain shadow of the Hindu Kush range, and Wakhan and Zebak are dominated by arid habitats at high altitude. Within both these areas, short stature, sparse, semi-desert plant communities predominate on both slopes and in valleys, while dense tall vegetation is rare within the landscape and typically associated with riparian areas and irrigated plantations. Additionally there are sporadic areas of arable, largely irrigated farmland and riparian grazing lands.

### **Nangarhar**

Located in eastern Afghanistan, densely populated Nangarhar is rich in natural resources, including high-quality marble, an abundance of forests, and substantial water resources. Nangarhar was a center of opium production until 2005, when the Afghan government launched a major eradication initiative. The

province now provides significant amounts of grains, fruits, and vegetables throughout the country. Nangarhar has a majority Pashtun population and a nomadic Kuchi minority. Jalalabad, the capital city, has several functioning educational institutions and receives limited electricity from the nearby Darunta Dam.

Natural forest is found in 11 districts all along the Spin Ghar Mountain. Nangarhar needs rehabilitation of water reservoirs. The major source of irrigation is Kabul River and 12 main perennial washes from Spin Ghar. Siltation has taken place in Darwanta Dam and little amount of water is available for irrigation and power generation purposes. Due to sever deforestation, the head of the perennial washes have been distracted which needs rehabilitation and construction of reservoirs for the conservation and accumulation of water. Kunar River with plenty of water is also passing through Jalalabad, but as it is located at lower area, the water is not fully available for agriculture purposes. It worth mentioning that Kunar River is a storming river during the floods it destroys the agricultural fertile land situated at the both side of the river. It badly needs the stream bank stabilizations comprehensive initiatives to control the land degradation.

The recovery process from war is slow and sporadic. The majority of the people depend on agriculture and livestock but these two sectors were badly hit by war and drought. The irrigation infrastructure is slowly recovering. Floods in the province have also damaged irrigation infrastructure, agriculture land and loss of livestock and human life.

The other areas which carry potential of globally significant environmental benefits including among others Panjsher, Parwan, Balkh, Heart, Ghazni, Nimroz, Paktia, Kandhar, Kunar and Nooristan. For example the Dasht-e Nawar (altitude: 3150 m ASL) located in the province of Ghazni, Afghanistan, was known since 1965 as the highest breeding site in the world for the Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*). The presence of large breeding colonies of flamingos in Afghanistan was first reported by Babur the Great (1483–1530). In 1504, on his way back to Kabul from an expedition in the Indus Valley, he observed that “when within one mile of Ab-e Estada something of a red appearance was seen, like the ruddy crepuscule, which again by-and-by vanished when we came close up we discovered that this appearance was occasioned by immense flocks of wild flamingos”

### **Criteria used in the selection**

The key criteria for the selection of the geographic focus are as under:

- The area is rich in biodiversity and holds potential for global environmental benefits
- In Afghanistan context the subject area is security wise safe
- There is a potential for co-financing for the sustainability for the program

### **Stakeholder’s selection process on focus areas**

Since the start up mission in June 2008 there have been several meetings, workshops and consultations with the government line departments and civil society organizations. The “National Stakeholders Consultation Workshop” held on 21 Nov 2012 was the last firm activity to finalize the geographically focused region. Thematic Focus:

Afghan National Development Strategy (2008 – 2013) identifies environment as a cross-cutting theme to be incorporated into all pillars of the strategy particularly social and economic development. The ANDS strategic vision is to improve the quality of the life of the people of Afghanistan through conservation of natural resources and protection of the environment. Those include; 1). Secure a clean and healthy environment, 2). Attain sustainable economic and social development while protecting the natural resource base and the environment of the country, 3). Ensure effective management of country's environment through participation of all environment stakeholders. The strategy elaborates priority program areas for environmental management based on thematic strategies including restoration and sustainable use of rangelands and forests conservation of bio-diversity, accession to/signing and enforcement of MEAs, preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage sites, encouragement to community based natural resource management, prevention and abatement of pollution, urban environmental management, environmental education and awareness.

The national environment strategy identifies six strategic focus areas:

1. Forestry and rangeland
2. Protected areas and bio-diversity
3. Water and River Basins
4. Air and water quality
5. Urban waste management and industrial environmental management
6. Environmental Awareness and Education

UNDAF 2010-2013" SGP Afghanistan will aim to address MDG goals in line with MDGs (Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper) and National Environment Strategy 2008-2013

NBSAP 2012-17 aims at conserving all aspects of Afghanistan's biodiversity, and ensuring that future utilization of biodiversity resources is sustainable, comprises the following elements:

- To continue ongoing assessments of Afghanistan's floral and faunal communities, with the overall aim of improving understanding of Afghanistan's biodiversity resources and their conservation requirements
- To expand the protected areas system to ensure that it is representative of all major ecosystems and areas of outstanding conservation or natural heritage value
- To develop and implement the support mechanisms (incentives, rules, regulations, environmental education, public awareness) necessary for the effective conservation of biodiversity and other natural resources
- To continue ongoing assessments of the status of Afghanistan's floral and faunal species, with the overall aim of improving understanding of Afghanistan's biodiversity resources and their conservation requirements
- To develop the mechanisms required for effective conservation of economically important species

- To develop and implement mechanisms to ensure sustainable use of biodiversity resources, including funding, capacity and policy considerations
- To prevent the illegal or unsustainable use of biodiversity resources
- To develop and implement mechanisms for preventing damage to natural ecosystems from invasive alien species
- To control impacts on biodiversity resources resulting from climate change, desertification and pollution
- To develop and implement mechanisms and plans for maintaining goods and services obtained from critical ecosystems, focusing on forests and woodlands
- To maintain cultural diversity by recognizing and valuing traditional knowledge and land uses
- To manage genetic resources for the benefit of all citizens of Afghanistan, and
- To ensure that government organizations have sufficient capacity and resources to carry out Afghanistan's obligations as a signatory to the CBD and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements

### **3. Baseline Country Context**

#### **3.1. Background Information and Analysis of the context- National and Geographic**

Afghanistan is a semi-arid land-locked country in the center of Asia, covering an area of about 652,000 square kilometers. It extends about 1 300 kilometers from southwest to northeast, and about 600 kilometers from northwest to southeast. The country's climate is continental, with big differences in temperature from day to night, from one season or region to the next, ranging from 20–45°C in summer in the lowlands to minus 20–40°C in winter in the highlands. Severe, long-lasting droughts, such as the one in 1999–2001, have major impacts on the environment and society. In spring late frost affects agriculture (mainly fruit production), while rising temperatures cause flooding and increase the vulnerability of crops to natural disasters.

The overall average annual rainfall of about 250 millimeters conceals stark variations between different parts of the country, from 1 200 millimeters in the higher altitudes of the northeast to only 60 millimeters in the southwest. Annual evaporation varies from relatively low in the Hindu-Kush Mountains (900–1 200 mm) to high (1 400–1 800 mm) in the hot arid plains of the north and south. Due to its mountainous relief and the convergence of several climate systems, Afghanistan boasts an impressive diversity of ecosystems, land cover and water sources. Geographical features and the distribution of the country's natural resources are reflected in the specialization of economic activities: crop cultivation, livestock grazing, forest products and minerals.

Afghanistan has a wide range of neighbors, with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the north; China to the northeast; Pakistan to the east and south, and Iran to the west. Relationships with them and the broader global community largely determine the current and future use of national and trans-boundary natural resources, as well as the effectiveness of any response to common environmental challenges and hazards.

### **3.2. Economic / Political Situation**

Afghanistan's economic outlook has improved since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. Gross domestic product (GDP) has grown at a rate of 11 per cent since 2002, although in 2006–7, real economic growth was lower, about 7.5 percent, which is nevertheless high for the region. Growth is largely due to reconstruction efforts supported by development assistance and recovery in the agricultural sector. Agriculture (32%) and services (38%) are the main contributors to Afghanistan's GDP. According to the International Monetary Fund, the opium sector represents about 40–50 per cent of GDP (as an illegal activity it does not register in economic calculations, but it has a significant overall impact on income and purchasing power). There are no large industries in the country but many small and medium enterprises.

