



MID-TERM EVALUATION

of the UNDP/GEF Project

**“Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Best Practices
for Management of Small Protected Areas in Macin Mountains National Park
(MMNP)”**

(PIMS 1999)

Final Report



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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AWP	Annual Work Plan
CC	Consultative Committee
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CD	Capacity Development
CITES	Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species
CO	Country Office
EAFRD	European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Council
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
FSC	Forestry Stewardship Council
FSP	Full Size Project
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographical Information System
GLA	Group for Local Action
GoR	Government of Romania
GPS	Global Positioning System
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
MAB	Man and Biosphere Programme
MAFRD	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MESD	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MMNP	Macin Mountains National Park
MP	Management Plan
MSP	Mid-Size Project
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NATURA 2000	The European ecological network of sites (also called N2000).
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NDP	National Development Plan
NDS	National Development Strategy
NEX	National Execution
NFA	National Forest Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Protected Area
PDF	Project Development Facility
PIMS	Project Information Management System
PIR	Project Implementation Review
POC	Project Oversight Committee
RAF	Resource Allocation Framework
RAMSAR	Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971
RBM	Result-Based Management
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SOP	Sector Operating Programme
SPA	Special Protection Area
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USD	United States Dollar
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Area
WP	Work Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UNDP/GEF project “*Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Best Practices for Management of Small Protected Areas in Macin Mountains National Park (MMNP)*” is funded by the GEF, UNDP, the National Forest Administration (NFA) and others partners. The UNDP Country Office in Romania is the implementing agency and the NFA is the National Implementing Agency for this project. The Project was signed in November 2005 and will end in December 2009. It has a total budget of US\$3.64M of which US\$1.0M is funded by GEF; including \$23,970 to fund the PDF-A phase and US\$2.66M co-financed by project partners.

The objective of the MMNP project is to demonstrate a landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and improving the conservation effectiveness of protected areas and to serve as a basis for replication across the emerging national system of protected areas in Romania. The project has three expected outcomes to achieve this objective: (i) the productive landscape around Macin Mountains National Park is made more biodiversity friendly; (ii) Macin Mountains National Park management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured; and (iii) Replication of small protected area management best practices across national PA system is ongoing.

This mid-term project evaluation - a requirement of UNDP/GEF procedures – has been initiated by UNDP Romania as the GEF Implementing Agency. This evaluation provides an in-depth reflection of project progress and future priority actions. Its objective is to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities in relation to the stated project objective so far, and to produce possible recommendations on how to improve the management of the project until its completion in 2009.

This evaluation was conducted by an external team of Consultants: Mr. Jean-Joseph Bellamy, Team Leader and Dr. Lucian Georgescu, National Consultant. It is based on a desk review of project documents and on interviews with project staffs and key project informants. The methodology included the development of an evaluation matrix to guide the entire data gathering and analysis process. The findings were triangulated with the use of multiple sources of information when possible. The evaluation report is structured around the GEF five evaluation criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Results/Impacts and Sustainability.

The main findings of this mid-term evaluation are:

Overall: The overall progress of the project is satisfactory. The project is highly relevant in the context of strengthening the protected area network in Romania. After a difficult first year the project is now delivering what it is expected to deliver. During this first half, the project focused on implementing initiatives under outcome 1 & 2. The MMNP Administration is now operational and some management tools are being developed. Demonstrations in the surrounding areas are underway to test approaches for the development of biodiversity-friendly use of the surrounding land. The second half should see a shift toward initiatives under outcome 3 that is to replicate the best practices that have been demonstrated during the first half of the project. The project resources are utilized efficiently and after some staff turnover issues during the first year, the park administration has now a well qualified team of professionals to manage the park. The strong partnership between UNDP and NFA is conducive to good project management. However, the stakeholder participation in the management of the park is limited; particularly the participation of the local communities. Access to information is also limited and more effort is needed in this area. Nevertheless, the good progress so far let to believe that the potential for the project to achieve its objective is good as well as achieving global environmental benefits due to its globally unique biodiversity. Finally, the design of the project, the strong partnership with NFA and the fact that the staff is the permanent staff of the MMNP Administration are all contributing factors to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project achievements.

Relevance: The Project is highly relevant for Romania and the development of its national network of protected areas. The Macin Mountains are the only Balkan-Pontic steppe ecosystem in the EU. It is an internationally important and recognized bio-geographic area and the EU accession increased its relevance to be protected and conserve the specific habitats, plant communities, endemics, sub-endemic and relict species. Romania is committed to strengthen its network of protected areas and the design of this project responds well to these national needs as well as to the UNDP country programme for Romania. The project objective

is about demonstrating an effective management model that would be replicated in other protected areas in Romania. Locally, the project provides resources to protect the natural resources of the Macin Mountains but also some know-how to use sustainably these natural resources. The MMNP Administration is seen as a catalyst for initiated local sustainable development activities in the surrounding areas.

***Effectiveness:** The project effectiveness is satisfactory.* The project is delivering results as per the expected outcomes. After a difficult start due to some major issues with local private operators, the project is now on track and should achieve its set of expected outcomes. In the first half of the project, the focus was more on achieving results under outcome 1 & 2: the MMNP Administration was set up, the MMNP management bodies established and the staff hired; a management plan underway based on an innovative landscape ecology planning approach; and some initiatives in the surrounding areas to ensure that the landscape is biodiversity-friendly such as the promotion of organic farming and the negotiation of a corridor (50ha) with local communities to conserve a sensitive habitat area situated outside of the park boundaries. In the second half, the project will now focus more on achieving the expected outcome 3 that is to replicate the best practices learned through the project to other small protected areas in Romania.

***Efficiency:** The efficiency of the project is satisfactory.* The project resources are utilized efficiently and the project management team uses an adaptive management approach to adapt its implementation. After a difficult first year when the project faced staff turnover issues, the project is now operating well and was able to make up its delay in the delivery of results. The project has now a good team of people – including some of them from the area – that are effective in developing good relationships with the local communities; particularly with the local elected leaders (Mayors). The project benefits from a strong management support from the UNDP-CO; including good management and administration of the project financial resources. The partnership between UNDP and NFA is excellent and the project is properly monitored, following UNDP/GEF procedures. However, information produced by the project should be made available to the general public through a web site and local information centers. Additionally, the involvement of stakeholders into the park's management decision-making process is limited and it should be reinforced during the second half of the project; which would strengthen the stakeholder ownership of MMNP.

***Impact:** The potential impact of the project is satisfactory.* Considering the current achievements, the potential for the project to achieve its objective is good. Through outcome 1 & 2, the project is demonstrating a landscape-oriented management method for small protected areas; the best tested practices should form a model to be replicated throughout the network of protected areas in Romania (outcome 3). In addition, the potential for the project to achieve global environmental benefits is rated as excellent. The Macin Mountains are part of the Dobrudja plateau that is an internationally important and recognized bio-geographical area. The strengthening of the management of MMNP should contribute to improve the conservation of this globally recognized biodiversity. Finally, the activities conducted in the surrounding areas to ensure the biodiversity-friendly use of the surrounding landscape have a positive impact on the local environment, poverty and socio-economic development.

***Sustainability:** The long-term sustainability of the project achievements is highly satisfactory.* A good sustainability strategy was developed as part of the design of the project. The strong partnership between UNDP and NFA is the cornerstone for the long-term sustainability potential of this project. NFA is investing into this project and is expecting its success to reinforce its network of protected areas. Additionally, the project set-up also reinforces the long-term sustainability. The project staffs are the permanent staffs of the MMNP Administration. Once the project ends, the staff will carry on with their respective duties, ensuring the continuity of the project achievements; no major disruption should occur at project end. Sustainability is also emphasized by the implementation approach of the project. All initiatives focus on developing capacities and sustainability is a “built-in” feature of most project initiatives. The project is supporting rather than “doing” initiatives. Finally, by design the project achievements are to be replicated in other protected areas in Romania (outcome 3), which is also reinforcing the long-term sustainability of project achievements.

The main lessons learned are summarized below:

- When the project staffs are permanent employees of the relevant national institutions, it is conducive to better ownership, institutionalization, replication and long-term sustainability of the project achievements.

- A small protected area is surrounded by rural areas; it needs to have the local population engaged in the management of the PA. Local communities need to consider the PA as an asset that needs to be protected and used sustainably. However, if we want these communities to become partners in the management of a PA, they need to understand the concept of protecting an area and the opportunities to improve their livelihood in using it sustainably.
- A project design with a well-integrated sustainability and replicability strategy is a contributing factor for the success of a project. When these elements are part of the set of expected results, they are considered early in the implementation by the project team, have project resources allocated to them and, as a consequence, they guarantee a better replicability and sustainability of project achievements.
- The establishment of the NATURA 2000 network in Romania was conducted very rapidly with limited consultation with the local population. The concept of Natura 2000 is good and local communities can benefit from it; however, the lack of consultation can transform a good concept into a disastrous process on the ground, emphasizing constraints and preventing the local communities to benefit from opportunities.

It is also to be noted that more lessons learned will be identified during the second half of the project and be part of the achievements under outcome 3 that is to replicate the best practices that have been tested and demonstrated under outcome 1 and 2. The selection of these best practices will be done in 2008 and their replication throughout the PA system in Romania should start in 2009.

Finally, within the context of this assessment recommendations were developed and are presented below:

Recommendations for the Remaining Implementation Period of the Project

1. Undertake a review of international practices for managing similar protected areas as additional potential best practices for managing the park and its surrounding areas and monitoring its biodiversity. A review of international practices would enrich the landscape conservation plan and the management plan for MMNP, which are currently under development.
2. As per the “Year 3 work plan”, finalize as soon as possible the main initiatives under outcome 1 & 2 and kick-start activities under outcome 3. It is recommended to organize a national workshop in collaboration with NFA and the Maramures Project to review these emerging best practices and identify the needs for the network of protected areas in Romania. The objective would be to identify the national needs in term of best practices, validate the emerging best practices in both UNDP/GEF projects and identify a plan of action to “package” these best practices.
3. The MMNP Administration should review the participation of local stakeholders in the management of the park. This issue was already raised in a recent survey on “conservation attitudes in the communities neighbouring the MMNP” and emphasized in the October 2007 report of the Consultant Phillip Desmet as a key element determining the long-term success of the park.
4. Explore the possibilities to monitor the surrounding areas through community/municipality committees or other forms of local associations (NGOs?) with the participation of the MMNP Administration. It will develop a greater participation of stakeholders in monitoring and preserving the surrounding areas and a greater local ownership to conserve these areas.
5. Support the production of a compendium (profile) on MMNP and the surrounding communities to expand people’s access to information on the area. This compendium should be mainly a compilation of existing data and become the environment and socio-economic baseline for the Macin area. Its potential use could be for identifying long term management strategies for the park, development of local sustainable development plans in the surrounding areas and it could also be packaged as a book on Macin and be sold as a reference book on the area.
6. The information produced by the project should be made more accessible to the public; particularly through the MMNP web site. The park newsletter should be disseminated largely in the local communities.
7. On the basis of the training needs assessment, recommendations for the development of a training programme were made with two levels of priorities. However, it is also recommended to develop this training programme in close collaboration with NFA and explore the possibility to develop this training programme in partnership with an existing training institution such as a training organization that is developing/delivering training courses to the public service or an academic institution specialised in environment and/or forestry.

8. Support capacity development activities to strengthen the management of the MMNP Administration; using the proposed institutional and project management skills training module identified through the training needs analysis.
9. Under the current jurisdiction, the MMNP Administration is becoming the custodian of the N2000 site. It is recommended that the project support the integration of the two concepts (N2000 and MMNP); particularly in the management plan that is under development.
10. The project should continue to support these dynamic communities in the surrounding areas of the park; particularly helping them to identify funding sources and developing project proposals. Opportunities exist, particularly with the EU structural funds such as the rural development strategy and action plan and the Natura 2000 programme funds available under the SOP Environment to help local landowners to preserve sensitive habitats.
11. Fast track the last phase of the value of the environmental services study. According to the 2008 work plan, the target date for the completion of the study is October 2008. It is late if we consider the implementation of any proposed recommendations within the project's lifetime.
12. Monitor the possible institutional reorganization for the management of the protected areas in Romania. According to MESD, this change may occur this year (2008) with the set-up of this new national agency and a staff of 300 people. The risk for the project is limited but changes should be expected.
13. Review the performance indicators of the project and add one indicator to measure the progress of the relationship between the MMNP Administration and the local communities such as "*Local communities understand better why to protect the Macin Mountain National Park and are active in its management*".
14. Review the METT and set new targets for each indicator for the end of the project; particularly for the areas where the project is supporting capacity development initiatives such as the strengthening of the Administration and the relation with the local communities.

Opportunities

15. The project team in collaboration with UNDP-CO and NFA should explore the possibility to access some of the environment SOP funds to strengthen the network of PAs and build on the achievements of the MMNP project. This SOP was approved by the EU in July 2007 with an indicative budget of 4.5B euros from the EU and 1B euros from GOR for the period 2007-2013. The priority axis #4 is about nature protection with a budget of 215M euros to implement adequate management framework for PAs; including N2000 sites.
16. It is recommended that a case study be done on the UNDP/GEF experience in Romania; including the identification of lessons learned. One strong characteristic of this project is the excellent partnership between the international implementation agency/donor (UNDP/GEF) and the national implementing agency (NFA). The partnership is the basis for truly joint projects, whereby, both partners are investing resources. The results seem to be: (1) a good response to address national priorities; (2) an integrated approach for project implementation leading to good stakeholder participation and ownership; (3) a great potential for replicating project achievements; (4) an easier project exit with minimal disruption of the work of local partners; and (5) a better long-term sustainability of the project achievements, due to an early institutionalization of these results into the local structures, procedures, skills and knowledge.

Sumar Executiv

Proiectul UNDP/GEF The UNDP/GEF project “Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Best Practices for Management of Small Protected Areas in Macin Mountains National Park (MMNP)” se bucura de suportul financiar al GEF, UNDP, Administratia Nationala a Padurilor (ROMSILVA) si al altor parteneri. Biroul UNDP din Romania este agentia de implementare iar Romsilva este Agentia Nationala de implementare pentru Romania pentru acest proiect. Proiectul a fost semnat in noiembrie 2005 si va fi finalizat in Decembrie 2009. Bugetul total este de 3.64 milioane dolari SUA din care un million de dolari SUA reprezinta contributia GEF, incluzand 23970 dolari USA pentru faza PDF-A si 2,66 milioane dolari USD fiind contributia celorlalti parteneri ai proiectului.

Obiectivul priectului PNMM (Parcul National Muntii Macinului) este aplicarea unei metode de lucru in teren pentru managementul ariilor protejate de dimensiuni reduse si imbunatatirea eficientei activitatii de conservare in ariile protejate pentru a servi ca model de urmat in sistemul ariilor protejate din Romania. Pentru indeplinirea acestui obiectiv in cadrul proiectului se estimeaza obtinerea a trei rezultate: (1) aria productiva din jurul PNMM va avea un impact redus asupra mediului; (2) capacitatea de management a PNMM si eficienta activitatii de conservare se va imbunatati; (3) cele mai bune practici in managementul ariilor protejate de dimensiuni reduse vor fi replicate la nivel national.

Initierea evaluarii la mijlocul proiectului – una din conditiile specifice ale procedurilor UNDP/GEF – a fost efectuata de UNDP Romania ca Agentie de implementare a GEF. Menirea evaluarii este sa furnizeze o analiza a progreselor din prima parte a proiectului si o masura a eficientei si eficacitatii activitatilor in raport cu obiectivele propuse si sa produca posibile recomandari asupra posibilitatilor de imbunatatire a managementului pentru perioada ramasa pana la finalizarea proiectului in 2009.

Evaluarea a fost efectuata de o echipa de Consultanti externi: domnul Jean-Joseph Bellamy, Conducatorul echipei si dr. Lucian Georgescu, Consultanta National. Evaluarea s-a bazat pe consultarea documentelor proiectului si pe discutii directe cu membrii echipei pentru si cu persoanele reprezentand institutiile implicate in proiect. Metoda de evaluare a inclus dezvoltarea unei matrici de evaluare pentru orientarea fazei de acumulare a datelor si analiza a procesului. Concluziile au fost strcturate prin analiza informatiilor din surse multiple atunci cand acest lucru a fost posibil. Raportul de evaluare este structurat dupa criteriile GEF de evaluare: Relevanta, Eficacitate, Eficienta, Rezultate/Impact si Sustenabilitate.

Concluziile principale ale evaluarii la mijlocul proiectului sunt:

General: Nivelul general al progresului proiectului este considerat satisfacator. Proiectul este foarte relevant in contextual consolidarii retelei ariilor protejate in Romania. Dupa un prim an mai dificil proiectul a inceput sa obtina rezultatele scontate. In prima parte a desfasurarii sale proiectul a fost axat pe obtinerea tipului de rezultate 1 si 2. Admnistratia PNMM este operational in acest moment si unele instrumente managerial au fost dezvoltate deja. Au fost dezvoltate activitati demonstrative in imprejurimile parcului pentru a testa capacitatea de utilizare a terenurilor cu un impact redus asupra biodiversitatii. A doua jumatate a proiectului trebuie sa se axeze pe initiative corespunzatoare rezultatelor din categoria 3 ca bune practici replicabile. Resursele proiectului sunt utilizate efficient si, dupa unele probleme legate de mobilitatea personalului in primul an, echipa PNMM a devenit o echipa foarte bine calificata in managementului acestuia. Printr-un parteneriat de foarte buna calitate dintre UNDP si Romsilva s-a asigurat un management de buna calitate a parcului. Se poate afirma insa ca participarea celor interesati in managemntul parcului este limitata mai ales in cazul comunitatilor locale. Accesul acestora la informatii este limitat si o intensificare a eforturilor in aceasta directie se impune. Progresele facute conduc la idea ca exista un potential real de indeplinire a obiectivelor proiectului asociat cu beneficii in domeniul mediului favorizate de globalitate si caracterul unic al biodiversitatii in zona PNMM. In final, designul proiectului, parteneriatul efficient cu ANP si faptul ca echipa parcului are un caracter permanent.

Relevanta: Proiectul are o mare relevant pentru Romania si pentru reseaua ariilor protejate. Muntii Macinului sunt singurii din UE care inregistreaza prezenta ecosistemelor mixte Balcano-Pontice. Acest fapt este recunoscut la nivel international iar intrarea Romaniei in UE a intensificat eforturile de conservare a habitatelor specific, a plantelor, a speciilor endemice, subendemice si a celor pe cale de disparitie. Romania

si-a propus consolidarea ariilor protejate iar prezentul proiect corespunde acestei prioritati asa cum corespunde si programului UNDP pentru Romania. Obiectivul proiectului este sa creeze si sa implementeze un model de management care sa poata fi folosit si la nivelul altor arii protejate din Romania. La nivel local proiectul contribuie la protejarea resurselor naturale din Muntii Maramuresului dar ofera si informatii asupra modului de utilizare sustenabila a acestora. Administratia PNMM are imaginea unui catalizator pentru activitatile locale incluse in efortul de dezvoltare durabila a zonei.

***Eficacitate:** Eficienta proiectului este satisfacatoare, rezultatele fiind in general cele asteptate.* Dupa un prim an dificil datorat unor diferenduri majore cu operatori private proiectul se afla acum pe calea scontata si trebuie sa obtina rezultatele scontate. In prima jumatate a proiectului s-a insistat pe rezultate din categoriile 1 si 2: s-a stabilit Administratia parcului si a fost angajat personalul implicat in managementul proiectului; s-a dezvoltat un plan inovativ de management ecologic si s-au dezvoltat initiative in ariile conexe destinate sa contribuie la conservarea biodiversitatii precum agricultura organica, negocierea unui coridor (50 ha) cu comunitatile locale pentru conservarea habitatelor sensibile din afara granitelor parcului. In a doua jumatate proiectul trebuie sa se concentreze pe rezultatele din categoria 3 potential replicabile ca bune practici la nivelul ariilor protejate de mici dimensiuni din Romania

***Eficienta:** Eficienta proiectului este satisfacatoare.* Resursele proiectului au fost utilizate cu un randament optim utilizandu-se un management adaptativ pentru implementarea obiectivelor. Dupa un prim an mai dificil proiectul are o activitatea satisfacatoare fiind capabil sa recupereze ramanerile in urma in unele domenii. Proiectul are o echipa buna – unii din membri fiind din zona – si a dezvoltat bune relatii cu comunitatile locale in particular cu administratia aleasa (primarii). Proiectul beneficiaza de un foarte bun suport managerial din partea UNDP-CO, incluzand o coordonare judicioasa a resurselor financiare. Parteneriatul dintre UNDP si ANP este excellent asigurand o monitorizare foarte buna conform procedurilor UNDP/GEF. Este necesar ca informatia produsa prin activitatile proiectului sa fie accesibila unui public mai larg prin diseminarea pe internet si a unor centre locale de informare. Se poate aduga deasemeni ca implicarea celor interesati in procesul managerial este limitata si trebuie intensificata in a doua parte a proiectului ceea ce va creste responsabilitatea comunitatilor din aria PNMM.

***Impact:** Impactul potential al proiectului este satisfactor.* Luand in considerare rezultatele obtinute pana in prezent se poate considera ca exista un bun potential de atingere a obiectivelor propuse. Prin intermediul activitatilor de tip 1 si 2 proiectul a demonstrat o metodologie managerial orientata in teren; bunele practici trebuie sa devina modele replicabile la nivelul retelei ariilor protejate din Romania (rezultate tip 3). Potentialul proiectului este sa produca beneficii globale pentru mediu este excelent. Muntii Macinului apartin regiunii Dobrogea fiind o arie biogeografica recunoscuta international. Consolidarea managementului PNMM trebuie sa aduca o contributie importanta la conservarea biodiversitatii. Activitatile de organizare in imprejurimi pentru a minimiza impactul asupra biodiversitatii au un impact pozitiv la nivel local, atat la nivelul mediului inconjurator cat si pentru dezvoltarea economico-sociala a zonei.

***Sustenabilitate:** Sustenabilitatea pe termen lung a proiectului este foarte buna.* Strategia pentru o dezvoltare sustenabila este o parte integranta a proiectului. Excelentul parteneriat dintre UNDP si ANP este decisiv pentru sustenabilitatea pe termen lung a proiectului. ANP a investit in acest proiect si se astepta la o intarire a retelei nationale de arii protejate, consecinta proiectului si rezultatelor sale. Echipa proiectului face parte din staful permanent a PNMM. La incheierea proiectului exista toate conditiile pentru indeplinirea in continuare a obiectivelor fara disfunctionalitati majore legate de intreruperea finantarii GEF. Metoda de implementare asigura deasemeni sustenabilitatea proiectului. Majoritatea activitatilor proiectului sunt bazate pe dezvoltarea capacitatilor de implementare asigurandu-se un caracter sustenabil clar. Proiectul asigura suportul activ al initiativelor mai mult decat executia acestora. In final se poate aprecia ca proiectul in sine, prin activitatile si rezultatele sale asigura o replicabilitate importanta (rezultat tip 3) ceea ce contribuie implicit la intarirea sustenabilitatii pe termen lung a proiectului.

Principalele lectii invatate dupa efectuarea proiectului sunt prezentate mai jos:

- Cand echipa proiectului este angajata permanent in structure ale unor institutii nationale exista un effect pozitiv asupra responsabilizarii, institutionalizarii, replicabilitatii si sustenabilitatii pe termen lung a rezultatelor proiectului.

- O arie protejată de dimensiuni reduse este înconjurată de zone rurale; este necesar deci să se intensifice implicarea comunităților locale în managementul AP. Comunitățile locale trebuie să considere AP ca un bun care trebuie protejat și utilizat într-un mod care să asigure sustenabilitatea. Dacă se dorește formarea acestei concepții comunitățile locale trebuie implicate în managementul AP în asociere cu îmbunătățirea înțelegerii practicilor de conservare a biodiversității legate de creșterea nivelului propriu de viață și a sustenabilității ambelor.
- Un proiect continuând o strategie pre-determinată care să asigure sustenabilitatea și replicabilitatea are șanse reale de succes. Când aceste elemente sunt parte a rezultatelor estimate ele sunt considerate în stadiul incipient de către echipa proiectului și de aceea sunt ele asigura resurse pentru replicare și sustenabilitate superioare
- Extinderea rețelei NATURA 200 în România a fost făcută rapid, fără o consultare serioasă a comunităților locale. Conceptul în sine este pozitiv și poate aduce beneficii comunităților locale dar, lipsa unei consultări temeinice poate transforma un concept favorabil într-un proces defavorabil care capătă imaginea unui cumul de constrângeri și care îndepărtează populația de la beneficiile potențiale.

Este de notat că lecțiile învățate din acest proiect vor fi parte a rezultatelor de tip 3 și vor fi replicate în contextul bunelor practici testate și implementate în cadrul rezultatelor de tip 1 și 2. Selecția acestor practici se va face în cursul anului 2008 și replicarea la nivelul AP în România va avea loc în 2009.

