

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

February 2021

CEPF Grant 111666

Istituto Oikos

***Lebanese Biosphere Reserves joint initiative
to revive traditional agricultural practices***

Lebanon

Grant Summary

1. Grantee organization: Istituto Oikos
2. Grant title: *Lebanese Biosphere Reserves joint initiative to revive traditional agricultural practices*
3. Grant number: CEPF-111666
4. Grant amount (US dollars): 149,922.75 USD
5. Proposed dates of grant: 1 May 2021 – 30 April 2022
6. Countries or territories where project will be undertaken: Lebanon
7. Date of preparation of this document: February 2021

8. **Introduction:**

The project aims at reducing the impacts in the Shouf Biosphere Reserves (SBR) and the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve (JMBR) of some practices like:

- adverse intensive agricultural practices (over tillage, abuse of water resources, cultivation of allochthonous or non-native species and not resilient to climate change and not drought-resistant, abuse of pesticides and chemical fertilizers) that cause loss of wild habitats and biodiversity for agricultural lands;
- unsustainable collection of wild edible species (i.e. *Origanum ehrenbergii*), for family self-sustenance and commercial reasons.

Neglecting these threats to biodiversity and not addressing their root causes can have many serious consequences affecting the environment and human wellbeing of the two Biosphere Reserves:

- loss of species dependent on habitats usually maintained over the years thanks to the positive impacts of sustainable traditional anthropic practices in agriculture;
- a serious risk of soil erosion;
- loss of the genetic heritage of the endemic flora due to harvesting in the wild as well as to the introduction of non-native species;
- deforestation;
- a snowball negative impact on the economic and health wellbeing of the local communities.

The project contributes to an inclusive and sustainable economic development initiative of the rural communities living in the SBR and JMBR through an exchange of good practices for the revival and dissemination of traditional, biodiversity-friendly land use and agricultural practices like:

1. Revive the restoration of old dry stone walls in abandoned agricultural terraces and promote the use and the dissemination of sustainable agricultural practices in order to reduce the soil erosion and to preserve the micro-habitats and their dependent species of:

- Reptiles: *Phoenicolacerta kulzeri* (EN) and *Montivipera bornmuelleri* (EN) in both the reserves, *Parvilacerta fraasii* (EN) in the JMBR and *Chalcides guentheri* (VU) in the SBR;
- Birds: *Serinus syriacus* (VU) in the SBR and JMBR
- Plants: *Cyclamen libanoticum* (EN), *Origanum libanoticum* (VU), *Salvia peyronii* (CR) in JMBR; *Origanum ehrenbergii* (VU) and *Malus trilobata* (NT) in JMBR and SBR;

2. Reduce the pressure of the collection in the wild of species such as *Origanum ehrenbergii*, *O. libanoticum*, *Malus trilobata*, *Crataegus monogyna* and *C. azarolus* by promoting their nursery propagation and cultivation or by the propagation and cultivation with traditional and sustainable agricultural practices of heirloom fruit trees such as the local grape varieties “*Obeidi*” and “*Merweh*”, or the local fig varieties, and monitoring the quality and quantity of the biodiversity. In JMBR a pilot

intervention of ex-situ conservation of *Salvia peyronii* (CR) will be applied by sowing seeds in the restored dry stonewalls agricultural terraces.

3. Improve the livelihood of the local communities by increasing the economic sustainability of the goods and services resulting from the cultural and traditional practices as well as by increasing skills of the farmers, women and young people by providing trainings on dry stonewalls restoration, sustainable agricultural practices and ways of transformation of local agricultural produce with high quality standards that will enable them to be sold in local farmer markets also participating in events organized by the fair trade channel.

4. Induce active participatory involvement of the local authorities and the communities living in the development zone of the two Reserves for the replication and dissemination of the proposed traditional practices and inclusion of these biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices in the land use plans of the buffer zones of the two Biosphere Reserves.

The direct beneficiaries of the project are 100 farmers of the SBR and 20 farmers of JMBR, 40 women living in the SBR and 20 women living in the JMBR and 30 young people from the 2 Biosphere Reserves.