Approximately five millions Afghan migrated to neighboring countries on the time of civil war and a period of severe drought starts from 1990s, an assessment illustrates that 3 million has been hosted by Pakistan, two millions in Iran and some others were migrated to Central Asia, Europe, Australia, United States and Canada. After the Interim Government was established, introducing relative stability, these refugees began to return home. More than three million Afghans have now returned, but in 2007 a significant number were still in host countries – Pakistan (two million) and Iran (900 000).

### **3.3. Environmental Situation**

Afghanistan's environment and natural resource base is under great pressure. The decades of conflict, on-going instability, lack of effective governance and service delivery, socio-economic insecurity and overall poverty, susceptibility to droughts and other natural hazards, population increase and influx of displaced and returning population, have all exacted a heavy toll on the environment and the natural resource base of the country. Over 80% of the Afghan population lives in rural areas practicing agricultural and related rural activities that rely heavily on use of natural resources. Of Afghanistan's 655,000 square kilometers of total land area, only 12% (7.9 million hectares) is arable and 4% irrigated. An additional 45% is rangeland under permanent pastures, less than 1.5% under forest cover, with the remaining 39% being mountainous. Large areas are considered 'barren land' or 'waste land', and are used for grazing, particularly in the winter season. Agriculture, not including poppy cultivation, generates about 40% of the GDP, employs about 70% of the labour force and is the a major source of livelihoods in the country. The degradation of the natural resource base, therefore, directly and severely impacts the livelihood of the majority of the Afghan population as well as the country's economic development as a whole. Particularly affected are the poor and most vulnerable, such as households headed by females or with physically disabled members, landless households or those farming on only small-rain-fed plots, many of whose rights are thus unfulfilled.

Vegetation cover in Afghanistan has been modified significantly through millennia of human occupation. It is estimated that between 1978 and 2002 alone, the area under conifer forests in the eastern part of the country has been reduced by 50 percent. Today, most of the country appears to be subject to some degree of land degradation. Much of the land surface is used as range land for grazing livestock. The potential for re-growth of vegetation is likely to be seriously affected by browsing and grazing domestic

livestock, heavy fuel wood or biomass collection and timber harvesting that far outstrips the rate of woodland regeneration. Over extraction of fuel wood (shrub) is considered to be one of the most pressing problems in management of range land, sometimes even leading to armed conflict among villages in remote areas over access to the remaining stands of shrubs. Soil erosion is also a serious problem due to the loss of protective vegetation cover. Assessing the incomplete evidence available in the late 1970s, FAO concluded that most of north, central and eastern Afghanistan was wooded until early in the 19th century. No comprehensive assessment of the current status of the range lands, and the (reversible or irreversible) effects of the drought on the range land has been carried out - even though a number of documents claim that there is extensive over-grazing in Afghanistan, there is no systematic evidence to corroborate this. Increasingly, pastures have come under rain fed agricultural production, with devastating consequences. To date, within the field of natural resources management, the initial focus of interventions has tended to be more in forestry rehabilitation and management, while there is little progress in range land management issues despite its well-recognized significance in preserving the country's natural resources base.

With snow/rainfall low and erratic in much of Afghanistan, and large areas qualifying as desert or semi-desert, rivers, streams and other wetlands are crucial for human needs such as drinking water and agriculture, and for maintaining populations of wild plants and animals, many of which provide potential for economic opportunities. Although broad calculations suggest that, in average conditions, Afghanistan as a whole uses less than one-third of its potential 75,000 million m<sup>3</sup> water resources, regional differences in supply, inefficient use, and wastage mean that a major part of the country experiences water scarcity. For instance, poor, uncoordinated management and excessive extraction of water for agriculture purposes, combined with long years of drought, has led to drastic declines in water flows in the Helmand River and 99% desiccation of its downstream Sistan wetlands, which is an important source of agricultural production and source of fish and water birds for food. The recent years of conflict have made it difficult to make improvements to infrastructure or to integrate uncoordinated local schemes into a coherent national strategy for water. However, improved water resource management will, in many regions, be an essential first step in rebuilding rural communities.

To be sustainable, economic growth cannot be achieved at the cost of environmental and natural resource degradation. Establishing clear environment-poverty linkage and fostering necessary capacity in the context of Afghan development, improving the practice of natural resources management with due consideration for the vulnerable population, preventing further degradation of the environment and improving and maintaining the integrity of ecosystem services, is therefore the very key to lasting recovery, human security and sustainable development of Afghanistan.

### **Biodiversity;**

The fauna and flora of Afghanistan is not exceptionally diverse with most countries in the world having a higher biodiversity index. There are 137 - 150 species of mammals, 428 - 515 birds, 92 - 112 reptiles, only 6 - 8 amphibians, 101 - 139 fish, 245 butterflies, and 3500 - 4000 vascular plant species native to Afghanistan. The range in numbers results from uncertainty in taxonomy and the questionable validity

of some records. Only 7 vertebrate species are known to be endemic to Afghanistan, but estimates for endemic plant species range as high as 30%. Much more basic biological survey work and synthesis needs to be done to fully understand the diversity of the country's organisms.

Many of Afghanistan's mammals and birds are considered globally threatened. These include snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*), wild goat (*Capra aegagrus*), markhor (*Capra falconeri*), Marco Polo sheep (*Ovis ammon polii*), urial (*Ovis orientalis*), Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*), imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), greater spotted eagle (*Aquila clanga*), Pallas's sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucoryphus*), lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*), white-headed duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*), marbled teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*), sociable lapwing (*Vanellus gregaria*), and large-billed reed warbler (*Acrocephalus orinus*). Afghanistan prepared the country's first Protected Species List in 2009 when 48 species were given protection.

As a broad generalization, biodiversity appears to be declining at an accelerating rate throughout Afghanistan. Satellite image analysis and assessment of commercial wood volumes show that forests, both closed forest and open woodlands, are rapidly disappearing. Overgrazing and shrub collection for fuel is markedly reducing plant biomass and altering plant communities. Diversion of water and increasingly frequent drought is drying wetlands and rivers with unknown effects on aquatic biodiversity. The ubiquity of weapons following years of war is leading to the loss of large mammals throughout much of the country. Ecological footprint analysis shows that Afghanistan's per capita bio capacity is declining. Large scale remote sensing analysis suggests that nearly 8000 km<sup>2</sup> of land was degraded between 1981 and 2003.

According to Afghanistan's Fourth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity 30 March, 2009, about 38% of Afghanistan's land area is comprised of eco-regions that are Endangered, 61% as Vulnerable, and only 1% as Stable. The eco-regions at highest threat are in an arc around the country's mountain chain and are comprised of open and closed woodlands.

Afghanistan's rapidly increasing human population presents the major underlying challenge to biodiversity conservation and ultimately to the quality of life of Afghans. Despite years of warfare that killed or displaced millions of Afghans, the population has doubled since 1979 to 24.3 - 32.7 million (depending on estimate accepted) in 2008. The latter figure approximates the highest population level for 2008 predicted in 1978 by the World Bank. Currently, Afghanistan's population growth is among the fastest in the world and the low median age of the Afghans ensures that rapid growth will continue for many years. Afghanistan's population can be expected to increase to 61 - 79 million people by 2050.

Proximal threats to Afghanistan's biodiversity are land encroachment, over-hunting, deforestation, over-grazing, shrub collection, dry land farming, water diversion and climate change. All of these threats have worsened in recent years.

## Climate Change:

While Afghanistan has made measurable progress in human development over the past six years, it remains one of the poorest and most vulnerable countries in the world. It ranked 172 in UNDP's Human Development Report 2011. The Global Adaptation Index ranks it as the most vulnerable country in the world, taking into account the country's exposure, sensitivity and ability to cope with climate related hazards. Climate change scenarios for Afghanistan suggest temperature increases of up to 4°C by the 2060s (from 1970-1999 averages), and a corresponding decrease in rainfall. The biophysical effects of climate change are expected to be significant; droughts are likely to be the norm by 2030 leading to associated dynamics of desertification and land degradation. Coping with the impacts of climate change is a major challenge for development in Afghanistan given that its negative effects are likely to be most severely felt by the poor and marginalized due to their high dependence on natural resources and limited capacity to cope with the impacts of climate variability and extremes.

