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# Integrated Management and Governance of GSLEP Landscapes

## Advice Document Addendum to the General Guidelines for Climate Smart Snow Leopard Landscape Management Planning

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## 1. Background

In this Advice Document, we hope to highlight the importance of integrating conservation and development activities in GSLEP landscapes with the spirit of cooperation and coordination among stakeholders.

All 23 GSLEP landscapes are geographically large, with over half of them covering more than 10,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and the largest covering more than 90,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The landscapes are often spread across international or administrative boundaries. They include existing wildlife protected areas (PA), but often, much of the landscape may be under the control or ownership of other government departments, communities or private parties. Conservation, thus, may not be the existing priority for land use in much of a GSLEP landscape.

Even with completely legal rights or mandates, community and agency activities may, at times, be detrimental to wildlife, but there can be opportunities for cooperation, too (see Addendum 3. Stakeholder Analysis). The landscapes may have numerous human settlements with development, human welfare and/or conservation activities that offer potential opportunities for cooperation among agencies. The guiding principle of the GSLEP process is integrated conservation and development, rather than conservation versus development.



*Photo 1. The village of Kibber in India's Spiti Valley is located in prime snow leopard habitat at 4,200 meters. Photo Credit: Nature Conservation Foundation / Snow Leopard Trust*

Landscape management plan actions will include threat mitigation – tackling various issues involving local communities, such as excessive resource extraction, livestock grazing leading to habitat degradation, poaching and negative interactions between people and wildlife. It will also deal with larger infrastructure and developmental pressures, such as hydropower projects, roads and mines, as

well as other unsustainable developmental schemes, such as intensified agriculture and livestock production. Tackling these issues often requires working simultaneously at multiple levels, from local to landscape to provincial to national and international levels. There is a clear need to mainstream biodiversity concerns in strategy and action at multiple levels.

Due to the sheer size and scale of the GSLEP landscapes and their characteristics, the factors summarized below necessitate **partnerships and forging effective coordination** among stakeholders:

- **Landscape spread across administrative boundaries.** Land use priorities and governance mechanisms may differ across provinces and other administrative boundaries, and control may rest with different officials. Mechanisms to work across these boundaries may not exist.
- **Large number of stakeholders and land tenure patterns.** Land ownership may rest with different government departments, communities and other stakeholders. Further, conservation agencies may have no direct control over much of the area.
- **Multiple officially mandated activities ongoing in the landscape.** Some of the activities may be positive and some negative for conservation goals.
- **Multiple on-going participatory community-level conservation and livelihood initiatives in the landscape.** These positive initiatives may exist, but may be led by different stakeholders with differing approaches, and be spread out unevenly across the landscape. They may lack coordination, and communities may receive opposing signals from different government departments.
- **Funds from a variety of sources may be available and used in the landscape.** These disparate funding sources may lead to over-investment and duplication of efforts in some areas, and under-investment in others.

The landscape management plan, therefore, needs to have suitable mechanisms built in to harmonize and effectively channel both on-going and new efforts. Collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders, referred to as 'convergence' in the document, is key to achieving progress and success in mitigation of threats. This document discusses this issue and provides a few suggested mechanisms for convergence at the landscape scale. It should be noted here that this document assumes that appropriate mechanisms for community participation (e.g. pasture committees, village development committees) are already in place in the landscape under the management plan (see Addendum 1. Strategic Management Planning and Addendum 2. Participation in Conservation) and focuses more on mechanisms at a higher level that can impact the entire landscape, including community-based conservation and development.

## 2. Ongoing Work on Conservation, Development and Livelihoods

Various stakeholders, from local communities to large corporations, may be involved in the landscape. As a first step, identify and compile a list of these stakeholders and their on-going activities and dependencies on the landscape (see Addendum 3. Stakeholder Analysis). Broadly, the GSLEP management plan will try to mitigate the impacts of imminent threats and proactively address potential threats. Most threats emerge from the stakeholders and some from larger events, such as climate change.

Conservation outcomes can be more effective and long lasting if stakeholder needs, especially those of local communities, are fulfilled and their livelihoods improved. Human welfare in the form of food, energy and water security, as well as education and livelihoods, is crucial for conservation and provides opportunities for engagement with specialized agencies working on these aspects.