În acest context a fost alcătuit un set de recomandări care vor fi prezentate în cele ce urmează:

Recomandări pentru perioada rămasă în implementarea proiectului:

1. Efectuarea unei treceri în revistă a practicilor internaționale în managementul unor arii protejate similar ca sursă suplimentară de bune practici pentru managementul parcului și a împrejurimilor precum și a monitorizării biodiversității. Această trecere în revistă va îmbogăți planul de conservare a biodiversității precum și planul de management al PNMM, ambele fiind în această perioadă în plină dezvoltare.
2. Așa cum se prevede în Planul pentru al treilea an al proiectului este necesară finalizarea activităților din categoriile 1 și 2 pentru a putea demara activitățile din categoria 3. Este recomandată organizarea unui workshop național în colaborare cu ANP și Proiectul Maramureș pentru a face o analiză a acestor bune practici și pentru identificarea nevoilor în zonele protejate din România. Obiectivul este identificarea nevoilor la nivel național privind bunele practici, validarea bunelor practici pentru ambele proiecte UNDP/GEF și identificarea unui plan de acțiune care să încorporeze aceste metode.
3. Administrația PNMM trebuie să evalueze implicarea participanților în managementul parcului. Această problemă a fost recent adresată într-un studiu numit 'conservarea atitudinilor în comunitățile din vecinătatea PNMM' și subliniat în raportul consultantului Phillip Desmet din octombrie 2007, ca un element cheie pentru succesul pe termen lung al parcului.
4. Explorarea posibilităților pentru monitorizarea zonelor adiacente prin intermediul comitetelor comunității/municipalității sau alte forme de asociații locale (ONG), cu participarea administrației PNMM. Aceasta va mari implicarea participanților în monitorizarea și conservarea ariilor adiacente și dezvoltarea proprietății locale.
5. Susținerea dezvoltării unui compendiu pentru PNMM și crearea condițiilor pentru accesul comunităților locale la informațiile legate de parc și împrejurimile sale. Acest compendiu va constitui, în principal, o compilatie a unor date existente și va deveni o bază pentru mediu și aria socio-economică în zona Macin. Utilizarea potențială poate fi identificarea strategiilor pentru managementul parcului pe termen lung, dezvoltarea unor planuri de dezvoltare locală. De asemenea, aceste planuri pot fi compilate într-un document ce poate fi comercializat ca un manual de referință pentru aria Macinului.
6. Pachetul de informații produs în urma acestui proiect vor fi puse la dispoziția publicului, în special prin adăugarea informațiilor pe site-ul PNMM. Brosura parcului va fi diseminată comunității locale.
7. Pe baza evaluării necesităților de training, recomandările pentru dezvoltarea unui program de training s-a făcut pe două nivele de prioritate. Se recomandă punerea la punct al unui program de training în colaborare cu NFA și explorarea posibilității de dezvoltare a acestui program de training în parteneriat cu o instituție de training deja existentă, care oferă cursuri pentru domeniul public sau o instituție de învățământ superior specializat în probleme de mediu și/sau păduri.
8. Activități destinate să consolideze capacitatea managerială a echipei PNMM prin utilizarea modulelor de training și identificarea priorităților pentru training prin intermediul unor analize specifice.
9. În situația curentă, administrația PNMM devine responsabilul zonelor încadrate în rețeaua N2000. Se

recomanda ca proiectul sa favorizeze integrarea a doua concepte (N2000 si PNMM), in special planul de management in desfasurare.

10. Proiectul va continua sa favorizeze comunitatile dinamice aflate in zona parcului, in particular pentru obtinerea fondurilor pentru dezvoltarea de proiecte specific. Exista oportunitati in aceasta directie in special legate de fondurile structurale ale UE precum si cele provenind din programele guvernamentale de dezvoltare rurala si din cele destinate conservarii biodiversitatii in ariile din reseaua Natura 2000.
11. In ceea ce priveste actiunile lagate de serviciile de mediu, daca se analizeaza Planul de activitati pe 2008 se constata ca acestea trebuie finalizate in oct 2008. Se poate aprecia ca este un termen scurt pentru implementarea unor recomandari in acest sens.
12. Exista un risc limitat in ceea ce priveste impactul pe care noua reorganizarea din cadrul MMDD l-ar putea avea supra PNMM. Se pot astepta insa unele schimbari legate de potentiala aparitie a unei noi agentii pentru ariile protejate.
13. Trecerea in revista a indicatorilor de performanta si adaugarea unui indicator legat de relatia dintre Administratia PNMM si comunitatile locale ca de exemplu: : “Cum se actioneaza pentru o mai buna intelegere a existentei si activitatilor parcului de catre comunitatile locale”.
14. Trecerea in revista a METT si identificarea a noi obiective pentru partea finala a proiectului, in particular pentru dezvoltarea initiativelor pentru cresterea capacitatii managerial sau consolidarea relatiilor PNMM cu comunitatile locale.

Oportunitati

15. Echipa proiectului impreuna cu UNDP si ANP trebuie sa exploreze oportunitatile pentru accesarea a noi fonduri in special din categoria celor structural pentru sustinerea activitatilor PNMM. Sumele disponibile prin proiectele structurale (pentru toate prioritatile) se ridica la 4.5 B Euro din fonduri UE si 1B din fonduri guvernamentale (perioada 2007 – 2013). Prioritatea 4 referitoare la protectia naturii beneficiaza de fonduri de 215 MEuros.
16. Este recomandata efectuarea unor studii de caz referitoare la activitatea UNDP in Romania cu identificarea lectiilor invatate. Una din caracteristicile de excelenta ale acestui proiect este relatia si colaborarea dintre agentia internationala de implementare (UNDP/GEF) si agentia nationala (ANP). Rezultatele acestui parteneriat pot fi baza pentru: (1) o solutie adresara prioritatilor nationale, (2) o solutie integrate pentru imbunatatirea implicarii participantilor la realizarea proiectului, (3) un important potential de replicare a rezultatelor proiectului, (4) finalizarea in bune conditii a proiectului cu minimalizarea consecintelor terminarii finantarii, (5) sustenabilitatea pe termen lung a rezultatelor proiectului si institutionalizarea acestora la nivelul structurilor, procedurilor, metodologiilor si practicilor locale.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents the findings of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project “*Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Best Practices for Management of Small Protected Areas in Macin Mountains National Park (MMNP)*” (PIMS 1999). This mid-term evaluation was performed by two independent Consultants Mr. Bellamy Jean-Joseph and Mr. Georgescu Lucian on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

2. A modern, national protected area (PA) system is emerging in Romania. The challenge of maintaining and conserving biodiversity in landscapes dominated by human land-use is of paramount concern to this emerging protected area system. Small protected areas, when managed as “islands” in a productive landscape “sea,” lose biodiversity over time. This project is designed to catalyze the adoption of best practices to meet this challenge by focusing on the Macin Mountain National Park (MMNP) and its surrounding landscape.

3. The project will contribute to the consolidation and rationalization of Romania’s national protected area system by demonstrating best management practices for securing long-term conservation in small protected areas. The replication of the project’s best practices will contribute significantly to the maturation of Romania’s emerging national level system of PAs. It seeks to build the capacity of protected areas for long term sustainability through legislation, policy and enabling activities to help PAs function effectively at the individual level and hence improve the effectiveness of the national level.

4. Among the EU-27 member states, Romania has the greatest bio-geographical diversity (5 bio-geographical regions out of the 11 at European level); most of them are in a good conservation status. From the 198 types of European habitats - which 65 are priority habitats - 94 types of habitats are in Romania, of which 23 are priority habitats at EU level; their conservation imposes designation of some Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

5. Nationally, the protected areas cover 17-18% of the territory of Romania; however, in the County of Tulcea – where the MMNP is situated - the protected areas (including the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve) cover 69-70% of the territory of the County. The County of Tulcea has 272,000 inhabitants of which 15,000 live in the Danube Delta.

6. This report includes seven sections. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the project; chapter 3 briefly describes the objective, scope, methodology, evaluation users and limitations of the evaluation; chapter 4 presents the findings of the evaluation. Conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations are presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively and relevant annexes are found at the back end of the report.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

7. The UNDP/GEF project “*Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Best Practices for Management of Small Protected Areas in Macin Mountains National Park (MMNP)*” is a joint initiative of the UNDP and the Government of Romania. It is funded by the GEF, UNDP, the NFA and others partners. The UNDP Country Office in Romania is the implementing agency and the National Forest Administration (NFA) was designated as the National Implementing Agency for this project. The Project was signed in November 2005 and will end in December 2009. It has a total budget of US\$3.64M of which US\$1.0M is funded by GEF; including \$23,970 to fund the PDF-A phase and US\$2.66M co-financed by project partners.

8. The government of Romania designated the Macin Mountains as the Macin Mountains National Park (MMNP) in 2003. With an area of 11,142 hectares, MMNP is one of three national parks not located in the Carpathian Mountain chain. The National Park category (IUCN Category II) allows for sustainable use activities within the boundaries of the Park, as regulated by a management plan. The landscape surrounding MMNP is comprised of small towns, agricultural land, grassland/grazing lands, the Danube River bottom/riparian zone, and production forest. Six municipalities have administrative territories within MMNP: Macin Town (11,673 inhabitants), Luncavita (7,194), Jijila (5,967), Greci (5,739), Cerna (4,507), and Hamcearca (1,450). The town of Macin is the main urban settlement in the area. There are a total of 14 villages within the other 5 localities.

9. The Macin Mountains, also known as the Hercinian Mountains, are the oldest mountains in Romania; their biological habitats and communities are completely different from the Carpathian Mountain range further north. With a maximum height of just over 450 m, they rise out of the Danube River bottom, eighty kilometres upstream from the river's delta. One of Europe's most outstanding natural regions, the Macin Mountains draw their uniqueness from a combination of intrinsic geological character and bio-geographical location and specificity. These mountains support a large number of endangered species as well as ecosystems characteristic of the Balkan-Pontic steppe and the sub-Mediterranean and Balkanic forest. Geographically, the Macin Mountains are situated at a low altitude in a unique bio-geographical position. Floristically, they represent the northern limit of Mediterranean, Balkan and Pontic species, the southern limit of the central European and Caucasian species, and the western limits of a number of Asiatic species.

10. The problem of MMNP is that - as a small protected area - it loses biodiversity over time when managed as "islands" in productive landscape. The main threat to the biodiversity in these small protected areas is the forest and grassland habitat degradation and low-level species loss to the surrounding landscape. The main barriers for an effective management of small protected areas include: absence of established PA management practice; top-down, narrow management, lacking participatory and cross-sectoral protected area management approach; economic and financial with a narrow valuation of forest products and benefits; and, regulation and policy providing management practitioners with few tools that can help to apply new approaches.

11. The objective of the project is to demonstrate a landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and improving the conservation effectiveness of protected areas and to serve as a basis for replication across the emerging national system of protected areas in Romania. The project has three expected outcomes to achieve this objective:

1. The productive landscape around Macin Mountains National Park is made more biodiversity friendly;
2. Macin Mountains National Park management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured;
3. Replication of small protected area management best practices across national PA system is ongoing.

12. The project is to demonstrate in MMNP the application of landscape ecology and biology-inspired conservation tools, with emphasis on community and civil society participation and cross-sectoral collaboration, and prioritization of the replication of lessons learned and best practices across the emerging network of over 800 protected areas of various types in Romania.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION

13. This mid-term project evaluation (a requirement of UNDP/GEF procedures) is initiated by UNDP Romania as the GEF Implementing Agency. This evaluation provides an in-depth reflection of project progress and future priority actions.

3.1. Objectives

14. The objective of this Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) is to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities in relation to the stated project objective so far, and to produce possible recommendations on how to improve the management of the project until its completion in 2009.

15. This MTE will play a critical role in the future implementation of the project by providing advice on how to:

- Strengthen the adaptive management and monitoring function of the project;
- Ensure accountability for the achievement of the GEF objective;
- Enhance organizational and development learning;
- Enable informed decision – making;
- Enhance the long-term sustainability and the replicability of the project achievements.

16. The evaluation report provides the Client complete and convincing evidence to support its findings/ratings. The report includes ratings on specific aspects of the project, as described in the Terms of Reference. Particular emphasis was put on current project results and the possibility of achieving all objectives in the established timeframe, taking into consideration the speed, at which the project is being delivered.

3.2. Scope

17. Below is presented a summary of the elements that are covered by this evaluation. There are based on the terms of reference:

- Project concept and design
- Implementation
- Project outputs, outcomes and impact
- Progress towards results
- Sustainability and Replicability
- Project's Adaptive Management Framework
- Underlying Factors
- UNDP Contribution
- Partnership Strategy

3.3. Methodology

18. The following methodology is compliant with international criteria and professional norms and standards; including the norms and standards adopted by the UN Evaluation Group. The Evaluators uses methodologies that promote a shared understanding of environmental management procedures and priorities. These techniques stress the search for, and application of simple and effective solutions aimed at improving environmental management practices, at both local and global levels.

3.3.1. Overall Approach

19. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the “*GEF Monitoring & Evaluation Policy*” as well as the “*UNDP/GEF monitoring and evaluation policy*”. It was undertaken in-line with the GEF principles: independence, impartiality, transparency, disclosure, ethical, partnership, competencies/capacities, credibility and utility. It considered the two GEF evaluation objectives at the project level: (i) promote accountability for the achievement of GEF objectives; including the global environmental benefits; and (ii) promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the GEF and its partners. The final approach and methodology were proposed and reviewed by UNDP Romania prior to being used by the evaluation team to conduct the evaluation assignment.

20. The evaluation team developed and used tools in accordance with the GEF M&E policy. The evaluation provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful and that is easily understood by project partners and applicable to the remaining period of project duration. As mentioned in the TOR, the evaluation was conducted and the findings are structured around the GEF five major evaluation criteria; which are also the five internationally accepted evaluation criteria set out by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development:

- *Relevance* relates to an overall assessment of whether the project is in keeping with its design and in addressing the key priorities to ensure that the obligations under the UNCBD are met and in keeping with the donors and partner policies, as well as with local needs and priorities.
- *Effectiveness* is a measure of the extent to which formally agreed end of project results (outcomes) have been achieved, or can be expected to be achieved.
- *Efficiency* is a measure of the productivity of the project intervention process, i.e. to what degree the outcomes achieved derive from efficient use of financial, human and material resources. In principle, it means comparing outcomes and outputs against inputs.
- *Impacts* are the long-term results of the project and include both positive and negative consequences, whether these are foreseen and expected, or not.
- *Sustainability* is an indication of whether the outcomes (end of project results) and the positive impacts (long term results) are likely to continue after the project ends.

21. In addition to the GEF guiding principles described in the TOR, the Evaluation Team also applied the following methodological principles to conduct the evaluation: (i) Participatory Consultancy; (ii) Applied Knowledge: the Team's working knowledge of evaluation theories and approaches and its particular expertise in environmental issues were applied to this mandate; (iii) Results-Based Management; (iv) Validity of information: multiple measures and sources were sought out to ensure that the results are accurate and valid; (v) Integrity: Any issue with respect to conflict of interest, lack of professional conduct or misrepresentation were immediately referred to the client if needed; and (vi) Respect and anonymity: All participants had the right to provide information in confidence.

22. The evaluation was conducted following a set of steps presented in the table below:

Steps to conduct the evaluation
I. <u>Review Project and Prepare Mission</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start-up teleconference/ finalize assignment WP • Collect and review project documents • Elaborate & submit evaluation matrix and questionnaire/interview guide • Prepare mission: agenda and logistic
II. <u>Collect Information</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission to Romania for the Team Leader • Interview key-Stakeholders • Conduct field visits • Further collect and review of documents • Mission debriefings • Mission Report Summary
III. <u>Analyze Information</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth analysis and interpretation of data collected • Follow-up interviews (if necessary) • Elaborate and submit draft evaluation report
IV. <u>Finalize Evaluation Report</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate draft report to UNDP/relevant stakeholders • Integrate comments and submit final report

23. Finally, the evaluation team also applied the “*Ethical Code of Conduct for UNDP Evaluation*”. The evaluation team conducted evaluation activities, which were independent, impartial and rigorous. The MTE contributes to learning and accountability. The evaluation team has personal and professional integrity and is guided by propriety in the conduct of their business.

3.3.2. Evaluation Instruments

24. To conduct this terminal evaluation, the Evaluation Team used the following evaluation instruments and data collection instruments to successfully achieve the mandate:

Evaluation Matrix: As part of the initiation phase, the evaluation team developed an evaluation matrix based on the evaluation scope presented in the TOR, the project log-frame and the review of the key project documents (*see Annex 2*). This matrix is structured along the five GEF evaluation criteria and includes all evaluation questions. It provided overall directions for the evaluation, was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents and provided a basis for structuring the evaluation report. This matrix was assembled with an overview of the project, the evaluation scope and the proposed methodology to complete the evaluation assignment strategy. [*This evaluation assignment strategy was presented to UNDP-Romania for approval before proceeding into the data-gathering phase*].

Documentation Review: It was conducted in Romania and in Canada by the evaluation team. In addition to being a main source of information, all documentation was also used as preparation for the mission of the Team Leader to Romania. A list of documents was provided in the TOR and the evaluation team collected other relevant documents through the web and contacts (*see Annex 3*). [*A review of the list of documents was proposed at the start-up of the assignment*].

Mission Agenda: An agenda for the 7-day mission to Romania was developed during the preparatory phase (see Annex 4). The process reviewed the list of Stakeholders to be interviewed; starting with the initial list presented in the TOR. This list was expanded as needed to represent all Stakeholders such as land owners/users, farmers, local elected community leaders, etc. as time allowed. Then, the evaluation team in collaboration the project management team planned the interviews during the week prior to the mission. The objective was to have a well organized and planned mission; which is critical for maximizing data collection and ensuring a broad scan of Stakeholders' views during the time allocated to the mission.

Questionnaire: A questionnaire/interview guide was developed to solicit information from the stakeholders. It was composed of standard questions issued from the evaluation matrix (see Annex 5). As part of the participatory approach, the evaluation team ensured that all parties viewed this tool as balanced, unbiased, and structured; in order to yield relevant information. It was also used for interviews to be conducted by phone or email if needed.

Interviews: Stakeholders were interviewed as per the prepared agenda and included UNDP Romania Project Manager, UNDP/GEF RTA from Bratislava, MMNP Administration Staff, Project Oversight Committee members, Project Director and other Stakeholders (see Annex 6). The semi-structured interviews were conducted using the interview guide; adapted to each interview. All interviews were conducted in person with some follow up using emails if needed. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings are incorporated in the final report.

Field Visit: As per the TOR, field visits were conducted during the mission of the Team Leader in Romania; it ensured that the team had direct primary sources of information from the field and project end-users. [These field visits were coordinated in collaboration with UNDP-Romania and the Project Team].

Achievement Rating: The evaluation team rated the project achievements according to the GEF project review criteria; which included the implementation approach, country ownership/drivers, outcome/achievement of objectives, stakeholder participation/public involvement, sustainability, replication approach, cost-effectiveness and monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation team used the ratings as *Highly Satisfactory* (HS), *Satisfactory* (S), *Marginally Satisfactory* (MS), *Marginally Unsatisfactory* (MU), *Unsatisfactory* (U) and *Not Applicable* (NA).

3.4. Evaluation Users

25. This mid-term evaluation has been initiated by UNDP Romania as the Implementation Agency for this project. It aims to provide the project managers (MMNP Administration, UNDP Romania Country Office and UNDP/GEF) with strategy and policy options for more effectively and efficiently achieving the project's outcomes and for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

26. This mid-term evaluation report will be disseminated for review to the executing and implementing agencies, and other partners. The Evaluation Team is fully responsible for this independent evaluation report; which may not necessarily reflect the views of NFA, UNDP or the GEF. The circulation of the final report will be determined by UNDP.

3.5. Limitations and Constraints

27. The findings and conclusions contained in this report rely primarily on a desk review of project documents, a field mission in the Tulcea County and more than 30 interviews with project key informants. Within the given resources allocated to this mid-term evaluation, the independent team of consultants conducted a detailed assessment of actual results against expected results.

28. Nevertheless, this mid-term evaluation report successfully ascertains whether the project is meeting its main objectives - as laid down in the project design document - and whether the project initiatives are, or are

likely to be, sustainable after completion of the project. It also makes a number of recommendations that would be useful to reinforce the long term sustainability of the project achievements and also identifies the main lessons learned and best practices obtained during this initial period of implementation.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

29. This section presents the findings of this mid-term evaluation, which are based on a desk review of project documents and on interviews with key project informants and project staffs. As described in Section 3.3.1 they are structured around the GEF five major evaluation criteria: *Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Results/Impacts* and *Sustainability*.

4.1. Project Relevance

30. The project seeks to demonstrate a landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and improving the conservation effectiveness of protected areas and to serve as a basis for replication across the emerging national system of protected areas in Romania. This section discussed the relevance of the project within its international and national context; as well as against its original design.

4.1.1. UNCBD Objectives

31. The project is highly relevant to the implementation of the UNCBD in Romania. It directly contributes to the objectives of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for Romania through the demonstration of a landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and the improvement of the conservation effectiveness of protected areas. The project is to serve as a basis for replication across the emerging national system of protected areas in Romania. It is directly addressing some of the short-term actions of the NBSAP such as the development and implementation of detailed management plans in 1-2 national parks or reserves; the establishment of the national network of protected areas; the reintroduction of key species extinct from Romania; and the completion of a biodiversity inventory of the primary types of ecosystems.

32. Romania signed the UNCBD in June 1992 and ratified the convention in August 1994. It developed its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) in 1996. This action plan include the following biodiversity objectives: (i) the development of the legislative framework and institutional capacity; (ii) the organization of the national network of protected areas; (iii) the conservation of species with a high economic value; (iv) the integration of the NBSAP into national, sectoral and local strategies and policies; and (v) the protection, conservation and restoration of biodiversity outside protected areas and biodiversity specific to agro-systems. The action plan is divided into three timeframes, 1-5 years, 5-10 years and 5-20 years. A GEF project has recently been approved to support Romania in updating its NBSAP.

33. With regard to protected areas (PAs), Romania had designated 963 protected areas (as of 2004), covering 7% of the country's area. However, most of these PAs exist on paper without an administration in place yet. Several areas already have international recognition, 5 are Ramsar sites and 2 are Biosphere Reserves – part of the UNESCO-MAB network. The National Development Plan 2007-2013 establishes a target to protect 15% of the country by the end of 2013; to comply with European Union requirements. Romania is also using the European bio-regions to establish its Natura 2000 network. Several large-scale projects are currently underway such as the Carpathian Mountains network of protected areas and the Green Danube Corridor.

34. The relevance of the project against the implementation of the UNCBD is indicated in the table 2 below:

Table 1: Relevance of the Project to the UNCBD

Project Outcomes	UNCBD Articles	Article 1: Objectives	Article 5: Cooperation	Article 6: General Measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use	Article 7: Identification and Monitoring	Article 8: In-situ Conservation	Article 10: Sustainable Use of Components of Biological Diversity	Article 11: Incentive Measures	Article 12: Research and Training	Article 13: Public Education and Awareness	Article 17: Exchange of Information
1. The productive landscape around Macin Mountains National Park is made more biodiversity friendly;		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
2. Macin Mountains National Park management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured;		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
3. Replication of small protected area management best practices across national PA system is ongoing.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X

35. The table above indicates that the MMNP project is fully in line with the implementation of the UNCBD in Romania. Through its three expected outcomes it is contributing to most of the convention obligations.

4.1.2. Development and Environment Objectives of Romania

36. The project is highly relevant to the development and environment objectives of Romania; particularly to the development of the national protected area system. The project objective is “*A landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and improving conservation effectiveness is demonstrated in Macin Mountains National Park and constitutes a model for replication across the emerging national system of protected areas*”. As it is discussed in Section 4.4.1, Romania is showing a real interest in this area and NFA’s commitment to this project demonstrates a national commitment for a national sustainable protected area system. Additionally, the project is also responding directly to the biodiversity objectives included in the NBSAP (*see Section 4.1.1*) by developing the capacity for a national network of protected areas (i), the conservation of species with a high economic value (iii) and the protection, conservation and restoration of biodiversity outside protected areas and biodiversity specific to agro-systems (v).

37. In order to understand the context of the network of protected areas in Romania in which the project is implemented, an overview of the protected area network is presented below as well as its PA institutional set-up¹, followed by an overview of the Natura 2000 network in Romania and the rural development context in Romania.

The Protected Areas in Romania

38. The legal status of protected areas in Romania was established in few steps between 2000 and 2006. The Romanian classification identifies the following [*EO 236/2000, Law 345/2006*]:

- Scientific reserves
- National parks
- Nature monuments
- Natural reserves
- Natural parks (less restrictive than national parks)
- Biosphere reserves
- Wetlands with international importance
- Special areas in conservation

¹ This overview is an adapted copy from the MTE of the UNDP/GEF Project “*Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Government-NGO Partnership in Romania’s Maramures Nature Park*” (2007).

- Area under special protection for avifauna

39. In 2007, the GOR passed the Gov. Emergency Ordinance #57 of 2007 - which is now being reviewed through a parliamentary commission - and should be approved by the Parliament in the near future. It will become the new Law on Protected Areas for Romania. It will include the different types of accepted PAs and introduce the concept of different types of zones within these PA types. It will legislate the need for each protected area to develop a management plan. These management plans will include the final zoning for each PA and its relevant boundaries; i.e. it is left to each protected area management structure to decide the different zones to apply to their respective protected areas. The Law allows also the PA Administration to expand their jurisdiction into the surrounding area of a protected area if it is recognized as a sensitive area linked with the biodiversity conservation of the PA species. However, from the interviews, it is said that the Law #57 lacks technical standards to manage these PAs. In the case of NFA, they use mostly their own management standards to manage the PAs under their jurisdiction.