Afghanistan has a predominately dry continental climate with wide extremes of temperature. High mountain ranges characterize much of the topography; a quarter of the country's land sits at more than 2,500m above sea level. While annual precipitation exceeds 1,000mm in the upper mountains of the northwest, it is less than 400 mm over 75 percent of the country and virtually all of the cultivable land. The cultivable area of Afghanistan is estimated to be 7.7 million ha, representing about 12 percent of the country's area. Approximately 42 percent is intensively or intermittently irrigated. The importance of irrigated agriculture cannot be overstated, since it is the mainstay of food security and income for the majority of the rural population, accounting for more than 70 percent of total crop production. The 2008 State of the Environment report makes it clear that water is the country's most critical natural resource and key to the health and well-being of the Afghan people.

The main climatic hazards identified in the NAPA are periodic droughts, floods due to untimely and heavy rainfall, flooding due to the thawing of snow and ice, and increasing temperatures. There is a discernible trend that these events are occurring more regularly and are more intense in nature. There have been severe flood or drought events in 8 out of the past 11 years. In fact, the period 1998-2006 marked the longest and most severe drought in Afghanistan's known climatic history. At the same time, flood risk is also increasing as rainfall patterns have become more erratic. Areas that traditionally receive 250 mm of rain over a period of six months are now receiving that amount of rainfall during the course of only one or two months, with a devastating effect on agriculture and livelihoods. Unless action is taken to strengthen the resilience of Afghan communities and reduce disaster risk, climate change impacts will jeopardize development gains and could push an even greater number of Afghans into poverty.

The underlying causes of Afghanistan's vulnerability to climate impacts are primarily socio-economic: poverty, food insecurity, a heavy dependence on natural resources, population growth, unclear land tenure, lack of effective governance, and no effective policy or legal framework. More than 80% of the population lives in rural areas and are almost totally dependent on agriculture and livestock for their livelihoods. Although there have been recent improvements in the provision of education, healthcare,

and clean drinking water, food security remains the predominant concern for the majority of village households. More than one out of three Afghans – some 9 million people or 36 percent of the population – lives in absolute poverty and cannot meet his or her basic needs.

Most of Afghanistan’s rangelands are either moderately or severely degraded primarily due to three factors: harvesting of woody biomass for fire wood, conversion of rangelands to rain-fed farming, and overgrazing by livestock. Rangelands provide critical ecosystem services such as watersheds, soil erosion control, flood control, disaster risk reduction, and a habitat for wildlife. Rangelands also support livestock production and the related meat, wool, carpet, dairy and leather industries and provide natural products such as fruits and nuts, all of which are vital to the Afghan economy. Degraded ecosystems such as rangelands and watersheds have made Afghans more vulnerable to both the physical and economic impacts of severe climate events. The high population growth rate of 2.4% places increased demand and pressure on rangeland resources.

There are three main barriers preventing the long-term solution from being achieved: awareness, technical capacity, and financing. For the most part, Afghan communities are not aware of climate risks and have not incorporated climate change impacts into their development planning. Similarly, provincial government officials do not have adequate knowledge of climate variability and consequently have not put in place supportive policies designed to bolster adaptive capacity. Up until now, rangelands and watersheds have been managed without consideration of long-term ecosystem resilience. Farmers have been applying traditional methods and lack the technical capacity and know-how to implement ecosystem-based adaptation approaches. Finally, most of the development assistance thus far, particularly in the south and east, has concentrated on short-term stabilization programmes, rather than longer term development approaches. Many rehabilitation efforts by necessity have taken the form of emergency assistance, with climate change adaptation and environmental management receiving less attention from the government and donors up until this stage.

#### Waters:

Mountains are vital “water towers” for Afghanistan and the Central Asian region as a whole. However climate change, the resulting melting of mountain glaciers, severe droughts and poor management of water resources are threatening water security. War-inflicted damage to large and small irrigation systems and the disruption of water supplies have reduced the accessibility of this essential resource. Improved access to safe drinking water for the urban and rural population is an important priority.

Three in four Afghans—16.8 million women, men and children—lack access to protected drinking water sources.<sup>43</sup> Every hour, six children die because they have consumed unsafe water or because they have been exposed to poor sanitation practices.

Agriculture accounts for 37 percent of gross national income and remains the mainstay of most individuals, families and communities. Despite the importance of agriculture, the irrigation infrastructure performs poorly. While around 3 million hectares were irrigated in the 1970s, only an average of 1.8 million hectares is irrigated each year now. Furthermore, while farmers located in the

upstream reaches of rivers and canals enjoy almost unlimited access to water, thousands of farmers toiling in downstream fields are often deprived of their water rights and, each year, are obliged to leave their fields fallow, missing out on a critical human development opportunity.

Recurring drought and flooding propel thousands of households into coping and survival strategies that often deprive them of their most productive assets, such as livestock or land, thus sinking them deeper into poverty. The water crisis is affecting the most vulnerable: woman-headed households, the children involved in fetching water, impoverished farmers living in downstream canal areas, poor households in unplanned urban areas and refugee camps, and Kuchis and other pastoralist groups.

There are several principal manifestations that define the nature of the water crisis in Afghanistan includes:

- Approximately 16.8 million Afghans drink unsafe water.
- An estimated 23 million people enjoy only inadequate access to improved toilets and waste disposal facilities.
- Increasing population growth rates mean more competition for less water per capita.
- Drought and flooding are still causing early deaths, injury, the destruction of property, food shortages and lost earnings.
- The danger of national and international disputes over water resources is growing.
- Environmental degradation is exacerbating water scarcity.

### **Land Degradation:**

Land Degradation or Desertification is one of the world's most alarming processes of environmental degradation. More than 250 million of the earth's inhabitants are directly affected by desertification; 135 million are in danger of being driven from their land, and the livelihoods of one billion people—nearly one-fifth of the world's population—are at risk. Globally, it is estimated that 70 percent of all global dry lands used for agriculture already are degraded; more than 110 countries have land at risk of desertification; and the worldwide price tag for desertification is 42 billion dollars a year. Significant regions of the planet are imperiled by desertification, and the scourge is on the increase.

Desertification in Afghanistan affects more than 75 percent of the total land area in northern, western and southern regions where widespread grazing and deforestation have reduced vegetation cover and catalyzed accelerated land degradation. Although empirical data on the extent and impact of desertification in Afghanistan is missing, there are significant indicators to show that the cost of desertification to Afghanistan is colossal. Valuable forest resources have been lost; traditional access to the remaining grazing lands has been disrupted for both migratory and sedentary herdsmen; and rapid run-off has had a negative impact on water supplies to irrigation schemes as well as catalyzing soil erosion. Superimposed on these problems is an increasing hazard of drought that jeopardizes the livelihoods of more than 80% of the population of Afghanistan.

In response to the desertification issues, the Government of Afghanistan ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) on December 26th 1996 and committed itself to fighting desertification as an integral part, and within the framework of the broader Afghanistan poverty eradication strategies and action plans. The UNCCD is a legally binding global treaty to stem desertification by fostering partnerships among countries, and between national governments and the local people most affected by the problem.

### **Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)**

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) belong to a group of pollutants known as “Persistent Organic Pollutants” or POPs. Often called “Dirty Dozen,” POPs are twelve in number and are considered the most hazardous substances in nature. The two most important characteristics that make POPs so dangerous is the fact that these don’t degrade readily and can travel thousands of miles. For the protection of human health and environment, the convention was adopted at Johannesburg during the 5th session of international negotiating committee (INC), in December, 2000.