As discussed above, the landscape management plan should duly take into consideration all relevant on-going work. The plan may need to initiate appropriate activities in clusters where no activities are happening. In others where activities are currently on-going, the plan should try to align with them. On-going activities in the landscape are likely to include:

1. Government agencies or NGOs implementing programs to secure livelihoods without clear participation of beneficiaries or stakeholders in decision making
2. Government agencies and private sector involved with larger infrastructure and developmental projects using their own resources without clear participation of beneficiaries or stakeholders in decision making
3. Government agencies or NGOs implementing participatory conservation and livelihood projects with the participation of local committees in a village or village clusters

Funding for these activities may be provided by the Government or national and international donors.

### 3. Challenges of Coordination and Co-management, or ‘Convergence’

Often, working through long lasting partnerships becomes difficult. Here, a few of the challenges are discussed.

Issue	Details
Sectorial priorities	Differing institutional mandates may result in conflicts between agencies working in the same area. In particular, this holds true for conservation agencies and their need to regulate consumptive or destructive activities of other agencies. The same parcel of land may be earmarked by agencies for different, and maybe opposing, purposes. <i>For example, one department may be aiming to triple livestock production to aid in livelihoods, while another may be trying to limit livestock numbers to assist in wildlife conservation.</i>
Competition	Competing for the same work or same pool of resources. This may be most commonly seen among NGOs that typically have to raise resources through competitive grants and also make their work more visible for future grants and credit. A certain amount of ‘territoriality’ may be evident.
Duplication	Agencies can have similar mandates and may, thus, duplicate efforts using different approaches and, at times, without core competence. This usually results in wastage of resources, confusion among beneficiaries and conflicts on the ground among departmental functionaries. <i>For example, ‘pasture development’ may be undertaken by the Animal Husbandry Department to secure fodder for livestock; Soil Conservation Department to conserve soil; Forestry Department as an eco-development initiative to engage with communities; and the Agricultural Department as a means to promote a certain high</i>

Issue	Details
	<i>yielding variety of fodder. All agencies may work in the same parcel of land and may duplicate efforts. The Agricultural Department, however, may have the advantage in carrying out field trials for the best production, which other departments may not.</i>
Administrative issues	Officials often have clear jurisdiction and cannot work beyond that. Official hierarchy may play an important role in acceptance or working together. Rules being enforced by a junior official, say the officer who is in-charge of the landscape management plan, may not be accepted by a senior, say in the district administration. Unwillingness to cooperate, to sit together for planning and execution of developmental work can become a significant impediment.
Funding	Government funding most often takes the form of departmental grants based on official schemes, and NGO funding is mostly from competitive grants. Each agency usually has a clear system of accounting and audits to ensure proper utilisation of their resources. The important thing is that funding is mostly sectorial and there may be very few options for sharing of funds among agencies for a common task.

## 4. Recommendations for Convergence

### 4.1 Broad principles of engagement

It is important for the management planning to transcend the above challenges in a manner that involves all relevant stakeholders to the best degree possible. The agency entrusted with the development and implementation of the management plan needs to take the onus to bring together the disparate stakeholders to a common meeting ground for conservation, while being sensitive to their individual agendas and legitimate mandates. Some principles that can help in this process are:

1. **Objectively understand the stakeholders** (see Addendum 3. Stakeholder Analysis): Each organisation is not necessarily a threat and there are often more opportunities for cooperation than is conventionally perceived. These convergences of work need to be understood and cooperation needs to be developed carefully. An appreciative enquiry of the stakeholder is helpful in understanding avenues of cooperation. Some agencies will surely have activities detrimental to conservation goals and these issues need to be understood equally well. These areas of divergence also need to be ironed out through understanding, dialogue and a search for alternatives. A sense of mutual respect and acceptance of each other's mandates is helpful in this process.
2. **Obtain political buy-in:** While ground level work is crucial for the management plan's success, an acceptance of the goals and innovative options for implementation need to be accepted at both local and national political levels. The relevant bureaucracies, in particular, need to accept and endorse or approve the plans.
3. **Execute formal arrangements:** As much as possible, initiate work with motivated individuals, but try to institutionalise through formal arrangements (see Section 4.2 below).



Photo 2. Community meeting in Spiti, India. Photo Credit: Snow Leopard Trust/ NCF, India.

## 4.2 Broad structures for implementation

We have discussed diverse activities from conservation threat mitigation to securing livelihoods that may need to be conducted under the management plan. Each stakeholder usually has an established form of administration or governance that will oversee their roles and efforts and needs to be respected. One of the best options to ensure integrated planning and implementation of the management plans is to establish a new committee or agency with the capacity to oversee participatory landscape-level work. It is important to consider a formal setup that allows for coordination, representation and cost-sharing among participating agencies, as well as transparent and fair fund flow mechanisms.

