

## CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

### I. BASIC DATA

**Organization Legal Name:** Association for Nature Protection and Sustainable Development - ``MTA-BARI``

**Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement):** Promoting Sustainable Forest Management in the Support/Buffer zone of Mtirala National Park

**Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement):** 1 June, 2007 – 31 May, 2008

**Date of Report (month/year):** September, 2008

### II. OPENING REMARKS

*Provide any opening remarks that may assist in the review of this report.*

The proposed project closely relates to the CEPF Strategic Direction 3.1 - „Evaluate and implement models for sustainable forestry, water use and range management”. The main purpose of the project was to establish effective management for the support/buffer zone of Mtirala National Park with a total area 35 000 hectares, of which 20 000 hectares are covered by forest.

The project area is located within the West Lesser Caucasus Corridor, CEPF priority site # 94 – Mtirala. The project area covers the support/buffer zone of Mtirala National Park (MNP) located on the territory of Adjara Autonomous Republic, Georgia. National act on the establishment of MNP was approved by Parliament of Georgia in May, 2006. The National Park covers 16,000 ha and 15,806 ha (or nearly 98%) from this total area is covered by Forest

Population density in the support/buffer zone is very high (with well over 100 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>). Because villages are scattered among forested areas in the MNP support/buffer zone, local communities heavily depend on forest resources (both wood and non-wood) for their livelihoods. Both, uniqueness of biodiversity and high population density necessitate very careful and proper natural resource management. Typical dominant land uses in the support/buffer zone is forestry (mainly for fire-wood), agriculture and grazing.

It should be highlighted that creation of the MNP support/buffer zone in parallel of establishment of MNP (ongoing activity financed by the Norwegian Government) will be the first ``real case`` to show in practice how harmoniously are operating and functioning the National Park and its support zone which is the best approach for biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use.

Territorial protection of Nature and tourism development related to it should be considered as one of the priorities in Adjara taking into account its biological diversity and tourism-recreational resources; in order to manage this activity successfully the process of spatial arrangement should be regulated (taking into account infrastructure development, cultural hereditary and requirements for environment protection), as well as the establishment of efficiently protected areas and their net.

### III. ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT PURPOSE

**Project Purpose:** Establish effective management for the support/buffer zone of Mtirala National Park having a total area 35 000 hectares, of which 20 000 hectares are covered by forest.

Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
<p><b>Purpose-level: Establish effective management for the support/buffer zone of Mtirala National Park having a total area 35 000 hectares, of which 20 000 hectares are covered by forest.</b></p>	<p>This initially planned purpose has been slightly changed during the project implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) project geographic scope extended; and</li> <li>b) innovative management approach applied.</li> </ul> <p>Please see explanations and more detailed information on this change below.</p>
<p><i>1. Management plan for the support zone of Mtirala National Park developed and officially approved by the end of the project.</i></p>	<p>Following changing in the project purpose, this purpose level indicator has been changed accordingly; in particular, the geographic scope was extended and covered not only the MNP support / buffer zone.</p> <p>Please see explanations and more detailed information on this change below.</p>
<p><i>2. Key stakeholders and local communities are fully aware of importance and management principles of the support zone of Mtirala National Park by the end of the project.</i></p>	<p>Meetings, consultation were held with local population, not only envisaged within project, but conducted by hired experts as well. Also meetings, consultation were held with different key stakeholders groups (NGO sector, local and central governments).</p> <p>Leaflet on establishment and importance of the MNP support zone and Machakhela natural-Landscape produced and distributed among different target groups.</p> <p>Two short TV broadcasts on the ongoing project activities prepared and released on regional Adjara TV and four articles published in regional newspapers "Adjara".</p>

***Describe the success of the project in terms of achieving its intended impact objective and performance indicators.***

**Introductory:** Initially the main purpose of the project was *to establish effective management for the support/buffer zone of Mtirala National Park having a total area 35 000 hectares, of which 20 000 hectares are covered by forest.* At the initial phase of the project implementation and following consultations with key stakeholders, including local governmental authorities and local communities, new ideas and more reasonable and significant approaches in terms of long-term biodiversity conservation and transboundary cooperation, have arisen. These ideas have been deeply discussed with all key stakeholders and resulted in more attractive outputs rather than originally planned and expected.

**What is the story beyond this change:** Since early 2000th, WWF develops concept for establishing Georgia-Turkey cross- and transboundary cooperation for biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use in South Colchic region (Ajara Autonomous Republic of Georgia and bordering part of Turkey). From Georgian side, apart of Mtirala NP, Machakhela (*Machakhel in Turkish*) river valley is considered as the key area for development of transboundary activities. Machakhela is relatively small transboundary river: upper part locates in Turkey – protected area as Jamili Biosphere Reserve (*established within the framework of GEF/WB project*) and middle and lower streams locate in Georgia. The valley is rich not only in biodiversity, but also from historical-cultural viewpoints. Proposed future protection status for Georgian Machakhela is Protected Landscape (IUCN category V).

