

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	Macedonian Ecological Society
Project Title:	Education and Capacity Building for the Conservation of the Priority KBA Lake
Date of Report:	28.01.2015
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CEPF Region: Europe & Central Asia

Strategic Direction: 3. Improve the conservation and protection status of 44 priority key biodiversity areas

3.3. Raise awareness of the importance of priority key biodiversity areas, including those that have irreplaceable plant and marine biodiversity

Grant Amount: \$19282,00

Project Dates: originally - November 2013-October 2014; extended to December 2014

Implementation Partners for this Project (please explain the level of involvement for each partner):
N/A

Conservation Impacts

Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile.

Lake Dojran is one of 1,110 key biodiversity areas in the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot which faces long-term threats to biodiversity because of its reliance on mass tourism, overexploitation of natural resources and habitat degradation. There is no local action and very little local knowledge of the need for conservation.

The project created a local conservation basis at a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) in Macedonia and sensitized key players that have an important role in the management of the protected area and future conservation efforts. This protected area (Monument of nature) does not have active management to which we could have been contributing directly, thus we have contributed to the awareness of its importance and need for its development.

The project also increased local knowledge on the value of biodiversity through involving stakeholders in monitoring directly and also indirectly through presenting findings and previously known facts. Also, this project has touched upon mitigating the risk of slow reaction after a threat appears through affirming points of contact for local authorities.

Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project.

The project has created a conservation basis which is aware of the specificities of KBA Lake Dojran and the need for its conservation. This basis for conservation has both a part which became active and a part which became aware but has yet to become activated. Among the active part of the conservation basis are local stakeholders which received basic training on survey and monitoring and have since had more opportunities to employ it. Among the part that has become aware are stakeholders who understand the biodiversity values of the KBA and the various ways of conserving it.

The project succeeded in reaching out to local stakeholders and ensuring their attendance of two camps for basic training on survey and monitoring. These camps were opportunities for our team of experts to directly influence local stakeholders as well as to collect data. A direct result from the camp we have seen the educational activities of local volunteers on topics of biodiversity conservation.

Additional results are the monitoring booklet and the positive public outreach.

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected: N/A

Species Conserved: N/A

Corridors Created: N/A

Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.

We have succeeded in achieving all of the short-term goals from the project in, essentially, an efficient and timely manner. Reaching out and finding the right stakeholders from the region has also been one of our greatest successes during the project. This success has led to the establishment of a conservation basis that has remained active throughout. This basis has provided us with several volunteers that participated in conservation actions and events organized by us but also they have organized their own activities with our support. Hence we believe that with our continued presence in the region, the monitoring booklet as a reference point and support to other organizations which are active in the region in the same field we have achieved the desired long-term impact.

One of the challenges we have faced has been the initially slow response of the local authorities who are in charge of the management of the KBA. However, we are certain that we have achieved the desired level of awareness.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

An unexpected impact was the cooperation and education opportunity for a local NGO that was formed during the summer of 2014 and which became very interested in supporting our mission in Dojran. This local NGO (Renatura) became a contributor to our organization and received ecological monitoring training in order to participate in the International waterfowl census in January 2015. We have also been able to work on strengthening their capacity by providing them with consultations on organizational growth and applying for projects. Our cooperation with this local stakeholder will continue even after the completion of the project as we have established several areas in which we can support them that are contributing towards our organization's vision for that region.

Additional unexpected impact has been the journalistic interest in biodiversity of Dojran Lake which resulted with several long articles about the biodiversity of the Lake (especially birds) and its potential for eco-tourism.

Project Components

Project Components: Please report on results by project component. Reporting should reference specific products/deliverables from the approved project design and other relevant information.

Component 1 Planned: Series of meetings with local stakeholders will be initiated by MES team, including the local government (contacts are already in place), hunting association, private fishermen and fishing company, the local water management body, and the existing NGOs, in order to sensitize them. They will be invited to become part of the local conservation group, expected to count about 20 people. The core of this group will be made by secondary and/or primary school children from the town Nov Dojran, but the opportunity will be used to invite students from the neighbouring towns of Gevgelija, Valandovo and Strumica, because of the non-priority KBAs in their vicinity. Cooperation with the local schools will be necessary to realize this activity.

Component 1 Actual at Completion: MES organized, initiated and attended the series of meetings with local stakeholders. Additionally, MES included the town of Bogdanci as the closest town to the KBA. These meetings, even though largely successful in the creation of a local conservation group they did not bring forth the desired results in regard to inciting action among stakeholders which include private companies and hunting/fishing associations. We have concluded that getting these groups to become more active would demand more time spent in the region and more frequent contact. MES will, however, continue the cooperation with these local stakeholders beyond the scope of this project. Our most valued deliverable from this component is the list of contacts of local stakeholders and their input and views on the management of the KBA captured during meetings.

Component 2 Planned: Basic training on survey and monitoring for this local conservation group will be held during 4 days in the winter period (including basic fish survey, snow tracking, waterfowl census) and 4 more days in the summer period (breeding bird survey, basic amphibians and reptiles survey and, if possible, habitat mapping)

Component 2 Actual at Completion: Basic training on survey and monitoring was conducted as planned during the summer and winter period. MES invited all stakeholders to take part at these camps. Participants were predominantly high-school students as well as representatives from the Municipality of Dojran and REC (as an organization that is also working at the KBA). These camps for basic training provided MES with conservation volunteers that later took part in additional activities and remain active ever since. Also, the involvement of MES and outside experts at the camps provided us with additional products and deliverables in the form of presentations, know-how and protocols which were subsequently used in achieving component 3. Other products and deliverables have been all the surveys, feedback forms and contact information from stakeholders.