These formal setups can take the form of ‘Coordination Committees’ at varying administrative levels, or even a new ‘Foundation’, ‘Society’ or NGO registered under the appropriate laws. Coordination committees can help oversee planning, direction-setting and monitoring by partners. Taking it a step further, a Foundation can have dedicated staff and infrastructure to fundraise from a variety of sources and coordinate management plan activities (see examples in Section 5.3 and 5.4 below).

The primary implementing (conservation) agency will need to take a leadership role in both the establishment and the operation of this new committee, Foundation or agency. In rare cases where these types of structures already exist, they can be adapted to help with the GSLEP landscapes.

Here are some other important aspects to take into account when considering a new oversight body for management plan implementation:

**Policy:** The new and innovative landscape level, participatory and cooperative management plans and their implementing bodies will likely need to integrate with existing policies or require modifications to existing policies (see example of NTNC, Section 5.1 below). This policy knowledge, integration and potential modification may be needed at different levels of governance. It is important here to consider

approval of the management plan at an appropriate government level so that integrated management is possible.

**Funding:** Funding from different government departments for the management plan’s implementation must be well-coordinated ahead of time. Additional funds from donors, offsets or revenue generated in the landscape will need to be raised and effectively channelled back for conservation and development in the landscape. It can be particularly helpful to set up a conservation Trust Fund (CFA 2008) or corpus that is managed by a committee of various stakeholders to facilitate the management plan’s implementation. Such a structure can help ensure that funds are fairly managed and distributed and made available during prime working seasons, which can be short in snow leopard range.

**Capacity building:** Innovative programs at this scale require adequate dedicated and motivated staff and volunteers to implement. Investment in their capacity is crucial. Participating organizations and agencies, thus, need to invest in building the capacity of staff through periodic thematic workshops, exposure visits and provision of equipment. It will be ideal to identify national or regional institutions (such as University of Central Asia, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Wildlife Institute, China, Wildlife Institute of India, etc.) that can formally and systematically lead in building capacity.

**Monitoring and evaluation (M&E):** Structures for M&E need to be set up to ensure that management plan implementation and governance remains efficient and functional. Expertise may be needed from both national institutions of high credibility and local partners. Individual conservation activities may already have or need their own M&E mechanisms set up at the appropriate level such as the village level or village cluster level.

Finally, integrated management structures for management plan implementation need to be formalized through written agreements or memoranda of understanding (MoU) approved by the Government at the appropriate level. Official approvals for cooperation among agencies at appropriate levels (national, provincial or local) is crucial for functionaries to effectively partner. The MoU can be a broad framework document and can have more specific terms of reference (ToR) for specific tasks. Broadly, the MoU should state mandates and responsibilities, mutual advantages of cooperation, convergence-based activities, beneficiaries, cost sharing and monitoring (Anon. 2014; Annexure 2). The ToR can have further details of specific tasks, work plans, budgets, etc. In many cases, the ToR can be integrated into the MoU itself.

In summary, here is an overview of potential structures for management plan implementation:

Level	Description
National agency for GSLEP implementation	Helps with policy and streamlining cooperation at the level of ministry or department headquarters. Can play a role in larger fundraising efforts. The GSLEP National Focal Point should be a functionary here. In the absence of a formal structure at this level, the NFP may have to fulfill the role independently. National level political buy-in can be an important outcome of this structure.
Provincial body	Can be in the form of a ‘Foundation’ or a ‘Coordination Committee’. Further points will be similar to the details given