After commencement this given CEPF-funded project on establishing the MNP support / buffer zone, local governmental authorities and representatives of Machakhela administration and some community leaders asked the project implementer to include the gorge into the project frame for future establishing of Protected Area also. This is how the project-frame was extended and a concept of Mtirala and Machakhela Natural-Landscape Territory was born.

**More Attractive Result:** Considering the above explained changes *the Spatial / Territorial Planning Document -`Management Plan for Natural - Landscape Territory of Mtirala and Machakhela`* was developed instead of the initially planned *Management Plan for the MNP support / buffer zone*. Of course, this was unexpected success having the following highlights:

- Huge interest from local governmental authorities and local community representatives;
- More area encompassed rather than initially planned;
- Take a step forward in promoting the transboundary cooperation between Georgia and Turkey for biodiversity conservation;
- Innovative ``bottom-up`` approach in establishing new protected area with immediate involvement of local / district level governmental representatives and communities. This approach fully excludes conflict with locals while establishing new protected area at the earliest convenience and also, makes sure to consider their interests at the beginning of the process.

Therefore, the MNP buffer/support zone sector of the Landscape Territory serves and functions as direct buffer for Mtirala NP, Machakhela sector - as one of key areas for creation of future network of PAs in South Colchic region and development of transboundary cooperation.

***Where there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?***

Again, following the above mentioned, unexpected positive impacts were:

- More area encompassed rather than initially planned;
- Take a step forward in promoting the transboundary cooperation between Georgia and Turkey for biodiversity conservation;

The importance of establishing the Mtirala NP support/buffer zone section exactly corresponds to internationally recognized main function of buffer zones: creation of buffer between National Park and intensively used areas: support/buffer zone, first of all, should support sustainable functioning of the National Park.

Second important function which is imposed to the section of protected landscape of Machakhela is the creation of the ecological corridor between the protected areas of south-west Georgia (in particular, Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi state reserve) and protected areas of north-east Turkey (in particular, Jamili biospheric reserve and others.).

MNP Support / buffer zone / territory will play the key function in the establishment of the network of protected areas in the Lesser Caucasus conservation landscape (corridor)<sup>1</sup> and in development of transboundary conservation, that is identified as priority by experts of the six countries of the Caucasus region according to the Ecoregional Conservation Plan of the Caucasus as well<sup>2</sup>.

#### IV. PROJECT OUTPUTS

*Project Outputs: Enter the project outputs from the Logical Framework for the project*

#### Planned vs. Actual Performance

Indicator	Actual at Completion
<p><b>Output 1: Management plan for the support zone of Mtirala National Park (MNP) elaborated, submitted to relevant authority (ies) and approved.</b></p>	
<p><i>Indicator 1.1: The draft management plan of the MNP support zone developed by November, 2007.</i></p>	<p>Background information and situation analysis (including socio-economical, biological assessments) provided. Existing legal basis analyzed. Forest Inventory, with special focus on biodiversity value and assessment, in the MNP support zone conducted.</p> <p>A tourism development plan, as a part of the overall management plan, for model village "Chakvistavi" in the MNP support zone prepared. A list of projects / ideas for sustainable resource use models in the MNP support zone, as a part of the overall management plan elaborated and legal assessments provided. 21 Consultants have worked in these directions (see appendix 1).</p> <p>About 40 consultations and meetings were held with different key stakeholders groups while developing the Spatial-Territorial Planning Document - "Management Plan for Natural - Landscape Territory of Mtirala and Machakhela".</p> <p>Following the above-explained situation, <u>the Spatial / Territorial Planning Document - "Management Plan for Natural - Landscape Territory of Mtirala and Machakhela"</u> was developed instead of the initially planned <i>Management Plan for the MNP support / buffer zone</i>. This document envisages establishment of natural-landscape territory of Mtirala and Machakhela covering territories of the municipalities of Kobuleti, Khelvachauri and Keda. This document is divided into two sections – Mtirala and Machakhela sections.</p> <p>Establishment of such category of the natural-landscape is foreseen by the Law of Georgia on "Spatial Arrangement and Town-Planning Basics" and particularly oriented to the interest of the local population and self-</p>

<sup>1</sup> See [www.cepf.net/caucasus](http://www.cepf.net/caucasus)

<sup>2</sup> See. Ecoregional Conservation Plan for the Caucasus. WWF-KfW-BMZ-CEPF-MakArthur Foundation. Printed by "Contour Ltd.", Tbilisi, 2006, 220 p.