Component 3 Planned: A simple booklet of techniques and protocols for monitoring of the lake ecosystem will be prepared and published in limited number of copies (100-150), and it will hopefully be not only used for the purpose of this capacity building, but also for the monitoring in the frames of the future management plan.

Component 3 Actual at Completion: The booklet was developed at a higher level than predicted after summarizing lessons learned from the camps and communication with the stakeholders. Hopefully we are yet to harvest the fruits of putting this booklet forth. MES encountered an unforeseen challenge with the development of the booklet since the expert who was developing it was prevented from completing the task on time. The failure to achieve the results from this component was mitigated though an extension of the project.

Component 4 Planned: Public outreach – the web site of the municipality will be supplemented with the information on the KBA and its conservation needs. Local and national media will be informed on regular basis on the activities ongoing at Dojran. MES web site and newsletter will be additional tool for project visibility.

Component 4 Actual at Completion: Public outreach as achieved at and beyond the expected level. With updates on Dojran website, MES website, newsletter and social media outlets as well as national electronic and traditional media.

Were any components unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?N/A

Please describe and submit (electronically if possible) any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.

Lessons Learned

Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that would inform projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community.

Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings)

The very specific definitions of the project approach and its detailed time-frame have been the most useful tools from the design process that contributed to its success. The project design process and its outputs have been especially important for our organization since we experienced a change in the staff that managed this project.

Project Implementation: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)

Project execution was well within the abilities of MES. The fact that the organization had at its disposal experts in several fields which employ surveying and monitoring as well as habitat mapping contributed to the success of the training camps, since the organization was not dependent on external expert assistance.

Additionally, the fact that MES has an active volunteer base contributed to the immersion of the new volunteers from the project region. Another aspect of successful project execution was derived from MES's affiliation with BirdLife International. Namely, our organization hosted a conservation officer from RSPB Northern Ireland as a volunteer and she was involved in the second training camp by providing presentations on best practices and encouraged local stakeholders to develop similar project ideas for Lake Dojran.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

Additional Funding

Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
MAVA (BLI)	Project co-financing	\$400	Used to provide monitoring
MES	In-kind contribution	\$2400	MES experts at camps

Sustainability/Replicability

The idea behind this project in the first place was to ensure some form of sustainability through the education of young conservation enthusiasts and future conservation leaders. We are firmly convinced that we have created a small group of such people because of their continued involvement and support of local and national MES actions. However, a challenge we have faced with this group of people is that most of them intend to continue their education away from the region. Our approach in mitigating this challenge has been to emphasize the importance of local leaders in conservation and introduce them to sterling examples of such people, who even after periods of living away from the region, have come back or have been in other ways devoted to championing positive change in their home regions. Also we have provided them with monitoring booklet as future guidance for their development in conservation.

Working with the staff of the Municipality in Dojran has also been a positive experience. Even though their interest and devotion to conservation and management of the protected area has remained very low they have embraced our efforts in the region and have become more open to ecologically sound approaches to tourism (Dojran's currently predominant choice for economic development). In our assessment they will become more directly involved in proper management of the protected area only after some years of our (or other organizations') presence and coordinated joint work. Which is why we remain fully committed to supporting the municipality of Dojran in their future conservation-related endeavours.

Unplanned replication (as already mentioned above) has been the coordination of monitoring efforts with the newly-established NGO Renatura in Dojran. This young organization is very keen on continuing our cooperation is very committed to propagating the need for proper management of the protected area. They are also involved in non-formal education of young people from the region an activity and we have decided to work on that area with a high degree of synchronisation.

Additional unplanned replication has been noted among some of the volunteers to come out of our summer and winter camp who have "recruited" more of their peers. Some of the participants have become true volunteers and have been very involved with our work, at a level that we could not have expected at the time we developed this project.

Safeguard Policy Assessment

There has been no need for the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.

Additional Comments/Recommendations

Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

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Performance Tracking Report Addendum

CEPF Global Targets

(Enter Grant Term)

Provide a numerical amount and brief description of the results achieved by your grant.
Please respond to only those questions that are relevant to your project.

Project Results	Is this question relevant?	If yes, provide your numerical response for results achieved during the annual period.	Provide your numerical response for project from inception of CEPF support to date.	Describe the principal results achieved from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014. (Attach annexes if necessary)
1. Did your project strengthen management of a protected area guided by a sustainable management plan? Please indicate number of hectares improved.	Yes	1596,04ha	1596,04ha	Protected Area: KBA Dojran Lake. Our project has strengthened management of this area through raising awareness at Municipal level (key management stakeholder) and at local level through raising awareness among stakeholders. Also, we have made a national impact on this subject since some of our project activities became published and advertised nationwide.
2. How many hectares of new and/or expanded protected areas did your project help establish through a legal declaration or community agreement?	N/A	N/A	N/A	
3. Did your project strengthen biodiversity conservation and/or natural resources management inside a key biodiversity area identified in the CEPF ecosystem profile? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	Yes	1596,04ha	1596,04ha	Biodiversity conservation has been strengthened through the collection of biodiversity data as part of monitoring education activities at both winter and summer camps. This data was further used for raising awareness, education and publicising the importance of this KBA at a national level. Based on our limited monitoring we have once again confirmed the biodiversity importance of this KBA.
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5. If your project promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, how many local communities accrued tangible socioeconomic benefits? Please complete Table 1 below.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A