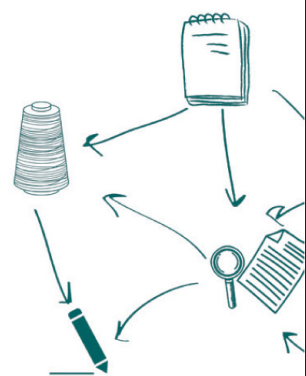
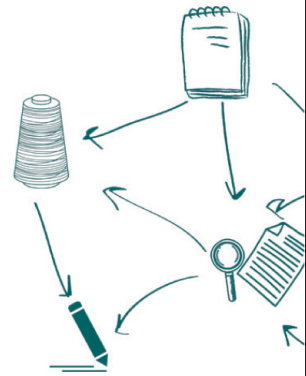
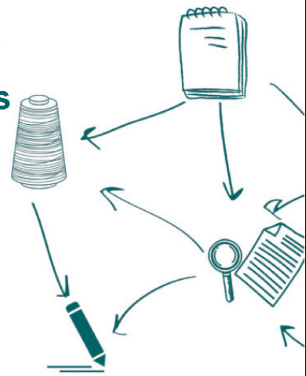
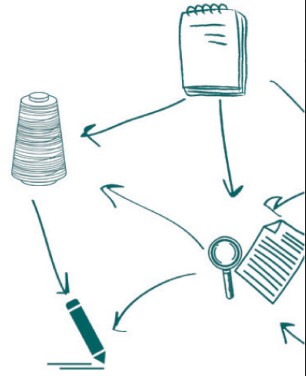
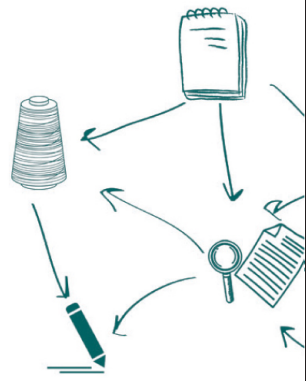


Alternative Livelihood

Narrated by CIWP

A Mechanism for Wise Use and Protection of Wetland Ecosystems



The Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project (CIWP) launched, in 2005, as a joint initiative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to strengthen protection of the country's important wetland sites, principally by introducing improved systems of wetland management, incorporating human activities bearing an influence on the biodiversity. The project selected Lake Urmia, Lake Parishan and the Shadegan Wetland as demonstration sites. In 2013, with a grant provided by the Government of Japan to UNDP, it was scaled up to contribute to the Lake Urmia, from its current critical situation. Since its beginning, the CIWP has attempted to engage local communities in the wetland management. It has also promoted effective reduction water consumption via supporting rural people to learn and apply sustainable agriculture techniques and/or start possible businesses other than agriculture-based livelihood.

The current booklet was developed to reflect the CIWP's efforts in launching eco-friendly livelihood projects and to share its acquired lessons, as experienced in different pilot sites until 2016. The first section briefly explains the necessity to introduce 'alternative livelihood' options to CIWP's stakeholders and beneficiaries. It also clarifies CIWP's objective of initiating alternative livelihood schemes and gives an account of opportunities and forces for and against such initiatives in pilot sites.

The second section discusses the term 'alternative livelihood' from a conceptual viewpoint by reviewing the literature on this subject and explains when, how and why this approach was undertaken in recent decades. The reader would, then, learn that there is not a rigid and uniform definition of the term. Yet, most of alternative livelihood projects share a basic feature; i.e. they minimize impacts upon natural resources. In agreement with IUCN, it is discussed that 'profitability is not the only factor. Attitudes to risk, access to assets, vulnerability and institutional influences all affect the way people make decisions. As a result, the concept of alternatives becomes much more complex' (Ireland, 2004). Additionally, importance of 'people' in natural resources management is explained and the need for community-led interventions is also elaborated. Finally, the relationship between poverty alleviation strategies and conservation of natural resources is described and concluded that increase in household income through diversification of livelihood options may not necessarily protect natural resources.

