

Developing mechanisms for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity of main ecosystems of Uzbekistan

Transfer project in the framework of the Klaus Toepfer Fellowship Programme

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Executive summary

The world's governments have committed themselves to increase the coverage of protected areas by 2020 in order to address rapid rates of environmental destruction. A new study shows that only half of the most important sites for wildlife have been fully protected.

Strict reserves cover only 0.5% of the territory of Uzbekistan. There were no Action Plans in Uzbekistan for the conservation of unprotected areas, although many of them are very important for biodiversity conservation. For example, by 2011 UzSPB identified 51 Important Bird Areas in Uzbekistan - sites vitally important for birds and other biodiversity. These territories were confirmed by BirdLife Secretariat. Most of them are not protected. The main direction of our NGO's strategy for the coming years is to establish concrete measures, through the development of Action Plans, to start conservation of identified IBAs in Uzbekistan by measures other than the lengthy process of designating protected areas. Developing Action Plans (APs) has more advantages than designation of new PAs. A lot of financial expenses are required to create new PA. It is impossible to create PAs on the territory where people live, because on PAs any human activities are prohibited. APs allow to foster sustainable use of biodiversity and often do not need that much investment from the government.

The project objective is to develop Action Plans for conservation of IBAs. To achieve this objective three pilot IBAs representing typical ecosystems of Central Asia: desert, wetland, mountains and tugai forest, were selected. This work was designed for 2012-2014.

For the preparation of the Action Plans an inventory and assessment of the species and threats on the sites was carried out and meetings with stakeholders were organized. Individual Action Plans for biodiversity conservation for each project territory were developed, and the APs were agreed with local communities on each site. Ideas were developed on how to foster implementation of the newly developed and agreed APs and how to gain governmental endorsement and support. Currently, Uzbekistan is preparing a new National Action Plan and Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity (NBSAP). The project experience will be included in that document, which shows that the government endorses the Action Plans developed. Methods and experience in implementing the Action Plans are widely disseminated to other unprotected areas of Uzbekistan.

The project had three main partners supporting and financing this work: National University of Uzbekistan (NUUz), Uzbekistan Society for the Protection of Birds (UzSPB) and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

This project delivered tangible benefits for sites and species, linked to the Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand regions, respectively.