40. The same Law define Natura 2000 (N2000) habitats. Around 90% of the Romanian protected areas are proposed to become N2000 sites; including MMNP. The list of sites proposed for N2000 was approved by the Romanian government and should be published in the near future. From a jurisdiction point of view, under the new Law #57 if a N2000 site overlap part of a PA – such as the Macin Mountains National Park – the park administration of this PA should manage the entire N2000 site. However, in the case of MMNP, no contracts between the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD) and NFA are in place to clarify this question. Currently, the N2000 Macin site is not managed by the MMNP Administration.

41. Currently, 9% of the country's area is protected². The National Development Plan 2007-2013 establishes a target to protect 15% of the country by the end of 2013 through government orders and government decisions. However, despite that the process to increase these PAs is ongoing, it is not participatory enough and the risk is that they will exist only on paper. 70% to 80% of PAs have been protected areas for 10-15 years; there were established by the forestry sector. 11.7% of all forests in Romania are in existing PAs and 2% of all forests are in strictly protected areas. Currently, 55% of all forests have a status to be totally protected and 45% have a status of protection but can be exploited sustainably.

The Institutional Set-up to Manage the Protected Areas

42. Currently, 22 of the 26 national and natural parks of Romania are under the responsibility of the NFA; with a management contract established between the MESD and NFA to identify the roles and responsibilities of each organization. One other park is managed by an NGO under the supervision of a County Council and the last 3 parks were newly established and don't have an Administration in place yet. The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve has a separate Administration Authority.

43. The office of NFA in the Tulcea County administrates 102,473ha of PAs, which includes 90,743ha of forests, 3,150ha of land to be reforested and 7,551ha of unproductive land. The County office supervises 9 sub-units: MMNP and 8 forest districts, which are managing 16 small PAs in the County.

44. The NFA has a good experience in managing parks/protected areas (Romanian foresters established the first PA in 1960); it has a structure in place to coordinate the 22 park administrations; including a national-based unit. The protected area activities are funded by NFA revenue coming from the selling of timber. The annual park administration budget (for 22 parks) is about 3M euros that is about 2% of the NFA budget. In the future, NFA is planning to create a semi-autonomous Foundation; which would have the responsibility of all park administrations (22). This foundation would receive funding from the NFA, but would also be more flexible to access other sources of funds such as the EU structural adjustment funds.

45. NFA is a state company managing the state forests and the private forests under contracts. NFA is an independent company under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD); however, the Minister of Agriculture nominates the General Manager of NFA³. This position is a performance-based position (with indicators) and he/she reports to MAFRD once a year plus possible ad-hoc communication. The NFA has a staff of about 25,000, from which 20,000 are in the field. It has 41 branches

² Romania MDG Report 2007

³ Until 2003 the NFA was under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment and Waters.

(about 1 branch per County). Under the NFA, there are territorial inspectorates for forestry and hunting with a staff of about 1,000 (about 30 per region). The inspectorates exist since 2001 to enforce the related laws including the private forest owners.

46. The NFA revenues are coming mostly from the selling of timber exploited in public forests. With the potential production of timber in Romania estimated at 21.3M³ of wood per year and per ha⁴, NFA is a very strong national economic actor. It is estimated that the NFA budget contributes to about 3% of the total GDP of Romania.

47. NFA is responsible for the management of the state and private (under contracts) forests. The forests are legislated by the forest code, which states that a forest management plan is the guide to manage the state forests and under-contract-private forests. These very elaborated/detailed forest management plans are approved by the MAFRD and are the instruments to implement the (outdated) forest management strategy. Forest exploitation has been controlled with an improved respect of laws and regulations over the last five years. Under the current legislation, any forest owner (private or public) cannot clear-cut more than 3 ha at once. However, the experience shows that when responsibility for protected area management falls within government institutions also responsible for commodity production and economic development, there is often a limited compatibility between conservation and development functions.

48. Under the current legislation, each of the 22 parks is to have a management plan (MP); however, currently only 3 parks have a MP approved by MESD. Each park has a scientific council to establish regulations and laws including input from the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and each park has also a Consultative committee to consult a broad spectrum of stakeholders on questions/issues related to the park. Currently, the management of parks is ensured by park administrations, which are not legal entities. They are local organisational units, part of NFA, under the authority of MAFRD.

49. However, the Ordinance of Emergency (195/22 December 2005 upgraded on July 9, 2006) specified that the management of protected areas in Romania (including MMNP) lies within the responsibility of the National Agency for Protected Areas and Conservation of Biodiversity; which should be a public institution subordinated to the central public authority for environmental protection (under MESD) and financed by its own resources as well as from the state budget. The same Ordinance states also that these protected areas must have coordination and administration structures with their own judicial personality. This potential institutional change should not have a major impact on the project and its achievements; however, it is important to monitor this situation.

The Natura 2000 (N2000) Network

50. N2000's aim is to safeguard Europe's biodiversity and to promote biodiversity-friendly economic activities. The N2000 network is the European Union's main instrument for nature conservation. It is based on the EU Birds and EU Habitats Directives, which came into force in Romania under Law 462/2001. Romania is obliged to assure protection of any species and habitats mentioned in this Law 462.

51. Among the EU-27 member states Romania has the greatest bio-geographical diversity (5 bio-geographical regions out of the 11 at European level) and most of them are in good conservation status. The Macin Mountains, also known as the Hercinian Mountains, are the oldest mountains in Romania and one of Europe's most outstanding natural regions. These mountains support a large number of endangered species as well as ecosystems characteristic of the Balkan-Pontic steppe and the sub-Mediterranean and Balkanic forest. It is an important and recognized bio-geographic area and the EU accession increased its relevance to be protected and conserve the specific habitats, plant communities, endemics, sub-endemic and relict species of the Dobrudja plateau. From the 198 types of European habitats, which 65 are priority habitats, 94 types of habitats are in Romania, of which 23 are priority habitats at EU level and their conservation imposes designation of some Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

52. Potential N2000 sites are first selected by scientific assessment at the national level. The N2000 network is composed of two types of N2000 sites:

⁴ It is estimated that NFA currently exploit only about 16.5M³ per year, per ha (legally) plus an estimate of about 0.4M³ per year, per ha illegally.

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for the conservation of natural habitats, and wild fauna and flora, listed in the Habitats Directive
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the conservation of wild birds listed in the Birds Directive.

53. All measures taken under N2000 must take into account the economic, social and cultural requirements of the area – a principle enshrined in the EU Habitats Directive. N2000 designation places certain obligations on local communities, who will receive compensation by means of special funding and other opportunities:

Obligations

- Activities must be avoided that could significantly disturb the species or damage the habitats for which the site is designated
- Positive measures must be taken, where necessary, to maintain these habitats and species
- Land-users must ensure good management so that vulnerable semi-natural habitats and species are maintained

Opportunities

- N2000 designation offers a brand image for an area, under which local products and services can be developed and marketing improved
- Increased economic diversification and inward investment
- Special EU agricultural and forestry support for biodiversity-friendly land management in N2000 areas
- Increased access to community development funds to help maintain the economic viability and social fabric of rural areas.

54. Despite the good framework for developing a national network of N2000 sites, the process was “rushed” through and limited public consultations were conducted throughout Romania. As a consequence, there is currently a limited “buy-in” from local communities; including in the Tulcea County. MMNP is part of the N2000 site and represent 60% of the N2000 site. Some priority biodiversity areas outside MMNP but inside N2000 are already included in the under-development integrated management plan for MMNP through the agreements being developed between the park and some local landowners. The MMNP team has already promoted the N2000 site through consultative council meetings. However, extensive awareness campaigns are needed to make communities more aware about the N2000 network, its obligations and its opportunities. Considering the existing legislation, the MMNP Administration should have a greater (proactive) involvement in the implementation of the N2000 in the Macin area.

Rural Development Context in Romania

55. Romania’s territory is administratively divided into 41 counties (with 98 municipalities) grouped into 8 development regions. Mayors and members of county, municipal and local councils are elected by popular vote. The Presidents of County Councils are elected by the respective County Council Members. The government authority responsible for relations with local governments (County and City Councils) is the Ministry of Interior and Administration Reform through the offices of County Prefects. At national level the umbrella organizations for elected local officials are the Romanian Federation of Local Authorities and the Romanian Association of Municipalities.

56. The key elements of the rural development in Romania include:

- A National Sustainable Development Strategy with a time horizon to 2020 was developed in 1997 and endorsed by the Government in 1999 (Governmental Decision no. 305/1999). It is now being updated with the support of an UNDP project, which started in 2006. It will set medium to long-term policy objectives with specific targets for 2013, 2020 and 2030. It is expected to be concluded in June 2008 and submitted to the EC the following month.
- A National Centre for Sustainable Development was established in 1997 - with UNDP support - to act as a specific entity for the coordination of relevant activities countrywide.
- A Medium-term National Development Strategy (NDS) was produced in 2000, followed in 2001 by an Action Plan. Chapter 4 is the “*Evaluation and Conservation of the Natural Capital*” with clear reference to forestry and protected areas.
- A National Strategic Plan for Rural Development was prepared on the basis of the Council Regulation (EC) no 1698/2005 on supporting rural development under European Agriculture Fund

for Rural Development (EAFRD). This National Strategic Plan covers the 2007-2013 programming period. This plan is to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors and its implementation is the responsibility of MAFRD; which is chairing the coordination committee. It includes rural strategies to improve the environment and the countryside (Axis 2): SO 4: to ensure the continuous sustainable use of agricultural land and SO 5: to preserve and to improve the state of the natural resources and habitats. This axis #2 has an allocated budget of 1,880M euros representing 25% of the total budget of this plan.

57. In the Tulcea County, the Department of Agriculture and Rural development is the local representation of MAFRD and has the mandate to implement locally the national strategic plan for rural development. The implementation should start in May 2008 - with EU structural funds – by setting up Group for Local Actions (GLA) that should include public, private and civil society representatives. The MMNP Administration is a member of the local GLA and was also asked to become a member of the national rural development network.

4.1.3. UNDP-GEF Objectives in Romania

58. The project is highly relevant to the objectives of UNDP and GEF in Romania. The current UNDP and GEF activities in Romania are based on the country programme document in which the government of Romania and UNDP set out their planned cooperation over the period 2005-2009. The document outlines the intended nature, focus and financial scope of the cooperation between UNDP and the GOR, based on UNDP's comparative advantage. The framework identifies key goals and opportunities for UNDP support to national programmes and priorities that are consistent with the poverty elimination priority and sustainable human development goals. It reflects the main elements of the intended strategies and thematic areas without elaborating the details of the programmes. The areas of focus of this programme are those where UNDP has a comparative advantage in making a significant contribution; they include: democratic governance and decentralized development, enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods and support to environmental governance.

59. This country programme framework is based on the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the UN Development Assistance Framework 2005-2009 (UNDAF). The UNDAF is guided by national goals and policy priorities, global commitments made by the GOR such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and results generated by the UN common country assessment; it focuses on three areas for assistance during the period 2005-2009: (i) capacity building for good governance; (ii) economic growth; and (iii) basic social services.

60. The UNDP country programme framework contributes to two (out of three) UNDAF outcomes and has the following programme outcomes:

Capacity Building for Democratic Governance:

- Enhanced cross-sectoral coordination and horizontal accountability in policy formulation and implementation to support transparent and effective public service delivery at central and local levels.
- Policies, legislation and implementation capacities to better protect the rights of vulnerable groups, including victims of human trafficking.

Environmental Governance:

- Environmental governance strengthened and greater compliance with EU environmental standards and international conventions achieved.

Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction:

- Reduced poverty among vulnerable groups – Roma, rural women, youth (including post-institutionalized), people living with AIDS – through employment generation and specific interventions to promote social inclusion.
- Increased foreign trade and capital inflows through capacity building of local authorities for FDI and export promotion, targeting regions with economic potential and low investment

61. However the core funding of UNDP and other UN agencies in Romania will diminish in the next few years and the future for UNDP in Romania depends mostly on new projects to sustain itself. In the medium term, the UNDP strategy is to build on its successful projects - using its comparative advantage - to develop

and manage a portfolio of projects.

62. The project is consistent with the GEF strategic priority #1 - Catalyzing the Sustainability of Protected Areas (PA), which aims at conserving biodiversity through the expansion, consolidation, and rationalization of national PA systems. The project will contribute to the consolidation and rationalization of Romania's national protected area system by demonstrating best management practices for securing long-term conservation in small protected areas. The project is also in conformity with the Operational Programme #1 – Arid and Semi-Arid Zone Ecosystems that is to conserve and use sustainably the biological resources in arid and semi-arid zone ecosystems. To a lesser degree the project is also in conformity with the OP #3 – Forest Ecosystems, which is to conserve and sustainably use the biological resources in forest ecosystems.

4.1.4. Needs of End-Users Beneficiaries

63. The project is highly relevant and provides important resources to protect the local biodiversity but also opportunities for a local sustainable socio-economic development of the surrounding communities. The low density of population in the County and the fact that 99% of the park is state property are advantages for MMNP and for biodiversity conservation. The existence of the park - as a protected area - is not really affecting – in any way - local livelihoods of local communities. The park was created two years ago and after a difficult start due mostly to existing quarries, the attitude of the population is now much more favourable. It is confirmed by the recent negotiation with the municipalities of Greci, Jijila and Hamcearca which recently passed a municipal decision to give the Macin park an additional 50ha of land for a corridor between two main parts of the park, which is a sensitive habitat area for some bird species.

64. The county has 1 municipality, 4 towns and 46 communes and the population density is the lowest in Romania. The population is formed by a mosaic of nationalities: Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians, Lipovans, Turks, Tatars, Romms, Greeks and Italians; and religions such as orthodox (different for Romanians and Russians), catholic, muslim, jewish and protestant. The Dobrogea Region and the northern part, Tulcea County, have a very long history that is shown through military and civil antic buildings such as: the Roman Castrum Arrubium near Macin (I century, A.D.); the Roman Fortress from Troesmis, near Turcoaia (III -IV century, A.D.); the Romano Byzantine Fortress Dinogetia, near Garvan (IV century, A.D.) etc.

65. The history of the region is one of the most complex in Europe. Some highlights indicate that in 657BC the Greeks colonized Dobrogea; in year 15, the Romans attacked Greek Dobrogea, which becomes a Roman province in year 106; in year 330 Byzantine Dobrogea was born; and in year 681 Dobrogea became part of the First Bulgarian Empire, which were followed by several invasions attempts by the Pechenegs (1036), the Cumans (1094), the Tatars and Mongols (1241), the Ottomans (1388) and finally the Russian (1771). From 1947, the region was one of the harshest places in Romania under the communism regime with labour camps to “deal” with dissidents.

66. The MMNP Administration is involved in community issues and takes part in local decision making processes in the park's surrounding area by establishing good relations with the institutions and persons that build and implement local and regional strategies. Some municipalities are developing their local sustainable development strategies and the park administration is always part of these processes. It is also to be noted that the political class members are not real “politicians” - especially at town and communal level – there are people from the local communities involved in day-to-day community life such as teachers and specialists in geology, biology, etc.

67. At the local level, local communities have few problems linked with the creation of the Park; there are sometimes fire settings in potentially dangerous areas. This is translated by a limited number of infractions/contraventions. However, the fact that a high percentage of these communities are protected necessitates (and will in the future) a strong community involvement in decision-making for local development. This is the case of the village of Jijila where 50% of its territory is protected and the village of Greci, where 94% of its territory is within the N2000 local site.

68. The biggest impact due to the creation of the park is the restrictions placed on the extraction of granite in the Macin mountain range, which is a local economic activity that exists for more than 80 years. Two

quarry companies got a licence from the government in 2000 for 25 years to further exploit minerals in the Macin mountain area. However, a conflict was created by the government decision #230/2005 specifying the park's boundaries around the Macin Mountain at an altitude of 100m, which included the granite extraction areas within the park boundaries. The conflict was solved through lengthy negotiations between the private companies, the park administration and the environmental guard service. They found a [difficult] consensus by authorizing the private companies to extract granite in the concession outside of the park but to a maximum altitude of 200m and to make sure that the impact of this extraction after the completion of mining operations is minimized (decision #1529/2006).

69. Nevertheless, this is a poor, under-developed area of Romania - the positive impacts of the post-communist period are hardly felt yet by these communities. Jobs are scarce and unemployment is high in the local towns such as the community of Macin. Farming practices are more subsistence farming, using little fertilizers and pesticides, and providing low yields. There are strong needs for increasing the socio-economic well-being of these communities and there are opportunities such as the development of organic agriculture and of eco-tourism activities. Locally, the MMNP area is the only attraction on land close to the Danube Delta, which is receiving about 200,000 visitors per year. Private operators are interested in the development of local tours for tourists including the Macin Mountain (hiking), wine making, visit of local churches/monasteries and historic monuments, and specific local cultural events.

4.1.5. Synergies with Donor Programs/Projects in Romania and in Region

70. The objective of this project is to demonstrate a landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and improving the conservation effectiveness of protected areas. The project will serve as a basis for replication across the nascent national system of protected areas in Romania; it is highly relevant in the context of strengthening the PA system of Romania and complementary to other initiatives in this area.

71. In the last 10 years, development in Romania was dominated by the "road map" for EU accession. The total pre-accession funding accessible by Romania was approximately USD 780M of commitments by the EC in 2003 and it was to rise to approximately USD 1B in 2006. The good progress made toward accession allowed Romania to become a full member of the European Community as of January 1, 2007.

72. Since its new EC membership in 2007, MESD prepared its Sector Operating Programme (SOP) in the environment for the period 2007-2013 to be funded by the EU structural adjustment funds. This programme is closely linked to the national objectives laid down in the National Development Plan (NDP) and the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF); it includes five specific objectives:

1. Improve the access to water infrastructure, by providing water supply and wastewater services in most urban areas by 2015
2. Improvement of soil quality, by improving waste management and reduction in the number of old ecological burdens in minimum 30 counties by 2015
3. Reduction of negative environmental impact caused by old municipal thermal plants in most polluted localities by 2015
4. Protection and improvement of biodiversity and natural heritage by supporting the protected areas management, including NATURA 2000 implementation
5. Reduction of the incidence of natural disasters for the population, by implementing preventive measures in most vulnerable areas by 2015

73. This SOP received the green light from Brussels in July 2007 and the environment in Romania should benefit from about 4.5B euros of EU investments plus a co-financing of about 1B euros from the GOR's budget - both for the period 2007-2013. The programme has 9 priority-axis, including the #4 that is "*Implementation of adequate management systems for nature protection*" with a budget of about 215M euros (80% co-financed by the national budget). The purpose of this priority axis is to support biodiversity and nature conservation through development of an adequate management framework for protected areas, including NATURA 2000 sites. The support will include:

- Development of infrastructure for protected areas as well as maintenance, operation and monitoring activities;
- Raising public awareness for environmental protection and nature-friendly behaviour;

- Preparation and implementation of management plans; including spatial framework, inventory (natural features and socio-economic information), planning and management tools;
- Support to the new National Agency for Protected Natural Areas and Biodiversity Conservation for strengthening its administrative capacity.

74. Administrators of protected areas and the National Agency for Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation will be beneficiaries under this priority axis.

75. This MMNP project is also part of GEF investments in the biodiversity sector in Romania, which are made within the context of the GEF strategic framework in Romania. In parallel to this project, GEF is also funding the project “*Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Government-NGO Partnership in Romania’s Maramures Nature Park*” that is implemented by UNDP. Another GEF project to be implemented by UNDP “*Aligning National Biodiversity Strategy to CBD priorities and development of the CHM*” was approved in January 2008 to support the GoR to update their NBSAP. Finally, a list of priority projects were approved in Romania by a general consultative stakeholders meeting, which took place on August 21, 2006. This list was sent to GEF⁵ in September 2006 and includes the following projects:

Table 2: List of Priority Projects for Biodiversity Focal Area

No	Project title	Implementing Agency	RAF allocation
1	Strengthening the Carpathian System of Protected Areas	UNDP	\$30,000 for the PDF A phase \$1,5 million for the FSP phase
2	Sustainable use of natural resources in the Romanian Protected Landscapes, as models for development and biodiversity conservation	UNDP	\$30,000 for the PDF A phase \$0.97 million for the MSP
3	GEF Small Grants Programme	UNDP/UNOPS	\$200,000 (\$50,000 per year)
4	Promoting Payment for Environmental Services and Related Sustainable Financing Schemes in the Danube Basin	UNEP	\$405,000 USD
5	Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Bio-safety Clearing-House (BCH)	UNEP	50,000.00 USD
6	Capacity Building for the Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol	UNEP	550,000.00 USD

4.1.6. Internal Project Concept/Design

76. The project concept/design is relevant in the context of Romania and there is a good coherence between the design elements of the project (internal logic: components, partners, structure, delivery mechanisms, scope and budget) and its expected results (log-frame). The overall design is also coherent with the actual implementation of the project. The project document reflects well the rationale of the project and its intention to address the identified problems.

77. The project design was led by the local EPA office in Tulcea with the support of the Danube Delta National Institute and the participation of the County Council. A first draft was completed in 2002-03; followed by a second draft with help from UNDP-CO and the Park Administration to finalize the MSP brief before its approval in 2005. Some consultations were conducted during the development phase but the process was mostly driven by government agencies.

78. The review of the set of expected results indicates that the three expected outcomes are linked with some sequential logic among them. Outcomes #1 and #2 needs to be delivered by the project in order to start delivering outcome #3. In itself outcome #3 is the replication strategy of the project results that is embedded into the design elements of the implementation strategy. The table below shows the overall revised set of expected results:

⁵ Letter from MEWM to GEF-CEO dated September 14, 2006.

Table 3: Set of Revised Project Expected Results

GOAL: To conserve globally significant biological diversity by strengthening Romania's emerging national system of protected areas.
PROJECT OBJECTIVE: A landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and improving conservation effectiveness is demonstrated in Macin Mountains National Park and constitutes a model for replication across the emerging national system of protected areas
OUTCOME 1. Productive landscape around MMNP is made more biodiversity friendly
Output 1.1 Stakeholder committees established and operational Output 1.2 Conservation landscape context of MMNP defined. Output 1.3 Priority habitats in the productive landscape around MMNP identified and conserved Output 1.4 Model sustainable agriculture and forest management piloted by schools, farmers, and foresters in lands around MMNP Output 1.5 Park's relationships with local communities strengthened.
OUTCOME 2. Macin Mountains National Park management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured.
Output 2.1 Practical MMNP management plan developed following best practice guidelines. Output 2.2 Management, technical and collaborative enforcement capacity of MMNP is strengthened. Output 2.3 Park is demarcated in the field and infrastructure made operational. Output 2.4 New revenue generating opportunities for Macin National Park created. Output 2.5 Information baseline as a basis for informed adaptive management consolidated and strengthened.
OUTCOME 3. Replication of small protected area management best practices across national PA system is ongoing.
Output 3.1 Applied and refined "best practices" for small protected area management. Output 3.2 New basic training program for PA managers established. Output 3.3 New internal NFA policies requiring national PA system to adopt best practices Output 3.4 Knowledge network comprised of managers of small protected areas, NGOs, and the private sector.

79. Since the start of the project only few changes occurred. Output 1.1 was adapted to the new governance structure of the park and instead of creating a new governance body (a Board of Directors) it was recommended and approved to establish a committee with members from the existing governing bodies of MMNP. Output 3.3 was revised to reflect a more feasible output .

4.2. Project Effectiveness

80. This Section presents the findings on the effectiveness of the project in achieving its expected results. An overview of the key results achieved by the project is presented, followed by the project contribution to capacity development, the review of any unexpected project achievements and the review of the management of risks and the mitigation measures related to the implementation of the project. These findings are based on a review of project documents and interviews with key informants.

4.2.1. Achievements of Project Expected Outcomes

81. The progress of the project to achieve its expected outcomes is highly satisfactory. The objective of the project is to demonstrate a landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and improving the conservation effectiveness of protected areas and to serve as a basis for replication across the emerging national system of protected areas in Romania. This objective is to be demonstrated through three expected outcomes:

1. The productive landscape around Macin Mountains National Park is made more biodiversity friendly;
2. Macin Mountains National Park management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured;
3. Replication of small protected area management best practices across national PA system is ongoing.

82. The review of project achievements indicates good progress toward achieving these expected outcomes. The key results delivered so far were listed in the PIR2007 (to end of June 2007) and are presented in the table below:

Table 4: List of Key Results Delivered so Far

Outcomes	Key Outputs
1. The productive landscape around Macin Mountains National Park is made more biodiversity friendly;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific Council and Operational Committees established with key stakeholders and operational. To provide oversight for the Park. • Controlled (according to carrying capacity) grazing enforced on 50 ha of grassland • Priority habitats identified (five) and methodology for the monitoring of key species. • Protocols signed with 4 farms in Macin landscape (total of 64 hectares) to begin applying agro-environmental practices; NFA and local forest district agree to begin process of securing forest certification for 27,000 hectares
2. Macin Mountains National Park management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management plan under development and is to be concluded by mid-2008 and submitted for endorsement by Romanian Academy in December 2008. (Biodiversity inventory team hired and working closely with PA management planning and landscape ecologist experts) • 10 cross-sectoral enforcement protocols developed and signed with local police offices, fire departments, "jandarmarie", and border guards, emergency situations inspectorate, and county police. • Macin field office remodeled, furnished and operational. • 12 Park staff hired by NFA. Park staff trained in effective use of GIS and GPS; resource mobilization, tourism management, and protected areas management. Park staff and local authorities participated in study tours on protected area management and integrated conservation and development in Norwegian, Slovenian and Austrian and Kazakhstan PA landscapes, catalyzing new ideas for MMNP-local community cooperation.
3. Replication of small protected area management best practices across national PA system is ongoing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first best practice experiences generated under outcomes 1 and 2 emerged (e.g. Park works successfully with village councils to create a 10 ha ecological corridor); Successful negotiation of local enforcement protocols; Successful negotiation with local rock quarries, allowing them to re-start operations in exchange for biodiversity off-sets to the Park and adopting new more environmentally friendly methods. • Park Administration collaborated with the local NFA to elaborate the management plans for the 16 other protected areas in the region under the jurisdiction of the local NFA office.