The third section gives certain details of several case studies, at international and national levels. A selective of good practices to support and improve livelihoods as well as to ensure conservation of natural resources, especially wetland ecosystems, was collected from different sources. Namely, a brief description of projects such as ‘Mariculture of Fish’ Project in Komodo National Park in Indonesia, ‘Reviving Sanjiang Plain Wetlands’ in Heilongjiang Province in China, ‘Capacity Building for Local NGOs and Alternative Livelihoods Programme for Key Wetlands’ in Kostanay Region in Kazakhstan, and ‘Restoration of Mangrove Forests’ in Senegal is given in this section. The Iranian experiences that are elaborated in this section include contribution of other joints projects of UNDP/GEF and the Iranian government to modeling less ecologically harmful economic activities in rural areas in the past decade. To be precise, some relevant details of Carbon Sequestration Project (CSP) and MENARID Project in Iran are explained to show that both projects have emphasized on the sustainability of local people’s economic activities. Furthermore, two more examples are given that highlight how women villagers got involved in economic activities and helped them not only generate income but also protect biodiversity and natural resources of their region. Small Grants Program (SGP) provided financial and technical support to both projects that were implemented by Plan for the Land Society to help local people generate income via alternative means of livelihood in Khar Turan Rural District and by Avaye –Tabiate-Paydar Institute to promote ecotourism in Qeshm Island.

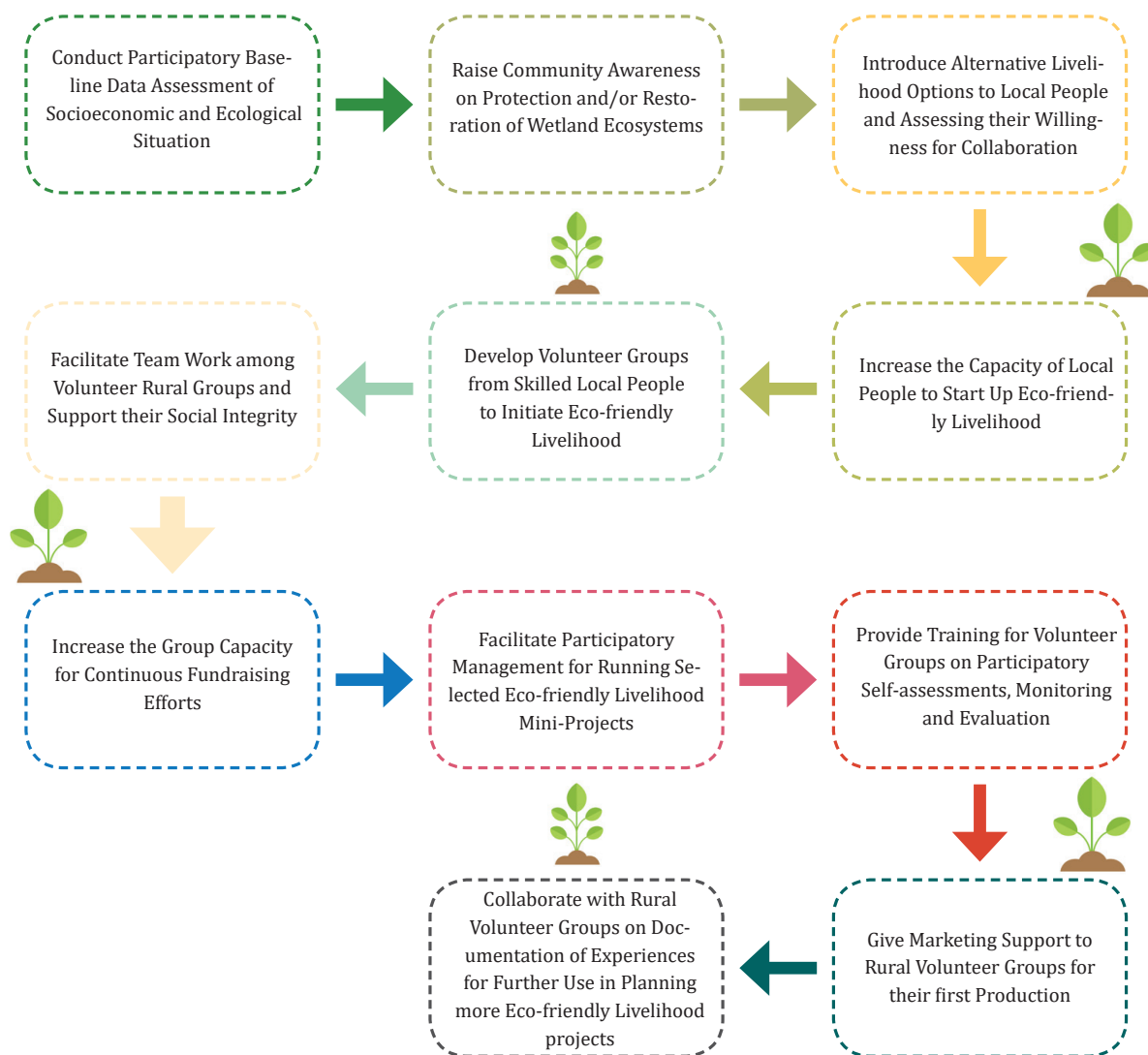
The fourth section gives details of actions undertaken by the CIWP to promote alternative livelihood options in its pilot sites. These actions are categorized in two levels, each with a different object; at institutional level, CIWP aims to introduce the idea of less harmful but still profitable rural economic activities to members of local government and provincial managers during workshops for developing a comprehensive wetland management plan. In addition, it facilitates the formation of a working group within the local management committee that will tackle with socio-economic matters of populations around wetlands. Such a working group is expected to be responsible for giving financial, technical and administrative support to livelihood options that protect wetland ecosystems. For that reason, related parts of management plan for Lake Urmia, Lake Parishan, and Shadegan and Qarah Qeshlaq wetlands are extracted and discussed in more details in this section. Besides, the processes for developing Ecotourism Strategy for Lake Parishan Local Management Plan and Community-based Fisheries Strategy for Shadegan Wetland Local Management are explained

