

## **Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions**

**Date : 24/06/2019**

**CEPF Grant : CEPF-109114**

**Grantee : Noé**

*Empowering Local Community and Stakeholders to Sustainably Manage Skadar lake's  
Freshwater Biodiversity*

**Project location : Albania, Montenegro**

## **Grant Summary**

1. **Grantee organization :**  
Noé
2. **Grant title :**  
*Empowering Local Community and Stakeholders to Sustainably Manage Skadar lake's Freshwater Biodiversity*
3. **Grant number :**  
CEPF-109114
4. **Grant amount (US dollars).**  
165 000 USD
5. **Proposed dates of grant :**  
Start : 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019  
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6. **Countries or territories where project will be undertaken:**  
Albania, Montenegro
7. **Date of preparation of this document.**  
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### **A. Project background**

This project aims at protecting a Mediterranean wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Convention), listed as Important Bird Area (IBA) and Important Plan Area (IPA) : the Skadar lake, the largest lake of the Balkans peninsula, shared between Albania and Montenegro. Through an ecosystem-based approach, the present project will focus on empowering local communities to contribute to effective cross-border management of Skadar lake by promoting participatory management of natural resources and developing sustainable economic opportunities. Fish resources and the Dalmatian pelican, symbol of the current threats impacting Skadar lake, and fish eating bird, will be the central pivot of the project, given its relevance as indicator species but also as emblematic species capable of gathering communities and stakeholders. The Dalmatian pelican has a central role as partner for economic development by the leveraging action it can have on the value of local products and services. Yet, being a very sensitive bird, this species requires low human impact and decreased exploitation of natural resources in Skadar Lake to prosper.

After the implementation of a first phase of the Dalmatian pelican conservation project (#63087), funded by the CEPF, focused on conservation actions targeting this species and the capacity building to local NGOs and management authorities, the present project is focused on building the capacities of local communities and creating greater ownership of their natural heritage for long term sustainable management of Skadar lake's resources. By supporting the development of environment-friendly economic activities and improving participative management of freshwater biodiversity of Skadar lake at cross-border level, the project aims to promote the appropriation of the project by local communities as well as their active participation in the preservation of wetlands.

Noé's project on Skadar lake is built on four complementary components:

1. Empower local communities by promoting participatory management of Skadar lake's biodiversity and developing economic benefits based on the sustainable use of natural resources.
2. Support the eradication of illegal fishing practices threatening freshwater biodiversity, through sensitization and control.
3. Ensuring the sustainability of the model by formalizing a cooperation framework amongst local, national and cross-border stakeholders.
4. Ensure the capacity building of involved local CSOs and the management and monitoring of the project for compliance with expected results.

Building on the results of the first phase of the Dalmatian Pelican Conservation and wetlands management project implemented by Noé with the support of the CEPF and the MAVVA foundation. The present project intends to strengthen Noé's contribution to the long-term sustainability of Skadar lake management and the preservation of the Freshwater biodiversity it shelters by:

- Building the capacities and promoting ownership of local communities,
- Promoting and supporting participatory management of natural resources, including elaboration of zonation, participation of local communities to gardening activities against illegal fishing.
- Fostering cooperation at both local and cross-border levels, through the establishment of platforms gathering the different categories of stake holders.
- Supporting the development of economic opportunities based on biodiversity-friendly practices through trainings, incentives and by creating mechanisms to allow the leverage of value of nature-friendly services and products ("Pelican friendly" label, local fairs).

An important component of the program will be focused on fighting against illegal fishing that poses a very complex problem causing overexploitation of fish stock (disrespect of the fishing ban, fishing in spawning places, huge amount of fish removed) and severe damages to other species and the natural habitats (ie disturbance to nesting birds, destruction of the bottom of the lake), by :

- creating a new participative zonation defining zones where fishing is allowed, prohibited or allowed periodically as well as zones where tourism activities are allowed is developed and materialized
- capacity building of fishermen and fishermen organizations on sustainable fishing practices to limit threats on freshwater biodiversity
- Providing incentives to promote sustainable fishing (marking of boats, providing appropriate nets)
- Organizing and conducting 90 days of joint patrols per year with members of local communities, including representatives of fishermen groups, and rangers to control illegal fishing
- Prepare a set of recommendations for amending fishing regulations and present it to relevant national authorities
- Conduct targeted awareness actions and promote cross border cooperation among fishermen organizations.