83. The project supported the establishment of the park administration. There is now a management team in place, an office, a management structure with a Consultative Committee and a Scientific Council and the project team (which is also the park administration team) is working on the development of a management plan for MMNP. The park administration is to move to a new location by May-June 2008 provided by the Tulcea Forestry Administration Unit.

84. In association with the Romanian Organic Farmers Association, the project is promoting organic agriculture in surrounding areas (outside the zone of MMNP). So far, they organized one workshop to sensitize the participants on organic farming with the participation of about 15 farmers. Following this first session, the partners separated participants in three thematic groups: breeders, apiculture and crops. A second workshop was organized at the time of this evaluation (January 2008) with 51 participants. As a result, 29 farmers from the area are already interested in becoming members of the Romanian Organic Farmers Association and 5 to 6 farmers are in the process of signing a contract with a certifying body to get their farms and their practices certified as organic farms. A third workshop is planned in the spring 2008.

85. This programme – which is gaining in popularity with local farmers - presents a real opportunity for implementing good agricultural practices in the surrounding areas of MMNP. It could also be complemented by the new EU Common Agricultural Policy, that moved from subsidies for farm production to emphasize values like environmental management and conservation/habitat protection.

86. Under the expected output to improve the relationship between MMNP and the local communities, the project supported numerous awareness activities in communities and in schools to increase the knowledge

about MMNP and biodiversity conservation in general. They partnered with the Science Museum of Tulcea to develop environmental education activities with students for level 1, 2 and 3 including fieldwork in the park. The objective is to make the students more aware about their County natural heritage; particularly outside of the Danube Delta. The project also partnered with a few schools in the area, including the Greci primary and secondary vocational school supporting a programme “*Let’s be Friend with Nature*” that is very popular with students; it includes also some fieldwork. In 2007, the project supported the “*European Day of the Park*” organized by the village of Cerna, a cultural event involving all villages from the surrounding areas of MMNP, including local schools and community volunteers.

87. Finally, the project also worked closely with all municipalities from the area to integrate the park in the local development. For instance, the municipality of Macin developed its development strategy 2005-2013, which integrates MMNP. The municipality of Luncavita is renovating its “House of Culture” and it will include an area for MMNP as an information center. The Municipality of Cerna has the project to develop an information center on MMNP in partnership with the Science Museum of Tulcea and the Park administration. The municipality of Jijila is now included in tourism itineraries developed with the support of the MMNP.

88. Based on the research supported by the project (biodiversity inventories), the park administration knows the habitats of key species better. The project team mapped the sensitive habitat zones in the park but also in the surrounding areas. These zones – particularly those outside the park boundaries – need to be protected. The park administration is now looking into a set protection measures to be implemented for these specific zones. It includes collaborative agreements with private landowners to exploit their land in a way that is protecting these sensitive habitats. The park administration is also looking into the possibility of compensation to farmers who would sign these agreements such as the new measures supported by the EU to conserve/protect sensitive habitats.

89. Overall the project delivers its expected results. The first two years of implementation focused mostly on the expected outcomes #1 and #2 with a strong focus on biodiversity conservation. Additionally, as discussed in Section 4.1.6, there is a certain sequential logic in the design of this project - outcomes #1 and #2 needs to be delivered by the project before the project can deliver outcome #3. However, it is urgent now that the project emphasizes the development of best practices for the surrounding areas and the “packaging” of these best practices to be replicated throughout the PA system in Romania as per the expected outcome #3. The success of this protected area depends largely on the involvement of the local communities in preserving the park. Protection measures need to be in place for the time when local economic development will take place and add pressure on the natural environment.

4.2.2. Contribution to Capacity Development

90. The project is clearly developing local capacities to better manage the MMNP; it is rated as satisfactory. Capacity development is an integral part of the project design. Outcome 2 – “*Macin Mountains National Park management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured*” is about developing the capacity of the MMNP Administration to better manage the park through establishing a management planning process, identifying revenue generating opportunities for the park and ensuring that the park is well demarcated. Therefore, implementing the MMNP project implies the implementation of capacity development initiatives.

91. Moreover, the project uses a capacity development approach that emphasizes stakeholder participation and ownership; which, in most cases, is a “built-in” feature of the project supported initiatives. For instance, the promotion of organic farming was initially started by the Park Administration but the follow-up activities have been conducted through a partnership with the association of organic farmers and not directly by the project. Currently, the association conducts the activities; the project only supports the initiative. It is, in most cases, the catalyst to initiate this kind of activities but it leaves the ownership of conducting the initiatives with the main stakeholders; therefore, emphasizing the development of local capacity.

92. A review of the literature on capacity development indicates that capacity development encompasses the acquisition of skills and knowledge for individuals, the improvements of institutional structures, mechanisms and procedures and finally the strengthening of an enabling environment with adequate policies

and Laws. It is now well recognized that capacity is the sum of a series of conditions, intangible assets and relationships that are part of an organisation or system and that are distributed at various levels⁶:

- Individuals have personal abilities and attributes or competencies that contribute to the performance of the system;
- Organisations and broader systems have a broad range of collective attributes, skills, abilities and expertise called capabilities which can be both 'technical' (e.g. policy analysis, marine resource assessment, financial resource management) and 'social-relational' (e.g. mobilising and engaging actors to collaborate towards a shared purpose across organisational boundaries, creating collective meaning and identity, managing the tensions between collaboration and competition);
- Capacity refers to the overall ability of a system to perform and sustain itself.

93. From an individual perspective, the project emphasizes the development of competencies of the MMNP Administration. In 2007 a training needs analysis was conducted with the staff of the MMNP and the staff from the Maramures Mountains Natural Park. The objective was to clarify the mandate of the organisations (the Park Administrations), identify the key positions and their respective responsibilities, identify the required skills and knowledge for each position, conduct a gap analysis between the required and the existing skills and knowledge and provide training recommendations. Based on a questionnaire completed by each individual staff, three priorities emerged from this training needs analysis:

- **Communication Skills:** Generic skills for presentations (oral and written). Specific skills for communicating with visitors, local communities, violators of laws and regulations and for dealing with conflict.
- **Law Enforcement Skills:** For dealing with violators correctly and processing actions and evidence against them.
- **Ecological Skills:** Improving rangers' knowledge and understanding the parks, their ecosystems and wildlife to enable them to make presentations and to participate in survey and monitoring activities.

94. On this basis, recommendations were provided to develop a training programme with two levels of priorities: (1) essential for meeting major current capacity gaps and (2) important for the successful completion of the project objectives. The first priority includes basic training for rangers and field workers, communication skills and working with communities. The second priority includes training on conservation biology and biodiversity management, tourism, recreation and awareness, and institutional and project management skills. This training programme should be developed during the second half of the project.

95. The project is also developing the capacity of local communities by increasing their knowledge about biodiversity conservation, management of MMNP and sustainable use of the MMNP natural resources. This awareness raising is already translated into practical actions related to the park such as the fieldwork conducted by the school of Greci and the information center on the park, which is being built in the village of Luncavita.

96. From an organisation perspective, the project is supporting the establishment of the MMNP Administration, its procedures and processes to manage the park. It also supports the demonstration of innovative approaches to manage the surrounding areas. In addition to the individual capacity being developed, the Park Administration is gaining a better structure and provides the staff with a more adequate environment to carry out their duties. A management plan for the park should be in place by mid-2008 and will form the basis for the management of the park in the future.

97. From a broader system perspective, the project will contribute to the development of a national capacity; mostly through its outcome 3 – “*Replication of small protected area management best practices across national PA system is ongoing*”. The best practices demonstrated and tested in the Macin Mountains should be replicated through the small protected areas in Romania in collaboration with NFA. This approach can be seen as a transfer of know-how and will increase the capacity of the national network of protected areas.

⁶ See the study on “*Capacity, Change and Performance*” conducted by the European Center for Development Policy Management (ECDPM); which explored the notion of capacity and capacity development (<http://www.ecdpm.org/>).

98. Finally, the project contribution to capacity development was measured by the Evaluation Team through the use of the recently developed UNDP/UNEP/GEF Capacity Development (CD) Monitoring Scorecard. This scorecard was developed within the context of the GEF Strategic Approach to Enhance Capacity Building and the new GEF Results-based Management Framework. This framework includes five capacity results needed for an operational managerial system; it includes a set of 15 indicators to monitor the progress of capacity development. As a monitoring tool, the value would be in comparing the ratings from project inception, mid-course and project end.

99. Nevertheless, in the case of MMNP, the assessment of these capacities and the 15 indicators provided a score of 24 out of a maximum of 45 (*see Annex 7*). This review indicates that the second half of the project should contribute mostly to develop the capacity:

- For engagement with a stronger stakeholder participation in decision-making related to the management of the park,
- To generate, access and use information and knowledge by stakeholders
- To management and implementation through mostly the training of MMNP staff

4.2.3. Unexpected Project Achievements

100. In addition to the project achievements, which are in line with the set of expected results identified in the project document, the success of the project is also being translated in some achievements, which were not specifically planned. When it was created, the MMNP was divided into two separate areas without corridors between them; which include sensitive habitats for birds. Benefiting from the good relation that the park administration has with the local communities, negotiations with the respective communities to create a 50ha corridor between these two parts was possible and a municipal decision had been made to include this corridor within MMNP boundaries. Additionally, the Park Administration is currently in negotiation with the Greci village for 290ha of pastures to be protected and it is expected that an additional 110ha will be the object of a similar process during the lifetime of the project; mostly for habitat protection reason.

101. Based on the application of modern forestry methods, the project team was able to introduce a new ecologically oriented forest harvesting method for forestry exploitation permitting natural regeneration by maintaining mature trees in the cutting area. This method was accepted by the Tulcea Forestry Department and it is the first time NFA approved a different forest-cutting practice resulting in more habitat preservation/protection than the classical clear-cut exploitation method.

102. The collaboration between MMNP and the research institution to conduct the scientific biodiversity inventory of the Park was an opportunity to highlight the possibility of partnership between a development organization such as the park administration and a research agency such as the University of Constanta. It showed the importance of research work in the management of a protected area by supporting the identification of the biodiversity species.

103. Finally, the organic farming initiative could very well be an extended success in the MMNP surrounding area. The recent workshops organized in collaboration with the association of organic farmers indicated a strong interest among the local community and with some project support the association will support the certification of volunteer farmers.

104. Considering that the project is only two years old, it is too early for assessing fully these unexpected results; however, these initial unexpected achievements indicate that the project has a strong potential for having unexpected achievements outside its original design. The project was mostly to set up the management infrastructure of the park; however, the actions oriented toward the local communities should not only increase their involvement in the management of the park but should also impact their own socio-economic well-being.

4.2.4. Risk and Assumptions / Risk Mitigation Management

105. The management of risks and their mitigation measures is rated as satisfactory. The risks and their respective mitigation measures were mostly identified through project assumptions and their respective responses and are listed in the project document; there are presented in the table below:

Table 5: List of Project Assumptions

Assumption	Response
Assumption #1: The project's outcomes are largely achievable with current institutions, and existing and to-be-increased financial resources and personnel.	Block A preparatory activities negotiated an arrangement with the NFA whereby the NFA will absorb the costs of staffing the new MMNP beginning in year 1 and significantly reducing the sustainability challenge w/respect to long-term management of MMNP. The project, in turn will support project staff costs, expert input, and start-up costs for MMNP related to equipment, basic infrastructure, training, and management planning. In addition, building new capacities into the existing, funded programs (e.g. protected area management; local community development programs) is the most cost-effective approach to achieving lasting sustainability in the project area.
Assumption #2: Strengthened partnerships among communities, NGOs and national government will contribute to sustainability.	The project is designed to strengthen the capacity of the Park management itself, as well as the MMNP stakeholder Board of Directors and the Cross-sectoral Working Group.
Assumption #3: Mainstreaming biodiversity into productive sector planning and programs will serve to reduce unsustainable pressures on PA resources and be a significant contributing factor to sustainability.	The project seeks to integrate conservation objectives into regional development plans and specific guidelines with respect to agricultural practices.
Assumption #4: Overcoming barriers (knowledge, financial, "proof of concept") will catalyze the self-sustaining adoption of new agricultural practices and new protected area management approaches.	The project integrates the guidance from GEF and experience of many other projects by focusing on removing barriers to the adoption of more sustainable practices. The project will seek to work with and strengthen local institutional and stakeholder capacities to access new information and markets.

106. The project risks are monitored on a regular basis as part of project management activities; it is done through the UNDP Atlas system and it is reported annually through PIRs. However, despite the list of assumptions above, the Atlas system contains a different set of risks, which are all rated as not critical. This list includes:

- *NFA team not enough experience in managing international projects*: an operational risk that is mitigated mostly through staff training;
- *The restructuring of the protected area system in Romania*: a regulatory risk that is viewed as a low risk for the management of the protected area system in Romania; including the park administration;
- *There is a project for a Governmental Decision to modify the park limits and to decrease the protected surface by 78 ha in order to allow for development of a quarry*: a regulatory risk that was the source of a local conflict between private operators and the Park Administration. The conflict was resolved by a court case between the quarry license owners and MESD. The private operators won the case by arguing that the park limits were wrongly defined in the Law, not respecting some scientific survey done in the past. The result was a change of the borders of the park to accommodate the quarry operation to continue up to an altitude of 200m instead of 190m but the area of the concession was reduced to ¼ of the initial approved license.

107. Worth noting is the risk linked with the restructuring of the protected area system in Romania. It was not in the initial assumptions presented in the project document but was added in the list of risks that are monitored regularly by the project management team through the Atlas system. Currently, most of the protected areas are under the jurisdiction of the NFA. However, the Ordinance of Emergency (195/22 December 2005 upgraded on July 9, 2006) specified that the management of protected areas in Romania lies now within the responsibility of the National Agency for Protected Areas and Conservation of Biodiversity - which should be a public institution subordinated to the central public authority for environmental protection (MESD) and financed by its own resources as well as from the state budget. The same Ordinance states also that these protected areas must have coordination and administration structures with their own judicial personality. There is also the project of NFA to form a foundation as another option. NFA is planning to change the status of Park administrations – to obtain the same status as the local administrative units of NFA – and to get legal powers as judicial entities to be able to directly access EU funds.

108. Considering the existence of this legislation and the NFA option, the risk associated with the possible institutional reorganization exists. According to MESD, this change may occur this year (2008) with the set-up of this new national agency and a staff of 300 people. Continuity of the MMNP administration should be ensured but, as with all institutional reorganizations, changes should be expected. The project team and UNDP-CO monitor this situation on a regular basis to ensure that the project achievements would be secured through a possible institutional change.

4.3. Project Efficiency

109. This Section presents the findings on the efficiency of the project in utilizing/mobilizing its resources. It reviews the overall management approach and the use of adaptive management, the financial management and its financial status, the technical assistance, the delivery mechanisms, the stakeholders participation and the monitoring approach to measure the progress of the project.

4.3.1. Project Management Approach and Tools / Adaptive Management

110. The management of the project is satisfactory. When needed the project management team applies an adaptive management approach to secure project outcomes while maintaining adherence to the overall project design. The project management team is highly dedicated to the process, taking some risks to test/develop new approaches, making some mistakes, learning from them and correcting its approach to move forward. However, the management is mostly activities based instead of being results based. It prevents the management team to develop a clear vision

111. The project had a slower than anticipated first year due to difficulties to recruit the necessary staff, some staff turnover thereafter and a longer time to establish the park office and procure the equipment. However, with the strong support of NFA, the project management team was able to do some “catch-up” and is expected to satisfactorily meet its objectives by the end of the project.

112. The log-frame is results-based and includes a set of expected results (objective, outcomes and outputs – see table 3 above) and a set of key performance indicators; each one with a baseline and a target value, and the verification means and data collection strategy (see Section 4.3.8). However, the project management is more based on activities rather than on results; particularly on outcomes and impact (big picture). A process of improvement is noticeable through the work plan reports from the international consultant but more needs to be improved. In the Work Plan Year 2 - January 2007 report it is mentioned that *“One of the main points we discussed at length was the importance of the project team staying focused on impact -- not on outputs. It is not enough to simply check off activities completed and reports produced. The project needs to show impact – to show changed stakeholder behaviour (practices) and changed situations. We also discussed the importance of paying particular, almost daily attention to the project’s indicators of success. To encourage this results-oriented approach, we did two things: 1) we linked the 2007 work plan directly with the logical framework indicators; and 2) we created a log frame working table (Section VI of this report) with columns for recording indicator values each year where appropriate”*. The annual work plans (excel spreadsheets) focus mostly on activities and attempts have been made to link the activities with the performance indicators (from the log-frame) and the budget and to set result targets for each output for the corresponding year.

113. The project had to resolve two major issues since it started. The first one was between the Park Administration and the local EPA office; whereby the EPA was refusing to submit some project results to the Park Administration. The issue was resolved when the local EPA finally agreed to share the management plan (project result) with the Park Administration; ending a long, complicated dispute involving the EU funded LIFE project, the MESD, and the NFA. The second issue was about the park borders, which included a quarry operation within its perimeters. This quarry operation had a quarry license from 2000. The conflict was resolved by a court case between the quarry license owners and MESD. The private operators won the case by arguing that the park limits were wrongly defined in the Law, not respecting some scientific survey done in the past. The result was a change of the borders of the park to accommodate the quarry operation to continue up to an altitude of 200m instead of 250m as initially set by the license. The capacity of the park administration team to use adaptive management and conflict resolution techniques to find solutions through consensus was used and further developed during these two conflicts.

114. The project design is ambitious and imposes a sequence in its implementation to achieve its objectives. The next two years will be challenging for the project management team to finalize most of the activities under outcome 1 and 2 and implement outcome 3; this is confirmed by the work plan 2008, that emphasizes the need to shift the set of activities from outcome 1 and 2 to outcome 3.

4.3.2. Financial Planning and Management

115. The accounting and financial system used by the project management team is rated as satisfactory. The project is executed using the NEX modality (National Execution) plus instalments. The project has an assigned bank account for managing project funds, which is under the authority of the Park Administration.

116. The project uses the UN ATLAS system as its accounting and financial system. It produces accurate and timely financial information for the project team. The system is set-up by Activity (corresponding to the 3 project outcomes) and each Activity is sub-divided into line items such as local consultant fees, travel tickets, printing and publications, utilities, etc. The system provides also what the project spent directly using the instalments and what is spent directly by UNDP-CO.

117. Based on the information reviewed by the evaluation team, as of the end of December 2007 it is estimated that USD 461,001 was spent from the UNDP-GEF budget of USD 975,000; it represents a total spent of 47% of the budget versus 60% (29 out of 48 months) of the total duration of the project.

Table 6: UNDP/GEF Fund Disbursement Status^(*)

Item	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	Total	Budget	% Spent
Outcome 1	32,681	86,386	99,311	218,378	289,000	76%
Outcome 2	5,585	156,184	73,936	235,705	410,000	57%
Outcome 3	6,192	5,066	0	11,258	217,000	5%
Project M&E	3,190	-15,083 ⁷	7,553	-4,340	59,000	0%
Total	47,648	232,553	180,800	461,001	975,000	47%

(*) UNDP Combined Delivery Report by Activity (as of end of December 2007)

118. The figures presented above indicate that so far expenditures are mostly for Outcome 1 & 2 as opposed to Outcome 3. Considering the nature of each outcome and the implementation logic, this financial logic is normal. The current work plan is now putting emphasis on outcome 3 (replication of best practices) and this current year (2008) and next (2009) should see a shift of expenditures from outcome 1 & 2 to outcome 3.

119. The project is audited annually and the last audit covered the year 2006 (Jan. to Dec.). Except for some minor effects of some adjustments due mostly to some Atlas functionalities and translation of project expenditures occurred in non-USD, the auditor's report stated that the financial schedules of the project presented fairly the expenditures incurred by the project, as well as the cash balance and the inventory, for the year ended 31 December 2006; in accordance with the accounting instructions of UNDP.

4.3.3. Fund Leveraging / Co-financing

120. The capacity of the project to leverage funds to co-finance project activities is rated as satisfactory. The total amount of co-financing pledged at the design phase was USD 2M and the NFA added an additional USD 560k for a total amount of USD 2.657M. It is reported in the PIR 2007 (end of June 2007) that USD 2.25M were disbursed that is 85% of the pledged amount (vs. 60% of the total duration of the project).

⁷ Includes an exchange rate adjustment

Table 7: Co-financing from Project Partners ^(*)

Partner	Initial Budget (US\$)	Additional co-financing	Total Co-Financing	Actual(*) (US\$)	% Spent
NFA (in kind & cash)	1,592,000	560,000	2,152,000	1,790,000	83%
MESD (in kind)	425,000		425,000	425,000	100%
Milvus Group (in kind)	25,000		25,000	40,000	160%
UNDP TRAC (cash)	55,000		55,000	0	0%
Total (US\$)	2,097,000	560,000	2,657,000	2,255,000	85%

(*) UNDP PIR 2007 (As of the end of June 2007).

121. The main contributions represent the strong commitment of NFA to the project with the provision of the park administration staff as project staff. The contribution of MESD is the related project funded by LIFE. In addition to the cash and in-kind contributions pledged by NFA at the design phase, the NFA increased its cash contribution in 2007 and is planning to do the same for the remaining part of the project; in recognition to the contribution of the UNDP/GEF project to the image of the park and the NFA.

4.3.4. Quality of Technical Assistance / Use of National Capacity

122. The project is implemented by a good quality team of professionals; the technical assistance used on the project – including the mix of national and international technical assistance – is rated as satisfactory. Some problems were faced during the first year of implementation to fill all available positions but over time, a good team of professional was put together to carry on with the project activities and the management of the park. Moreover, the project team is also the park administration staff. They were hired at the beginning of the project as NFA staff; they have long-term employment contracts with NFA and are appointed to the administration of the park. The project document planned to have only two staff dedicated to the project; however following a discussion at a Project Oversight Committee (POC) meeting in early 2006, the decision was made that the entire park administration staff will implement the project. The MMNP Team includes:

- A Director
- A Biologist
- A Finance Specialist
- A Public Awareness and Communities Specialist (currently in maternity leave)
- A Head Ranger
- Six Rangers

123. The staff is highly motivated and dedicated to the park functions and biodiversity conservation. A Director, a highly regarded biologist, who has an in-depth knowledge of the park's biodiversity, heads the team; however, his management skills are not as developed as it should be. The Director led the team through the first phase; bringing his extensive biological knowledge to conduct the various inventories. All this work is now finalized and the next phase will necessitate more management skills to develop the management plan for the park, and structure the park administration to conduct their respective assigned functions to manage the park. It is important to continue with staff training; emphasizing management matters.

124. Identical to the UNDP/GEF Maramures project, the fact that the project team is the park administration is a very valuable set-up indicating a strong commitment from NFA to the project and it will facilitate the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. At the end of the project, the staff will carry on with their respective responsibilities to manage the park; there will be a natural continuity of the project achievements and NFA will be able to use the skills and knowledge accumulated by the MMNP staff to replicate some of the achievements in other protected areas in Romania.

125. The project is also using international technical assistance to bring ad-hoc expertise as needed. This is

the case with a landscape planning specialist, an environmental economist specialist, an environmental management specialist and a project management specialist. These short-term consultants bring ad-hoc expertise in their respective fields and their intervention is timed with the implementation of the project. Their input is well documented through reports; however, more emphasis should be placed on the transfer of knowledge to the project team. These assignments are short but they should all include a task to maximize the transfer of competencies and knowledge.

4.3.5. Project Delivery Mechanisms / Partnerships

126. The project delivery mechanisms are highly satisfactory. They are well defined in the project document and were implemented as planned since the launch of the project in 2005. The project is implemented using the UNDP-NEX guidelines (national execution). The designated institution is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the focal point for coordinating UNDP's technical cooperation in Romania. The designated executing agency in Romania is the NFA and the day-to-day project management and implementation tasks are done by the MMNP Administration staff: the MMNP Administration Director is the Project Manager and the park chief accountant is the project financial and administration assistant.

127. As per the description in the project document, each organisation involved in project implementation has a well-defined role and responsibilities. The commitments from the two main partners (UNDP and NFA) are excellent and contribute greatly to the potential positive project impact on the protected area system in Romania. The project is responding well to NFA needs for help in strengthening the PA system under their leadership. In return, NFA is a full partner in the implementation of the project and is committing critical resources.

128. The implementation of the project is also overseen by a Project Oversight Committee (POC) composed of 9 members and including 3 village mayors, EPA, Environmental guard, UNDP and NFA. This committee meets twice a year plus ad-hoc meetings as necessary; it met twice in 2006 and three times in 2007. Its role comprises three main responsibilities:

- To serve as a forum for stakeholder input and discussion
- To oversee project implementation: to review project progress and approve annual project work-plans.
- To facilitate the implementation of project activities in the members' respective organizations: to ensure that cooperative activities are implemented in a timely manner and facilitate the integration of project-inspired activities into existing programs and practices

129. The project delivery mechanisms of this project and also the one for the UNDP/GEF Maramures project could be the object of a case study for GEF. The partnership between NFA and UNDP is very effective and allows a smooth implementation with resources from both partners made available when needed.