Level	Description
	below for landscape level. These setups are useful at the provincial level for obtaining political buy-in.
Landscape level foundation	A Foundation, Society or NGO registered and set up under appropriate law (with a formal set of constituents (relevant stakeholders) and constitution (see example for the <a href="http://www.periyarfoundation.org">Periyar Foundation</a> at <a href="http://www.periyarfoundation.org">www.periyarfoundation.org</a> ) and with the purpose of supporting management plan implementation. Led by the implementing agency, this organisation can raise funds from both government and non-government sources, including international agencies, and can source funds to partners based on agreed annual plans, and is audited as per each country's laws. Can have staff for administration, accounting and day to day oversight of work. Governance is aided by MoUs among stakeholders (see below)
Landscape level Coordination Committee	A Coordination Committee typically has members of stakeholders, including government departments, NGOs and community members and is useful for planning, direction setting and monitoring implementation by partners. Governance is aided by MoUs among stakeholders (see below)
Inter-departmental MoUs	These are bilateral, or in some cases multi-lateral, agreements that clarify reasons for coming together, individual mandates, strengths, roles and responsibilities, work plans, funding, credit sharing, reporting, etc. (Anon. 2014; Annexure 2). The MoUs can be overarching departmental frameworks that can have more specific terms of reference
Village level committees	Committees established or recognised by the management plan for the purpose of village level planning and implementation of activities. It is good if there are committed individuals, but ideally the body should be democratically formed. These committees may facilitate local level planning and assist with implementation. They may receive funds and ensure their effective use and timely reporting.
Agency responsible for capacity enhancement	All the above work requires capacity levels often lacking at present. It will be ideal to collaborate with a national or regional organisation of repute that can help with periodic capacity enhancement of personnel involved at different levels.
Agency responsible for monitoring & evaluation	M&E ideally needs to be conducted by an independent entity. These may be recognised and mandated by the government with the task of annual and 5-yearly M&E of the works of the above bodies.

## 5. Some Examples of Governance Structures in Conservation<sup>1</sup>

In this section, four of the numerous innovative examples of governance structures from snow leopard range countries have been highlighted representing different administrative levels – national, provincial, landscape and PA. The mechanisms used by these structures with regard to participation, convergence, and fund management can be useful for adapting to the GSLEP landscape management plans.

### 5.1 National level: National Trust for Nature Conservation, Nepal

The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) was established in 1982 by a Legislative Act as an autonomous and not-for-profit organization, mandated to work in the field of nature conservation in Nepal. This organisation has undertaken over 200 innovative projects in Nepal and has firmly put participatory and landscape level work as an official strategy for conservation. Their Mission Statement is self-explanatory: “To promote, conserve and manage nature in all its diversity balancing human needs with the environment on a sustainable basis for posterity - ensuring maximum community participation with due cognizance of the linkages between economics, environment and ethics through a process in which people are both the principal actors and beneficiaries.” The NTNC Act provides the organization a clear mandate and authority to complement and supplement the Government’s efforts in nature conservation and sustainable development. NTNC has the direct responsibility of planning and implementing integrated conservation and development programs by running them as projects through comprehensive management plans. The NTNC has a Governing Board of Trustees that consists of distinguished and recognized national and international personalities (Patron is the country’s Prime Minister and the Chairperson is the Minister of Forests and Soil Conservation, with membership consisting of top government bureaucrats, national and international academicians and respected local people. NTNC was partly funded by the Government of Nepal but is now able to raise most of its funds through competitive grants and revenues generated by tourism and other enterprises.

Due to its national level governance structure, NTNC can operate projects with flexibility and speed unhindered by bureaucratic red tape, but is recognized as an apolitical and competent organization with high credibility, substantial and rich experiences, and its pioneering achievements in nature conservation are regarded as impressive by different groups of stakeholders, conservation agencies and donors. The Trust’s focus in lowland protected areas is primarily on wildlife research and monitoring, which also includes habitat management, biodiversity conservation, community mobilization, anti-poaching and illegal trade control. In the snow leopard range, NTNC is engaged in protected area management by adopting the approach of an integrated conservation and development program where they are handling innovative landscape and participatory projects in the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), Manasalu Conservation Area Project (MCAP) and Gaurishankar Conservation Area Project (GCAP). NTNC also works in other areas, such as alternative energy development, sustainable tourism, sustainable agriculture, climate change and gender equity, which further enhances conservation and development work at the landscape level.

Website: <http://www.ntnc.org.np/>

### 5.2 Provincial level: Sikkim Rural Development Programme

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from respective Websites

With the objective of sustainable development in the mountains of Sikkim, India, the Rural Development Department of the State has developed a mechanism for enabling convergence among agencies through formal bilateral partnerships. These partnerships are based on a larger 'framework' agreement signed at the state headquarter level between the Rural Development Department and the other collaborating departments (e.g. Department of Horticulture), which includes jointly developing annual operations plans, workplans and funding plans, M&E and social audits (Anon 2014, Annexure 2). In this case, a separate governance structure has not been created, but the concerned department (Rural Development in this case) has an internal plan and vision based on which they have developed thematic MoUs to formulate and implement programs.

