



Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions

Date: 28.09.2018

CEPF Grant 108537:

Grantee: Albanian Ornithological Society

Project Title: Let's Make Divjaka Natural Again!

Project Location: Divjaka-Karavasta National Park (Albania)

Project: Let's Make Divjaka Natural Again!

Applicant: Albanian Ornithological Society

A. Project background

The wetland complex of Divjaka-Karavasta or the National Park of Divjaka-Karavasta is a designated Ramsar Site, an Important Bird and Plant Area, an Emerald Site and finally a Natura 2000 Pilot Site. All the above designations are based on its outstanding biodiversity values and particularly its crucial importance for migrating, wintering and nesting birds. Circa 250 bird species have been registered here so far and among them about 15 Globally Endangered bird species, at least 80 species of the Annex 1 of the Birds Directive and some 5 bird species exceeding the 1% threshold of the biogeographic population.

Despite its outstanding ecological values and subsequently its national and international designations, Divjaka-Karavasta is currently under huge threat from large and unsustainable tourism developments, intensification of fisheries and agriculture as well as looming plans for power plant construction.

Interested stakeholders were never consulted properly and often banned from the information. Both, environmental and socio-economic impacts are hidden and not properly elaborated. Despite the above legal infringements and obvious procedural mistakes, the environmental authorities responsible for the implementation of the legal framework on environmental impact assessment continue to consider the proposal and continue to neglect the opinion of experts and public at large.

The above interventions and investments will have a huge environmental impacts during both construction and operation phase. More particularly there will be:

- Loss of natural habitats,
- Increased erosion and limited sedimentation of the coastal area,
- Degradation of the today natural habitats due to the human use and presence,
- Noise and light pollution,
- Increased eutrophication of the lagoon waters,
- High building barrier effects on migrating waterbirds,
- Increased levels of human disturbance *and*
- Degradation of local livelihood due to the loss of natural heritage.

The intervention to protect the biodiversity in Divjaka-Karavasta National Park is crucial because if the foreseen unsustainable plans for construction, industrialization and intensification uses occur in this National Park then it will pave the way for the destruction of

other Protected Areas and National Parks in the country, as for any investor the protected areas are the most attractive places for development.

Considering the threats that Divjaka-Karavasta is now facing, the proposal aims to conserve and better protect the globally important biodiversity of Divjaka-Karavasta National Park through ensuring the sustainability of the decision-making by involving local communities in conservation actions and by stimulating alternative livelihood projects in order to reduce the pressure upon natural resources.

The proposal has one conservation Goal: Advocate for the Protection of the Natural Integrity of the Divjaka-Karavasta National Park and ensure decision-making that supports sustainable models for the development of the local economy.

In order to achieve this goal, the project would undertake several activities falling under four project components:

Component 1: Preparatory actions, investigation, identification, analysis, study, assess and calculation of proposal impacts on development of environment, economy, social, historical heritage and cultural heritage.

Component 2: The National Coalition of Civil Society Organizations and other stakeholders engage proactively and advocate for policies and decision making sustainable use of natural resources of National Parks.

Component 3: Build a great co-operation with the public at large and particularly with local community through involvement on monitoring, conservation actions as well as engagement to improve the status of different bird species and their critical habitats.

Component 4: A comprehensive public campaign to raise awareness on the importance and values of the Protected Areas and the threats posed by the implementation of different urbanization and destructive plans.

Component 5: Project management, capacity building and strengthening

B. Participatory implementation

Considering the national and local importance of Divjaka-Karavasta National Park in terms of biodiversity and local tourism economy, the implementation of the project activities will take a participatory approach both at local and at national level.

This is foreseen in many project activities:

1. The identification, description, and appropriate assessment of the impacts of the project “Divjake Resort Albania” includes consultations with stakeholder groups, reporting and spreading of information. Consultation will take place at both local and national level.

2. Periodic meetings will be conducted with representatives from different stakeholders that operate within and outside of the administrative territory of the Divjaka Municipality. The main purpose of these meetings is to consult and discuss the negative impacts of recent investments expected to be implemented within the territory of the Divjaka–Karavasta National Park.
3. The assessment on the existing and potential resources will deliver a guide on diversified short, medium and long term tourism products based on the diversification of product types such as Bird watching, Agro tourism, Fishing, Gastronomy and the promotion of local products. The development of such products would serve at diversifying the local economy and ease the pressure upon natural resources.
4. The formalizing of the coalition for Protected Areas would look also for locally based partners who could engage in local activities.
5. Project partners will organise and hold a two day international workshop focusing on the conservation of Divjaka-Karavasta National Park and other Sites of Important Ecological Interest. The workshop will also focus on exploring of opportunities and best practices to maximize funding in outdoor-oriented tourism and on promotion of the long-term public-private partnerships which provides benefits to the community, people, wildlife and habitats.
6. AOS, along with various local stakeholders and volunteers, will engage in periodic monitoring of nesting colonies such as Dalmatian Pelican, Heron, Terns and other species. Monitoring activities such would field training for locals involved and would create thus a local group able to undertake such activity in a periodical way.
7. In order to increase connection among local people and natural resources the project would involve local communities in small scale conservation actions that give pride to the entire community. Such actions include monitoring and conservation of flagship species, rehabilitation of tourism trails, participation in a conservation camp in Divjaka-Karavasta National Park, exhibitions in Divjaka to attract media and public attention the values of the National Park and several celebrations in Divjaka-Karavasta.

