A new tool to assist protected areas in delivering multiple benefits

“The Green List is a voluntary standard that ensures that all certified sites fulfill three major criteria: good governance, effective management for clear benefits, and sound design and planning.”

In West Asia, a total of 242 protected areas have been designated as part of ongoing schemes to protect landscapes and biodiversity all over the region. Saudi Arabia leads the other West Asian countries in the number of designated (existing & future) sites, followed by Jordan and Kuwait. In 2006, the area of protected areas in West Asia amounted to 87,863,926 hectares, or less than %10 of the total land area.

Well-governed, well-designed and well-managed protected areas are our most effective tool for conserving nature, in doing so providing also a critical amount of ecological, socio-economic, cultural and spiritual benefits.

In West Asia, IUCN has supported the development of the Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas since 2014. The Green List initiative aims to encourage, achieve, and promote effective, equitable and successful protected areas in all partner countries and jurisdictions.

The overarching objective of the IUCN Green List is to increase the number of protected areas that deliver successful conservation outcomes through effective and equitable governance and management. Protected areas found eligible to access the Green List must demonstrate that best standards for effective management are applied on site to ensure the delivery of the best ecological, socio-economic, cultural and spiritual benefits for people and the environment.

In West Asia, a group of 13 experts with specialist knowledge in biodiversity and protected area management provides independent and professional evaluations of the applications submitted by protected areas to appear on the Green List.

Currently, 13 protected areas from Jordan, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, Palestine and Egypt are engaged in the green listing process, with hopefully more to follow to reach the target of 50 protected areas green listed in West Asia by 2020.

A model of trust building: private sector and communities tackling environmental issues

IUCN in Jordan and AES Levant Holdings BV Jordan are working together to engage stakeholders in seeking solutions to environmental issues affecting the area to the east of the capital Amman. This project was commissioned by the authorities to set a model encouraging other private companies to assist affected communities with environmental planning on a local level.

The project brings together AES, governmental institutions, environmental experts and local communities in one of its kind initiatives. Through consultations stakeholders have identified their environmental priorities and the needs of local people, including the need for establishing a native seedling nursery and a veterinary clinic and agriculture extension, conducting building capacities workshops, devising an environmental community action plan and monitoring system for the area. All the initiatives intend to increase local community participation and contribution to finding nature-based solutions to the environmental challenges faced by the area.

One success factor is to gather innovative ideas for partnership opportunities. For example, Al-Khashafeh community seedling nursery was established with contribution from the Sustainable Environment and Economic Development (SEED) Project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented through the United States Forest Service (USFS). The nursery runs in full capacity with eight trained women and men from the community to propagate native rangeland species, with a production capacity of 80,000 seedlings / season, ensuring critically-needed employment opportunities and helping with combating desertification. The seedlings are used for local community gardens, the restoration of ecosystems in Badia, and for landscaping by the Amman Greater Municipality.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, a veterinary clinic and agricultural extension center was established to support around 350 livestock owners and 350 farmers, including women working in agricultural processing. The range of services offered includes: animal disease prevention, control and treatment, surgical operations, training veterinarian and advising owners on care of their livestock and newborns, in addition to general agricultural extension and capacity building in food processing.

This project demonstrates that combating desertification and restoring ecosystems can be achieved through multi-stakeholder partnerships, from global businesses to local communities, all in one joint effort towards investing in conservation and supporting livelihoods.

IUCN Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) was established in 2004 to support Members and implement projects in 13 countries, including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Yemen and Iran in addition to the Gulf countries including Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The office aims to address the major critical issues facing the region, including:
- Land degradation, aridity and desertification
- Unsustainable water extraction and use
- Threats to sensitive marine ecosystems, such as pollution and invasive species
- Biodiversity and habitat loss leading to ecosystem loss and species extinction

* Facts and figures as of October 2018
IUCN is a membership union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations.

The Union provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together. Created in 1948, IUCN has evolved into the world’s largest and most diverse environmental network. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its 1,300 Member organisations and the input of more than 10,000 experts. These include states and government agencies, NGOs, scientific and academic institutions and business associations.

IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

IUCN’s expertise and extensive network provide a solid foundation for a large and diverse portfolio of conservation projects around the world. Combining the latest science with the traditional knowledge of local communities, these projects work to reverse habitat loss, restore ecosystems and improve people’s well-being. They also produce a wealth of data and information which feeds into IUCN’s analytical capacity.

By joining IUCN, Members benefit from IUCN’s scientific credibility, its unsurpassed knowledge base and convening power, extensive networking opportunities and access to high-level political, economic and social decision making.

Being a Member of IUCN enables them to both advance their own cause and to strengthen common action in overcoming barriers to a sustainable future.

IUCN ROWA aims to strengthen its work on landscape forest restoration to secure environmental and social benefits and adapt better to climate change.

All projects include gender mainstreaming as a key element to achieve higher impacts in natural resource management.

Over the years, IUCN has been involved in a wide range of UN environmental policy events. The Office has collaborated with many government institutions to help update national policies, strategies and action plans related to the environment, including drafting gender policies and mainstreaming environmental and social safeguards in programmes and projects.

Major ongoing projects at IUCN ROWA:

- The Mena Region Initiative as a model of NEXUS Approach and Renewable Energy Technologies (MINARET), funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), aims at strengthening the regional cooperation in the MENA region by implementing the NEXUS Approach and integrating it into renewable energy technologies at the municipal level in Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon in order to mitigate climate change impacts and combat poverty.
- The Initial Steps for Establishment of the National Protected Areas Network in Iraq, funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF) and UNEnvironment, ensures improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas in Iraq as a means to conserve biodiversity and sustainable use in the country.
- Healthy Ecosystems for Rangeland Development (HERD), funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF), builds on the sustainable management of pastoral rangelands for the provision of ecosystem services and protection of biodiversity.
- The Stakeholders’ Engagement and Natural Resources Assessment for AES in East Amman, funded by AES Levant Holdings BV Jordan, attempts to achieve global environmental standards through stakeholders’ engagement and capacity building.

West Asia Membership Growth:

235 volunteer commission experts
13 countries
73 members

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