	<p>government.</p> <p>Based on this document, it is planned in future to create two Protected Areas – (a) the MNP support/buffer zone and (b) Machakhela protected landscape` according to the Georgian Law on `Protected Areas System`.</p> <p>The reason why these documents were not created or why these two protected areas are not founded initially is the condition that modern management of the protected areas requires participation of local population and self government in the planning and management of the protected areas that initially is the guarantee to avoid any conflict between the use of the nature and interests of the local population. It is underlined in the working program of the protected areas of the convention of the biodiversity (Georgia has been its part since 1994<sup>3</sup>). The category of the natural-landscape which is foreseen by the Law of Georgia on “Spatial Arrangement and Town-Planning Basics” is particularly oriented to the interest of the local population and self-government.</p> <p><b>So</b>, in the south Colchic region, namely in Adjara Autonomous Republic, there is two-stag approach used to found above mentioned protected areas (see planning map of the territories – sch.1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ at the first stage, “Natural-landscape territory of Mtirala and Machakhela” is established according to the Law of Georgia on “Spatial Arrangement and Town-Planning Basics”;</li> <li>➤ at the second stage “the MNP support / buffer zone” and “Machakhela protected landscape” are established according to Law of Georgia on “Protected Areas System”</li> </ul>
<p><i>Indicator 1.2: The management plan of the MNP support zone approved by the end of the project – February, 2008.</i></p>	<p>As it was mentioned above <u>the Spatial / Territorial Planning Document - `Management Plan for Natural - Landscape Territory of Mtirala and Machakhela`</u> was developed instead of the initially planned <i>Management Plan for the MNP support / buffer zone.</i></p> <p>The mentioned draft spatial / territorial planning document was discussed with key stakeholders and furthermore, some key stakeholders from local governmental authorities and communities were involved in the developing process.</p> <p>During the last stakeholders meeting this draft document was informally endorsed by heads of local / district level authorities from all three districts concerned and passed to Head of Government of Adjara Autonomous Republic for further approval. As we are informed this document should be discussed and approved in the nearest future.</p> <p>Due to the above explained positive changes in the project, the way of the new approach was longer rather than the initially planned. In particular, we followed so-called (a) two-stage approach through the Georgian law on `“Spatial Arrangement and Town-Planning Basics” and developed <u>the Spatial / Territorial Planning Document - `Management Plan for Natural - Landscape Territory of Mtirala and Machakhela`</u> which will be resulted finally in the establishing of two new protected areas instead of (b)</p>

<sup>3</sup> See the decree of Georgian Parliament on April 21, 1994 on “Convention of biological diversity” (List of Parliament of Georgia, ##16-17, 1994; art..343).

	establishing of only the MNP support / buffer zone through the Georgian law on ``Protected Areas System`` which would be faster. However, we discussed above positive sides and benefits of this two-stage approach.
<b>Output 2: The legislative act / draft law developed and submitted to relevant authority and adopted to ensure approval of the management plan for the MNP support zone.</b>	
<i>Indicator 2.1: The draft legislative act developed by November, 2007.</i>	The package of the draft legislative acts has been developed.
<i>Indicator 2.2: The legislative act approved by the end of the project – February, 2008.</i>	Due to the above explained positive changes in the project, the way of the new approach was longer rather than the initially planned. In particular, we followed so-called (a) two-stage approach through the Georgian law on ``“Spatial Arrangement and Town-Planning Basics” and developed the <u>Spatial / Territorial Planning Document - ``Management Plan for Natural - Landscape Territory of Mtirala and Machakhela``</u> which will be resulted finally in the establishing of two new protected areas instead of (b) establishing of only the MNP support / buffer zone through the Georgian law on ``Protected Areas System`` which would be faster. However, we discussed above positive sides and benefits of this two-stage approach.
<b>Output 3: Communication and public awareness raising work on the ongoing project activities carried out.</b>	
<i>Indicator 3.1: Consultations and meetings with different key stakeholders groups (local communities and NGO sector, local and central governments) arranged by October, 2007.</i>	Consultations and meetings with different key stakeholders groups (local communities and NGO sector, local and central governments) arranged. (see appendix 3)
<i>Indicator 3.2: Leaflet on establishment and importance of the MNP support zone is produced and distributed among different target groups (wide public, governmental sector and local communities) by October, 2007.</i>	Leaflets on establishment and importance of the MNP support zone and Machakhela Natural-Landscape produced and distributed among different target groups. (See attach of Leaflets)
<i>Indicator 3.3: At least two short TV broadcasts prepared and released</i>	Two short TV broadcasts on the ongoing project activities prepared and released on regional Adjara TV and <i>four articles published in regional newspapers "Adjara".</i>

