

Preparation for the
Workshop “Midterm Review of the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)”
16-19 April 2018, Vilm, Germany

Questions for Government Representatives

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1. Please name the main activities of your Government since 2014, which implement the CAMI Programme of Work (POW) with respect to CAMI species found in your country (please name projects and money spent, if possible).

- Activities under Objective 1 (To address key threats and issues currently not (sufficiently) covered by existing work programmes and stakeholders) aiming at controlling (1.1.) illegal hunting and trade, (1.2) overgrazing and livestock competition, supporting (1.4.) good governance of natural resource management/policy and legislation, (1.5.) human needs/community engagement in conservation, and (1.6.) scientific knowledge, as well as under Objective 2 (to guide planning and implementation of prioritized conservation actions at a regional scale), snow leopard and argali (mountain systems), and Objective 4 (to support implementation, coordination and resourcing of the CAMI), (4.2.) funding implementation and (4.3.) awareness raising are currently implemented for snow leopards and argali in the Wakhan National Park and nationally, through the GEF/UNDP project “*Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management*” (2014-2018), it is executed in partnership with WCS and MAIL.
- Activities under Objective 1 aiming at controlling (1.1.) illegal hunting and trade, developing (1.5.) human needs/community engagement in conservation and improving (1.6.) scientific knowledge about snow leopards have been implemented in partnership with and executed by WCS through the grant “*Saving snow leopards in Afghanistan’s new Wakhan National Park*” (2016-2017) from the National Geographic Society, USA.
- Activities aiming at argali conservation such as proposed Objective 1 aiming at controlling (1.1) illegal hunting and trade, supporting (1.3) good governance of natural resource management/policy and legislation, (1.5) human needs/community engagement in conservation, (1.6) scientific knowledge, and (1.7) transboundary cooperation, controlling disease threat (not-listed in the POW); as well as under Objective 2 are currently implemented in the Wakhan National in partnership with and executed by WCS, through the grant “*Transboundary Conservation of Mountain Monarchs in Afghanistan and Pakistan*” (2017-2020) from *Fondation Segré*, Switzerland.

2. Please name your Government’s priorities for conservation action on the CAMI species occurring in your country (name 3-5 priorities). Which objectives on CAMI POW do they address?

Snow leopard and argali

The priorities for conservation action for these two species fall under Objective 1, Issue 1.1. Illegal hunting and trade; 1.5. Human needs/community engagement in conservation; 1.6. Scientific knowledge, Objective 2, Issue 2.1. Snow leopard and argali, and Objective 4, Issue 4.2 Funding implementation. It is critical for the survival of these two species in Afghanistan to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of enforcement personnel to counteract illegal hunting and trade at local and national levels, to engage armed authorities in better cooperation and deter them from any attempt to hunt or trade; promote best practice methods to achieve these objectives, and secure the necessary resources to achieve sustainability of protection system in place. It is also very important to engage local communities in all aspect of conservation actions, improve the functionality and effectiveness of existing community institutions, promote local development and sustainable livelihoods compatible with conservation, and support science-based conservation actions. Under Objective 2 we should continue on-going the conservation efforts aligned with those specified in the GSLEP/NSLEPS and Argali Single-Species Action Plan and improve our collaboration with China, Pakistan and Tajikistan. Finally we will continue promote co-funding, use national environmental funds to the benefit of CAMI species and explore new funding options.

Goitered gazelle, Chinkara, Bukhara deer

Considering the current difficulties to access the distribution range of these species in Afghanistan, the key priority falls under Objective 1, Issue 1.6. Scientific knowledge. The priority is to understand better the status of these species, develop simple indicators of presence to evaluate their distribution range, conduct threat and gap analysis whenever possible and then initiate conservation management plans.

3. Are you aware of any emergencies or urgent threats currently affecting CAMI species in your country or which are very likely to affect the CAMI species in your country in the near future (extreme weather conditions, disease outbreaks, infrastructure plans, ongoing construction, mining, changes in legislation etc.)?