Afghanistan is not yet a party to Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

### **3.4. Relevant Environmental Conventions and Treaties**

- Afghanistan has signed the following international conventions
- International convention for the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage (WHC), 20 May 1979
- Convention on International Trade & Endangered Species of Wild Flora & Fauna (CITES), 28 January 1986
- United Nation Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), 26 December 1996
- United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBC), 18 December 2002
- The Montreal Protocol on Substances that deplete the Ozone Layer, 18 December 2002
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1992 (UNFCCC), 18 December 2002
- Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (signed on 17 June 2004, no ratified)
- Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes & Their Disposal (signed on 22 March 1989, but not ratified)
- Convention of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)-(soon will be signed)
- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (RAMSAR) -(soon will be signed)

### **3.5. Institutional Framework and Governance Context:**

In the past few years, there were several important achievements in the field of environmental governance. The National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) was established in 2005 as Afghanistan’s environmental policy-making institution, tasked with regulation, coordination, monitoring and enforcement. Afghanistan’s first Environment Law was drafted and signed by the President in late 2005. It was then reviewed and amended by the (then newly-established) National Assembly, and the

final version was promulgated in early 2007 (Official Gazette No. 912, 25 January 2007). In addition, with support from the international community, several projects targeting various aspects of capacity building and environmental assessment, clean-up and restoration have been implemented, and important international environmental conventions and cross border cooperation agreements signed. In 2008 adoption of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), which among priority issues and sectors lists environmental management and conservation, will be an essential step forward.

Within ANDS, NEPA is expected to play an important role in environmental protection. However its mandate extends further: under the Environment Law it is responsible for fulfilling 18 key functions related to the environment and natural resources. In the years to come NEPA will consequently be one of the central institutions dealing with management of Afghanistan's environment for the benefit of all Afghan people, alongside other sectoral ministries such as the Ministry for Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW), and the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA).

The new Environment Law of Afghanistan is based on 13 fundamental principles. It consists of nine chapters and 78 articles addressing all the main environmental concerns. For example, chapter 4 addresses the regulatory provisions for pollution control and waste management; chapter 6 focuses on biodiversity, conservation and management of natural resources. Overall, the law defines the functions and powers of NEPA and reflects the role of the agency as the apex body for the formulation, implementation, regulation and monitoring of Afghanistan's environmental policies and also as the coordinator for international environmental cooperation. To promote further integration and coordination of environmental matters with other government agencies, the Environment Law has established Afghanistan's Committee for Environmental Coordination and the National Environmental Advisory Council.

Afghanistan's environmental policies are steadily improving. The National Capacity Needs Self-Assessment for Global Environmental Management (NCSA) and National Adaptation Programme of Action for Climate Change (NAPA) projects, completed in February 2008, provide an excellent overview of Afghanistan's progress towards implementing UNFCCC (Climate Change Convention), UNCBD (Biodiversity Convention), and UNCCD (Desertification Convention), and its overall position in the international environmental arena. The National Environmental Strategy of Afghanistan, developed by NEPA in 2007 as part of the ANDS process, clearly demonstrates the cross-sectoral perspective of environmental management. It also proposes specific activities and considerations to meet national targets for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Assessment of ozone-depleting substances has helped to define the weight of Afghanistan in the global impact on Earth's ozone layer. Very comprehensive work has been carried out to assess Afghanistan's biodiversity, ecological hotspots and conservation potential, while developing recommendations for strengthening the network of protected areas and supporting community-based natural resource management. The new approach to environmental policy is designed to address the cross-sectoral character of the use of natural resources, as well as the underlying causes of environmental degradation.

Based on Environment Law, National Environmental Advisory Councils, Provincial Environmental Advisory Councils and Coordination Committee for Environment have been established for coordination of environmental issues.

### **3.6. NGOS and CBO Analysis**

1. The local NGOs are registered with the Ministry of Economy and other line ministries. They are engaged as implementing partners with the government as well as a number of aid agencies. This underlines a good working relationship between NGOs and the government. A number of government development plans have been implemented by NGOs. NGOs have also played an important role as a conduit of humanitarian or development initiatives to the needy population during the last fifteen years. Local NGOs are well aware of community set-ups, their priority needs; they know how to involve people in planning and implementation of projects and i.e. usually involve CBOs. NGOs tend to be physically flexible and mobile, and the government and international community assistances have been able to reach remote communities mainly through local NGOs as implementation partners.

2. The Community Based Organizations include:

- a. Community Development Councils (CDCs) that have been established by the country-wide National Solidarity Programme (NSP) of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). These establishments exist in 352 districts of all 34 provinces. As of now, over 21,548 CDCs have been established and registered under the framework of the MRRD. These local entities identify their community development needs and work at grass-root level on various developmental activities.
- b. District Development Assemblies (DDAs) that have been established by the UNDP National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP) across the country - also under the auspice of MRRD. As of now, 314 DDAs have been established across the country. DDAs are registered establishments under the framework of the MRRD, currently the NABDP working to provide these establishments legal status who can work as entities by changing them to the district development agencies in the near future.

As MRRD is working closely at the grass root level with NSP and MRRD, SGP will have close coordination with MRRD in the implementation of the programme.

A number of CBOs have been formed with specific tasks at the village levels, e.g., Environment Sub-Committees established by the Joint UNDP Programme "Strengthened Approach for the Integration of Sustainable Environmental Management in Afghanistan (SAISEM)" and Green Afghanistan Initiative (GAIN) in the already existed structures of DDAs and CDCs. On Provincial level, PEACs have been established by NEPA with the support of SAISEM programme. The chairperson of PEAC is the Head of PDC and other members are district governors, provincial NEPA director, civil society members, nomads, farmers, Islamic scholars and tribal elders.

Even before the end of the Taliban regime, UNDP under the PEACE Programme established over 2,500 CBOs all over Afghanistan between 1997-2001. This is indicative of the people's understating of such community-based organizations that could be utilized in implementing development activities.

Despite lack of substantive experience in the environment field, the mentioned CBOs are ideal for implementation of SGP at grass-root level. Meanwhile, a number of NGOs are active in the environment sector; however their experience in the sector is not very profound – partly due to lack of attention to the sector over the past years.

The CBOs have the experience in implementation of small scale projects at community level and their development plans mostly include local infrastructural projects where less attention is paid to environmental projects. The CBOs have yet to develop financial management capabilities; however with the improved banking system that exists today compared to the time when NSP was implemented, the mentioned capacity gap will be addressed to some extent.

The SGP will strengthen the NGOs and CBOs capacities, particularly in the field of environment in following ways:

1. As the SGP works at grass-root level involving the NGOs and CBOs for implementation of environmental projects, the capacity of the institutions will be mainly developed in the environment sector.
2. Environment aspects will be sensitized and included in the development agenda of the community-based institutions.
3. CBOs will be activated by receiving grants through implementation of SGP projects. Their capabilities will be enhanced as strong community based establishments to implement future development interventions.

### **3.7. Poverty and Poverty Reduction**

The National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment define poverty according to the monthly cost of a minimum basket of necessities for basic subsistence, including food, water, clothing and shelter. This translates into a poverty line of AFN 1,255 (\$25.10) per person per month. According to the assessment, 36 percent of the population cannot meet these basic subsistence requirements. By this tally, an estimated 9 million Afghans are living below the poverty line. The assessment also finds that household expenditure among these people is, on average, 22 percent below the AFN 1,255 poverty threshold. Figure 7 shows that urban households are as poor as rural households. The regional differences are, meanwhile, much more acute: the poverty incidence ranges from 23 percent in the south-west to 45 percent in the eastern region.

Other approaches to gauging poverty rely less on income-based measures and more on multidimensional indicators. They focus on evaluations of the quality of life through assessments of health, educational attainment and living standards to reach an aggregate view. The human poverty index, for example, is used to rank developing countries in terms of poverty. The 2009 global HDR ranks

135 United Nations member states according to this index. According to the ranking, Afghanistan has the dubious distinction of being the most impoverished country in the world.

Poverty in Afghanistan is complex and multidimensional. The NRVA surveys reveal the severity of poverty with one in two Afghans being classified as poor. Further, a large number of people are concentrated close to the poverty line and are highly vulnerable to natural, security and price based shocks.