Website: <http://www.mgnregasikkim.org/convergence>

### 5.3 Landscape level: Annapurna Conservation Area Project, Nepal

The ACAP, launched in 1986, is among the earliest examples of participatory conservation in snow leopard range. Its goal, "To achieve sustained balance between nature conservation and socio-economic improvement in the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) thereby assisting National Trust for Nature Conservation in achieving its goal" has the following objectives:

- Conserve the natural resources of ACA for the benefit of present and future generations.
- Bring sustainable social and economic development to the local people.
- Develop tourism in such a way that it will have minimum negative impact on the natural, socio-cultural and economic environments.

The ACA covers an area of 7,629 km<sup>2</sup>. and is home to over 100,000 residents of different cultural and linguistic groups. The multifaceted challenges in ACA have been addressed through an integrated, community-based conservation and development approach, which is an experimental model that has been the vanguard of promoting the concepts of "Conservation Area" through an "Integrated Conservation and Development Programme." ACAP was first tested as a pilot program in the Ghandruk Village Development Committee (VDC) in 1986. After being notified in the National Gazette as a "Conservation Area" in 1992, ACAP's program now covers the entire area. It is a good practice for countries not to scale up work in the entire landscape at the onset, but test out the innovative ideas in a smaller part of the GSLEP landscape before scaling up.

The primary model is to invest in democratic Village Development Committees (VDCs) in a village or village clusters, and to help with need-based activities there relating to both conservation and livelihoods in its seven geographic units. Much of the funds are generated through community-based tourism activities. The larger set of activities include support for better agriculture and animal husbandry, energy security, tourism and small scale industry. The committees have direct oversight from the NTNC with assistance for a large variety of expertise and cross learning opportunities. All funds for the ACAP are raised from entry fees and other grants, but the Government normally doesn't provide any funds. NTNC is investing heavily in local capacity and motivation of the communities so that they can take over the management into perpetuity.

Website: <http://www.ntnc.org.np/project/annapurna-conservation-area-project>

### 5.4 Large PA level: Periyar Foundation, Kerala, India

The Periyar Foundation is a landscape level body that was set up by the provincial government to strengthen participatory conservation of the Periyar Tiger Reserve. “Periyar Foundation is a Government owned public trust with the legality of the Government organization and flexibility of a good non-governmental organization”, is the introduction to the organization on their Facebook page.

The main aim of the Foundation is to facilitate and support Periyar Tiger Reserve management in biodiversity conservation initiatives through eco-development and people’s participation and to support similar initiatives in adjoining landscapes. Its objectives are:

1. Support Periyar Tiger Reserve and the adjoining landscape in biodiversity conservation.
2. Carry forward on-going activities of eco-development committees and their confederations through the Periyar Tiger Reserve management.
3. Foster partnerships in conservation through innovative alternative livelihood options for forest fringe dwellers.
4. Carry forward the spirit of research and impact monitoring in the PA and adjoining landscape with the support of scientists and professionals.
5. Strengthen the stake for conservation through community empowerment, trainings for capacity building, conduct of nature camps and formation of nature clubs for various stakeholders in conservation

The organization, thus, assists in the management of the reserve and adjoining areas using a sound integrated governance mechanism that is facilitated by its ability to innovate, collaborate and raise and use funds in a flexible but legal manner. Based on the successes of this foundation the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change of the Government of India has set up a knowledge centre for biodiversity conservation and rural livelihoods improvement in the this reserve that is mandated to improve capacity of conservation agencies.

Website: [www.periyarfoundation.org](http://www.periyarfoundation.org) (also see this website for example of the Trust Deed to set up a Foundation). Facebook: <http://goo.gl/zoqBqf>.

## 6. Key Resources

- Anon. (2014) Convergence of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme with Schemes of Horticulture & Cash Crop Development Department. Department of Rural Development, Govt. of Sikkim, Gangtok.

Online version available at: [www.mgnregasikkim.org/convergence](http://www.mgnregasikkim.org/convergence)

- Anon. (2015) Social Audit Handbook: An Instrument for making the Programme Accountable to People. Department of Rural Development, Govt. of Sikkim, Gangtok.

Online version available at: [www.mgnregasikkim.org/home/social-audit](http://www.mgnregasikkim.org/home/social-audit)

- Conservation Finance Alliance (CFA). (2008) Rapid Review of Conservation Trust Funds. Prepared for the CFA Working Group on Environmental Funds by Barry Spergel and Philippe Taïeb.

Online version: <https://www.cbd.int/financial/trustfunds/g-rapidassess.pdf>