to highlight that ecosystem approach in wetland management should care for people's sustainable livelihood. Finally, a brief account of CIWP primary role in establishing a working group on livelihood within the Joint Secretarial International Projects in Iran is given to emphasize the significance of launching of eco-friendly livelihood projects in a greater scale.

At rural level, CIWP has launched several livelihood projects. All these experiences are described to give a sense of their scope and influence on rural people's livelihood in CIWP pilot sites. It is noteworthy that rural women have generally welcomed CIWP livelihood initiatives more than rural men. This has been the case in most of the pilot sites in West and East Azerbaijan. Another similarity is the tendency of majority of implementing bodies to reframe alternative initiatives and to lay higher emphasis on poverty eradication strategies and rural development goals than wetland ecosystems conservation goals. Among these examples, the project called 'Qarah Qeshlaq Alternative Livelihood Initiative' (in brief words, stands out a more inclusive set of activities. Therefore the project summary report is added to the Appendices section. Section four also includes two more project examples, one of which aimed to model sustainable ecotourism as a tool to improve local people's livelihood for conservation of Mighan Wetland in Markazi Province and another that tried to map opportunities for alternative livelihoods initiatives in Rud-e-Shur, Rud-e-Shirin and Rud-e-Minab Wetland in Hormozgan Province.

The fifth section of the present booklet concludes discussions by describing lessons learned in details, bringing up challenges and providing suggestions for quality improvement livelihood projects in favor of wetland ecosystems conservation. One essential lesson learned is that the success of eco-friendly livelihood initiatives, in the Iranian context, depends on interest and support of local and national stakeholders of CIWP. Given this assumption, the following figure briefly portrays effective ways to implement livelihood initiatives that ensure wetland ecosystems conservation. According to CIWP experience, missing or undermining any one step would lead to unwanted consequences that not only disappoint the community but also harm the process of integrating conservation and rural development goals.

Features of the Most Effectives Ways to Launch Eco-friendly Livelihood Initiatives



CIWP is facing many challenges in launching eco-friendly livelihood initiatives, some of which are categorized as inadequate i) general agreement on the concept of ‘alternative livelihood’ and/or how it should contribute to conservation of wetland ecosystems, ii) gender policy, in terms of similar and/or different roles, responsibilities and needs of men and women in conservation and community management of wetland ecosystems, iii) cross-sectoral coordination among government agencies, and iv) project period to adopt of participatory development approaches for ensuring community

involvement. Across CIWP and its provincial stakeholders and partners, it was agreed that a number of challenges can be reduced by quality improvement projects. Yet, some must be tackled with at higher levels. Hence, a list of specific and general recommendations is given at the end. One suggestion is to modify the name of such initiatives and call them by what they are, in actual fact, up to; i.e. ‘Eco-friendly Livelihood Initiatives’. It is also recommended to increasingly and systematically advocating for ‘Eco-friendly Livelihood Initiatives’ at provincial levels by, for instance, allocating one session to exchange views in this regard at during workshops organized for development of wetland management plans. Another suggestion is to link existing livelihood rural groups as well as CIWP implementing partners to provincial and/or national bodies in charge of promoting ‘green jobs’, ‘green banking’, home-based livelihoods, small/medium enterprises, etc.

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