## **B. Participatory implementation**

Skadar lake has a high economic importance for local communities with 80 to 85% of local population depending on the use of natural resources of Lake Skadar, and fishing being the primary source of revenue.

Several of the activities above-mentioned, like the implementation of a zonation for fishing and tourism activities and the subsequent implementation of new boat pathways and channeling tourist/fishermen boats away from pelican colonies and other sensitive areas, could represent a potential prevention of access to some parts of the protected area (Skadar Lake National Park) for local people. Ten villages are particularly targeted by the project because they are located in the vicinity of the special nature reserve called « Panceva oka » ("Pelican eyes" in local language). These villages are part of Malesija area or Malesija region and

have already been involved in the first phase of the Dalmatian pelican conservation project and have expressed their desire to be involved in future activities.

As in the first phase, the second phase will not exclude people from accessing the natural resources they depend on, but the access will be more regulated and in accordance with already existing Law. For example, during the first phase of the project, zonation was made for the exclusion perimeter around the pelican colony at Panceva oka. By the local Law, Panceva oka, as a Special Nature Reserve, cannot be entered by fishing or tour boats, and entrance is allowed only for scientific purpose and with a permit. However, with the zonation that was developed by the Natural History Museum together with the local fishermen and the Municipality of Tuzi, local fishermen were not strictly prevented to enter Panceva oka. Instead, as a compromise, boat routes were collected and three boat pathways were defined so that the fishermen could pass through the area, and at a distance that would not cause disturbance to the pelicans. Eventually one main boat pathway was defined and agreed on both by the local community and the management authority, creating a “win-win” situation – pelicans were not disturbed and fishermen could continue their daily routine.

For the detailed zonation that will be defined in the framework of the present project, and in order to prevent any adverse effects on the Pelican colony, particularly sensitive areas, and other key bird and aquatic species, an expert from the Museum with extensive knowledge on the lake, together with expert for fish and local fishermen will provide an expertise to define priority zones most sensitive to human disturbance. This expertise, together with the involvement of local communities, Albanian and Montenegrin partners and the Skadar Lake National Park in 2 consultation workshop specially dedicated to these issues, shall provide information on optimal boat routes that will minimize the anthropogenic influences on these areas. Indeed, the goal of the workshops that will be organized in this sense are : i) to involve communities from the early stages of the project design onwards, ii) to benefit from their knowledge on the lake as well as to identify their practices and potential incentives / brakes to ensure the compliance to the new restriction, and iii) to share local and external best practices and determine local sustainable practices in a participatory way to allow better appropriation and acceptance from local communities.

As an practical example of the expected results of these workshops we will describe the use of routes for tour boats. Currently tour-boats have their own routes - passing through vegetation where propellers from boat engines are constantly cutting the vegetation that tries to close the route, and dispersing the silt deposits on the bottom, and disturbing birds on floating vegetation, even though they are visiting the same touristic spots at Skadar Lake. Zonation will compile these boat routes in to one or few pathways so that the tour operators can continue with their activities, but cause less damage to the birds. Boat routes are best maintained if the boats are constantly using them throughout the year (the only other way to maintain such boat routes being dredging which is very expensive and requires specialized equipment), and this is another reason why few boat routes used by a majority of boats are, in long term, more sustainable, than a lot of personal routes used by just one or two-boats. The creation of few boat routes will help fishermen and tour-boats to reach their destination more easily, and should motivate locals to use them with benefit to both people and nature.

### **C. Criteria for eligibility of affected persons**

Local fishermen, farmers and tourism operators are the main public concerned by the activities of the project. Fishing on Skadar lake has been the only source of income for generations in the Podhum area. The old and traditional fishing practices are mainly abandoned in favor of fishing methods that bring bigger income but also harm the fish stock. Electric power generators, shoreline nets, fishing at fish hibernation sites in winter, and during spawning season are some of the methods that are responsible for the diminishing fish stock. All these activities are illegal by national law.