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

The proposed initiative is rooted on previous experiences jointly implemented by Istituto Oikos (OI) and Al Shouf Cedar Society (ACS) since 2016 and later also involving the Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa (APJM). Stakeholder engagement activities relevant to this initiative have been therefore implemented in the past years and can be summarized as follows:

- Consultations with local municipalities, cooperatives and individual farmers;
- Meetings conducted in the framework of past projects in the relevant target area, involving municipalities and other local authorities, farmers and cooperatives with the aim of exchanging about project activities;
- Socio-economic surveys carried out in the project area, thus allowing the staff to introduce the initiative and its goals;
- Workshops, focus groups with women of the communities, farmers, volunteers of other local environmental NGOs, trainings for farmers and cooperatives on sustainable agriculture, dry stone walls restoration, local value chains development, local agricultural products transformation and marketing;
- Agreements with local Universities (American University of Beirut – AUB - and Lebanese University – LU) with their direct involvement in biodiversity monitoring activities and researches. Involvement of students from the two University through scholarships to carry on their Thesis on biodiversity monitoring;
- Two years of biodiversity monitoring activity in the SBR with collection of lessons learned and best practices to be replicated in similar areas such as the JMBR;
- Consultations with local authorities about the CEPF proposal.

10. Project Stakeholders:

Direct beneficiaries:

- 120 farmers (100 in the SBR and 20 in JMBR) beneficiaries of the terraces restoration and in the capacity building programme
- 60 women of the communities living in the two Biosphere Reserves (40 in the SBR and 20 in the JMBR) beneficiaries in the capacity building programme
- 30 unemployed young people living in the two Biosphere Reserves beneficiaries in the capacity building programme
- 6 Municipalities (4 in the SBR and 2 in JMBR) beneficiaries in the active participatory action
- Union of the Municipalities of the Upper Shouf and Union of Keserwan Municipalities beneficiaries in the active participatory action

Indirect beneficiaries and other stakeholders:

- Farmers and members of the agricultural Cooperatives in the SBR and JMBR
- Universities: American University of Beirut – AUB - and Lebanese University - LU
- Local NGOs: Green Orient, Tradition & People (Souk el Tayeb), Private sector
- Lebanese Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture
- Souk el Tayeb, Fair Trade Lebanon, Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL)

11. Stakeholder Engagement Program:

Depending on the type of stakeholder group, different methods will be adopted during the implementation period to ensure their engagement in the program.

- All beneficiaries and stakeholders will be invited to the kick-off meeting at the beginning of the project and at the conclusive meeting at the end of the project by personal invitations, use of the WhatsApp already existing groups between the Reserves and the farmers and/or other stakeholders, and by announcements in the webpages and social media of the two Reserves.
- Regarding farmers and cooperatives members, information and consultation sessions will take place during periodical working meetings, both in presence and/or via web in case the current pandemic obliges to still keep distances and avoid social contacts.
- Training and capacity building actions will ensure the engagement of 120 farmers, 60 women of the local communities and 30 unemployed young people living in the two Biosphere Reserves.
- Local communities will be properly involved through workshops and meetings organized during the project life by the staff. Meetings will be held in the most suitable places to convey an audience, will be led by local coordinators and foresee the active participation of local authorities.
- Brochures and leaflets addressed to the population living in the two Biosphere Reserves and other external stakeholders will support the dissemination purposes.
- Representatives of other Protected Areas of Lebanon, of local environmental NGOs and of the Lebanese Ministry of Environment and the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture will be invited during meetings, workshops in order to promote the best practices of the project with the aim of a possible replication in other areas of the Country.

12. Consultation methods:

Consultation with stakeholders will take place all through the project life, the methods again varying according to activity and stakeholder group. The consultation methods that have been used so far will expect to continue during the CEPF project, namely:

- Surveys or questionnaires before and after trainings and workshops

- Meetings with cooperatives, farmers, community leaders, other groups (women, unemployed young people living in the two reserves);
- Bi-annual meeting of the Steering Committee of the project consisting of representatives of Municipalities, OI, ACS, APJM, representatives of the agricultural Cooperatives and key farmers.
- Individual meetings, interviews with community members
- Workshops with community leaders to promote the best practices and how to replicate them
- Exchange visits between staff and farmers of the two Biosphere Reserves

13. **Other Engagement Activities:**

As mentioned above the present initiative is rooted on previous experiences of Istituto Oikos and on the on-going programmes of the two Biosphere Reserves thus it ensures and continues the initiatives and methodologies already applied with success with the local communities and other relevant stakeholders of the two Districts.