### **3.8. Gender Equality**

Despite progress in advancing women's rights and improving the access to education among girls, gender discrimination is pervasive in Afghanistan. According to the 2009 global HDR, the country ranks 154th (with an index of 0.331) in measurements of the gender-related development index, which is second-lowest after Niger (index of 0.308). The most visible progress has occurred in the constitutional rights, political participation and representation of women. In-deed, Afghanistan ranks among the world's top 20 countries in terms of the number of women representatives in parliament, at 27 percent, higher than any other Muslim country and much higher than the average of 16.4 percent in the region. Afghanistan's Constitution allocates a minimum of two seats per province to women in the lower house, the Wolesi Jirga, guaranteeing women 68 of the 249 seats. The Afghan election law also contains a provision stipulating that at least a quarter of the seats in provincial councils must be reserved for women. However, this has not translated into an expansion in the recognition of gender rights, which is still limited.

The extent of gender discrimination in Afghanistan impedes human development by constraining the contribution of women. Despite substantial investments in the provision of basic health services, indicators of the health of women and children are still alarming, while access to education remains unequal across the gender divide. The adult literacy rate is nearly three times lower among women (11 percent) than among men (32 percent), and the overall literacy rate among all women is 18 percent, compared with 36 percent among men. Girls are especially disadvantaged. Though governmental and donor efforts to increase enrolments have been intense, girls still represent only 37.4 percent of all students. Geographically disaggregated data reveal considerable discrepancies in female educational participation across provinces.

The roles of men and women are more closely intertwined in rural areas, particularly in farming activities and handicrafts such as carpet weaving. In handicrafts, the average income of women is only 41 per-cent of the average income of men; the corresponding share is 53 percent in weaving and gathering firewood. Women play a key role in the cultivation of opium poppy and are often responsible for planting, weeding, thinning, lancing, collecting, field clearing and processing. Women also manage food supplies. However, in most house-holds, men continue to manage finances, and the income earned from agricultural produce is largely retained by the men. The effects of this intra-household distribution on family well-being are negative.

### **3.9. Indigenous people and / or marginalized communities**

The targeted areas have been a home of isolated and marginalized communities. The remoteness and lack of rural development have exposed these marginalized indigenous people to several problems ranging from loss of their traditional livelihood sources to denial of being part of the mainstream society. The predominant indigenous communities include among others nomadic Koochis and other minorities in Afghanistan. The Koochis (Ghalzai or Pawinda) migrate back and forth from Afghanistan to Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Iran. The life-style of Koochis is totally natural resources dependent. Their trans-boundary nature of movement even further calls for some community based interventions. Similarly like Kohistanies people who are a cultural minority and currently exposed to conversions and change in their ways of life.

### **3.10. Donor Programming Context**

There are a number of donors e.g. USAID, CIDA, DFID, JAICA, etc. who are funding projects and programmes in a number of sectors and cross cutting issues. As GEF Small grant programme is responding to the priorities of the grass root people and contributing to poverty reduction, gender equality, sustainable rural development and agriculture while protecting the global environment, donors are expected to take interest. The programme will be well communicated and coordinated with all the donors and a fund mobilization strategy will be developed.

## **4. Country Programme Strategy**

### **4.1 SGP Programming Niche**

Being a new program here in a biodiversity rich, historically grand and anthropologically diverse country – which has withstood over three decades of war and resultant deprivation, Afghanistan offers numerous opportunities in addition to critical challenges. However, SGP cannot be a small fish in a big pond only if it stands out in the crowd with innovations.

Based on the country context and environmental problems existed in Afghanistan in general and in the targeted areas in particular, SGP Programme will support local NGOs and CBOs on projects that deliver global environmental benefits as well as help to encourage the communities in order to reduce extreme poverty among rural communities. Community empowerment is a critical entry point for promoting activities to reduce poverty. Local communities will be supported to build on their traditional knowledge and practices, access new information and technologies to improve livelihoods while protecting their environment. Afghanistan SGP projects will link socioeconomic benefits for the community with realizing global environmental benefits.

Sustainable livelihood approaches based on selected GEF thematic and the community context such as sustainable small enterprises for the production of biodiversity goods, and introduction of alternative renewable energy, participatory community forest management, community watershed management, community-based ecotourism, and promotion of technical utilization of medicinal plants will be adopted.

The main objective of this strategy is to be more concrete and focused on small geographical area with wide range of thematic areas to create synergies for bringing desired change. The strategy focuses on sustainable community-based environmental management systems to cut the losses and reverse the trend in resource management, facilitate and strengthen grassroots community based institutions, promote inspirational environmental leadership by injecting advanced knowledge and developing the capacities of NGOs/CBOs in proven community-level initiatives in biodiversity conservation, wetland management, forest conservation, climate change mitigation, management of International Waters, reduction in the release of persistent organic pollutants, and sustainable land management for global environmental benefits and local wealth creation/preservation in the targeted areas. This strategy will be based on the principles of transparency, social audit, local accountability and gender equality and believing in potential of local affected groups.

Gender equality and women empowerment will be considered essential elements for achieving sustainable development and global environmental benefits. In this sense, global gender mainstreaming policy of SGP, which lays out the key features of this approach, will be used. All NGO and CBO partners will be encouraged and supported to consider gender in designing and implementing projects. Gender specialists sit on NSCs in order to facilitate the review of gender-focused projects or components in the GEF focal areas. The aim is not just to ensure the presence or participation of women and girls in projects, but to achieve genuine gender agency and leadership.

The participation of children and young people as the bearers of future commitments and efforts for the global environment and sustainable development will be encouraged. SGP Afghanistan projects with environmental education and raising awareness components will ensure the active participation of schoolchildren and youth. Children and youth will be motivated to actively participate in campaigns to protect species and local habitats, tree planting, creating home and community gardens, and renewable energy initiatives.

## **4.2. UNDP – GEF SGP Contribution to MDGs**

The country program strategy will contribute directly to following MDGs:

**MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger:** Several project activities, outputs and outcomes are directed to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger in the selected geographical location.

**MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women:** The country strategy will be guided by two broader principles i.e. gender equality and environmental justice. All the grants disbursed ensure that women empowerment component is integral part of it.

**MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability:** The overarching goal of the strategy is to protect biodiversity and make sure that current development approaches are not compromising the environmental sustainability. The increase in forest cover, forest rehabilitation, reduction in greenhouse gases, community based resources management such as sustainable forests, land management and alternative energy sources will contribute to achieve the environmental sustainability goal.

## **4.3. Contribution of SGP to GEF mandate and objectives**

SGP Afghanistan will contribute to resolving local and global environment and sustainable development challenges by providing small-scale grants to communities, community-based organizations (CBOs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for projects aligned to the strategic priorities of the GEF and within the framework of sustainable development as well as with UNDP's goal of building and strengthening local, low emission, climate resilient, sustainable human development.

The GEF serves as the designated financial mechanism for the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), as well as a financial mechanism for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). GEF supports projects in biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer and persistent organic pollutants. These projects link local, national, and global environmental challenges while promoting sustainable livelihoods.

In line with the GEF objectives and national priorities, SGP Afghanistan supports community-level initiatives across the range of global environmental issues addressed by the GEF with the added integration of actions that lead to poverty reduction and empowerment. Participation, democracy, flexibility, and transparency are cornerstones of the SGP approach. SGP's niche lies in its innovative community-based approach, strong country-drivenness, and strategic international connectivity as a global programme, creating transformative impact at community, national and international levels.