All above activities and events would generate discussions with local communities on local concerns. Benefits and constraints of local economy in protected areas will be thoroughly discussed.

The above process will develop in a climate where the authority of Protected Areas has been widely restored among local communities particularly during the last five years.

The creation of National Administration for Protected Areas has given a new impetus and this is especially felt in Divjaka-Karavasta National Park. The Regional Authority for Protected Areas in Fieri Region has been strengthened in its capacities and its role in implementing the legislation on Protected Areas. The hard work undertaken in continuous cooperation with local communities has ensured:

- A drastic decrease in poaching,
- A drastic decrease in illegal logging,
- Control of leisure activities in biodiversity sensitive areas,
- No new cases of illegal constructions *and*
- Restricted access to subzones of specific biodiversity importance.

C. Criteria for eligibility of affected persons

Activities to be implemented in the frame of the project include restricted access in an area surrounding the Pelicans' island for circa 6 months. The area is indeed designated as such since 2014 and it highly respected by legal fisherman.

Furthermore, the surrounding community is well informed about the restricted access area and the public respects this restriction as they understand the importance of such a conservation action.

Despite the above, illegal fishing is still undergoing in the restricted access area although in very limited scale. As a result, any further restriction is expected to impact the current livelihood of the illegal fisherman.

In order to first reduce and finally avoid the impact of restrictions, the project foresees the following activities:

- Involve affected stakeholders in the revision of the Management Plan for Divjaka-Karavasta National Park;
- Involve affected stakeholders in the consultations for the production of the guide manifest for the diversification of the tourism sector;
- Involve and train affected stakeholders in Nature Tourism, Agro-tourism and Cultural tourism, as well as in the consultations for designing packages that combine Nature tourism, Agro-tourism and Cultural tourism.

D. Measures to assist the affected persons

Affected persons, represented in our case by illegal fishermen, will improve their capacities in undertaking alternative tourism activities through the foreseen training,

The guidance on alternative livelihood practices will be concentrated mainly on different tourism opportunities including ecotourism, agro tourism, wildlife photography, cultural and historical tourism.

Opportunities will be explored to share experience and knowledge on alternative livelihood from other similar Protected Areas in Albania where exists positive experience.

This project will offer to the affected persons new jobs opportunities for nature guides, bird watching tours and various types of services such as agricultural tourisms

Besides, the affected persons will benefits indirectly through the community incomes financed through the project funded pilot activities, such as bird watching tours, offer of branded domestic products.

All the above activities will be supported by expertise and private actors in the supply chain who would be invited so that all individuals involved have the opportunity to make better livelihoods, without undergoing illegal activities.

E. Conflict resolution and complaint mechanism

Potential conflicts at the local level look pretty limited as the project is restricting access in areas already respected by the local community. Nevertheless, in order to appease any conflict and AOS will provide to the local community conflict resolution mechanisms.

First point of contact would be the representatives of AOS which have excellent contacts with the local community. Besides AOS social networks accept and try to resolve immediately any type of compliance regarding its activities.

Project partners would undertake their activities in close contact with the administration for protected areas. This public institution, in accordance with the legal framework on public institutions recognizes both the administrative and the judiciary complain forms.

One important institution over the local administration for protected areas is the Management Committee of the National Park, a body responsible for the supervision of the implementation of the protected area's management plan. If a project activity would be in conflict with the existing management plan, than the Management Committee could intervene nearby the local administration to ensure the correct implementation of the management plan.

In addition, contact information of AOS and project partners, the Regional Implementation Team for CEPF (Birdlife International) and the CEPF Grant Director will be provided to the local population.

The dedicated email account for CEPF (cepfexecutive@conservation.org) will be mentioned, for grievances sent by email. Grievances raised by the grantees will be communicated to the

Regional Implementation Team for CEPF (Birdlife International) and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days, together with a proposed response.

F. Implementation Arrangements

The project and its safeguard mechanisms will be implemented by all project partners. AOS will immediately inform its partners on the obligations under the conflict resolution and complaint mechanism. Project partners and AOS will discuss the practical implementation of the suggested mechanisms.

A Monitoring and Evaluation system will be put in place to assess the manner at which project indicators are met. Furthermore, in compliance to the CEPF reporting system, AOS will provide intermediate and final evaluations, analysing and reporting on each deliverable and key indicator.