



“Building capacity and resilience within the conservation sector in Tajikistan”

- This project has been funded by the UK government's Darwin Initiative –

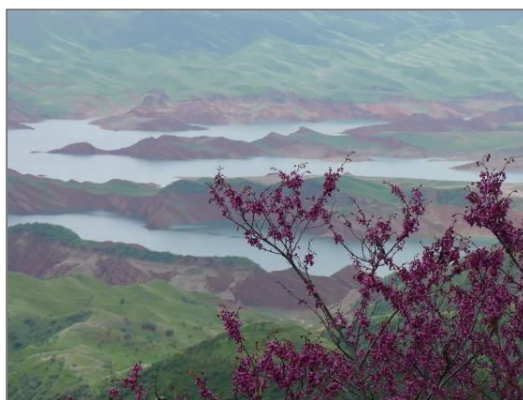


## Developing a National Biodiversity Conservation Training Programme for Tajikistan

### Background & Rationale

Tajikistan is a mountainous country with a rich landscape, wildlife and culture. Its biological richness is equivalent to Kazakhstan, a country 20 times its size. However this rich natural heritage is now under severe threat. Habitat fragmentation and degradation, soil erosion, unsustainable natural resource use, including the extensive cutting of trees and bushes and poaching, all contribute to biodiversity loss.

Discussion with a wide range of state and non-state conservation actors reveal that whilst 21.6% of the country is designated, the majority of protected areas are “paper parks” with little conservation on-the-ground. Protected areas, statutory conservation agencies and academic institutions are under-funded, under-resourced and in urgent need of training and capacity support. The young NGO sector is predominantly focused on development issues and lacks the skills to complement the development of a modern natural resource management sector.



*Nurek Reservoir in spring*

The conservation sector needs to ‘modernise’ its skills to develop approaches that are adaptive, inclusive and address a range of development and conservation needs. Opportunities also need to be found to allow the State and NGOs to work together to raise awareness and engage stakeholders and local communities in the process of addressing these issues.

Conservation staff are generally well educated in disciplines including biology, ecology, forestry and agriculture. However, curricula have not kept pace with the changing world. New methodologies and approaches to biodiversity conservation, community engagement participatory approaches and sustainable development have not been incorporated into curricula. Current students will enter the conservation sector and some will become the decision-makers and leaders of the future, thus they require the skills to manage conservation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The development and provision of a national conservation training programme will provide an opportunity to address the deficit in knowledge and skills. Moreover, it will allow for students, state and NGO employees to come together in an environment that is conducive to building trust and developing solutions to many of Tajikistan’s conservation problems.

The need for a national training programme was identified in discussions, during visits to Tajikistan in 2006. A scoping trip, funded by Darwin Initiative, took place in July – August 2007 when meetings were held with a wide range of stakeholders including the National Biodiversity and Biosafety Centre (NBBC), National Academy of Sciences (NAS), UNDP, various programmes of the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), Institute for Professional Development (IPD), University of Central Asia (UCA), the State Department of Natural Protected Areas and national NGOs. During these meetings, information was shared, advice sought, and the roles of the different potential project partners discussed. The structure of the training programme was drafted; the



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potential contributions of the different host institutions considered; the likely topics of the modules selected; and the possible sources of national specialists and trainers identified.

It was very clear from these discussions in-country that there is a real need for high quality training in conservation in Tajikistan and it will have a real impact on conservation on the ground.

FFI has since been successful in obtaining funding for a three year project from Defra's Darwin Initiative – which draws on the wealth of biodiversity expertise within the UK to help protect and enhance biodiversity around the world.

### Project Objective

To improve conservation impact in Tajikistan by increasing the capacity of current and future conservation professionals through establishing a conservation skills training programme and promoting applied conservation research.

### Expected outputs

1. Accredited teaching modules on modern conservation policy and practice developed and being delivered by host country trainers and institutions.
2. Government and NGO staff better able to deliver conservation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
3. Improved linkages between state and NGO conservation sectors.
4. Relevant conservation field research undertaken and disseminated by young Tajik researchers.



*Shurabad valley*

### Partners

#### International Centre for Protected Landscapes (ICPL), UK

ICPL will provide technical input and support to the development of the training courses and programme structure. ICPL will also provide the UK expertise to develop and deliver some training modules, including mentoring of the host country specialists to become trainers for these courses.

#### University of Central Asia (UCA) and Institute for Professional Development (IPD), Khorog

These partners will contribute a working structure for training delivery, the necessary administration and marketing back-up, facilities including classrooms, internet access and a library, teams of training specialists, and strong established relationships with the government and NGO sectors. Whilst both institutions are based in Khorog, they have sister institutes in Dushanbe which will allow us to run courses in both centres.

#### National Academy of Sciences (NAS), Dushanbe

The NAS will provide specialists to contribute to the course content and become national trainers who will work with the UK experts to develop the training modules, ensuring the content is applicable to Tajikistan. The NAS will also play a key role in the research component of the project. The National Biodiversity & Biosafety Centre will also be involved in providing additional specialists whilst presenting a strong link with government. The specialists will work with the international experts in course development and delivery and, once trained, they will be able to deliver the training to others.