## 5. Objective, Outcomes, and Activities

### 5.1. Biodiversity

SGP OP5 Immediate Objective 1: Improve sustainability of protected areas and indigenous and community conservation areas through community-based actions

SGP BD Outcome 1.1: Improved community-level actions and practices, and reduced negative impacts on biodiversity resources in and around protected areas, and indigenous and community conservation areas

SGP BD Outcome 1.2: Benefits generated at the community level from conservation of biodiversity in and around protected areas and indigenous and community conservation areas

SGP BD Outcome 1.3: Increased recognition and integration of indigenous and community conservation areas in national protected area systems

SGP BD Outcome 1.4: Increased understanding and awareness at the community-level of the importance and value of biodiversity

SGP grants will generate environmental benefits by leveraging community-based efforts to support biodiversity conservation through projects and interventions which aim to improve the sustainability, management and governance of state-designated protected areas, as well as through the appropriate recognition and strengthening of indigenous and community conserved areas (ICCAs). To support the sustainable use of biodiversity at national level, the SGP will promote the mainstreaming of biodiversity-friendly practices across a broad spectrum of production landscapes and sectors. To this end, the programme will develop the capacity of small-scale producer organizations to conserve agro-biodiversity at the local level, conduct appropriate verification practices, and where possible secure value-added labels and certification for their biodiversity-based products. With SGP's support for capacity-building, sharing of best practices and networking at the national level, civil society organizations will develop improved long-term capacity to sustainably use biodiversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels; as well as to contribute to poverty reduction, and achieve lasting community livelihoods.

SGP will (i) support community-efforts to improve the effectiveness of protected areas and ICCAs by improving community capacity to manage landscapes and enforce protection measures; and (ii) will assist in developing local benefits which will be a critical factor for the success of protected area systems and connectivity at the landscape or biome level.

In particular, SGP will build on its innovative model for the Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation (COMPACT) piloted in a number of globally recognized protected areas such as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves. Based on the COMPACT model, developed with support from the UN Foundation (UNF) over a 10- year period since 2001, planning and monitoring techniques for the strategic clustering of small grants at the landscape level will be further replicated and mainstreamed within SGP. In this regard, the portfolio aggregation of SGP projects at the landscape level will contribute to a range of GEF focal areas and environmental interventions related to biodiversity, sustainable forest management, as well as projects contributing to resilience to climate change.

SGP OP5 Immediate Objective 2: Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes, and sectors through community initiatives and actions

SGP BD Outcome 2.1: Improved community-level sustainable use of biodiversity in production landscapes / seascapes through community-based initiatives, frameworks and market mechanisms, including recognized environmental standards that incorporate biodiversity considerations

SGP BD Outcome 2.2: Increased understanding and awareness of sustainable use of biodiversity

While protected areas are an effective spatial and/or regional planning tool for biodiversity conservation, a great deal of biodiversity is located in wider production landscapes where a range of economic and extraction activities are underway. Under this objective, SGP will focus its efforts on: (i) the mainstreaming of sustainable biodiversity-friendly practices into the use of natural resources across multiple-use production landscapes; and (ii) the development of sustainable local livelihoods based on natural resources through the production, processing, and marketing of biodiversity-based products.

Based on the SGP experiences in other country such project could be (i) agricultural products indigenous crop varieties, land races, honey, beeswax, roots, shoots and tubers); (ii) non-timber forest products (extracts, resins, fruits, seeds, nuts); (iii) forest products (timber, pulp/paper products, palm fiber products); (iv) horticultural and botanical products (ornamental flowers, medicinal plants); (v) agroforestry products (fruits); (vi) handicrafts and textiles (baskets, silk and cotton fabrics, embroidered clothing, wood carvings); (vii) personal care and health products (soaps, essential oils, makeup, nutritional supplements); (viii) livestock and insect-based products (green beef, native livestock species.

## **5.2. Climate Change**

SGP OP5 Immediate Objective 3: Promote the demonstration, development and transfer of low carbon technologies at the community level SGP helps communities to reduce GHGs through projects focusing on the use of renewable energy technologies such as micro-hydro, wind, biomass, and solar energy.

SGP CC Outcome 3.1: Innovative low-GHG technologies deployed and successfully demonstrated at the community level

SGP CC Outcome 3.2: GHG emissions avoided

SGP OP5 Immediate Objective 5: Support the conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks through sustainable management and climate proofing of land use, land use change and forestry

SGP CC Outcome 5.1: Sustainable land use, land use change, and forestry management and climate proofing practices adopted at the community level for forest and non-forest land-use types

SGP CC Outcome 5.2: Restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests and non-forest lands

SGP CC Outcome 5.3: GHG emissions avoided

In the climate change focal area, SGP will work to promote the demonstration, development and transfer of low carbon technologies and transport at the community level with the aim of developing low carbon climate resilient communities. In partnership with other GEF and non-GEF initiatives, SGP will empower communities to scale up successful models by forging partnerships with the private and public sector, as well as with other development partners. SGP will support the conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks through sustainable land use and forest management at the community level by increasing the area managed in accordance with sustainable and climate resilient practices. In order to achieve these objectives, SGP will work to strengthen the capacity of the communities in partnership building, resource mobilization and greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting and monitoring allowing them to benefit from growing investment in green technologies, and participate in international GHG mitigation mechanisms such as Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD).

SGP promotes the adoption of energy efficiency practices at the community level in sub-sectors such as building and housing, small-scale and medium-sized commercial enterprises and productive activities, heating and cooking.

Examples of some of the projects which have been implemented under SGP in other countries at the community level (i) biogas; (ii) biofuel as alternative to diesel or kerosene; (iii) solar energy for water heating and electricity; and (iv) hydro energy such as micro-hydro and watermills. Energy efficiency was supported widely in both rural and urban communities. In cities, SGP supported communities in their efforts to use energy efficient appliances and build energy efficient housing. In rural areas, the focus was in many instances on reducing the use of firewood by promoting efficient cooking technologies.

### **5.3. Land Degradation:**

SGP OP5 Immediate Objective 6: Maintain or improve flow of agro-ecosystem and forest ecosystem services to sustain livelihoods of local communities

SGP LD Outcome 6.1: Improved community-level actions and practices, and reduced negative impacts on agro-, and forest ecosystems and ecosystem services demonstrated to sustain ecosystem functionality

SGP LD Outcome 6.2: Community-based models of sustainable forestry management developed, and tested, linked to carbon sequestration for possible up scaling and replication where appropriate, to reduce GHG emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and enhance carbon sinks from land use, land use change, and forestry activities

The ownership and management of the world's forests by communities, individuals and private companies is on the rise globally. Forests are managed for a variety of multiple uses ranging from productive ends; strict protection and nature conservation; cultural and spiritual values; biological diversity; as well as for the provision of regulating and provisioning ecosystem services. These services include their capacity to provide goods and services related to carbon sinks and storehouses, to be effective as buffers against desertification and soil degradation, and most importantly, for their functions as livelihood support systems and "fallback areas" for survival in cases of extreme poverty for millions of rural inhabitants.

Sustainable forest Management (SFM) will be supported as multi-focal area approach at the local level but with progress on clear deliverables targeting recent innovation strategies that include REDD+ and carbon sequestration.

Efforts will also be made to link the OP5 activities on Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) and multiple use production landscapes under the biodiversity focal area with the evolving multilateral and bilateral forest investment programmes and partnerships facilities. In particular, sustainable land use, land use change, and forestry management and climate proofing practices will be adopted at the community level for forest and non-forest land use types. This will involve up-scaling and replication of good practices and lessons, as well as the restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks in forests and non-forest lands. These efforts will aim at up-scaling and replicating at local levels, good practices and lessons for avoided GHG emissions and sequestration functions of forests coming out of other SGP and large scale projects of UNDP with community demonstration components.

The rehabilitation activities will include reforestation, raising tree seedlings, tree planting, enrichment planting, woodlots establishments, social forestry approaches such as hedge row and boundary plantings, woodlots and home gardens, and the conventional agroforestry. The protective functions will include watershed management; soil and water conservation; sand dune stabilization; avalanche control; desertification control; conservation area protection; natural regeneration support/afforestation; use of traditional tree management techniques for tree crop management; occupancy management of forest; and communal tree farms establishment. While, the socio-economic functions activities will include management of communal forests for: recreation, tourism, education and conservation of spiritual and cultural heritage and general provision of social and ecosystem - services.

