

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

14 February 2021

CEPF Grant 111385

Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon

***Promote the Conservation of Biodiversity and Traditional Land-use Practices at the
Socio-ecological Landscape of Upper Beirut River Valley***

Lebanon

Grant Summary

1. **Grantee organization:** Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon
2. **Grant title:** Promote the Conservation of Biodiversity and Traditional Land-use Practices at the Socio-ecological Landscape of Upper Beirut River Valley
3. **Grant number:** 111385
4. **Grant amount (US dollars):** 150,000
5. **Proposed dates of grant:** 01 March 2021 – 31 August 2022
6. **Countries or territories where project will be undertaken:** Lebanon
7. **Date of preparation of this document.** February 14, 2021

8. **Introduction:** This section will briefly describe the project including design elements and potential social and environmental issues. Where possible, include maps of the project site and surrounding area.

The Beirut River Valley, and particularly its upper reaches, is one of the most important locations for bird migration in Lebanon. The site was declared as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) in 2009 (BirdLife International, 2020). It is a deep river valley carved by the Beirut river, extending 20 Km eastwards from the outskirts of Beirut on the western slopes of the Mount Lebanon range.

Higher Metn region constitutes the upper boundary of the IBA/KBA Beirut River Valley. It is the most important bottleneck for migratory soaring birds during autumn migration season, stretching across several municipalities, with no fully-covered formal protection. The two largest villages in the region, Hammana and Ras El Metn, extend for 70% of the length of the Beirut River Valley along the upper northern slopes, representing the borderline between Mount Lebanon green area and the concrete jungle of Beirut and its suburbs. Hammana and Ras el Metn declared their Himas in 2018 and 2019 respectively, and so far, are the only protected areas across the IBA/KBA.

The deterioration and abandonment of cultural land-use practices, related to agricultural, pastoral and forestry systems, which employ traditional knowledge and use natural tools and approaches, have negatively affected the ecological diversity across Higher Metn region. The latter suffers from agricultural intensification, forest fires, illegal killing of birds, waste management deficiencies, negatively impacting habitat and species survival. However, recent threat assessment of the area (IBA program-SPNL) showed that agricultural expansion and intensification is the single most severe threat to the region. Conservation action is needed much needed at Upper Metn Region, namely Hammana and Ras el Metn, for the below bird, plant and reptile species which are dependent on traditional farming and negatively affected by unsustainable agricultural practices.

- Avifauna: Syrian Serin (*Serinus syriacus*; EN) and the European Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*; EN) as well as the migratory raptors.
- Herpetofauna: Lebanese thin-toed gecko (*Mediodactylus amictopholis*; EN) and the Greek tortoise (*Testudo graeca*; VU)
- Flora: Ehrenberg's Marjoram (*Origanum ehrenbergii*; VU) and Malodorous Alkanet (*Alkanna maleolens*; Rare and Endemic)

In fact, minimal conservation has been done in the whole IBA/KBA of Beirut River Valley, while it is important to conserve its habitat and species, which migratory soaring birds depend on. Along with parallel efforts to address other major threats, restoring traditional cultural land-use practices would ensure direct benefit to these species and associated habitats in the area, especially its upper reaches.

The project aims at promoting the conservation of biodiversity in the Upper Beirut River Valley, namely Higher Metn region, through the maintenance of interlinked traditional land-use practices. Through the Hima integrated approach and its various programmes, this project achieves its aim through targeting biodiversity associated with land-use practices, advocating for policy changes, promoting local products, empowering local communities through capacity building, experiential learning, especially women and youth, and livelihoods' improvement.

9. **Summary of Previous Stakeholder Engagement Activities:**

No major activities have been undertaken by the grantee to date. However, couple of meetings and site visits have been conducted between Hammana and Ras el Metn to inspect potential pilot sites as well as farmers' and local community representatives' willingness to participate in the project. Background on the project objectives and activities was communicated to them.

Richard Porter, Birdlife Middle East Advisor, was also consulted to supervise the development and implementation of the biodiversity component of the project, including providing trainings to the team throughout the project lifetime.

10. **Project Stakeholders:**

SPNL will be the implementing partner of the project, further acting as a catalyst with Hammana and Ras El Metn municipalities as well as Higher Metn union to identify key stakeholders potentially contributing to implementing the project activities. This will include governmental agencies and CSOs interested in conserving the IBA/KBA region and its biodiversity. SPNL will be the lead partner responsible for the coordination of the project on technical, administrative and financial basis.

The main project stakeholders are the local communities living in and around the IBA/KBA site. These entities will benefit from the development of their capacities in managing the IBA/ KBA and understanding the linkages between traditional land use practices and biodiversity conservation. While the projects will target farmers, shepherds and women whose livelihoods depend on land-use practices through workshop and awareness session, those involved directly on pilot sites will get on-site guidance and follow-up throughout the lifetime of the project. The project will also target the future generation of the region, the children and youth, through highly-focused hands-on-training to raise their awareness and capacity on biodiversity conservation in production landscapes and engage them in the management and decision-making process of their Hima.