4.3.6. Roles, Capacity and Efficiency of UNDP-CO

130. The efficiency of the UNDP-CO – as the implementing agency of the project - to support the implementation of the project is rated as highly satisfactory. It provides the necessary project management support to the project team to ensure an efficient use of the GEF resources; a professional progress reporting system through the PIR process reflecting the progress made but also if there are any issues to be dealt with; and the efficient use of the UNDP procedures such as procurement, hiring and contracting procedures. The capacity of the UNDP-CO to provide project management support/advice is certainly a comparative advantage in delivering this type of project. It provides a necessary project management layer to this type of project for an efficient use of project resources. It also provides a global link to access international experiences and resources, which are beneficial to the project when well chosen.

4.3.7. Country Ownership / Stakeholder Participation

131. The stakeholders participation and their ownership of the project is good; it is rated as satisfactory. The project is "owned" by NFA; the agency is investing its own budget into the project and is looking for results, which could be applied to other protected areas. The design of the project was led by the local

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with the participation of the main local government agencies; however the participation of local communities in the design and implementation of the project was/is limited.

132. The MMNP has two management bodies to oversee the work of the park administration:

- A *Scientific Council*: it was created through Ministry Order and has 11 members; including the environmental guard service that was nominated 6 months ago. It is a decision-making body for the management of MMNP and their role is to oversee the MMNP Administration work. The Park Director reports to the local NFA but also to the Scientific Council;
- A *Consultative Committee*: it was created by Ministry Order. It has 24 members and its objective is to inform the members and participate in the management of the park. Management measures can be proposed by the members; they will then be reviewed by the Scientific Council. This committee includes 19 members (out of 24) from the surrounding areas; including the local Mayors (7). The membership is approved by MESD based on the recommendations presented by the MMNP Administration. The council meets a minimum of twice a year but in practice it meets more regularly: 5 times in 2006 and 7 times in 2007.

133. The MMNP administration is well recognized by most local development players; including the local community representatives (Mayors). Few interviewees recognized the catalyst role that the administration can have for local development. The team's know-how is recognized and is appreciated such as the initiative to promote organic farming; more is expected from the MMNP administration.

134. However, despite these two stakeholders bodies and the POC to oversee the UNDP/GEF funded project (see Section 4.3.5), the involvement of the stakeholders in the management of the park is still limited. This is also emphasized by the fact that the design of the project cannot be claimed by the stakeholders; it is not their "baby" as it is the case for the Maramures Mountain project. The project was designed by government agencies led by the local EPA. Currently, the committee structure includes most of the government agencies and the local elected representatives. It is already a first channel of participation for local population; however, more direct participation of the local communities in addition to the existing participation process would be beneficial for MMNP. It would increase the support from the local population and make the park a more localized attraction.

135. This situation is also exacerbated by the development of the Natura 2000 (N2000) network, which seems to be "imposed" on local communities without much consultation. The N2000 site for the Macin Mountains is about 18,000ha, which represents an area that is almost 50% more than the area of MMNP. The network is not fully finalized yet but should be in the year to come. The Special Protection Areas (SPAs) were notified to the EC and, therefore, became part of the N2000 network in Romania immediately. However, the process to select the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) is still underway; biogeographical region seminars are planned in the current year to finalize the selection of the SACs. Under the current jurisdiction, when a N2000 site includes a national park with an administration, this administration is responsible for the management of the N2000 site as well. Therefore, more effort to involve the local communities in the Macin Mountains area is needed to improve the relationship between the protected area as defined by the N2000 site and the local communities; particularly those villages which are greatly affected such as Jijila where 50% of their surface area is part of the N2000 Macin site. At the local level, there is a lack of clarity of these two protected area networks/systems. It is too much government driven and there is a risk of future problems with the local communities; the more awareness is being done the less these problems should occur – MMNP has a role to play here.

There is a limited link between the protected areas and the local people. We only try to protect the biodiversity.
General Director, Ministry of Tourism

136. The limited involvement of the local surrounding communities is also part of the findings of a study commissioned by the MMNP Administration in 2007⁸. This study was conducted in the surrounding villages and the findings are mostly based on a survey of 74 households. The study found that the mean age was 53.2 years with 30% of the respondents over 65 years old. They live off an income that is far lower than the national average and most houses own various types of livestock. Nature protection is seen as a lower

⁸ Dr. Brandon Anthony and Dragos Moldovan, January 2008, *Conservation Attitudes in the Communities Neighboring the Macin Mountains National Park*.

priority lagging behind access to drinking water and better agriculture. Their perception of nature protection and MMNP is “*Most of the people believe that the MMNP has neither done anything good, nor anything in particular bad for their communities, especially in terms of direct benefits. However, they like the fact that their village / town is situated near a national park and consider that it also exists for the betterment of their communities*”. Despite local community representatives (Mayors and Business Leaders) seating on the MMNP Consultative Committee (forum involved in the management of the Park), very few respondents have knowledge about this Consultative Committee (CC). The study makes a few recommendations to improve the relationship between the MMNP and the local communities:

- The inclusion of other community members than formal representatives (businesses, informal leaders etc);
- Giving the communities the opportunity to elect their representatives;
- Clearly defining role of the CC and state procedures, policies through which people can communicate with members of the CC.

4.3.8. Monitoring Approach and Progress Reporting

137. The monitoring of the project and the progress reporting is done according to UNDP and GEF procedures; including the use of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) developed by the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). It is rated as satisfactory.

138. The project document has a well-defined monitoring and evaluation plan detailing the monitoring process during project implementation; including the list of the various monitoring reports to be completed, the roles and responsibilities of the Project Manager and the UNDP-CO and the monitoring steps to be conducted. A revised budget of USD 110,000 was allocated to this management function.

139. The project is monitored on a day-to-day basis with the necessary “check and balances” between the Director of the project and the UNDP-CO and a full project review conducted once a year; including a review of the progress (indicators), a review of the implementation, the risks and the finances. The yearly review is presented to the POC for their endorsement and the planning of the year ahead. The monitoring function includes several management reports, a set of indicators and the tracking tool for GEF biodiversity projects. There are discussed below.

140. The main management/progress reports produced by the project management team are:

An Inception report was produced at the end of the inception phase (December 2005) to summarize the project start-up phase; update the key issues and the related recommendations; detail the project work plan for the first year (2006) and some indications for the following years; presents the terms of reference for the key positions as well as the revised logical framework (change of output 1.1 and 3.3); and a budget presentation per year for the total duration of the project.

Annual Work Plans (AWP) are produced once a year with a review of the project progress, some related recommendations and the work plan for the coming year with the corresponding budget. They are presented to UNDP-CO and NFA.

Brief **Operational Quarterly reports** are produced once a quarter, stating the major accomplishments of the past quarter and the plan for the coming quarter.

Once a year, the project management team in collaboration with UNDP-CO are producing **Project Implementation Review (PIR) reports** (only one PIR-2007 was produced so far). These reports follow the UNDP/GEF guidelines and are a good instrument to review the implementation of the project, the risks and update the progress against the set of indicators. These reports also includes a section “*IX - Project Contribution to GEF Strategic Targets in biodiversity*”, which is a technical review of the project assessing the project contribution toward the GEF strategic targets in the biodiversity area. Additionally, these reports are written with the participation of the entire team, making use of this instrument to review the project progress and discuss any variance.

141. As per UNDP/GEF guidelines, the project is using the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) to monitor the project progress towards improving the management effectiveness of MMNP. The

initial score of the METT (at project inception) was 32. As of June 2007 the METT score was 56, which is higher than the target set for the end of the project that was 50.

142. During the first two years of implementation most METT indicators have improved. Considering the work plan and the training planned for later this year, the score should continue to improve over the next two years; a new target for the project end should be established. One area rated low is the environmental education/awareness of local communities. The MMNP administration needs to do more in this area and it confirms also the lack of community involvement discussed in section 4.3.7.

143. Project progress is monitored/measured with a set of indicators (14), which were identified during the design phase and included in the log-frame. There are:

Table 8: List of Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator
Objective: A landscape-oriented method of managing small PA and improving conservation effectiveness is demonstrated in MMNP and serves as a basis for replication across the PA system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # grassland ha managed to enhance habitat of priority species.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # hectares of forest in and around the Macin Park under (FSC) certified management.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Populations of target landscape species within NP maintained at baseline levels or increased.
Outcome 1: Productive landscape around MMNP is made more biodiversity friendly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of priority habitats under special management by local stakeholders and MMNP in surrounding landscape.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of farms replicating agro environmental/organic practices in Macin.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % improvement in level of support for 5 basic biodiversity issues in local communities.
Outcome 2: Management capacity and conservation effectiveness of Macin Mountains National Park is secured.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> METT score increases annually to a significant degree.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of cross-sectoral hunting enforcement/poaching prevention agreements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplementary funding for PA increased. –e.g. tourism revenue.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park management decisions are being made up to date monitoring system.
Outcome 3. Replication of small protected area management best practices across national PA system is ongoing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best practices and new training curriculum for PAs and surrounding landscape.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of PA whose staff successfully completed new training module.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NFA PA management performance evaluations include adopting best practices (BP) as a criterion.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of protected areas replicating best practices.

144. A review of these indicators, which are used to measure the progress of the project at the objective and outcome level, indicates that there is much emphasis on biodiversity conservation measures. However, considering the design of the project, this review indicates that:

- No indicators measure the quality of the relationship between the MMNP Administration and the local communities living in surrounding areas and their level of awareness. It was discussed in Section 4.3.7 that these local communities need to be more involved in the decision-making process of the park. The project is investing in this area and the outcome should be measured. As it is an important part for the management of protected areas, it is recommended that one indicator to be added to measure the progress of the project objective such as “*Local communities understand better why to protect the Macin Mountain National Park and are active in its management*”.

- The measurement of the progress of the development of the management plan and its effectiveness is mostly accomplished through the monitoring of the METT score. This tool includes a set of 30 indicators to measure the management effectiveness in managing the park. It is recommended to set specific ambitious targets (3?); particularly for two areas: (1) indicators related to the local communities and their awareness; and (2) indicators related to the management of the park such as annual work plans, M&E and resource allocation.

4.4. Project Impacts

145. This section discussed the progress made so far toward the achievement of the objective of the project and the likelihood that the project initiatives will achieve the project expected impact.

4.4.1. Potential to Achieve Long Term Project Goal and Objectives

146. The potential for the project to achieve its long-term goal and objective is rated as satisfactory. The project goal is “to conserve globally significant biological diversity by strengthening Romania’s emerging national system of protected areas”. Its objective is “a landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and improving conservation effectiveness is demonstrated in Macin Mountains National Park and constitutes a model for replication across the emerging national system of protected areas”. It is still early to predict the impacts that the project will have on the protected area system in Romania but initial results indicate that there is a good potential for impacting positively the PA system in Romania through the development of best management practices to be replicated throughout the PAs in Romania.

147. As indicated in Section 4.2.1, the project delivers its outputs as planned with a focus so far on setting up the park administration, on establishing a management planning process to manage the park and on testing new ways to make the surrounding areas more biodiversity friendly. For the remaining half of the project, the plan is to shift the focus on the replication of the best (tested) practices to other protected areas through collaboration with NFA.

148. The main areas where impacts are expected are:

- Landscape ecology/conservation planning to anchor the long-term strategic management vision for the park; including both the landscape within the park boundaries and the landscape surrounding it. It includes also the capacity to conduct biodiversity studies (inventories) in collaboration with local research centers;
- Making the surrounding landscape more biodiversity friendly through the promotion of organic agriculture;
- Increasing awareness of the value of the environmental services potentially to be generated by the park such as eco-tourism;
- Establishing a management planning function based on the current NFA guidelines for protected area management plans;
- Strengthening the management of the park by improving data management and use through a new database design, and development of a web-based mechanism for sharing lessons learned;
- A training program developed and implemented for staffs involved in the management of protected areas;

The problem of NFA is not to preserve the environment in the protected areas but to manage the conflicts in surrounding local communities.
General Director, Ministry of Tourism

149. This potential impact is also to be viewed within the context of Romania’s development. In recent years, the country prepared its accession to the EU and supported/adopted a series of institutional and legislative changes to harmonize its environmental legislative framework with the EU “*environmental acquis*” and also to align its environmental management system with international conventions and treaties signed by Romania. There are still numerous capacity gaps – particularly at the implementation level – but Romania is showing a real interest and NFA’s commitment to MMNP demonstrates a national commitment for a national sustainable protected area system. This is an opportunity of the UNDP/GEF project to collaborate with the national agencies involved in the management of protected areas in Romania; particularly for the second half of this project through the implementation of outcome 3. This project should make a great impact on the protected area system of Romania; particularly for small protected areas, which often include sensitive habitats outside the boundaries of the PA.

4.4.2. Potential to Achieve Global Environmental Benefits

150. The potential for this UNDP/GEF funded project to achieve global environmental benefits is excellent; it is rated as highly satisfactory. By demonstrating new management techniques for small protected areas such as the development of a landscape-oriented method and the promotion of biodiversity-friendly use of surrounding lands, the project has a great potential to contribute to global environmental benefits; including the objective to replicate the best practices throughout the protected area system in Romania. Considering the achievements so far, the project is on track to deliver its set of expected results. Therefore, there is a high potential for the project to achieve expected global environmental benefits.

151. Prior to the creation of the park, there was limited biodiversity knowledge of the Macin area; available data was poor and there were no complete inventories of species present in the Macin area. Yet, this region (Dobrudja) is the only region where there are important areas of steppe vegetation in Romania and in the Balkans. Therefore, the creation of the MMNP has (and will have) many benefits for the local environment and the conservation of this biodiversity will contribute to global environmental benefits.

152. The Macin Mountains, also known as the Hercinian Mountains, are the oldest mountains in Romania. One of Europe's most outstanding natural regions, they draw their uniqueness from a combination of intrinsic geological character and bio-geographical location and specificity. The protection of this area conserves the specific habitats, plant communities, endemics, sub-endemic and relict species of the Dobrudja plateau, an internationally important and recognized bio-geographic area.

153. These mountains support a large number of endangered species as well as ecosystems characteristic of the Balkan-Pontic steppe and the sub-Mediterranean and Balkanic forest. Floristically, the Macin Mountains represent the northern limit of Mediterranean, Balkan and Pontic species, the southern limit of the central European and Caucasian species, and the western limits of a number of Asiatic species. Some characteristics of the local biodiversity are:

- Out of the 41 recorded mammal species, 11 are protected by international conventions. Bird fauna in the Park area is extremely rich, supporting 78 species strictly protected under the Bern Convention. Of the 187 bird species sightings recorded within the park area, 60% (approximately 112 species) are listed by IUCN as "Vulnerable," "Rare," or "Possibly Extinct," with many of the remaining species being considered as "Insufficiently Known." Two species in the Park are also protected under the Habitat Directive of the European Union. Macin lies also along a major migration corridor for northern European and western Asian migrants;
- Over 979 species of butterflies (Lepidoptera) have been recorded at Macin. Approximately 55 % of the butterflies (Lepidoptera) of the Macin Mountains have Eurasian distribution areas. The many species of butterflies are a testimony of a rich biodiversity well preserved in pristine areas of North Dobrogea;
- All 11 reptile species recorded in the Macin area are also strictly protected under the Bern Convention. These include the Dobrodjan turtle *Testudo graeca iberica* and the Romanian dragon snake *Elaphe quatuorlineata* sauromates;
- Over 72 nationally and internationally threatened plant species occur in the Macin area. These mountains conserve plant communities and endangered or representative species, many of them endemic to the bio-geographical unit of the Dobrudja Plateau, of which Macin is a part; 1,911 plant species exist in the Macin Mountains, representing over 19% of European flora. The area supports 27 endemic plant species, including the Romania Bell *Campanula romanica*.

154. This globally significant biodiversity is under threats; mostly from the forest and grassland habitat degradation and low-level species loss to the surrounding landscape. These threats are due mainly to habitat fragmentation, whereby habitats within the protected area are not connected to similar habitats just outside of the protected area. This lack of connectivity between the protected area and the surrounding landscape negatively affects the long-term viability of biodiversity within a protected area the size of MMNP (that is considered a small size protected area).

155. Biodiversity conservation in small protected areas is problematic over the long-term, especially as pressures in the surrounding landscape slowly increase. Coverage of ecosystems is often fragmented, and there is a lack of connectivity between areas or between a protected area and its surrounding landscape that

would help redress size limitations.

156. Nevertheless, this project demonstrates how to overcome these size limitations by developing a landscape-scale conservation planning process, cooperate with surrounding land users and owners, and apply practical protected area management tools and practices rooted in conservation biology. Considering the lack of biodiversity knowledge and the threats faced by the globally significant biodiversity existing in the Macin Mountains, the project will contribute to global environmental benefits; it will:

- Provide the relevant communities with knowledge about the existing biodiversity and its habitats;
- Provide protected area managers with demonstrated best practices to manage small protected areas with emphasis on landscape ecology planning within the PA boundaries and also in the surrounding areas; and on promoting biodiversity-friendly techniques in the surrounding landscape such as organic farming;
- Provide the small PA managers with an adapted management planning process to conserve and use sustainably the biodiversity in small protected areas.

4.4.3. Potential Impacts on Local Environment, Poverty and Other Socio-Economic Issues

157. There is a good potential for the project to impact on the local environment, poverty and other local socio-economic issues; it is rated as satisfactory. The county of Tulcea is considered a poor region in Romania with a high rate of unemployment. Industrial activity in the Macin area decreased by 15 times in the last 15 years, and the fishing industry also decreased drastically – due to the polders created thirty years ago. No economic alternatives were created in the region and it is said that it is very difficult to develop and to implement biodiversity conservation policies and programs in the context of a weak economic development, of population poverty and of the existence of unsolved social issues. Nevertheless, the creation of MMNP and the implementation of the park administration create new opportunities for local socio-economic development:

- The Macin area is being introduced in tourist itineraries, including the park (hiking), wine making, monasteries, historical points (the area has a very rich history), and the possibility to participate in local cultural and religious events. It is close to the Danube Delta - which is visited by about 200,000 tourists per year – and the travel agencies are interested in diversifying their products by offering “in-land” activities as added options to the Delta tours. These opportunities should provide economic opportunities for the local communities surrounding the MMNP in the near future such as bed and breakfast businesses, tour guides, horse riding, etc.
- The MMNP Administration is promoting organic farming as a safe way to farm the surrounding land. The market for organic products is increasing and the transformation of the existing farm to organic farming is facilitated by already low intensity farming techniques. This is an opportunity for local farmers to increase their yield and obtain better market prices; and an opportunity for the park to contribute to the preservation of sensitive habitats outside the park boundaries.
- The proximity of the park offers an advantage to the local communities for the accession of some EU funds on a competitive basis whereby a 5 to 10 point bonus is given to communities living close to protected areas. In addition, the MMNP team is helping those interested communities in putting proposals together. A good example is the village of Luncavita that is using this bonus and help from the MMNP team in its favour to win EU funds for community projects. This is a community with the youngest Mayor in Romania where you can find a new drinking water supply system, high-speed internet access, an association for nature and biodiversity protection and the projects to create a park information center and to introduce in the local school a course to become environmental guides in the MMNP area.

158. In addition to these activities, which have the potential to contribute to the local environment, poverty and socio-economic development, the MMNP administration is mostly made up of staffs that are born in the region. They are environmental professionals but also committed to the development of their own region.

159. From the various interviews and some project documents such as the “*Year 3 Work Planning Report*”⁹, it is interesting to note the local perception of the park and its administration. Most interviewees see the MMNP Administration as a strong local sustainable development player. The park is viewed as a/an:

- Partner for sustainable development in collaboration with public authorities as well as with private companies;
- Active participant in community life, cultural and religious events through organization and direct financial participation;
- Investor in new infrastructure (new information centers in the area will be created in collaboration with local administration);
- Promoter of environmental education through actions of dissemination, information and education were organized together with schools from the region, having very good results in competitions at national and international level;
- Innovator in new forest management practices (good collaboration with NFA and an example of good practices);
- Introducer of new innovative farming practices (initiating training, study visits, exchange of experiences, encouraging creation of organic farmer associations, etc);
- Protector of local grape varieties, helping to ensure healthy local viticulture;
- Promoter of Macin area to the world through its website;
- Conservator of unique natural heritage of Romania;
- Asset for local communities when seeking out EU funding (Luncavita example);
- Unique study location for Romanian and international scientists.

4.5. Sustainability and Replicability

4.5.1. Sustainability Strategy and Project Exit Strategy

160. The project strategy for its exit and the long-term sustainability of the project achievements is rated as highly satisfactory; it has two major pillars. Firstly, the partnership between UNDP and NFA is very conducive for ensuring the continuity of the project achievements. As it is reviewed in Section 4.3.5, there are clear and effective delivery mechanisms. NFA is investing in this project and will ensure that the results are sustained; it is their interest. Secondly, the design of the project is such that outcome #3 is about the replication of the project achievements (achieved under outcome 1 & 2). In itself the project has its long-term sustainability and its replication embedded into its design.

161. The sustainability strategy for the project was identified through the review of the following critical assumptions:

- The project’s outcomes are largely achievable with current institutions, and existing and to-be-increased financial resources and personnel;
- Strengthened partnerships among communities, NGOs and national government will contribute to sustainability;
- Mainstreaming biodiversity into productive sector planning and programs will serve to reduce unsustainable pressures on PA resources and be a significant contributing factor to sustainability;
- Overcoming barriers (knowledge, financial, “proof of concept”) will catalyze the self-sustaining adoption of new agricultural practices and new protected area management approaches.

4.5.2. Sustainability of Results Achieved by the Project

162. The potential for the long-term sustainability of the project achievements is good; it is rated as satisfactory. As it is discussed in Section 4.5.1, the project has a strong strategy in place to ensure this sustainability and its replicability. It is well supported by the NFA, the national implementing agency of the project. The project is about strengthening the management capacity of the MMNP Administration, demonstrate landscape ecology/conservation planning methods and replicate the best practices to other small protected areas in Romania. At half way through, the project achievements indicates that they will have a positive impact over the long term on the protected area system in Romania and the assessment indicates that these results will be sustained in the future.

⁹ Jeffrey Griffin, January 2008, *Year 3 Work Planning Report*

163. In addition to be relevant in the context of Romania, the project design includes a series of expected results, which are needed by NFA to strengthen their network of PAs. For instance, the inventories, which necessitated a high level of project resources are needed to manage the park. Once these inventories will be finalized, they will be used by the MMNP Administration and the Scientific Council to make management decisions. This information should also be used to a lesser extent by a multitude of local actors such as local schools, museums, municipalities, etc. By responding to the need for biodiversity information, the sustainability of these inventories is quasi-guaranteed.

164. Regarding the management capacity of the MMNP Administration, the prospect for the long-term sustainability of the capacity developed is also good. The project supported the installation of the Administration and supports the capacity development of the Administration staff; including a training programme that is under development following a management training needs analysis conducted in 2007. These capacities that are being developed will be sustained in the future. NFA is committed to MMNP and the Park Administration will carry on with the management of the park after the project end. This long-term sustainability is reinforced by the fact that the project team is the MMNP Administration. The staffs are NFA employees with permanent contracts to manage the Macin Park. After the project end in December 2009, the MMNP staff will carry on with their MMNP job duties; benefiting from increased capacities gained through the implementation of the project.

165. The demonstrations of the landscape ecology/conservation planning and the promotion of organic farming are also achievements that should be sustained in the long-term. The same is true for the study on the potential value of environmental services, which could be generated through the sustainable use of the park's resources. Most of these achievements will be sustainable in the long-term through two channels. The first one is the sustainability of these demonstrations through their applications in the Macin area. For instance, the landscape ecology/conservation planning is the basis for identifying sensitive habitats outside the boundaries of the park. Some results have already been used to negotiate with local communities a corridor between two parts of the MMNP. More of these sensitive areas exist in the surrounding area of MMNP and more negotiations with local communities will take place in the years to come; using the information produced through the landscape ecology/conservation planning initiative. The second channel for the long-term sustainability of these initiatives will be through the project initiatives undertaken under outcome 3. This outcome will be implemented during the second half of the project. It is about replicating the project best practices to other protected areas in Romania. In itself, the design of this particular outcome is also to guarantee the long-term sustainability. These best practices will be institutionalized through NFA and replicated in other PAs.

166. Finally, the sustainability is also reinforced by the approach used for implementing the project. The project uses a capacity development approach that emphasizes stakeholder participation and ownership. In most cases the sustainability is a "built-in" feature of these initiatives. For instance, the promotion of organic farming is done through a partnership with the association of organic farmers. The activities are supported by the project but are conducted by the association. In other words, the project is seen as a catalyst to launch this kind of initiatives, which should sustain themselves after the end of the project support. Following 2 workshops with organic farmers, the associations got already a few new members and, more importantly, a few farmers already signed a contract to get their organic certification process underway. Additionally, the President of this association enquired with the Park Manager to get contacts for all protected areas in Romania; the idea would be to contact these PAs and offer to jointly organize a similar approach. This initiative seems now to be sustainable and may also be replicated in other PAs in Romania.