#### **5.4. International Waters**

SGP OP5 Immediate Objective 8: Support transboundary water body management with community-based initiatives

SGP IW Outcome 8.1: Effective and climate resilient community-based actions and practices supporting implementation of SAP regional priority actions demonstrated

SGP IW Outcome 8.2: Synergistic partnerships developed between SGP stakeholders and transboundary water management institutions and structures supporting implementation of SAP regional priority actions

In international waters, SGP will support transboundary water body management with community-based initiatives, including community-level linkages for implementation of Strategic Action Programs (SAPs) in partnership with other GEF initiatives.

Objective 10: Support transboundary water body management with community-based initiatives

SGP will focus its effort to implement community-based practices in managing specific water body types i.e. rivers and lakes (while some limited piloting activities might take place in addressing underground

water management). Climate variability impacts every aspect of international waters, adding further risks and complications to international waters management. It is critical for communities to incorporate climate risks in the design, implementation and management of community-based IW projects.

## **5.5. Chemicals**

SGP OP5 Immediate Objective 9: Promote and support phase out of POPs and chemicals of global concern at community level

SGP CH Outcome 9.1: Improved community-level initiatives and actions to prevent, reduce and phase out POPs, harmful chemicals and other pollutants, manage contaminated sites in an environmentally sound manner, and mitigate environmental contamination learned, as appropriate

SGP will promote and support the phase out at the community level of POPs and chemicals of global concern, such as through the introduction of POPs substitutes, and the promotion of environmentally friendly practices in pesticide management.

An integrated approach to address chemical management will be tested and promoted, addressing mitigation of chemical impact on ecosystems, species and human health. Chemicals management is interlinked with other environmental issues, such as climate change, international waters, and land degradation. For example, inappropriate waste management, such as burning of waste, results not only in emissions of POPs, but also increased GHG emissions. SGP chemicals management activities should therefore address various aspects of the sources and impacts of chemicals, including their management, to implement an integrated approach that not only prevent, reduce and phase out chemicals, but also help to mitigate impacts on biodiversity and climate change. Given the daunting challenge of climate change, chemicals management should fully incorporate climate resilient and mitigating activities.

SGP will pilot innovative demonstration models and approaches to prevent, reduce and eliminate POPs at the community level including the reduction, elimination or avoidance of harmful chemicals, such as mercury, that are commonly used in small-scale mining, and agricultural pesticides. SGP's POPs portfolio will focus on: (i) prevention of open burning of plastics and other solid waste; (ii) development and implementation of POPs and chemicals alternatives such as combating malaria using DDT alternatives; (iii) integrated pesticide management and organic farming; and (iv) awareness raising and capacity building activities.

## **5.6. Capacity Development**

SGP OP5 Immediate Objective 10: Enhance and strengthen capacities of CSOs (particularly community-based organizations and those of indigenous peoples) to engage in consultative processes, apply knowledge management to ensure adequate information flows, implement convention guidelines, and monitor and evaluate environmental impacts and trends

SGP CD Outcome 10.1: Active participation of NSCs and NFGs in GEF focal areas at the national level

SGP CD Outcome 10.2: Improved information flows to/from CBOs and CSOs in SGP countries regarding good practices and lessons learned, and application of such practices

SGP CD Outcome 10.3: Increased public awareness and education at the community-level regarding global environmental issues

SGP CD Outcome 10.4: Capacity of CBOs and CSOs strengthened to support implementation of global conventions

SGP CD Outcome 10.5: Increased application of community-based environmental monitoring

SGP CD Outcome 10.6: Evaluation of SGP projects and programs against expected results strengthened, including increased capacity of CBOs and CSOs to apply relevant evaluation methodologies

#### Technical and project management capacity to generate global environmental benefits

CSOs technical and management capacity will be enhanced to carry out field activities addressing the priority issues as identified in each of the focal area strategies outlined above. SGP will ensure that all project activities are in alignment with the priorities and policies of the global Rio conventions, and will build grantees' capacity to implement their guidelines.

#### Participation and networking capacity for policy influence

Community participation will be actively promoted in consultative and dialogue processes related to the development and implementation of national policies aimed at fulfilling global environmental and other political commitments. These would include the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, the MDGs, and others.

SGP NSCs will actively bring SGP experiences to national decision-making processes, and link up with grantees for interactive policy development and implementation. In this context, NSC will continue to be a key mechanism to highlight policy issues and recommendations from lessons learned and best practices captured from the SGP projects on the ground. The meetings of the NSC will serve to inform key national stakeholders on progress from the national portfolio and influence policy. The NSC's institutional role will be further strengthened not only in its functions of oversight and outreach, but also in partnership development, policy communications, and in the longer term sustainability of the programme.

#### Knowledge management capacity for replication, up-scaling and mainstreaming,

As generating and sharing knowledge is an important goal of SGP, all projects and country programmes would incorporate a significant knowledge generation and sharing component as part of project design.

Each grantee will be expected to develop and submit knowledge products, including a final project sheet summarizing project activities and achievements that can be included in the SGP global database. The SGP database will be improved to reflect the growth and expansion of the programme, so that it will be able to accommodate more sophisticated monitoring and evaluation indicators and tools as well as knowledge sharing and learning mechanisms.

## 5.7. Livelihoods and Gender

Objective 13: SGP seeks to improve livelihoods through increasing local benefits generated from environmental resources, and mainstream gender considerations in community-based environmental initiatives

SGP has always recognized the importance of local livelihoods in achieving sustainable global environmental benefits. One of the key elements of the SGP is that it considers the human needs of the communities it works with and that will assist them to attain sustainable livelihoods.

SGP understands that the sustainability of its projects will only be possible if there is a high level of ownership by the community, combined with demonstrable local benefits. SGP invests in strengthening the human capital of its CSO and grassroots partners, by enhancing their level of technical skills, embodied knowledge and planning abilities necessary to implement and sustain the projects.

**Proposed Activities:** Below are the activities which have been proposed by the stakeholders in the national consultation workshop convened for the development of country programme strategy.

### **Geographic Focus Area 1: Kabul**

- Activity 1: Trophy-tree plantation becomes a demonstration site for Afghanistan flora varieties
- Activity 2: trophy-tree-plantation becomes a key resource mobilization for the program
- Activity 4: Kol-e-Hashmat Khan lake rehabilitated
- Activity 5: Kol-e-Hashmat Khan becomes a key eco-tourism site
- Activity 6: Kabul pine reforestation
- Activity 7: Energy Efficiency and Alternate Energy demonstration Center is established

### **Geographical Focus Area 2: Badakhshan**

- Activity 1: Local community awareness increased on the value and use of biodiversity resources.
- Activity 2: Community based watershed management practices promoted
- Activity 3: Alternative energy efficient techniques and technologies introduced
- Activity 4: Natural habitat have been protected and promoted for the ecotourism
- Activity 5: Inventory of key indigenous (and endemic) grains, medicinal plants and trees and demonstration nursery
- Activity 6: Eco-tourism safari promoted at Att, Tagab District; with reforestation/ afforestation and snow leopard and Marco polo sheep watching
- Activity 7: Demo micro-hydro on three rivers

### **Geographical Focus Areas 3: Bamyan**

- Activity 1: Alternative Energy efficient technology introduced
- Activity 2: Community based watershed management techniques introduced
- Activity 3: Popular rejuvenation programme initiated
- Activity 4: Bamyan and other key towns are equipped with solar street lights
- Activity 5: Degraded pastures rehabilitated with the community based initiative and practice
- Activity 6: Community based waste management at Band-i-Amir, Bamyan to conserve the natural waters through eco-tourism project.
- Activity 7: Energy Efficiency and Alternate Energy demonstration Center is established in Bamyan

### **Geographical Focus Areas 4: Nangarhar**

- Activity 1: Restrained Gambiri desert desertification with tamarix (Gaz) cuttings
- Activity 2: Community based watershed management practices promoted at Spin Ghar forests.
- Activity 3: Natural forest protected through community based initiatives.
- Activity 4: Agricultural fertile land degradation protected.
- Activity 5: Local community awareness increased on the value and use of biodiversity resources.

## 6. Monitoring and Evaluation

It is necessary to emphasize that the evaluation is inserted within an integral process of planning where different elements may appear, that is, **the assessment, the programming, the monitoring, the systematization and the evaluation**. In this way the evaluation processes are considered from the beginning of the projects, formulating those indicators of process and impact that should be detected during and at the end of each project and Programme.