<p><i>on regional TV channel and three articles published in regional newspapers by the end of the project – February, 2008.</i></p>	<p><b>July 2007 - December 2007</b></p>	<p><b>January 2008 - June 2008</b></p>
	<p>The first short TV broadcasts on the ongoing project activities prepared and release on regional TV "Adjara" channel. 29 Sept.2007</p> <p>The first article “MNP BZ Project Presentation” <b>N 136, 29.09.07</b> on the ongoing project activities published in a regional newspaper "Adjara".</p>	<p>The second short TV broadcasts on the ongoing project activities prepared and released on regional Adjara TV. 16 February 2008</p> <p>The articles: “</p> <p><b>1. “About Results of Project Promoting Sustainable Forest Management in the Support/Buffer zone of Mtirala National Park ” N 5, 17.01.08</b> regional newspaper "Adjara"</p> <p><b>2. “What will MNP BZ change”, N 18, 16 02.08</b></p> <p><b>3. “What is the aim of creation MNP BZ”, N 19, 19 02.08 (to be continue next N) N 20, 21 02.08</b> published in regional newspaper "Adjara"</p>

***Describe the success of the project in terms of delivering the intended outputs.***

See above information under the output indicators.

***Were any outputs unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?***

**Output 1** – Realized with changes however with better results and larger scope.

**Output 1 / Document’s scope:** As it was mentioned above *the Spatial / Territorial Planning Document - “Management Plan for Natural - Landscape Territory of Mtirala and Machakhela”* was developed instead of the initially planned *Management Plan for the MNP support / buffer zone*.

**Output 1 / Document’s approval:** During the last stakeholders meeting this draft document was informally endorsed by heads of local / district level authorities from all three districts concerned and passed to Head of Government of Adjara Autonomous Republic for further approval. As we are informed this document should be discussed and approved in the nearest future.

Due to the above explained positive changes in the project, the way of the new approach was longer rather than the initially planned. In particular, we followed so-called (a) two-stage approach through the Georgian law on “Spatial Arrangement and Town-Planning Basics” and developed *the Spatial / Territorial Planning Document - “Management Plan for Natural - Landscape Territory of Mtirala and Machakhela”* which will be resulted finally in the establishing of two new protected areas instead of (b) establishing of only the MNP support / buffer zone through the Georgian law on “Protected Areas System” which would be faster. However, we discussed above positive sides and benefits of this two-stage approach.

**Output 2:** Changes and delays under this output are directly linked to the output 1. See more info above.

**V. SAFEGUARD POLICY ASSESSMENTS**

*Provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.*

**VI. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT**

*Describe any lessons learned during the various phases of the project. Consider lessons both for future projects, as well as for CEPF’s future performance.*

- Close cooperation with local governmental authorities and local communities
- Right communications on the ongoing project to key stakeholders concerned.

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

*Project Execution: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/failure)*

**VII. 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.*

<b>Donor</b>	<b>Type of Funding*</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Notes</b>

*\*Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:*

- A Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF project)*
- B Complementary funding (Other donors contribute to partner organizations that are working on a project linked with this CEPF project)*
- C Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF project.)*
- D Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*



***Provide details of whether this project will continue in the future and if so, how any additional funding already secured or fundraising plans will help ensure its sustainability.***

It is planned to allocate the certain amount of money for so called phase 2 project - ``*Development of buffer zone of Mtirala National Park: initiation of sustainable resource use activities*`` to continue working with the MNP support / buffer zone and contribute to its real establishment on the ground.

#### **VIII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It was mentioned above that *the Spatial / Territorial Planning Document - ``Management Plan for Natural - Landscape Territory of Mtirala and Machakhela``* was only informally endorsed by heads of local / district level authorities from all three districts concerned and passed to Head of Government of Adjara Autonomous Republic for further approval. During the phase 2 of this project we will lobby to push and expedite the process of approval of this document by Head of Adjara Autonomous Republic.

#### **VIII. INFORMATION SHARING**

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. One way we do this is by making programmatic project documents available on our Web site, [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net), and by marketing these in our newsletter and other communications.

These documents are accessed frequently by other CEPF grantees, potential partners, and the wider conservation community.

**Please include your full contact details below:**

Name: MTA-BARI

Organization name: Association for Environment Protection and Sustainable Development „Mta-Bari”

Mailing address: Baratashvili St 4 (flat 8), 6010 Batumi, Georgia

Tel: (+995 222) 7 57 52

Fax: (+995 222) 7 57 52

E-mail: [mta-bari@mail.ru](mailto:mta-bari@mail.ru); [mta\\_bari@yahoo.com](mailto:mta_bari@yahoo.com)