Another target group includes the local decision-makers, municipalities and civil societies, where they will be called to participate in project events, hence raising their awareness on the importance of IBA/KBA eco-systems, and the need to adopt the Hima community-based conservation approach for sustainable management, ensuring it spreads towards neighboring villages for effective and sustainable outcomes protecting the Upper Beirut River Valley in participatory and inclusive manner.

Another partner in the project is the Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME) which will contribute to conducting the Autumn count of migratory raptors, building on the success of 2019 count.

To build the capacity of the team to monitor avifauna, flora and fauna, Richard Porter, Birdlife Middle East Advisor will be consulted for overlooking the implementation of the conservation component of the project and provide trainings to SPNL team members as needed.

11. **Stakeholder Engagement Program:**

For the purpose of education and awareness, members of the local communities in the targeted sites (Youth/ Children/ Farmers/ Shepherds/ Women/Others) will be joining educational and training sessions and workshops to elevate their awareness and knowledge on traditional land-use practices and their connection to biodiversity conservation, with special focus on project's targeted species.

At the level of Ras el Metn and Hammana, Hima management plans will be developed in a participatory manner with local community representatives. Addressing conservation recommendation for trigger species, these plans will be endorsed by the municipalities. In addition, traditional land-use practices will be promoted across different municipalities to encourage their adoption in the region of the IBA/KBA.

Project activities, results and best practices will be disseminated through SPNL media tools and newspapers and also communicated in person through the municipalities and community representatives to local community groups.

As part of building the team's capacity, many meetings and training sessions will be held online with the consultant Richard Porter to ensure effective implementation of the biodiversity component of the project. A proposal will be also submitted to OSME to partner in conducting the Autumn count of migratory raptors.

12. **Consultation methods:**

Various methods will be used for the education and awareness objective of the local community. The educational and capacity building to children and youth will be delivered through interactive educational sessions based on PowerPoint presentations in addition to activities and games. Trainings to local community groups (farmers, women and shepherds) will be delivered through collaborative workshops.

The management plans will be developed in a participatory process with local communities of Hammana and Ras el Metn through workshops and meetings. Besides SPNL, A team of representatives from the local community will be formulated to contribute to the process. The plans will be then presented to the municipality and key stakeholders for endorsement.

Methods will be held with municipalities of the IBA/KBA region and various governmental bodies to promote the project's objectives and results to encourage them to adopt the practices.

13. **Other Engagement Activities:**

As part of developing the Hima management plans, the team will be conducting interviews and focus group meetings with all key stakeholders to identify the problems, their causes and effects. Meetings and training sessions will be held with Richard Porter on monthly basis to overview the implementation of the biodiversity component and raise SPNL's team capacity. A partnership with OSME will also allow to jointly conduct the Autumn count of migratory raptors.

14. **Timetable:** This section will provide a schedule outlining dates and locations when various stakeholder engagement activities, including consultation, disclosure, and partnerships will take place and the date by which such activities will be incorporated into project design.

Event/Stakeholder	Dates	Location (Depending on COVID Lockdown measures)
Educational Sessions- Children	9/2021-10/2021 3/2022-4/2021	Hammana / Ras el Metn municipalities
Capacity Building Workshops-Youth	5/2021-7/2021	Hammana / Ras el Metn municipalities
Workshops-local community	1/2022-3/2022	Hammana / Ras el Metn municipalities
Consultation-Richard Porter	3/2021-8/2022	Virtual
Partnership-OSME	9/2021-10/2022	Hammana / Ras el Metn municipalities
HIMA Management Plans Consultations	3/2021-4/2021	Virtual and Face to Face at Hammana and Ras el Metn
Meetings with municipalities and governmental bodies	5/2021-7/2022	Face to Face meetings at respective locations

15. **Resources and Responsibilities:**

The project manager and coordinator will be responsible for carrying out the project activities, including managing and implementing the Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Financial resources needed to conduct the different educational and training sessions, workshops, meetings and consultations have been allocated from the project budget.

16. **Grievance mechanism:**

The project will provide local communities and other stakeholders with the means by which they may raise a grievance with SPNL, the CEPF Regional Implementation Team, the CEPF Secretariat or the World Bank. Affected local communities will be informed of the objectives of the project and the existence of a grievance mechanism. The email address, telephone number, and physical address of SPNL, the CEPF Regional Implementation Team, and the CEPF Grant Director will be made publicly available through announcements at public announcements, meetings and publications. 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 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.

17. **Monitoring and Reporting:**

Monitoring of project impacts and mitigation programs will not involve any project stakeholders or third-party monitors.