167. The same can be said of the initiatives with the local municipalities and the local communities. The project supports local initiatives by bringing its know-how and some resources. These initiatives are owned by the stakeholders and they will continue after the end of the project. Such examples are the support to local municipalities to produce their development plans; the development of information centers on the park in some municipalities as potential point of departure for hiking trails in the park; the partnership with private tourism operators to develop eco-tourism in the region; the support for local cultural events highlighting the natural heritage of the region; and, the support for school activities related to the park and its biodiversity.

4.5.3. Financial and Human Resources Sustainability

168. The financial and human resources sustainability of the project is highly satisfactory. As it is described in Section 4.3.4, the staff long-term positions on the project are not funded by UNDP/GEF. They are funded by NFA as regular staff of the agencies. They have legal employment contracts to administer/manage the park and will be continued after the project end as the Macin Mountain National Park Administration. Therefore, no financial and human resources sustainability issues can be noted. Additionally, NFA is already funding the cost of the office and some operational costs to manage the park. There is an annual budget for MMNP that is part of NFA budget and which should be continued after the project end.

4.5.4. Enabling Environment – Policy, Legislation and Institutions

169. The project should contribute greatly to an enabling environment for the management of the protected areas in Romania; this potential is rated as highly satisfactory. The project supported the establishment of the MMNP. It is also testing/demonstrating new management approaches to conserve biodiversity and to use it sustainably through the development of biodiversity friendly socio-economic activities such as eco-tourism and organic farming. Outcome 3 is about the replication of best practices across the national PA system in Romania; particularly the small protected areas.

170. Romania has a national network of protected areas consisting of 26 national and natural parks and 844 small reserves and protected areas. The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve represents in itself about 50% of the total areas that are protected, encompassing 580,000 hectares. From the 844 natural monuments and nature reserves, 95% are less than 10,000 hectares in size. By developing best practices for small protected areas, the MMNP will provide NFA with valuable new management approaches for this type of protected areas.

171. The main contribution from the project seems to be on management matters related to the surrounding areas, which are not within the park boundaries. MMNP is a relatively small protected area surrounded by rural communities. Despite not having many problems with encroachment, the challenge is to ensure that these surrounding communities are not affecting - negatively - the protected areas; particularly some biodiversity habitats outside the boundaries of the park. Best practices are emerging from the project and discussion needs to take place with NFA to strategize the replication process of these best practices.

4.5.5. Ecological Sustainability

172. The ecological sustainability of the project is rated as highly satisfactory. There are no environmental risks; no project activities pose a threat to the environment, which can undermine the future flow of project environmental benefits. On the contrary, most of the activities should contribute to improving the ecological sustainability in the MMNP area. The research conducted in the park allowed the park administration to inventory the biodiversity existing in the park and identify the threatened species. It also allowed the staff to review the existing boundaries and identify sensitive habitat areas, which are not within the park boundaries and which are now the object of negotiations with the respective communities to establish an agreement between the land owners and the park to preserve these sensitive habitat.

173. The existence of the project to support the establishment of the MMNP administration will ensure a stronger ecological sustainability over the long-term. The Macin mountain range is now protected by law and having the advantage of not having any communities living in the area, the challenge of socio-economic development in the surrounding areas should be controlled and not affect negatively the local environment in the future; particularly if these communities realize the value of the park and its potential use for sustainable activities.

4.5.6. Replication and Scaling-Up

174. The replication and the scaling-up of the project achievements is part of the core design of this project and the potential in the future is rated as highly satisfactory. The success of this project is partly being measured by its ability to replicate best practices in other small protected areas throughout Romania. Replication is embedded in the outcome 3 of the project that is the “*Replication of small protected area*”

management best practices across national PA system is ongoing”.

175. The replication is being measured with four performance indicators:

- # of PA whose staff successfully completed new training module.
- MESD and MAFRD mandate use of best practice PA management modules.
- SPA and DNBC PA management performance evaluations include adopting best practices as a criterion.
- Number of hits on Romanian language website for the protected area knowledge network.

176. As of the end of June 2007 (PIR 2007), no progress was yet reported under this outcome. It is logical when we consider the design of the project. Before any progress can be made under outcome 3, the project needs to achieve some targets under outcome 1 & 2. These achievements can be packaged as best practices and replicated through the NFA network of protected areas in Romania. During the first half, the project focussed on implementing research/inventory activities, landscape planning, drafting the management plan for the park and various socio-economic activities in the surrounding areas. It is now at a crucial stage to identify the best practices, which may be replicated in other protected areas.

177. The project is already helping the local NFA to improve the management of the 16 protected areas in the vicinity of MMNP. This initiative should be monitored and the main lessons learned used to replicate the model to all small protected areas in Romania.

5. CONCLUSION / RATINGS SUMMARY

178. In conclusion, a summary of the ratings is given in the table below for each evaluation criteria.

Table 9: Ratings Summary

Evaluation Criterion	Summary Comments	Rating
Relevance	The Project is highly relevant for Romania and the development of its national network of protected areas. The Macin Mountains are the only Balkan-Pontic steppe ecosystem in the EU. It is an internationally important and recognized bio-geographic area and the EU accession increased its relevance to be protected and conserve the specific habitats, plant communities, endemics, sub-endemic and relict species. Romania is committed to strengthen its network of protected areas and the design of this project responds well to these national needs as well as to the UNDP country programme for Romania. The project objective is about demonstrating an effective management model that would be replicated in other protected areas in Romania. Locally, the project provides resources to protect the natural resources of the Macin Mountains but also some know-how to use sustainably these natural resources. The MMNP Administration is seen as a catalyst for initiated local sustainable development activities in the surrounding areas.	Highly Relevant
Effectiveness	The project effectiveness is satisfactory. The project is delivering results as per the set of expected outcomes. After a difficult start due to some major issues with local private operators, the project is now on track and should achieve its set of expected outcomes. In the first half of the project, the focus was more on achieving results under outcome 1 & 2: the MMNP Administration was set up, the MMNP management bodies established and the staff hired; a management plan underway based on an innovative landscape ecology planning approach; and some initiatives in the surrounding areas to ensure that the landscape is biodiversity-friendly such as the promotion of organic farming and the negotiation of a corridor (50ha) with local communities to conserve a sensitive habitat area situated outside of the park boundaries. In the second half, the	Satisfactory

Evaluation Criterion	Summary Comments	Rating
	project will now focus more on achieving the expected outcome 3 that is to replicate the best practices learned through the project to other small protected areas in Romania.	
Efficiency	The efficiency of the project is satisfactory. The project resources are utilized efficiently and the project management team uses an adaptive management approach to adapt its implementation. After a difficult first year when the project faced staff turnover issues, the project is now operating well and was able to catch up with the delivery of results. The project has now a good team of people – including some of them from the area – that are effective in developing good relationships with the local communities; particularly with the local elected leaders (Mayors). The project benefits from a strong management support from the UNDP-CO; including good management and administration of the project financial resources. The partnership between UNDP and NFA is excellent and the project is properly monitored, following UNDP/GEF procedures. However, information produced by the project should be made available to the general public through a web site and local information centers. Additionally, the involvement of stakeholders into the park's management decision-making process is limited and it should be reinforced during the second half of the project; which would strengthen the stakeholder ownership of MMNP.	Satisfactory
Impact	The potential impact of the project is satisfactory. Considering the current achievements, the potential for the project to achieve its objectives is good. Through outcome 1 & 2, the project is demonstrating a landscape-oriented management method for small protected areas; the best tested practices should form a model to be replicated throughout the network of protected areas in Romania (outcome 3). In addition, the potential for the project to achieve global environmental benefits is rated as excellent. The Macin Mountains are part of the Dobrudja plateau that is an internationally important and recognized bio-geographical area. The strengthening of the management of MMNP should contribute to improve the conservation of this globally recognized biodiversity. Finally, the activities conducted in the surrounding areas to ensure the biodiversity-friendly use of the surrounding landscape have a positive impact on the local environment, poverty and socio-economic development.	Satisfactory
Sustainability	The long-term sustainability of the project achievements is highly satisfactory. A good sustainability strategy was developed as part of the design of the project. The strong partnership between UNDP and NFA is the cornerstone for the long-term sustainability potential of this project. NFA is investing into this project and is expecting its success to reinforce its network of protected areas. Additionally, the project set-up also reinforces the long-term sustainability. The project staffs are the permanent staffs of the MMNP Administration. Once the project ends, the staff will carry on with their respective duties, ensuring the continuity of the project achievements; no major disruption should occur at project end. Sustainability is also emphasized by the implementation approach of the project. All initiatives focus on developing capacities and sustainability is a “built-in” feature of most project initiatives. The project is supporting rather than “doing” initiatives. Finally, by design the project achievements are to be replicated in other protected areas in Romania (outcome 3), which is also reinforcing the long-term	Highly Satisfactory

Evaluation Criterion	Summary Comments	Rating
	sustainability of project achievements.	
Specific Evaluation Criterion to be Rated (from TORs)		
Implementation Approach	See Section 4.3	Satisfactory
Country Ownership/Drivers	See Section 4.3.6	Satisfactory
Outcome/Achievements of Objectives	See Section 4.2.1 and 4.4.1	Satisfactory
Stakeholders Participation/Public Involvement	See Section 4.3.6	Satisfactory
Sustainability	See Section 4.5	Highly Satisfactory
Replication Approach	See Section 4.5.6	Highly Satisfactory
Cost-Effectiveness	See Section 4.3.2	Satisfactory
Monitoring and Evaluation	See Section 4.3.8	Satisfactory
Overall Rating	<p>Overall, the progress of the project is rated as satisfactory. The project is highly relevant in the context of strengthening the protected area network in Romania. After a difficult first year the project is now delivering what it is expected to deliver. During this first half, the project focused on implementing initiatives under outcome 1 & 2. The MMNP Administration is now operational and some management tools are being developed. Demonstrations in the surrounding areas are underway to test approaches for the development of biodiversity-friendly use of the surrounding land. The second half should see a shift toward initiatives under outcome 3 that is to replicate the best practices that have been demonstrated during the first half of the project. The project resources are utilized efficiently and after some staff turnover issues during the first year, the park administration has now a well qualified team of professionals to manage the park. The strong partnership between UNDP and NFA is conducive to good project management. However, the stakeholder participation in the management of the park is limited; particularly the participation of the local communities. Access to information is also limited and more effort is needed in this area. Nevertheless, the good progress so far let to believe that the potential for the project to achieve its objective is good as well as achieving global environmental benefits due to its globally unique biodiversity. Finally, the design of the project, the strong partnership with NFA and the fact that the staff is the permanent staff of the MMNP Administration are all contributing factors to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project achievements.</p>	Satisfactory

6. LESSONS LEARNED

179. The Evaluation Team collated the following lessons learned from the standpoint of the design and implementation of the project. There are based on the review of project documents, interviews with key informants, and analysis of the information collected:

- When the project staffs are not funded by the project but are in fact permanent employees of the relevant national institutions, the questions of ownership, institutionalization, replication and long-term sustainability of the project achievements are not as critical as when the project is a separate entity with its own staff. The experience indicates that these factors are automatically embedded into the implementation strategy and are natural outcomes during the project implementation and more importantly after the project end. Moreover, the greater sharing of the control of the project among the partners imposes the institutionalization of the project from its inception and prevent the need to ensure the “buy-in” of the more typical project achievements.
- A small protected area is surrounded by rural areas where local communities live. The only chance for the protected area to succeed is to have the local population engaged in the management of the PA. They need to consider the PA as an asset that needs to be protected and used sustainably. Therefore, raising the awareness of these local communities is critical. Local communities need to understand the concept of protecting an area and the opportunities to improve their livelihood in using it sustainably. They need to know “*what’s in it for them?*” if we want these communities to become partners in the management of a PA.
- A project design with a well-integrated sustainability and replicability strategy is a contributing factor for the future success of a project. When these elements are part of the set of expected results, they are considered early in the implementation by the project team, have project resources allocated to them and, as a consequence, they guarantee a better replicability and sustainability of project achievements.
- The establishment of the NATURA 2000 network in Romania was conducted very rapidly with limited consultation with the local population. As a result, some villages have more than 90% of their surface under a Natura 2000 site and very few people know about the constraints and the opportunities offered by the network. The concept of Natura 2000 is good and local communities can benefit from it, particularly some landowners when their land is declared a sensitive habitat area. However, when a concept is imposed on communities without proper consultation and awareness campaigns, a good idea may end up as a disastrous process on the ground, emphasizing the constraints and preventing the local populations to benefit from the opportunities.

It is also to be noted that more lessons learned will be identified during the second half of the project and be part of the achievements under outcome 3 that is to replicate the best practices that have been tested and demonstrated under outcome 1 and 2. The selection of these best practices will be done in 2008 and their replication throughout the PA system in Romania should start in 2009.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

180. Based on the findings of this mid-term evaluation, the following recommendations are made; they are not in any particular order for implementation:

Recommendations for the Remaining Implementation Period of the Project

1. It is recommended to undertake a review of international practices for managing similar protected areas as additional potential best practices for managing the park and its surrounding areas and monitoring its biodiversity. Few examples could be the Niagara Escarpment (Ontario, Canada), the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve in Latvia – particularly for their own experience with their ecological landscape planning process and their Eco-watch programme to monitor the biodiversity in the reserve based on local volunteers with the support of thematic experts. A review of international practices would enrich the landscape conservation plan and the management plan for MMNP, which are currently under development.

2. As per the “*Year 3 work plan*”, it is recommended to finalize as soon as possible the main initiatives under outcome 1 & 2 and kick-start activities under outcome 3. The project is already in its second half and it is necessary to undertake the portfolio of activities under outcome 3 as soon as possible. Despite that these outcomes should sequentially be implemented; it is possible that activities under outcome 3 overlap with the finalization of some initiatives under outcome 1 & 2. In addition to the development of a list of emerging best practices generated by the project (Activity 1 of WP2008), it is recommended to:
 - a. Organize a national workshop in collaboration with NFA and the Maramures Project to review these emerging best practices and identify the needs for the network of protected areas in Romania. The objective would be to identify the national needs in term of best practices, validate the emerging best practices in both UNDP/GEF projects and identify a plan of action to “package” these best practices: format (case study, fact sheet, study tours, web sites, etc...), resources, responsibilities and schedule. The timing of this workshop should also be done after the review of international practices to be able to also use this input into the workshop.
3. It is recommended that the MMNP Administration review the participation of local stakeholders in the management of the park. The need for a greater participation of local stakeholders in the management of the park as reviewed during this MTE (*see Section 4.3.7*) was confirmed by the recent survey on “*conservation attitudes in the communities neighbouring the MMNP*”. It was also emphasized in the October 2007 report of the Consultant Phillip Desmet as a key element determining the long-term success of the park. Dr. Desmet recommended that “*a framework for stakeholder involvement in the management and development/ utilisation of the park*” be integrated into the management plan; including an initial list of elements for a greater stakeholder involvement.
4. In parallel to the previous recommendation, it is recommended to explore the possibilities to monitor the surrounding areas through community/municipality committees or other forms of local associations (NGOs?) with the participation of the MMNP Administration. It will develop a greater participation of stakeholders in monitoring and preserving the surrounding areas and a greater local ownership to conserve these areas.
5. Support the production of a compendium (profile) on MMNP and the surrounding communities to expand people’s access to information on the area. Currently, information on the region exists but it is scattered throughout agencies and ministries and not easily accessible. For instance, MMNP has now an inventory of most flora and fauna existing in the park, the recent survey on conservation attitudes is also with the park, the legislation on national patrimoine contains a list of all cultural monuments in the region, etc. This compendium should be for the most part a compilation of existing data covering, for instance, the governance aspects, history and culture, social environment, services and infrastructure, economic conditions, a summary description of the natural environment and the human impacts on the environment (agriculture, forestry, tourism, waste water management, etc.). This compendium could become the environment and socio-economic baseline for the Macin area and be used to identify the long term management strategies for the park but also for the local communities such as the development of local sustainable development plans. It could also be packaged as a book on Macin and be sold as a reference book on the area.
6. The information produced by the project should be made more accessible to the public; particularly through the MMNP web site. The park newsletter should be disseminated largely in the local communities.
7. On the basis of the training needs assessment, recommendations for the development of a training programme were made with two levels of priorities: (1) essential for meeting major current capacity gaps and (2) important for the successful completion of the project objectives. It is recommended to go ahead with the first level of priorities that includes basic training for rangers and field workers, communication skills and working with communities. However, it is also recommended to develop this training programme in close collaboration with NFA and explore the possibility to develop this training programme in partnership with an existing training institution such as a training organization that is developing/delivering training courses to the public service or

an academic institution specialised in environment and/or forestry. The concept would be to develop jointly this training, deliver it to the MMNP staff but also opening this training to all staff involved in managing protected areas in Romania; including NFA staff but also staff from MESD. Instead of being a one time delivered course – which is costly – the programme could be used for the years to come to transfer know-how on PA management and raise the capacity of staff involved in PAs.

8. In addition to the training recommendation above, it is recommended to support capacity development activities to strengthen the management of the MMNP Administration; using the proposed institutional and project management skills training module identified through the training needs analysis. It should include topics such as management systems, management information system, GIS, human resource management system and project life cycle.
9. As discussed in Section 4.1.2, the identification of the national network of Natura 2000 sites was conducted without much public consultation. As a result, there is a limited “buy-in” from the local communities such as those in the Tulcea County. However, the N2000 Macin site exists and in addition to the MMNP area (11,000ha), it covers another 7,000ha of land in the surrounding areas to the park; mostly private land. Under the current jurisdiction, the MMNP Administration is becoming the custodian of the N2000 site. It is recommended that the project support the integration of the two concepts (N2000 and MMNP); particularly in the management plan that is under development. The MMNP Administration needs also to be more proactive on this issue and support some awareness campaign to increase the communities’ knowledge about the N2000 network and its obligations and opportunities.
10. The communities in the Macin area are dynamic. Local leaders and local government agency staff are promoting the development of plans, programmes and projects. They also expect the support of the MMNP Administration to help them identifying funding sources and developing project proposals. It is recommended that the project continue to support these community needs. Opportunities exist, particularly with the EU structural funds. The main one is the rural development strategy and action plan that will be funded by the GOR and the EU. Also under the Natura 2000 programme funds are available under the SOP Environment to help local landowners to preserve sensitive habitats.
11. Regarding the study of the value of the environmental services, it is recommended to fast track its last phase. According to the 2008 work plan, the target date for the completion of the study is October 2008. It is late if we consider the implementation of any proposed recommendations within the project’s lifetime. It is recommended to discuss with the consultant and explore the possibility to launch some proposed initiatives in parallel to the completion of the study. Also a target date of mid-summer 2008 for the completion of the study would be recommended if possible.
12. It is recommended to monitor the possible institutional reorganization for the management of the protected areas in Romania. According to MESD, this change may occur this year (2008) with the set-up of this new national agency and a staff of 300 people. Continuity of the MMNP Administration should be ensured but, as with all institutional reorganizations, changes should be expected. The project team in collaboration with UNDP-CO need to maintain a dialogue with MESD; including their involvement in the POC.
13. As described in Section 4.3.8, it is recommended to review the performance indicators of the project and to add one indicator to measure the progress of the relationship between the MMNP Administration and the local communities such as “*Local communities understand better why to protect the Macin Mountain National Park and are active in its management*”.
14. The project is using the METT scorecard to track the management effectiveness of the MMNP Administration. As discussed in Section 4.3.8, the current score is 56 that is higher than the target set for the end of the project (50). It is recommended to review and set new targets for each indicator for the end of the project (Dec. 2009); particularly for the areas where the project is supporting capacity development initiatives such as the strengthening of the Administration and the relation with the local communities.

Opportunities

15. It is recommended that the project team in collaboration with UNDP-CO and NFA explore the possibility to access the environment SOP funds to strengthen the network of PAs and build on the achievements of the MMNP project. As discussed in Section 4.1.5, the environment SOP was approved by the EU in July 2007 with an indicative budget of 4.5B euros from the EU and 1B euros from GOR for the period 2007-2013. The priority axis #4 is about nature protection with a budget of 215M euros to implement adequate management framework for PAs; including N2000 sites.
16. It is recommended that a case study be done on the UNDP/GEF experience in Romania; including the identification of lessons learned. One strong characteristic of this experience is the excellent partnership between the international implementation agency/donor (UNDP/GEF) and the national implementing agency (NFA). The partnership is the basis for truly joint projects, whereby, both partners are investing resources. The results seem to be: (1) a good response to address national priorities; (2) an integrated approach for project implementation leading to good stakeholder participation and ownership; (3) a great potential for replicating project achievements; (4) an easier project exit with minimal disruption of the work of local partners; and (5) a better long-term sustainability of the project achievements, due to an early institutionalization of these results into the local structures, procedures, skills and knowledge.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

for

Mid Term Evaluation of the Project

Strengthening Romania's Protected Area System by Demonstrating Best Practices for Management of Small Protected Areas in Macin Mountains National Park (MMNP)
PIMS 1999

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Background information

The objective of the project is to demonstrate a landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and improving the conservation effectiveness of protected areas and to serve as a basis for replication across the emerging national system of protected areas in Romania.

The project is designed to produce three primary outcomes in order to achieve this objective:

- 1) The productive landscape around Macin Mountains National Park is made more biodiversity friendly;
- 2) Macin Mountains National Park management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured;
- 3) Replication of small protected area management best practices across national PA system is ongoing.

The approach to be demonstrated by this project applies landscape ecology and biology-inspired conservation tools, emphasizes community and civil society participation and cross-sectoral collaboration, and prioritizes the replication of lessons learned and best practices across the emerging network of over 800 protected areas of various types in Romania.

The target area:

The biological habitats and communities of the Macin Mountains are completely different from the Carpathian Mountains. The Macin Mountains, also known as the Hercinian Mountains, are the oldest mountains in Romania. With a maximum height of just over 450 m, they rise out of the Danube River bottom, eighty kilometres upstream from the river's delta. One of Europe's most outstanding natural regions, the Macin Mountains draw their uniqueness from a combination of intrinsic geological character and biogeographical location and specificity. These mountains support a large number of endangered species as well as ecosystems characteristic of the Balkan-Pontic steppe and the sub-Mediterranean and Balkanic forest. Geographically, the Macin Mountains are situated at a low altitude in a unique bio-geographical position. Floristically, they represent the northern limit of Mediterranean, Balkan and Pontic species, the southern limit of the central European and Caucasian species, and the western limits of a number of Asiatic species.

From the point of view of the design and implementation of the project, the key stakeholders are:

- The National Forestry Administration – Romsilva
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development,
- Tulcea Forestry Directorate – Macin Mountains National Park Administration
- Ministry of Environment and Water Management
- UNDP Romania (Bucharest)
- UNDP/GEF Regional Center for Europe and CIS (Bratislava)
- The GEF Secretariat, who is not involved in project implementation, but to whom the Mid Term Evaluation Report to be prepared under this Terms of Reference will be submitted.

The Project Document was signed between the Romanian Government and UNDP Romania in August 2005 and it is available on line, for consultation, in English language, at

<http://www.gefonline.org/ProjectDocs/Biodiversity/Romania%20-%20Strengthening%20Romania's%20Protected%20Area--%20Macin%20Mountains%20National%20Park/6-9-05%201999%20ROM%20MacinBrief%20final%2023%20May%202005.doc>

Three project outcomes are defined in the Project Document:

1	Productive landscape around MMNP is made more biodiversity friendly
2	MMNP management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured
3	Replication of small protected area management best practice across national PA is achieved

Associated with these outcomes there are a number of Outputs (please see Appendix for the Revised Logical Framework of the project). Progress towards them is reported in 2006 and 2007 Annual Project Implementation Review (to be made available by UNDP country office in Bucharest).

Evaluation audience and the Objectives of the Mid Term Evaluation

This evaluation is to be undertaken taking into consideration the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policy (<http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html>) and the UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (<http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>).

This Mid Term Evaluation is initiated by the UNDP Romania as the Implementation Agency for this project and it aims to provide managers (at the MMNP Administration, UNDP Romania Country Office and UNDP/GEF levels) with strategy and policy options for more effectively and efficiently achieving the project's outcomes and for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

The objective of this Mid-Term Evaluation is to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities in relation to the stated objective so far, and to produce possible recommendations on how to improve the management of the project until its completion in 2009.

The report will play a critical role in the future implementation of the project by providing advice on:

- how to strengthen the adaptive management and monitoring function of the project;
- how to ensure accountability for the achievement of the GEF objective;
- how to enhance organizational and development learning;
- how to enable informed decision – making.

The report will have to provide to the GEF Secretariat complete and convincing evidence to support its findings/ratings. The consultant should prepare specific ratings on seven aspects of the project, as described in the 'Reporting' section of this Terms of Reference. Particular emphasis should be put on the current project results and the possibility of achieving all objectives in the established timeframe, taking into consideration the speed, at which the project is proceeding.

The evaluation should assess:

Project concept and design

The evaluators will assess the project concept and design. S/he should review the problem addressed by the project and the project strategy, encompassing an assessment of the appropriateness of the objectives, planned outputs, activities and inputs as compared to cost-effective alternatives. The executing modality and managerial arrangements should also be judged. The evaluator will assess the achievement of indicators and review the work plan, planned duration and budget of the project.

Implementation

The evaluation will assess the implementation of the project in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs and efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out. Also, the effectiveness of management as well as the quality and timeliness of monitoring and backstopping by all parties to the project should be evaluated. In particular, the evaluation is to assess the Project team's use of adaptive management in project implementation.