In addition to activities on water, the use of paths and trails, which go through the special reserves, are also in contradiction with the law. Usage of these paths and trails bring the physical harm to the nature and disturbance to the wildlife inhabiting the shoreline.

Hunting within the Park is illegal. Poaching seems to occur and has negative impact on birds' populations (including pelicans due to disturbance, although not directly targeted). The poachers are not only locals but also hunters that come from Albania on their own accord, or foreign hunters brought by the locals for profit.

Tourist activities are allowed but not in all parts of the lake. For example Special Reserve Panceva oka is often targeted by tourist boats because of its ornithological values, even though the entrance there is strictly prohibited. The presence of tourists is rising almost exponentially and the tourism industry is not yet managed, resulting in disturbance and harm to bird colonies, especially during nesting period.

All these activities are illegal both by Montenegrin and Albanian law. Prohibiting activities such as illegal fishing, hunting and the usage of the trails and paths will only enforce the existing local legislation, and bring better protection to Skadar lake. The project will support the creation of joint patrols between the ranger services and volunteers to regulate the entrance to the Special Reserve Panceva oka according to adopted regulations, and therefore only support the managing institutions of the Skadar lake. This support is needed as there is currently a low number of prosecuted cases on the Lake, mainly caused by the limitations in the equipment and control for rangers. The project will target ranger services and their efficiency, through actions to improve their legal prerogatives to fight illegal fishing and hunting.

By developing a detailed zonation and pathways the project will lead fishermen and tour operators away from the zones most sensitive to human disturbance and decrease the incidents of damage to local species and their habitats. This will be done via pathways that will concentrate the boats to just one or several routes that are distant enough from the sensitive areas. The pathways therefore does not harm the natural habitat of the Lake, but also provides the local population with a year-round accessible route of traveling on open water. The position to be selected for the boat pathway should encourage the locals to use it for their own benefit. To ensure the boat pathway will be used in such way, we will decide upon its final position based on the needs and propositions given by the locals themselves.

Providing amendments to the Management plan of National Park Skadar lake for the inclusion of a new detailed zonation of Skadar lake, in particular Panceva oka – that do not have any specific drawn borders, will help ensure better respect towards conservation laws and clear map of the prohibited areas that will be available to the locals. The zonation set as a part of this project is a long expected addition to the management plan of NP Skadar Lake. Current zonation used is very simplistic and is missing defined boat pathways to be used by the fishermen or tourist boats. This zonation will help improve the current situation but with respect to local people and with minimal influence to their daily routine. This approach goes along with the “cooperation with local community” chapters of the Management plan itself that stresses the need to develop rules and regulations respecting peoples tradition and sources of income.

The project might therefore impact mostly :

- Hunters and poachers, which will not be considered as affected persons. The hunting activities are prohibited and do not represent a livelihood activity
- Fishermen : only professional fishermen will be considered as affected (as opposed to leisure fishing). Restrictions to illegal, unsustainable fishing methods (electric fishing, fishing during spawning season or on hibernation sites etc.), that are enforced by national authorities, will not be considered to determine affected persons – as these methods are generally used to maximize

profits in relation with criminal groups (while fishermen could ensure livelihood with legal fishing activities).

- No restriction of access is expected to affect farmers - the project will mostly promote best practices
- Tourist operators might be affected by some restriction of access (zonation for boat tours), but project expects to work on best practices and promote tourism, and economic impact on tourist operators is expected to be positive.

#### **D. Measures to assist the affected persons**

As described earlier, the consultations and workshops with local communities will determine the best way to ensure continuance of their activities, but in the respect of the local laws and regulations.

Regarding the fishermen, the capacity building activities, the setting up of incentives for fishermen willing to change their practices, as well as the creation of a label to add value to sustainable local products and services, are all measures meant to support the transition to a more sustainable economic model for fishing, that will ensure livelihoods for future generations.