Because of the insecurity conditions and the difficulties in accessing parts of the distribution range of a number of CAMI species it is very difficult to assess the level of threats and their urgency. However, it is speculated that because of lack of law enforcement and some level of food insecurity in these areas hunting may be an on-going very significant threat for these species. The Wakhan National Park which hosts the only population of argali and probably the largest population of snow leopards in Afghanistan faces a number of new threats which need to be monitored:

- *Disease:* In the context of the emergence of the livestock-born 'Peste des Petits Ruminants' in Central Asia, this disease is threatening the fragile populations of wild ungulates in Wakhan including the argali. As part of a national control plan the government has initiated a large-scale prevention campaign that resulted in the vaccination of more than half of the sheep and goat population in Wakhan in 2017. Seconded by ngo partners working more specifically at the livestock-wildlife interface in the area, ca. 8,000 sheep and goat have also been vaccinated in areas of highest transmission risk to wildlife. Additional vaccination efforts in these risk areas are urgently needed.
- *Increase in security apparatus in Wakhan National Park:* As part of a legitimate effort to secure the international borders, Afghanistan and China are collaborating in expanding

the presence of border security forces in the Little Pamir of Wakhan National Park. A priority is to expand the presence of wildlife guards in this part of the park and to implement awareness campaigns within local and provincial military forces on the protected status of a number of wildlife species in the area and particularly the snow leopard, argali, ibex and bear.

4. Please identify 3 major challenges that make implementation of CMS and CAMI difficult in your country.

- **Competing priorities:** Afghanistan is emerging from decades of conflict that have had a profound impact on the society, economy and governmental institutions, which all require urgent attention. In such circumstances, it is difficult for the government of Afghanistan to allocate the necessary resources to build the required internal systems and intergovernmental synergies to implement the CMS and POW of CAMI fully, even though environmental protection is of key concern to the government and to the people of Afghanistan.
- **Professional capacity:** For the reasons mentioned above, the professional capacity of many staff of the main stakeholders involved in the POW of CAMI remains relatively low, although it is improving steadily. Without good professional capacity the level of achievement of many POW activities will remain sub-optimal and will lack sustainability. The first post-conflict PhD in conservation biology is expected to come into action in the country in 2020.
- **Chronic insecurity:** Unfortunately, in many areas where CAMI species are found it is still very difficult to even carry out basic surveys and impossible to implement comprehensive conservation activities. This is particularly relevant since 2008-2009 for the goitered gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*), the Chinkara (*Gazella bennettii*) and the Asiatic cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*) in the west and southwest of the country, and since 2014-2015 for the Bukhara deer (*Cervus elaphus yarkandensis*) in northern provinces of Takhar and Kunduz, along the middle course of the Amu Darya River. Without a secure access to these areas very limited conservation work can be done for these species in Afghanistan.

5. If possible, provide recommendation(s) for CMS (or other relevant stakeholders) to promote implementation of CAMI and thus conservation of the respective species in your country.

Based on the POW document:

Activity 1.4.6. Create a 'best practice' policy guide for issues that affect migratory and transboundary species in CAMI countries (*and support its translation in Dari and Pashto for Afghanistan*).

Activity 1.7.5. Strengthen transboundary communication, specifically: a) conduct a communication gap analysis, b) identify the best ways to communicate in order to promote action, and c) identify and increase understanding of the nuances in terms of culture, language and political settings in the different countries in order to communicate correctly. *In the case of Afghanistan this would be relevant for communication on CAMI species with Tajikistan, Pakistan and Iran. Ideally including also China, although the country is not Party to CMS.*

3.1.1. Identify and establish mechanisms for data and knowledge storage and sharing within the CAMI. *Has such central repository system been developed recently by CMS?*

- . 4.1.7. Establish transboundary working groups to maintain progress and communication between CMS meetings/COPs (*In the case of transboundary snow leopard-argali region it would include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and non-Party China, and Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan for CAMI species of the southwest region, cheetah, chinkara, wild ass, goitered gazelle*).