

Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions

05.02.2019

CEPF Grant MAC-108686

Macedonian Ecological Society

Working together for conservation of national endemic plants in Macedonia

Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia

Grant Summary

1. Grantee organization: Macedonian Ecological Society
2. Grant title: Working together for conservation of national endemic plants in Macedonia
3. Grant number: CEPF-MAC108686: MEDII-SD4
4. Grant amount (US dollars): 81.403
5. Proposed dates of grant: 01.03.2019 – 01.03.2022
6. Countries or territories where project will be undertaken: Republic of Macedonia
7. Date of preparation of this document: 30.10.2018

A. Project background

The Macedonian Ecological Society already has some good experience of almost 10 years work related to wild plants conservation done with community participation. When working on nature and biodiversity conservation projects, continuous work is one of the key actions for success. This current project serves as great opportunity for MES and its local collaborators to continue the actions that lead towards promotion and conservation of plant diversity in Macedonia.

Project sites description

Two areas have been chosen where selected plant species monitoring and other community activities will take place – Dojran Lake KBA (28 km²) and Jablanica Mt. KBA (235 km²). The first has already status of protected area (Monument of Nature, or category III according to IUCN) whereas the second one is still not protected yet some initial activities for its proclamation for National Park have been taken in the recent years. Both areas possess rich biodiversity but unfortunately both miss active management and protection. Or, explained in more details, the site that is actually officially protected (Dojran Lake) is missing active management plan for years, so it can be really categorized as protected by all means of protection. The municipality of Dojran (the nearest town) remains as official management authority for this site. For the current project purposes, we will take into consideration only a very small territory, a locality called Bogdanci, which is also known as the only habitat for *Astragalus physocalyx* in Macedonia. This site has no status of protected area what so ever. Yet, there is a “nice climate” among core group of locals who actively promote the idea of protecting this small site at least as a “national rarity” or some similar category of protection. Pretty similar situation goes for Jablanica Mt., which is lot bigger site than Bogdanci and there is some locally generated movement in form of initiative for proclaiming this area for National Park. The only officially protected area within whole Jablanica Mt. is the locality known as Vevchanski Izvori (13 km²) which is Monument of Nature and the management authority for this site is the nearest municipality – Vevchani.

For the purposes of this project five plant species have been selected to be studied by performing monitoring in order to lineage their population distribution within the chosen areas. Besides the monitoring part which aims at collecting good knowledge on selected species distribution, the project contains parts of collaboration and capacity strengthening, popularization and awareness raising as well as some conservation measures. Once good and accurate data on distribution and habitat status is collected, the information can be used for national purposes such as national red lists, national strategies for biodiversity conservation, local action plans etc.

One of the selected specimen (*Astragalus physocalyx*) is going to be used for collection of seeds that will be saved at the national seed bank.

B. Participatory implementation

A big advantage in regards to this project is the already good established connection with certain local civil societies that work in the field of nature conservation. In general, MES has good coverage of collaborators on a national basis. As an environmental organization with long-term on ground

conservation activities we have established a network of so called Local Conservation Groups (LCGs) which are mostly distributed in the "hot spot" areas where we obtain our ongoing projects. These LCGs are usually NGOs, hunting societies, municipalities, sometimes schools and individuals who are not actually LCG, but are of huge support to our work because they live within the area of investigation and are willing to share all kind of relevant information for our work. Stakeholders that will be included in this project are from different levels in different aspects.

Starting from the top, the Ministry of Environment is one of the stakeholders, then comes the Institute of Biology, Skopje; Botanical Garden in Skopje, National Seed's bank in Skopje, PAs representatives (again, in our case the PAs overlaps with the municipalities of Dojran and Vevchani), local enthusiasts, schools, scientists and students. One of the main stakeholders, part of our LCG network is actually the sub grantee in this project. It is a word of one local CSO within the site that covers the habitat of *Astragalus physocalyx*. In this concern, including one local CSO from Dojransko Ezero KBA as a sub grantee will have a big influence on the popularity of the project as well as the idea of conservation of rare and endemic plants on local level.