In situations where some fishermen's traditional boat routes will be found significantly farther than the proposed, and accepted route, a model will be proposed to the NP Skadar Lake, for these fishermen to be granted cheaper fishing permits to compensate for the losses of fuel caused by the detour as an additional stimulation.

Tourism will provide additional incomes for local communities impacted. The willingness to create a "Pelican friendly" label for products and services is planned in the framework of the project, inspired from the Cambodian Ibis rice or the "Park brand" (marque "esprit Parc") from the Regional Natural parks network in France, to add value to local, sustainable products backed up by their origin (National park).

For tour boats no additional losses are expected. Tour boats will continue to have the same starting and return points and even the same routes, which will just be uniform for all and slightly modified to keep distance from the sensitive areas such as bird colonies or roosting places. It is expected that, due to increase of distance allowed to the most sensitive areas of the lake, some boat-tours will be even shorter. This will not impact their income as the time spent on water can remain the same, and visit to tourist spots will remain the same.

#### **E. Conflict resolution and complaint mechanism.**

Prior to the implementation of each of the project activities, the beneficiaries of the project will be informed of the objectives and activities of the project and of the existence of a grievance mechanism. Moreover, the printing budget provided for every workshop will allow to distribute a copy of one page presentation of the project presenting also the grievance mechanism.

An awareness-raising component has been included in this project, through tight set of consultations and workshops, to ensure that local communities have participated and are aware of the location and different delimitations of the protected area, the buffer zone (area of restricted access inside the protected area) and the implications of the zonation of this area of restricted access, on their natural resource use. Moreover, the project contemplates the definition of this zonation in a map and its materialization on water through info-tables.

As already described, Noé will facilitate discussions and meetings between stakeholders and local communities (see section B). The involvement of local communities in the implementation of the project and continuous communication and presence of the team in the field will ensure fewer grievances.

Upon receipt of a grievance, Noé and project partners will inform the CEPF implementation team and hold additional meetings with local communities or individuals, to discuss the issues and develop amicable solutions, which will be implemented by the project. We will share all grievances – and a proposed response – with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days. If the claimant is not satisfied following the response, they may submit the grievance directly to the CEPF Executive Director at [cepfexecutive@conservation.org](mailto:cepfexecutive@conservation.org) or by surface mail. If the claimant is not satisfied with the response from the CEPF Executive Director, they may submit the grievance to the World Bank at the local World Bank office. The dedicated email account for grievances can be indicated in the different communication and sensitization tools that will be developed in the framework of the project.

The conflicts that might occur are with illegal fishermen or poachers and largely remain unprocessed because of the current legal status of the rangers - they are not empowered to produce legal suits without the involvement of police. In such cases, they are also requested to provide personal data and evidence against the poachers, but in most cases they are not equipped nor instructed to acquire those. This could be solved either by legally empowering the rangers, building much better connection with the police and with local fishermen, this is an activity foreseen in the project.

## **F. Implementation Arrangements**

Management authorities of the lake on both Montenegrin and Albanian sides will be directly involved in the project implementation (patrolling, zonation, concertation framework, trainings). Other administrative authorities shall also be targeted such as the Ministry for sustainable development and tourism in Montenegro and municipalities (such as the town of Tuzi for instance).

Indeed, the program plans to contribute to the integration of environmental issues in local political and economic decision making by sensitizing stakeholders to environmental issues via awareness and communication campaigns among local population and institutions.

Noé is responsible for overall management of the project, but will require close cooperation with local partners and international institutions cited below.

**The Center for Protection and Research of Birds of Montenegro (CPRB / CZIP in Montenegrin)**, a Montenegrin association focusing on birds, is in charge of carrying out scientific monitoring and awareness-raising campaigns around Skadar while creating tourism activities.

**The Management Authority of Skadar Lake National Park** will receive technical training to ensure the implementation of conservation activities in the Park and will be supported to strengthen patrolling.

**Expert from the Natural History Museum of Montenegro (NHM) cooperating with Living Green NGO** shall be responsible of facilitating the workshops for the zonation as well as to define the map with new zonation.

**Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania (INCA)** will be the main partner on the Montenegrin side regarding trainings and consultations with different categories of stakeholders.