Project outputs, outcomes and impact

The evaluation will assess the outputs, outcomes and impact achieved by the project as well as the likely sustainability of project results. This should encompass an assessment of the achievement of the outcomes and the contribution to attaining the overall objective of the project. The evaluation should also assess the extent to which the implementation of the project has been inclusive of relevant stakeholders and to which it has been able to create collaboration between different partners. The evaluation will also examine if the project has had significant unexpected effects, whether of beneficial or detrimental character.

The Mid-Term Evaluation will also cover the following aspects:

1. Progress towards Results

Changes in development conditions. The following questions should be addressed, with a focus on the perception of change among stakeholders:

- Have critically endangered species been properly and adequately protected within the MMNP?
- Have there been changes in local stakeholder behavior (i.e. threats...) that have contributed to improved conservation? If not, why not?
- Is there distinct improvement in biodiversity information turnover and use in decision making among MMNP stakeholders?
- Has awareness on biodiversity conservation and subsequent public participation in biodiversity monitoring and management increased as a result of the project?
- Is there adequate territorial planning in place, or in progress, ensuring long-term conservation of biodiversity and cultural values?

Measurement of change: Progress towards results should be based on a comparison of indicators before and after (so far) the project intervention. Progress can also be assessed by comparing conditions in the project site to conditions in similar unmanaged sites.

Project strategy: how and why outcomes (listed as outputs in the project document) and strategies contribute to the achievement of the expected results. Examine their relevance and whether they provide the most effective route towards results.

Sustainability: Extent to which the benefits of the project will continue, within or outside the project domain, after it has come to an end. Relevant factors include for example: development of a sustainability strategy, establishment of financial and economic instruments and mechanisms, mainstreaming project objectives into the local economy, etc.

2. Project's Adaptive Management Framework

(a) Monitoring Systems

- Assess the monitoring tools currently being used:
 - o Do they provide the necessary information?
 - o Do they involve key partners?
 - o Are they efficient?
 - o Are additional tools required?
- Reconstruct baseline data if necessary¹⁰. Reconstruction should follow participatory processes and could be achieved in conjunction with a learning exercise¹¹;
- Ensure the monitoring system, including performance indicators, at least meets GEF minimum requirements¹². Apply SMART indicators as necessary;
- Apply the GEF Tracking Tool and provide a description of comparison with initial application of the tool.

(b) Risk Management

- Validate whether the risks identified in the project document and PIRs are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate. If not, explain why. Describe any additional risks identified and suggest risk ratings and possible risk management strategies to be adopted;
- Assess the project's risk identification and management systems:
 - o Is the UNDP/GEF Risk Management System¹³ appropriately applied?
 - o How can the UNDP/GEF Risk Management System be used to strengthen project management?

(c) Work Planning

¹⁰ See p.67 of UNDP's "Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results", available at

<http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>

¹¹ See Annex C of "Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: approaches to sustainability", available at

<http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>

¹² See section 3.2 of the GEF's "Monitoring and Evaluation Policies and Procedures", available at

<http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>

¹³ UNDP-GEF's system is based on the Atlas Risk Module. See the UNDP-GEF Risk Management Strategy resource kit, available as Annex XI at <http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>

- Assess the use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation and any changes made to it;
- Assess the use of routinely updated workplans;
- Assess the use of electronic information technologies to support implementation, participation and monitoring, as well as other project activities;
- Are processes of work planning result-based¹⁴? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning;
- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions. Any irregularities must be noted.

(d) Reporting

- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management;
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

3. Underlying Factors

- Assess the underlying factors beyond the project's immediate control that influence outcomes and results. Consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the project's management strategies for these factors;
- Re-test the assumptions made by the project management and identify new assumptions that should be made;
- Assess the effect of any incorrect assumptions made by the project.

4. UNDP Contribution

- Assess the role of UNDP against the requirements set out in the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results. Consider:
 - o Field visits
 - o Steering Committee/TOR follow-up and analysis
 - o PIR preparation and follow-up
 - o GEF guidance
- Consider the new UNDP requirements outlined in the UNDP User Guide¹⁵, especially the Project Assurance role, and ensure they are incorporated into the project's adaptive management framework;
- Assess the contribution to the project from UNDP "soft" assistance (i.e. policy advice & dialogue, advocacy, and coordination). Suggest measures to strengthen UNDP's soft assistance to the project management.

5. Partnership Strategy

- - Assess how partners are involved in the project's adaptive management framework:
 - o Involving partners and stakeholders in the selection of indicators and other measures of performance
 - o Using already existing data and statistics
 - o Analyzing progress towards results and determining project strategies.
- Identify opportunities for stronger substantive partnerships;
- Assess how local stakeholders participate in project management and decision-making; Include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted by the project and suggestions for improvement if necessary;
- Consider the dissemination of project information to partners and stakeholders and if necessary suggest more appropriate mechanisms.

Products expected from the evaluation

¹⁴ RBM Support documents are available at <http://www.undp.org/ro/methodologies.htm>

¹⁵ The UNDP User Guide is currently only available on UNDP's intranet. However UNDP can provide the necessary section on roles and responsibility from <http://content.undp.org/go/userguide/results/rmoverview/progprojorg/?src=print>

The key product expected from this mid-term evaluation is a comprehensive analytical report in English that should, at least, include the following contents:

Executive summary

- Brief description of the project
- Context and purpose of the evaluation
- Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

Introduction

- Project background
- Purpose of the evaluation
- Key issues addressed
- The outputs of the evaluation and how will they be used
- Methodology of the evaluation
- Structure of the evaluation

The Project and its development context

- Project start and its duration
- Implementation status
- Problems that the project seek to address
- Immediate and development objectives of the project
- Main stakeholders
- Results expected

An analysis of the situation with regard to the outcomes, the outputs and the partnership strategy;

Key findings (including best practice and lessons learned, assessment of performance)

• Project formulation

- Implementation approach
- Country ownership/Driveness
- Stakeholder participation
- Replication approach
- Cost-effectiveness
- UNDP comparative advantage
- Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector
- Management arrangements

• Implementation

- Financial planning
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Execution and implementation modalities
- Management by the UNDP country office
- Coordination and operation issues
- Identification and management of risks (adaptive management)

• Results

- Attainment of objective
- Prospects of sustainability

Conclusions and recommendations

- Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project
- Actions to strengthen or reinforce benefits from the project
- Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives
- Suggestions for strengthening ownership, management of potential risks

Lessons learned

- Good practices and lessons learned in addressing issues relating to effectiveness, efficiency and relevance.

Annexes: TOR, itinerary, field visits, people interviewed, documents reviewed, etc.

The length of the mid-term evaluation report shall not exceed 30 pages in total (not including annexes).

Evaluation team – qualities and requirements

A team of independent experts will conduct the evaluation. The evaluators selected should not have participated in the project preparation and/or implementation and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities.

The evaluation team will be composed of one International Consultant or team leader and one National Consultant. The consultants shall have prior experience in evaluating similar projects. Former cooperation with GEF is an advantage.

Team Qualities:

- (i) Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- (ii) Experience applying participatory monitoring approaches;
- (iii) Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- (iv) Recent knowledge of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
- (v) Recent knowledge of UNDP's results-based evaluation policies and procedures
- (vi) Competence in Adaptive Management, as applied to conservation or natural resource management projects;
- (vii) Recognized expertise in the management and sustainable use of wetlands in temperate ecosystems;
- (viii) Familiarity with protected area policies and management structures in Romania;
- (ix) Demonstrable analytical skills;
- (x) Work experience in relevant areas for at least 10 years;
- (xi) Experience with multilateral or bilateral supported conservation projects;
- (xii) Project evaluation experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
- (xiii) Excellent English communication skills.

Specifically, the international expert (team leader) will perform the following tasks:

- Lead and manage the evaluation mission;
- Design the detailed evaluation scope and methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis);
- Assist in drafting terms of reference of the national consultant(s)
- Decide the division of labor within the evaluation team;
- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
- Draft related parts of the evaluation report; and
- Finalize the whole evaluation report.

The National Consultant will provide input in reviewing all project documentation and will provide the International Consultant with a compilation of information prior to the evaluation mission. Specifically, the national expert will perform tasks with a focus on:

- Review documents;
- Prepare a list of the outputs achieved under project;
- Organize the mission programme and provide translation/interpretation when necessary;
- Participate in the design of the evaluation methodology;
- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
- Draft related parts of the evaluation report;
- Assist Team leader in finalizing document through incorporating suggestions received on draft related to his/her assigned sections.

Individual consultants are invited to submit applications together with their CV for these positions. Joint proposals from two independent evaluators are welcome. Or alternatively, proposals will be accepted from recognized consulting firms to field a complete team with the required expertise within the evaluation budget.

The evaluation will be undertaken in-line with GEF principles¹⁶:

- Independence
- Impartiality
- Transparency
- Disclosure
- Ethical
- Partnership
- Competencies and Capacities
- Credibility
- Utility

The evaluators must be independent from both the policy-making process and the delivery and management of assistance. Therefore applications will not be considered from evaluators who have had any direct involvement with the design or implementation of this project. This may apply equally to evaluators who are associated with organizations, universities or entities that are, or have been, involved in the MMNP policy-making process and/or delivery of the project. Any previous association with the project, the MMNP Administration, the National Forestry Administration, UNDP Romania or other partners/stakeholders must be disclosed in the application. This applies equally to firms submitting proposals as it does to individual evaluators.

If selected, failure to make the above disclosures will be considered just grounds for immediate contract termination, without recompense. In such circumstances, all notes, reports and other documentation produced by the evaluator will be retained by UNDP.

If individual evaluators are selected, UNDP will appoint one Team Leader. The Team Leader will have overall responsibility for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products. Team roles and responsibilities will be reflected in the individual contracts. If a proposal is accepted from a consulting firm, the firm will be held responsible for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products and therefore has responsibility for team management arrangements.

Methodology or evaluation approach

An outline of an evaluation approach is provided below, however it should be made clear that the evaluation team is responsible for revising the approach as necessary. Any changes should be in-line with international criteria and professional norms and standards (as adopted by the UN Evaluation Group¹⁷). They must be also cleared by UNDP before being applied by the evaluation team.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. It must be easily understood by project partners and applicable to the remaining period of project duration.

The methodology to be used by the evaluation team should be presented in the report in detail. It shall include information on:

- Documentation review (desk study) - the list of documentation to be reviewed is included in the Appending B to this Terms of Reference;
- Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at minimum: UNDP Romania, UNDP/GEF RTA from Bratislava, MMNP Administration, Project Oversight Committee members, Project Director;
- Field visits;
- Questionnaires;

¹⁶ See p.16 of the GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

¹⁷ See <http://www.uneval.org/>

- Participatory techniques and other approaches for the gathering and analysis of data.

The consultant should also provide ratings of Project achievements according to GEF Project Review Criteria. Aspects of the Project to be rated are:

1	Implementation approach;
2	Country ownership/drivers
3	Outcome/Achievement of objectives (meaning the extent to which the project's environmental and development objectives were achieved).
4	Stakeholder participation/public involvement
5	Sustainability;
6	Replication approach;
7	Cost-effectiveness;
8	Monitoring and evaluation

The ratings to be used are:

HS	Highly Satisfactory
S	Satisfactory
MS	Marginally Satisfactory
U	Unsatisfactory
NA	Not applicable

Implementation Arrangements

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation lies with UNDP Romania. UNDP Romania will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team. UNDP Romania and MMNP Administration will be responsible for liaising with the Evaluators team to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the Government etc.

Timeframe for submission of first draft of the report: 6 weeks after signing the contract. The evaluation should be completed by 28 February 2008. The report shall be submitted to the UNDP Romania office.

Prior to approval of the final report, a draft version shall be circulated for comments to government counterparts, project team and UNDP CO and RCU. If any discrepancies have emerged between impressions and findings of the evaluation team and the aforementioned parties, these should be explained in an annex attached to the final report.

The activity and timeframe are broken down as follows:

Activity	Timeframe and responsible party
Desk review	3 days by the international expert, 5 days by the national consultant
Briefings for evaluators	1 day by the MMNP Administration/UNDP
Field visits, interviews, questionnaires, de-briefings	7 days by the international consultant, 9 days by the national consultant
Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of draft reports for comments, meetings and other types of feedback mechanisms	6 days by the evaluation team
Finalization of the evaluation report (incorporating comments received on first draft)	3 days by the international evaluator, 1 day by the national evaluator

Working Days:

Team Leader (international expert) – 20 working days

Technical experts (national experts) – 22 working days

The proposed dates for the in-country mission to Romania are 28 January-1 February 2008. The assignment is to commence no later than 14 January 2008.

APPLICATION: Please send your applications entailing your CV (s), requested consultancy fee and letter of intention, to: Monica Moldovan, UNDP CO Romania, UN House, 48 A Blvd Primaverii, Bucharest 1, Romania, email: monica.moldovan@undp.org. Applications are due by 30 November, 5pm Bucharest time.

Appendix 1 – Logical Framework of the project

Objective/Outcomes	Key Performance Indicator	Baseline (Year 1)	Target (Year _)	Verification means/ Data collection strategy	Assumptions & Risks
Objective: A landscape-oriented method of managing small PA and improving conservation effectiveness is demonstrated in MMNP and serves as a basis for replication across the PA system.					The landscape conservation needs of MMNP will be addressable by this project.
	# Forest ha. where monoculture forests are being diversified. # grassland ha. under sustainable grazing management.	0 0	100 -yr 1; 1,000 – yr 2; 4,000-yr3. 400 ha grassland.	SFA land management maps; botanical surveys & field visits; official interviews.	Ministries and departments will be able to work effectively together.
	Change in populations of target landscape species within NP.	TBD	Same or increased from project start levels.	Semi-annual biological surveys. Visual sitings, scat/track surveys, other methods as appropriate.	Unforeseen climatic events will not minimize results of new management regimes.
	METT score increases annually to a significant degree.	METT Baseline score of: 32	Increase greater than 50% by yr 4.	Field, map assessments; expert opinion.	
	Best practices and new training curriculum for small PAs adopted/not adopted by NFA and MoEWM.	Do not exist.	Adopted by year 4.	Best practice policy papers and official notice of adoption. Interviews w/officials;	
OUTCOME 1: Productive landscape around MMNP is made more biodiversity friendly.					
	# of priority habitats under special management by local stakeholders and MMNP in surrounding landscape.	0	At least 5 by year 2; 10 by year 4.	Habitat planning docs; & field interviews.	
	% improvement in knowledge & understanding of cooperative management practices among PA staff	Pre-training baseline.	Improved by 50%.	Pre and post-training knowledge assessment tests.	Local leadership will have enough continuity to allow for learning and trust building.

Objective/Outcomes	Key Performance Indicator	Baseline (Year 1)	Target (Year _)	Verification means/ Data collection strategy	Assumptions & Risks
	and BoD.				
	# of farms replicating agro environmental/organic practices in Macin.	0	At least 10 farms by Yr 3.	Field visits; interviews with participants.	
	Increase # hectares of productive forest managed using new certified forestry practices around MMNP.	0	10,000 ha by year 3	Field visits; forest management plan.	
	# of new hectares of grassland managed to enhance tortoise and butterfly habitat.	0	500 ha by year 3	Field visits with grazing managers/livestock owners; NP records	Farmers will have incentives to support protected areas.
	% improvement in level of support for 5 basic biodiversity issues in local communities.	TBD	10% annually	Annual awareness surveys of stakeholders.	Education institutions will collaborate with awareness activities.
OUTCOME 2: Management capacity and conservation effectiveness of Macin Mountains National Park is secured.					
	# of cross-sectoral hunting enforcement/poaching prevention agreements.	None	2 by yr 2	Field visits; Work programs in MoAF MEWM; agreements.	Institutions willing to carry out policy and regulatory reform.
	Adaptive management practices being applied in MMNP	No objectives; No monitoring; No assessment.	Specific objectives; Continuous monitoring; Annual METT assess	Expert review of management process.	
	Staff skills improvement underway and skilled staff retaining policy in place.	No training program; low staff retention	Present by end of Yr 2	Field visit; policy document.	GoR will fund additional staff.
	# of habitat, species conservation plans implemented by PA	0	3 – MTE 6 – yr 3	Planning documents; field visits.	
	MoAF budget level for MMNP is/is not stable in years 2 and 3.	Unstable	Stable yr 2. MTE	Letter of commitment/ agreement; State budget	
	Non-timber resource revenue for MMNP	None	Meaningful increase by year 3.	MMNP budget; fee statements; resource use agreements.	
Outcome 3. Replication of small protected area					

Objective/Outcomes	Key Performance Indicator	Baseline (Year 1)	Target (Year _)	Verification means/ Data collection strategy	Assumptions & Risks
management best practices across national PA system is ongoing.					
	# of PA whose staff successfully completed new training module.	None; Knowledge baseline TBD	Increasing to 50 by yr 4. Measurable knowledge Improvement.	Training records; training test scores before and after.	
	MEWM and MoAF mandate use of best practice PA management modules.	No modules/no use	Module by year 2; policy by year 3; Use by at least 10 PA by year 4;	Policy documents. PA managers performance evaluations	
	SPA and DNBC PA management performance evaluations include adopting best practices (BP) as a criterion.	No performance evaluations	Evaluations include adopting BP as important criterion by year 3.	Performance valuations	
	# of hits on Romanian language website for the protected area knowledge network.	None	Increasing to 200/month by year 3.	Web site records.	

Appendix B - List of documents to be reviewed by the Evaluators

Following documents can be used as a basis for evaluation of the project:

Document	Description
Project document	The Project Document and Budget Revisions
Project reports	Project Inception Report Environment and Energy Programme Outcome Evaluation (if ready at the time of the Mid-Term Evaluation)
Annual Project Report to GEF	Project Implementation Reports for 2005/2006 and 2006/2007
Other relevant materials:	Financial Audit Reports 2005, 2006 Co-financing agreements Mission Reports of International Experts Press articles Maps Various databases Research results Minutes of Project Oversight Committee Meetings
GEF and UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy	http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html
Atlas Risk Management System	UNDP-GEF Risk Management Strategy resource kit, available as Annex XI at http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html

Annex 2: Evaluation Matrix

The evaluation matrix below served as a general guide for the evaluation. It provided directions for the evaluation; particularly for the collect of relevant data. It was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents. It also provided a basis for structuring the evaluation report as a whole.

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Evaluation criteria: Relevance - <i>How does the Project relate to the main objectives of the UNCBD, GEF and to the development challenges faced by the Government of Romania for the conservation of globally and nationally significant biodiversity?</i>				
<i>Is the Project relevant to UNCBD and GEF objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project support the objectives of the UNCBD How does the Project support the objectives of the GEF for OP1 & 3 and SP1? Does the Project participate in the implementation of the UNCBD in Romania? Is the GEF incremental cost principle being respected? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objectives and those of the UNCBD Convention Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies in the area of protected areas Level of coherence between the project and EU specific legislation (Directives) UNCBD Convention status in Romania Extent to which the project is actually implemented in line with incremental cost argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents National policies and strategies to implement the UNCBD Convention or related to environment more generally Key government officials and other partners UNCBD web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with government officials and other partners
<i>Is the Project relevant to UNDP objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project support the objectives of UNDP in this sector? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of a clear relationship between the project objectives and sustainable development objectives of UNDP. Existence of a clear relationship between the project objectives and UNDP Strategic Results Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents UNDP strategies and programmes National policies and strategies to implement the UNCBD Convention or related to environment more generally Key government officials and other partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with government officials and other partners
<i>Is the Project relevant to Romania development objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project support the objectives of the development of Romania? How country-driven is the Project? Does the Project adequately take into account the national realities, both in terms of institutional framework and programming, in its design and its implementation? To what extent were national partners involved in the design of the Project? Were the GEF criteria for Project identification adequate in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which the project support national environmental objectives Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies Appreciation from national stakeholders with respect to adequacy of project design and implementation to national realities and existing capacities? Level of involvement of Government officials and other partners into the project Coherence between needs expressed by national stakeholders and UNDP-GEF criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents National policies and strategies (PRSP and NEP) Key government officials and other partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with government officials and other partners

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
	view of actual needs?			
<i>Is the Project addressing the needs of target beneficiaries?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project support the needs of target beneficiaries; including the managers of the MMNP and the land owners and population leaving in the area? Is the implementation of the Project been inclusive of all relevant Stakeholders? Are local beneficiaries and stakeholders adequately involved in Project design and implementation? Is the project implementation and objectives realistic related to the specificity of a transitions state and the status of new EU member? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of the link between expected results from the Project and the needs of target beneficiaries Degree of involvement and inclusiveness of beneficiaries and stakeholders in Project design and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries and stakeholders Needs assessment studies Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders
<i>How is the Project relevant in light of other donors?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With regards to Romania as an EU funding eligible country, does the Project remain relevant in terms of areas of focus and targeting of key activities? What is the synergy between the project and the EU life project in the same area? How do GEF-funds help to fill gaps (or give additional stimulus) that are crucial but are not covered by other donors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which program was coherent and complementary to other donor programming in Romania and Regionally List of Programs and funds in which the future developments, ideas and partnerships of the project are eligible? EU life project strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other Donors' policies and programming documents Other Donor representatives Project documents EU Life project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with other Donors
Future directions for the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons have been learnt and what changes should be made to the Project in order to strengthen the alignment between the Project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus? How could the Project better target and address the priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis
Evaluation criteria: Effectiveness – To what extent are the expected outcomes of the Project being achieved?				
<i>How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the Project being effective in achieving its expected outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The productive landscape around Macin Mountains National Park is made more biodiversity friendly; Macin Mountains National Park management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured; Replication of small protected area management best practices across national PA system is ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in biodiversity conservation through alternatives economic development activities Change in biodiversity habitats Change in capacity for information management: Knowledge acquisition and sharing; Effective data gathering, methods and procedures for reporting on biodiversity Change in capacity for awareness raising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder involvement and government awareness Change in local stakeholder behavior Change in capacity in policy making and planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy reform to preserve and improve biodiversity conservation Legislation/regulation change to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Key stakeholders Research findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analysis Meetings with main Project Partners including UNDP, Gov. of Romania and other Partners Interviews with Project Beneficiaries

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<p><i>Are Project activities designed to achieve Project outcomes?</i></p> <p><i>How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?</i></p> <p><i>Future directions for the Project</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ biodiversity conservation ○ Development of national and local strategies and plans supporting biodiversity; including ecological landscape plans ■ Change in capacity in implementation and enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Design and implementation of risk assessments ○ Implementation of national and local strategies and action plans through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance ○ Monitoring, evaluation and promotion of pilots ■ Change in capacity in mobilizing resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leverage of resources ○ human resources ○ appropriate practices ○ the mobilization of advisory services ■ Existence, quality and use of M&E, feedback and dissemination mechanism to share findings, lessons learned and recommendation on effectiveness of project design 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is there a direct and strong link between expected results of the Project (log frame) and the Project design (in terms of Project components, choice of partners, structure, delivery mechanism, scope, budget, use of resources etc)? ■ Is actual Project implementation coherent with Project design? ■ Is the length of the Project conducting to achieve Project outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Level of coherence between Project expected results and Project design internal logic ■ Level of coherence between Project implementation approach and Project design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Project document ■ Key Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Document analysis ■ Key Interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How well are risks and assumptions being managed? ■ What was the quality of risk mitigation strategies developed? Were these sufficient? ■ Are there clear strategies for risk mitigation related with long term sustainability of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Completeness of risk identification and assumptions during Project planning ■ Quality of existing information systems in place to identify emerging risks and other issues? ■ Quality of risk mitigations strategies developed and followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Project documents and evaluations ■ UNDP staff and Project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Document analysis ■ Interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What lessons have been learnt for the Project to achieve its outcomes? ■ What changes should be made (if any) to the design of the Project in order to improve the achievement of the Project' expected results? ■ How can the Project be more effective in achieving its results? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Data analysis