Regular monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is an essential component of the SGP Programme and intends to measure progress and achievements at projects and country programme levels. Both, at the project and country programme levels, M&E will be conducted in the course of implementation of the different stages: planning, execution and completion. M&E identifies implementation problems and helps to assess whether targets are being achieved. M&E activities are represented through different types of reports that help the Programme and its projects to maintain accountability, achieve sustainability, allow for replicability and provide opportunities for extracting and communicating lessons learned. The results and/or lessons learned from M&E will be used to improve the Programme and projects design and implementation, and will enable SGP grantees to carry on project activities after the grant period is over.

Monitoring focuses at tracking the progress of project activities and achievement of planned outputs. It allows project participants to keep track of project activities, to determine whether project objectives are being met, and to make the necessary changes to improve the project's performance.

Evaluation refers to a periodic activity aimed at assessing the relevance, performance, effects and impact of a project within the framework of the stated objectives. The evaluation includes an explicit appraisal on whether the project has met its stated objectives in terms of the GEF focal area, country priorities and operational programmes and if not, it analyses the reasons. It is one of the SGP principles that the SGP grantees deeply involve local communities and other stakeholders in a participatory self-monitoring and assessment/evaluation process at the project level. It is believed that the involvement of project beneficiaries in M&E process will promote mutual understanding about the project's approach, contribute to community "ownership", as well as enable capacity building and apply lessons learned from project and programme experience.

At the country level, the M&E process mainly will involve: development and implementation of the Programme M&E plan; compilation and communication of lessons learned, and reporting to the Central Programme Management Team.

Both at the project and programme levels, the baseline data refers to the "starting point" from which change can be measured at different results levels - before the project or programme activities implemented. Through the indicators, programme/project progress and accomplishments can then be compared with the baseline, and hence evaluated. An indicator should be logically connected with the baseline and easily measurable. A good indicator, as a rule, should answer the following questions: what? (what is changing); when? (within what period of time); where?; and by how much? (to what extent

something is changed). Indicators to measure the expected results at country Programme level (Outcomes) are agreed with the NSC, while for the project level results (Outputs) indicators are determined by the NC and grantees. Thus, at the project level M&E process implies planning, coordination, systematic reporting, and agreement upon these and other issues by all project participants before projects are undertaken.

Regular monitoring visits will be conducted by NC at different stage of project planning, intermediate reporting and at final reporting. Upon necessity and as possible, respective members of the NSC will also participate in site visits. The site visits will give the NC/NSC the opportunity to observe the actual implementation of the project and confirm the information contained in the interim and final reports of grantees. During the site visits, the NC will collect materials, information, make digital photos, etc., in order to document lessons learned and to demonstrate the environmental and sustainable livelihood impacts of the SGP activities. After each site visit the NC/NSC members will prepare a monitoring record indicating observations, recommendations and respective measure to be taken.

<b>M&amp;E Plan at the Project Level</b>		
<b>M&amp;E Activity</b>	<b>Responsible Parties</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Participatory Project Monitoring	Grantees	Duration of project
Baseline Data Collection Grantees,	NC	At project concept planning and proposal stage
Two or Three Project Progress and Financial Reports <i>(depending on agreed disbursement schedule)</i>	Grantees, NC, PA	At each disbursement request
Project Work plans	Grantees, NC, PA	Duration of project
NC Project Proposal Site Visit <i>(as necessary / cost effective)</i>	NC	Before project approval, as appropriate
NC Project Monitoring Site Visit <i>(as necessary / cost effective)</i>	NC	On average twice per year, as appropriate
NC Project Evaluation Site Visit <i>(as necessary / cost effective)</i>	NC	At end of project, as appropriate
Project Final Report	Grantees	Following completion of project activities
Project Evaluation Report <i>(as necessary / cost effective)</i>	NC, NSC, External party	Following completion of project activities
Prepare project description to be incorporated into global project database	PA, NC	At start of project, and ongoing as appropriate

## **7. Sustainability strategy**

UNDP - GEF SGP Afghanistan sustainability strategy will focus on sustaining the country programme results, both at project and programme levels, beyond the GEF funding. In particular, the country Programme will focus on achievement of the following results:

- Up scaling of SGP projects through transformation into larger projects, replication nationally, even globally, mainstreaming into national plans and strategies, networking, creating needed policy change at the national level, also influencing global environmental policy debate.
- Strengthening income-generating components and thus, community “ownership” of the projects;
- Securing co-financing resources from traditional and non-traditional sources;
- Ensuring broad advertisement and replication of the successfully implemented SGP projects and initiatives;
- Ensuring that the country Programme strategy is updated to incorporate national environmental and sustainable development priorities;
- Ensuring the most-efficient contribution of the government representative(s) in the NSC aimed at enhanced involvement of the SGP in the national strategies and action plans;
- Ensuring SGP’s visibility through continuous communication, outreach and networking;
- Serving as a platform for cooperation and dialogue among NGOs/CBOs, local authorities, Government agencies, academic and research institutes, private sector, media, and other stakeholders.

## **8. Knowledge Management Strategy:**

Knowledge management strategy implies the collection and dissemination of information concerning the experience gained from each individual project and the entire project portfolio by various GEF thematic areas. The objective of the knowledge management efforts is to facilitate the flow of knowledge and experiences, leverage lessons learned from both successful and unsuccessful projects, and to replicate good practices. Intended beneficiaries include SGP grantees and SGP country programme partners, government, donors and international agencies for:

- Analysis of lessons learned to generate new knowledge;
- Knowledge sharing through existing SGP and other mechanisms; and
- Knowledge uptake to ensure that knowledge products are applied, used and further improved.

Knowledge management will be one of the key activities of the SGP. Knowledge and experience gained through SGP projects will be collected and consolidated in handbooks, factsheets, case studies, films and video materials. This information will then be disseminated among practitioners to determine the good/best practices and strategies and to compare and share experience. Experiences will also be shared at the seminars, meetings, public presentations and through different electronic information networks and media when applicable. Training programmes and workshops conducted within the SGP projects are of special importance in the knowledge management aspect.

Afghanistan UNDP- GEF Small Grants Programme will ask for continuous knowledge sharing among grantees to:

- Share best practices and lessons learned;
- Document best practices distributed;
- Create a "directory of expertise" among SGP grantees to call upon each other for advice;
- Websites and e-groups for regional groupings; and
- Designate sub-national focal persons.

Applicants will be encouraged to include a component for demonstration and knowledge dissemination in proposed projects. Regular short "press releases" will be prepared and disseminated in electronic and/or printed form by the grantees for updating the public on the activities. The grantees will be required to ensure continuous and open exchange of knowledge and lessons.

The country programme will ensure that the GEF is visible in all programme and project material and events. A sign post with appropriate project details, logos of the UNDP; GEF; SGP; and other partners will be installed at the site of the supported projects. All knowledge materials and products will acknowledge the GEF as the funding mechanism.

## **9. Fund Mobilization Strategy**

SGP Afghanistan will focus on mobilization of additional resources as one of its priorities. Keeping in view the current situation of Afghanistan and interest of the donors in funding project and programme which are focused on grass root level for poverty reduction and sustainable development, it is expected that donors will take huge interest in Small Grants Program. It is a commitment on the part of SGP to the GEF Council to ensure minimum 1:1 co-funding ratio of SGP projects, in a way that co-funding part is evenly allocated between cash and in-kind. Co-financing is also important for increasing the number, size and impacts of SGP funded projects. Mobilized partnerships and resources are vital for strengthening income-generating and other livelihood components of the projects that would foster community "ownership" and "stewardship" of projects and thus ensure sustainability.

Partnerships with other UNDP projects and programmes e.g., National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP), Sub-National Governance Programme (SGP) and Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) will be established. All possible sources will be targeted to provide in-kind and cash co-financing for SGP both at programme and project levels. Strong partnership with donor bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, other UN agencies, as well as private sector and government will be established.

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