Concrete activities that will be covered by the local sub grantee are: being part of the monitoring; develop a report on feasibility and options for protection of sites hosting populations of endangered plants, starting with the *Astragalus* site; data on selected taxa distribution that will contribute towards national legislation concerning species conservation; collection of seeds that will be followed by expert help and requested seed collection techniques and protocols (ex situ conservation); strengthening capacities for plant monitoring among potential volunteers from the area. Besides involvement of local CSO, investing in future botanists by engaging young students who are the next group of stakeholders (raised awareness about values of national plant diversity, promotion of rare and peculiar plants). Local people from the chosen sites, especially youth will be involved in the awareness raising related actions. In a nutshell, several groups of stakeholders will be involved in the project and each of them has its special place in terms of tasks to be performed and support to be given.

C. Criteria for eligibility of affected persons

First of all, it should be noted that the plants that are the focus of this project are not used by the inhabitants of the area – there is no known practices of collecting them for medicinal purpose, for instance. The only possible direct utilization would be for trafficking of rare plants (not known to happen yet). The main threats to the plant population, that will be assessed in details during the project to start plan conservation measures, might come from lack of knowledge leading, for instance, to development of infrastructures or introduction of other bad practices on this very small sites where native populations are present.

On Jablanica KBA it is not expected that the project will affect persons. Having in mind that the planned activities are mainly scientifically related (monitoring of plant taxa, habitat status, threats) no significant direct interaction is expected with some persons. This would be of course different if one of the aims of this project related to this site would have been changing its status into protected, which in our case, is not.

On Dojran Lake KBA we will have similar situation as on Jablanica. The difference here is that within this project MES together with the local sub grantee from Bogdanci will explore options for protection of the site. We do not expect that during the project duration we will receive feedback from the Ministry of the possibly changed protection status this site. The work will be mostly exploratory, with no actual restriction of access occurring during the process. MES and the local partners will ensure a participatory process for exploring protection options based on actual assessment of population size and threats (main activities).

Some farmers who graze their cattle can be spotted within the habitat where the Astragalus is found within Bogdanci site. There is no expected restriction for them at this stage, and they will be associated to the discussion about protection of plant populations. It is possible (to be assessed by project) that grazing practices are actually an important element for the conservation of the plants. If some practices need to be changed, in the long term, it would be done under a collaborative approach and ensuring this has no impact on livelihoods of this people.

The visitors from outside, most often mountaineers, sometimes (but rarely) botanists have open access to both areas and are not considered as affected.

D. Measures to assist the affected persons

The only potentially affected group in the case of this project will be the local cattle breeders in Bogdanci site. Since one of the actions of this project is to only develop a report on feasibility and options for protection of sites hosting populations of endangered plants, starting with the Astragalus site, no concrete measures can be listed to assist the affected persons. Anyhow, in case some future developments follow and this site really becomes protected, then the first measures that should and will be taken are immediate inclusion of all affected and potentially affected persons in order to involve them in the decision making process.

E. Conflict resolution and complaint mechanism

In the case of Dojran Lake KBA (Bogdanci site) the local sub grantee will be the bridge between the possible complaints and MES as main national coordinator of the project. News, events, happenings will be published on a regular basis publically by using existing media, such web sites or social networks. For every possible conflict the claimant will have the chance to contact the local focal point from the chosen KBAs – this will be the municipality representative from Vevcani municipality and representative from the Polymath13 CSO from Bogdanci municipality.

With the start of the project, an introductory explanation will be published via the portals of the above mentioned focal points where among other the announcement will contain:

- email and telephone contact for the grantee organization,
- email and telephone contact for the CEPF RIT (Borut Rubinic) and email of CEPF Grant Director (Pierre Carret),
- Information that if the complaint is not addressed, claimant can contact the CEPF Executive Director at cepfexecutive@conservation.org or by surface mail and that 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

Small boards with this information will also be posted in municipality building where relevant.

F. Implementation Arrangements

MES will perform lot of preparatory activities that will include mainly communications and arrangements of actions planned to take place with this project. This is actually why the timeframe of the project starts in the wintering months so we have enough time to accomplish all this preparatory and detailed planning activities together with the sub grantee, experts and other stakeholders. All points discussed during the meetings will be formulated in “minutes of meetings”. When clear actions are agreed upon, the final plan will be developed, integrating the needs of affected people as well as the agreed upon actions.

The above will be reported regularly to CEPF as part of the semi-annual performance reports.