The whole CEPF 111666 project includes actions of stakeholders engagement starting by the establishment of a steering committee consisting of representatives of Municipalities, OI, ACS, APJM, representatives of the agricultural Cooperatives and key farmers, presentation to other local environmental NGOs and representatives of other Protected Areas in Lebanon of the scope of the project at the kick-off meeting and the best practices and results obtained at the end of the project in order to replicate them in other protected areas of the Country.

A MoU of effective collaboration between the Shouf Biosphere Reserve and the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve will be signed in order to advance in a common vision and the best practices achieved will be integrated in the Management Plan of the SBR as well as development of recommendations for their integration in the revised management plan and strategies of JMBR. “Conservative Agreements” with the farmers direct beneficiaries of the project will guarantee their commitment to maintain their lands according to the traditional eco-friendly practices beyond the project lifetime and beyond. They will be examples of the proposed model to be replicated by other farmers as well as pilot sites where to conduct training on the field with other groups and where to conduct visits with other stakeholders/interested parties to increase their involvement.

14. **Timetable:**

As noted above, stakeholder engagement is integral to all project activities and all project activities incorporate stakeholder engagement. Therefore, the schedule for stakeholder engagement is the same as the schedule for the whole project. Some upcoming key activities to note include:

- Project partnership agreements to be developed and signed by end of May 2021
- MoU of effective collaboration between the Shouf Biosphere Reserve and the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve will be signed in order to advance in a common vision developed and signed by the end of May 2021
- Establishment of the Steering Committee of the project consisting of representatives of Municipalities, OI, ACS, APJM, representatives of the agricultural Cooperatives and key farmers. Maasser el Shouf, by the end of May 2021
- Project inception workshop in late May 2021 at SBR, Maasser el Shouf (among the people who will be invited: representatives of the Ministry of Environment and of the Ministry of Agriculture, Municipalities, representatives of agricultural cooperatives and key farmers, of local environmental NGOs and of other Protected Areas in Lebanon)
- Regular periodic meetings on project progresses to be held every three months, inviting representatives of the Municipalities, of the agricultural Cooperatives and key farmers, thus

potentially to be held in June, September, December 2021 and March 2022 (2 in the SBR and 2 in the JMBR).

- Final event of the project, end of April 2022 at SBR or JMBR

15. Resources and Responsibilities:

The Project Manager and the local Project Coordinators will be responsible for the stakeholder engagement activities. Given that this aspect is integrated in all project activities, no ad-hoc budget resources have been allocated.

16. Grievance mechanism:

Istituto Oikos will provide local communities around the 2 KBAs and other listed stakeholders with means by which they may raise a grievance with the Istituto Oikos. The email address, telephone number, and physical address of IO, the CEPF Regional Implementation Team, and the CEPF Grant Director will be made available to the public and all stakeholders on IO's website and all the communication materials that will be designed by the project. Any grievances raised about Istituto Oikos will be communicated to the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days, together with a proposed response. If the claimant is still not satisfied following the response, the grievance may be submitted directly to the CEPF Executive Director via the dedicated email account (cepfexecutive@conservation.org) or by mail. If the claimant is not satisfied with the response from the CEPF Secretariat, the grievance may be submitted to the World Bank at the local World Bank office in Lebanon.

17. Monitoring and Reporting:

The Project Manager will be responsible for the proper execution of the project together with the local coordinators, ensuring the application of a participative approach.

Project progresses will be reported during periodical partners consultations and ad-hoc meetings with local authorities and beneficiaries.

A mid-term mission will be scheduled around November 2021 to assess the project progresses and propose corrective actions if needed, in order to achieve the foreseen goals and impacts. A final project report will be compiled, intended as a collection on the achievements of the project with an assessment against the foreseen objectives and commitments of the initiative.