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Evaluation criteria: <i>Efficiency</i> - How efficiently is the Project implemented?				
<i>Is Project support channeled in an efficient way?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use? Do the Project logical framework and work plans and any changes made to them use as management tools during implementation? Are the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for Project management and producing accurate and timely financial information? Are progress reports produced accurately, timely and respond to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes? Is Project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual) Is the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happening as planned? Are financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently? How is RBM used during program and Project implementation? Are there an institutionalized or informal feedback or dissemination mechanism to ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to Project design and implementation effectiveness are shared among Project stakeholders, UNDP and GEF Staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing Project adjustment and improvement? Does the Project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability and quality of financial and progress reports Timeliness and adequacy of reporting provided Level of discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures Planned vs. Actual funds leveraged Cost in view of results achieved compared to costs of similar Projects from other organizations Adequacy of Project choices in view of existing context, infrastructure and cost Quality of RBM reporting (progress reporting, monitoring and evaluation) Occurrence of change in Project design/ implementation approach (ie restructuring) when needed to improve Project efficiency Existence, quality and use of M&E, feedback and dissemination mechanism to share findings, lessons learned and recommendation on effectiveness of Project design. Cost associated with delivery mechanism and management structure compare to alternatives Gender disaggregated data in Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP, Gov. of Romania and Project personnel Beneficiaries and Project partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key Interviews
<i>How efficient are partnership arrangements for the Project?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are partnerships/ linkages between institutions/ organizations being encouraged and supported? Which partnerships/linkages are facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable? What is the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNDP/GEF and the Government of Romania) Which methods were successful or not and why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific activities conducted to support the development of cooperative arrangements between partners, Examples of supported partnerships Evidence that particular partnerships/linkages will be sustained Types/quality of partnership cooperation methods utilized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Project Partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Does the Project efficiently utilize local capacity in</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity? Did the Project take into account local capacity in design and implementation of the Project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of total expertise utilized taken from Romania Number/quality of analyses done to assess local capacity potential and absorptive capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP and Project partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>implementation?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there an effective collaboration with scientific institutions with competence in biodiversity, sustainable development in ecological sensitive areas etc? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries 	
Future directions for the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons can be learnt from the Project on efficiency? How could the Project more efficiently address its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc...)? What changes should be made (if any) to the Project in order to improve its efficiency? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis
Evaluation criteria: <i>Impacts</i> - What are the potential and realized impacts of activities carried out in the context of the Project?				
<i>How is the Project effective in achieving its long term objective?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the project achieve its long-term goal that is to conserve globally significant biological diversity by strengthening Romania's emerging national system of protected areas? Will the project achieve its objective that is a landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and improving conservation effectiveness is demonstrated in Macin Mountains National Park and constitutes a model for replication across the emerging national system of protected areas? Considering that the small protected areas lose biodiversity over time when managed as "islands" in productive landscape, is the Project being effective in addressing the threat to the MMNP's biodiversity that is forest and grassland habitat degradation and low level species loss to the surrounding landscape? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in management of MMNP Change in capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To pool/mobilize resources For related policy making and strategic planning, For implementation of related laws and strategies through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance, Change to the quantity and strength of barriers such as change in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of established PA management practice Top-down, narrow management Economic and financial Regulation and policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Key Stakeholders Research findings; if available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analysis Meetings with UNDP and Project Partners Interviews with Project beneficiaries and other stakeholders
<i>How is the Project effective in achieving the objectives of the UNCBD?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the impacts or likely impacts of the Project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the local environment; particularly protecting the biodiversity; On poverty; and, On other socio-economic issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide specific examples of impacts at those three levels, as relevant List of potential structural funds (specific development funds for EU regions) to be used to assure long term sustainability of UNCBD objectives within MMNP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents UNCBD Convention's documents Key Stakeholders Research findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis Interviews with key stakeholders
Future directions for the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How could the Project build on its apparent successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis
Evaluation criteria: <i>Sustainability</i> - Are the initiatives and results of the Project allowing for continued benefits?				
<i>Are sustainability issues adequately</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are sustainability issues integrated into the design and implementation of the Project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence/Quality of sustainability strategy Evidence/Quality of steps taken to address sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP personnel and Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>integrated in Project design?</i>			Partners ■ Beneficiaries	
<i>Financial Sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Does the Project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues? ■ Are the recurrent costs after Project completion sustainable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Level and source of future financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities in Romania after Project end? ■ Evidence of commitments from government or other stakeholder to financially support relevant sectors of activities after project end ■ Level of recurrent costs after completion of Project and funding sources for those recurrent costs ■ Existence of a strategy for financial sustainability of the MMNP actions and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Project documents and evaluations ■ UNDP personnel and Project Partners ■ Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Document analysis ■ Interviews
<i>Organizations arrangements and continuation of activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are the results of efforts made during the Project implementation period well assimilated by organizations and their internal systems and procedures? ■ Is there evidence that Project partners will continue their activities beyond Project support? ■ What degree is there of local ownership of initiatives and results? ■ Are appropriate ‘champions’ being identified and/or supported? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Degree to which Project activities and results have been taken over by local counterparts or institutions/ organizations ■ Level of financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities by in-country actors after Project end ■ Number/quality of champions identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Project documents and evaluations ■ UNDP personnel and Project Partners ■ Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Document analysis ■ Interviews
<i>Enabling Environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are laws, policies and frameworks being addressed through the Project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms? ■ Are the necessary related capacities for lawmaking and enforcement being built? ■ What is the level of political commitment to build on the results so far? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Efforts to support the development of relevant laws and policies ■ State of enforcement and law making capacity ■ Evidences of commitment by the political class through speeches, enactment of laws and resource allocation to priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Project documents and evaluations ■ UNDP personnel and Project Partners ■ Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Document analysis ■ Interviews
<i>Institutional and individual capacity building</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is the capacity in place at the national and local levels adequate to ensure sustainability of the results achieved to date? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Elements in place in those different management functions, at the appropriate levels (national, district and municipal) in terms of adequate structures, strategies, systems, skills, incentives and interrelationships with other key actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Project documents and evaluations ■ UNDP personnel and Project Partners ■ Beneficiaries ■ Capacity assessments available, if any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interviews ■ Documentation review
<i>Social and political sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Does the Project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability? ■ Does the Project contribute to consumers’ acceptance of the new products or practices? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Example of contributions to sustainable political and social change in support of the convention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Project documents and evaluations ■ UNDP personnel and Project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interviews ■ Documentation review

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>Replication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the possibilities to improve the law system in Romania and if the decision makers are really interested in doing this? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are Project activities and results being replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up? What is the Project contribution to replication or scaling up of innovative practices or mechanisms that support the UNCBD objectives? Are common good practices and experience with other UNDP/GEF projects (e.g. Maramures) able to give good examples for other similar projects in Romania and other countries? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number/quality of replicated initiatives Number/quality of replicated innovative initiatives Volume of additional investment leveraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other donor programming documents Beneficiaries UNDP personnel and Project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Challenges to sustainability of the Project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts? Have any of these been addressed through Project management? What could be the possible measures to further contribute to the sustainability of efforts achieved with the Project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in view of building blocks of sustainability as presented above Recent changes which may present new challenges to the Project Education strategy and partnership with school, education institutions etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Beneficiaries UNDP personnel and Project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
Future directions for the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which areas/arrangements under the Project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results? What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of the Project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed? How can the experience and good practices accumulated in the project influence the strategies for other protected areas in Romania and neighborhood? Are the Romanian decision making institutions (Parliament, Government etc.) ready to improve their strategy in function of experience accumulated in MMNP? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis

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<http://www.undp.ro/>

Annex 4: Mission Agenda

Date and Time	Subject	Location
Sunday January 13		
10:00	Pick up Lucian Georgescu from Galati	Driver: Mr. Iordanescu Mobile: 0722600991
14:00	JJ Bellamy: Arrival at Otopeni Airport with Air France (pick up arranged by Marshal Tourism)	Otopeni Driver: Mr. Iordanescu Mobile: 0722600991
15:00	Brief Meeting at UNDP with Monica Moldovan	UN House - UNDP Romania Bdul Primaverii Nr. 48A Sector 3, Bucharest
16:00	Departure to Tulcea	Driver: Mr. Iordanescu Mobile: 0722600991
Monday January 14		
09:30	Introductory meeting with Mr. Marian Simonescu,- Director General of Forest Directorate, Tulcea District Mr. Costel Petcu –Responsible for Forest Protected Areas in Tulcea County	Forest Directorate Office, Tulcea
11:00	Mr. Gheorghe Cucu- Director - Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development	Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development
12:00	Mr. Ioan Boieru, Subprefect –Tulcea County	Tulcea County Government Office
12:30	Mr. Bunduc Gheorghe, President of County Council, Tulcea Ms. Elena Cojoaca – Superior Expert – Land use planning; Member of Consultative Council MMNP	County Council Tulcea County Council Tulcea
13:00	Lunch	Hotel Delta
14:30	Ms. Gabriela Soparla, Section Chief, National Environmental Guard Mr. Gheorghe Badea , Chief of National Environmental Guard, Tulcea	Office National Environment Guard, Tulcea
16:00	Albert Imre – Executive Director Agricultural Association of Romania “Bioterra” Wilhelm Shuster –Bio-farming Consultant- Bioterra Lorinez Piroska – Director, Organic Agriculture Certification group “S.C. ECOINSPECT”	Forest Directorate Office, Tulcea
17:30	Park Team	Forest Directorate Office, Tulcea
20:00	Dinner with Viorel Rosca, Park Director/Project Manager	Hotel Delta
Tuesday January 15		
9:00	Ms. Cristina Dinu – Section Chief, Science Museum; Member of Consultative Council	Eco-museum Research Institute , Tulcea
10:00	Mr. Marius Skolka – University Professor of Entomology – Ovidius University, City of Constanta; Researcher in MMNP.	Forest Directorate Office, Tulcea
11:30	Mr Cadar Bectas – Executive Director, Environmental	Environmental Protection Agency

Date and Time	Subject	Location
	Protection Agency, Tulcea	Tulcea
13:00	Lunch	Hotel Delta
14:30	Mr. Grigore Baboianu – Executive Director Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, Member of Scientific Council	Biosphere Reserve Office
15:30	Mr. Vasile Radu – General Manager – Ecotourism Company “Europolis-Tour Operator”	Ecotourism complex Europolis
16:30	Macin Park Administration Team	Office of Forest Directorate, Tulcea
20:00	Dinner with Park Administration Team	Hotel Delta
Wednesday January 16		
8:00	Early departure from hotel for Macin region.	
9:00	Mr. Ilie Stefan – Mayor and Member of Consultative Council of Park	Mayor's Office, Luncavita
10:00	Mr. Dumitru Nicoara – Mayor of Jijila Village and Member of Consultative Council,	Mayor's Office, Jijila
11:00	Mr. Andone Ichim – Mayor of Macin Village, Member of Project Oversight Committee	Mayor's Office, Macin
12:00	Mr. Maricel Parascan – Director Forest Unit Macin, Member of Consultative Council Mr. Mihai Culuri – Inspector, Regional Environment Guard	Forest Unit Office, Macin
13:00	Lunch with Dan Jalea – Director of Alcovin Vineyard operator/winemaker/partner with Park in tourism.	Alcovin Company
15:00	Mr. Nicolae Caraua – Mayor of Village of Greci – Member of POC	Mayor's Office, Greci
16:30	Mr. Dumitru Pangrate- Farmer, Village of Hamcearca	Village of Hamcearca (Balabancea)
19:00	Dinner with Park Manager	Hotel Delta
Thursday January 17		
08:00	Departure from Tulcea	Hotel Danube
09:30	Mr. Nicolae Musat – Vice Mayor of Cerna Village & Member of Project Oversight Committee	Village of Cerna
10:30	Mss. Maria Mocanu – School Teacher and Environmental program coordinator for Greci Primary & Secondary Vocational school.	Primary & Secondary Vocational School, Village of Greci
11:00	Field hike into the Park from Greci Village	Field hike/walk into the Park at Greci
14:00	Working lunch & meeting with Park staff	Popas “Caprioara”
16:30	Depart for Bucharest	Popas “Caprioara”
20:00	Arrival to Bucharest – check in hotel Helvetia	Hotel Helvetia Charles de Gaulle Square 13 tel. 021-223.0566 fax. +40-21-223.0567

Date and Time	Subject	Location
Friday January 18		
9:30-10:30	Meeting with Octavian Arsene, Director – General Directorate for Development and International Relations, Ministry of Tourism	Ministry of Tourism Calea Victoriei nr. 152, sector 1 Bucuresti octavian.arsene@mturism.ro oarsene@yahoo.com Tel 2025.228 Fax 2025.287 Tel mobil 0723.567817
10:45-11:45	Meeting with Paul Iacobas, Apuseni Experience, Ecotourism Agency	UNDP offices
12:30-14:00	Working Lunch with Dragos Mihai, Romsilva and Mihai Zota, Protected Areas Department, National Forest Administration	La Mamna Restaurant, Piata Romana
14:15-15:15	Meeting with Carmen Damian, MESD	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development e-mail: Carmen.damian@mmediu.ro tel. 0722532196
15:30-16:15	Meeting with Marilena Teodorescu, GEF Focal point, MESD	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development e-mail: marilena.teodorescu@mmediu.ro 0722798338
17.00-17.30	Debriefing meeting with Mr. Jan Sorensen, UNDP Resident Representative	National Forest Administration 0743022112
18.30-20.00	Dinner at Caru cu Bere in the old Bucharest	Caru cu Bere Restaurant
20.00	Departure Lucian Georgescu to Galati Marshall Tourism	Driver George Raducu Mobile: 0722205786
Saturday January 19		
04:45	Jean-Jo -pick up from Hotel Helvetia by Marshal transport	Hotel Helvetia

Annex 5: Interview Guide

I. RELEVANCE - *How does the Project relate to the main objectives of the UNCBD, GEF and to the development challenges faced by the Government of Romania for the conservation of globally and nationally significant biodiversity?*

- I.1. Is the Project relevant to United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) and GEF objectives?
- I.2. Is the Project relevant to UNDP objectives?
- I.3. Is the Project relevant to Romania development objectives?
- I.4. Does the Project address the needs of target beneficiaries?
- I.5. How is the Project relevant in light of other donors?
- I.6. What is the synergy with the EU LIFE project in the same area?

Future directions for the Project

- I.7. What lessons have been learnt and what changes should be made to the Project in order to strengthen the alignment between the Project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus?
- I.8. How could the Project better target and address the priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries?

II. EFFECTIVENESS – *To what extent are the expected outcomes of the Project being achieved?*

- II.1. How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?
 - The productive landscape around Macin Mountains National Park is made more biodiversity friendly;
 - Macin Mountains National Park management capacity and conservation effectiveness is secured;
 - Replication of small protected area management best practices across national PA system is ongoing
- II.2. Are Project activities designed to achieve Project outcomes?
- II.3. How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?

Future directions for the Project

- II.4. What lessons have been learnt for the Project to achieve its outcomes?
- II.5. What changes should be made (if any) to the design of the Project in order to improve the achievement of the Project' expected results?
- II.6. How can the Project be more effective in achieving its results?

III. EFFICIENCY - *How efficiently is the Project implemented?*

- III.1. Is adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use?
- III.2. Do the Project logical framework and work plans and any changes made to them use as management tools during implementation?

- III.3. Are the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for Project management and producing accurate and timely financial information?
- III.4. Are progress reports produced accurately, timely and respond to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes?
- III.5. Is Project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual)
- III.6. Is the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happening as planned?
- III.7. Are financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently?
- III.8. How is RBM used during program and Project implementation?
- III.9. Are there an institutionalized or informal feedback or dissemination mechanism to ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to Project design and implementation effectiveness are shared among Project stakeholders, UNDP and GEF Staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing Project adjustment and improvement?
- III.10. Does the Project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation?
- III.11. To what extent are partnerships/ linkages between institutions/ organizations being encouraged and supported?
- III.12. Which partnerships/linkages are facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable?
- III.13. What is the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNDP/GEF and the Government of Romania)
- III.14. Which methods were successful or not and why?
- III.15. Was an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity?
- III.16. Did the Project take into account local capacity in design and implementation of the Project?

Future directions for the Project

- III.17. What lessons can be learnt from the Project on efficiency?
- III.18. How could the Project more efficiently address its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc...)?

IV. IMPACTS - *What are the potential and realized impacts of activities carried out in the context of the Project?*

- IV.1. Will the project achieve its long-term goal that is to conserve globally significant biological diversity by strengthening Romania's emerging national system of protected areas?
- IV.2. Will the project achieve its objective that is a landscape-oriented method of managing small protected areas and improving conservation effectiveness is demonstrated in Macin Mountains National Park and constitutes a model for replication across the emerging national system of protected areas?
- IV.3. Considering that the small protected areas lose biodiversity over time when managed as "islands" in productive landscape, is the Project being effective in addressing the threat to the MMNP's

biodiversity that is forest and grassland habitat degradation and low level species loss to the surrounding landscape?

- IV.4. How is the Project effective in achieving the objectives of the UNCBD such as impacts or likely impacts on the local environment; particularly protecting the biodiversity; on poverty; and, on other socio-economic issues?

Future directions for the Project

- IV.5. How could the Project build on its apparent successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives?

V. SUSTAINABILITY - *Are the initiatives and results of the Project allowing for continued benefits?*

- V.1. Are sustainability issues adequately integrated in Project design?
- V.2. Does the Project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues?
- V.3. Is there evidence that Project partners will continue their activities beyond Project support?
- V.4. Are laws, policies and frameworks being addressed through the Project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms?
- V.5. Is the capacity in place at the national and local levels adequate to ensure sustainability of the results achieved to date?
- V.6. Does the Project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability?
- V.7. Are Project activities and results being replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up?
- V.8. What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts?

Future directions for the Project

- V.9. Which areas/arrangements under the Project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results?
- V.10. What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of the Project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed?

VI. ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THE PROJECT?

Thank you very much for your input.

Annex 6: List of People Interviewed

Name	Position / Contact	Organization
Appleton Michael	Consultant	MMNP
Arsene Octavian	Director	General Directorate for Development and International Relations, Ministry of Tourism
Badea Gheorghe	Chief	National Environmental Guard, Tulcea
Baboianu Grigore	Executive Director	Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Member of MMNP Scientific Council
Bâdliaș Vasile	Ranger	Macin Park Administration Team
Bajenara, Bogdan-Ștefan	Biologist	Macin Park Administration Team
Bara Ion	Vice-president of TCC	Tulcea County Council (TCC)
Bectas Cadar	Executive Director	Environmental Protection Agency, Tulcea
Berca, Marian	Ranger	Macin Park Administration Team
Bercea Costica	Vice-president of TCC	Tulcea County Council (TCC)
Boieru Ioan	Subprefect	Tulcea County
Bunduc Gheorghe	President	County Council, Tulcea
Caraua Nicolae	Mayor of Greci	Member of POC
Cojoaca Elena	Senior Expert – Land use planning	Member MMNP Consultative Council
Cucu Gheorghe	Director	Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development
Culuri Mihai	Inspector	Regional Environment Guard
Damian Carmen		MESD
Darte, Viorica-Codruta	Ranger	Macin Park Administration Team
Dida Mirela	Chief Architect	Tulcea County Council (TCC)
Dinu Adriana	Regional Technical Advisor	UNDP Bratislava
Dinu Cristina	Section Chief,	Science Museum Member of Consultative Council
Griffin Jeffrey	Consultant	MMNP
Gudu Vasile	Executive director	Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development
Gutoi Cristian	Head Ranger	Macin Park Administration Team
Iacobas Paul	Apuseni Experience	Ecotourism Agency
Ichim Andone	Mayor of Macin	Member Project Oversight Committee
Ifrim, Alexandru	Ranger	Macin Park Administration Team
Imre Albert	Executive Director	Agricultural Association of Romania “Bioterra”

Name	Position / Contact	Organization
Jalea Dan	Director	Alcovin Vineyard operator / winemaker
Luchici Valentina	Finance specialist	Macin Park Administration Team
Mihai Dragos	Romsilva	National Forest Administration
Mocanu Maria	School Teacher and Environmental program coordinator	Greci Primary & Secondary Vocational school
Moldovan Monica	Project Manager	Energy and Environment Section, UNDP Romania
Motoc Octavian	Director of Investment department	Tulcea County Council (TCC)
Musat Nicolae	Vice Mayor	Cerna Village Member of POC
Nicoara Dumitru	Mayor	Jijila Village Member MMNP Consultative Council,
Parascan Maricel	Director	Forest Unit Macin Member MMNP Consultative Council
Parascan Silviu	Ranger	Macin Park Administration Team
Parmac, Victor	Ranger	Macin Park Administration Team
Parpala Veronel	Biodiversity Advisor, Natura 2000	EPA – Tulcea
Pangrate Dumitru	Farmer	Village of Hamcearca
Petcu Costel	Responsible for Forest Protected Areas	Forest Directorate, Tulcea District
Piroska Lorinez	Director, Organic Agriculture Certification group	S.C. ECOINSPECT
Radu Vasile	General Manager	Ecotourism Company “Europolis-Tour Operator”
Rosca Viorel	Park Director/Project Manager	MMNP
Shuster Wilhelm	Bio-farming Consultant	Agricultural Association of Romania “Bioterra”
Simonescu Marian	Director General	Forest Directorate, Tulcea District
Skolka Marius	University Professor of Entomology	Ovidius University, City of Constanta MMNP Researcher
Soparla Gabriela	Section Chief	National Environmental Guard, Tulcea
Sorensen Jan	Resident Representative	UNDP
Stefan Ilie	Mayor of Luncavita	Member MMNP Consultative Council
Teodorescu Marilena	GEF Focal point	MESD
Zota Mihai	Protected Areas Dprmt	National Forest Administration

Annex 7: Capacity Development Monitoring Scorecard

Project/Programme Name:

Project/Programme Cycle Phase:

Date:

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
CR 1: Capacities for engagement						
Indicator 1.1 – Degree of legitimacy/mandate of lead environmental organizations	Institutional responsibilities for environmental management are not clearly defined	0	2			
	Institutional responsibilities for environmental management are identified	1				
	Authority and legitimacy of all lead organizations responsible for environmental management are partially recognized by stakeholders	2				
	Authority and legitimacy of all lead organizations responsible for environmental management recognized by stakeholders	3				
Indicator 1.2 – Existence of operational co-management mechanisms	No co-management mechanisms are in place	0	2			1
	Some co-management mechanisms are in place and operational	1				
	Some co-management mechanisms are formally established through agreements, MOUs, etc.	2				
	Comprehensive co-management mechanisms are formally established and are operational/functional	3				
Indicator 1.3 – Existence of cooperation with stakeholder groups	Identification of stakeholders and their participation/involvement in decision-making is poor	0	1			1
	Stakeholders are identified but their participation in decision-making is limited	1				
	Stakeholders are identified and regular consultations mechanisms are established	2				
	Stakeholders are identified and they actively contribute to established participative decision-making processes	3				
.... Add your own indicator(s)						
CR 2: Capacities to generate, access and use information and knowledge						
Indicator 2.1 – Degree of environmental awareness of stakeholders	Stakeholders are not aware about global environmental issues and their related possible solutions (MEAs)	0	1			1
	Stakeholders are aware about global	1				

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
	environmental issues but not about the possible solutions (MEAs)					
	Stakeholders are aware about global environmental issues and the possible solutions but do not know how to participate	2				
	Stakeholders are aware about global environmental issues and are actively participating in the implementation of related solutions	3				
Indicator 2.2 – Access and sharing of environmental information by stakeholders	The environmental information needs are not identified and the information management infrastructure is inadequate	0	1			3
	The environmental information needs are identified but the information management infrastructure is inadequate	1				
	The environmental information is partially available and shared among stakeholders but is not covering all focal areas and/or the information management infrastructure to manage and give information access to the public is limited	2				
	Comprehensive environmental information is available and shared through an adequate information management infrastructure	3				
Indicator 2.3 – Existence of environmental education programmes	No environmental education programmes are in place	0	1			
	Environmental education programmes are partially developed and partially delivered	1				
	Environmental education programmes are fully developed but partially delivered	2				
	Comprehensive environmental education programmes exist and are being delivered	3				
Indicator 2.4 – Extend of the linkage between environmental research/science and policy development	No linkage exist between environmental policy development and science/research strategies and programmes	0	2			3
	Research needs for environmental policy development are identified but are not translated into relevant research strategies and programmes	1				
	Relevant research strategies and programmes for environmental policy development exist but the research information is not responding fully	2				

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
	to the policy research needs					
	Relevant research results are available for environmental policy development	3				
Indicator 2.5 – Extend of inclusion/use of traditional knowledge in environmental decision-making	Traditional knowledge is ignored and not taken into account into relevant participative decision-making processes	0	0			
	Traditional knowledge is identified and recognized as important but is not collected and used in relevant participative decision-making processes	1				
	Traditional knowledge is collected but is not used systematically into relevant participative decision-making processes	2				
	Traditional knowledge is collected, used and shared for effective participative decision-making processes	3				
.... Add your own indicator(s)						
CR 3: Capacities for strategy, policy and legislation development						
Indicator 3.1 – Extend of the environmental planning and strategy development process	The environmental planning and strategy development process is not coordinated and does not produce adequate environmental plans and strategies	0	2			2, 3
	The environmental planning and strategy development process does produce adequate environmental plans and strategies but there are not implemented/used	1				
	Adequate environmental plans and strategies are produced but there are only partially implemented because of funding constraints and/or other problems	2				
	The environmental planning and strategy development process is well coordinated by the lead environmental organizations and produces the required environmental plans and strategies; which are being implemented	3				
Indicator 3.2 – Existence of an adequate environmental policy and regulatory frameworks	The environmental policy and regulatory frameworks are insufficient; they do not provide an enabling environment	0	2			3
	Some relevant environmental policies and laws	1				

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
	exist but few are implemented and enforced					
	Adequate environmental policy and legislation frameworks exist but there are problems in implementing and enforcing them	2				
	Adequate policy and legislation frameworks are implemented and provide an adequate enabling environment; a compliance and enforcement mechanism is established and functions	3				
Indicator 3.3 – Adequacy of the environmental information available for decision-making	The availability of environmental information for decision-making is lacking	0	1			1, 3
	Some environmental information exists but it is not sufficient to support environmental decision-making processes	1				
	Relevant environmental information is made available to environmental decision-makers but the process to update this information is not functioning properly	2				
	Political and administrative decision-makers obtain and use updated environmental information to make environmental decisions	3				
.... Add your own indicator(s)						
CR 4: Capacities for management and implementation						
Indicator 4.1 – Existence and mobilization of resources	The environmental organizations don't have adequate resources for their programmes and projects and the requirements have not been assessed	0	3			
	The resource requirements are known but are not being addressed	1				
	The funding sources for these resource requirements are partially identified and the resource requirements are partially addressed	2				
	Adequate resources are mobilized and available for the functioning of the lead environmental organizations	3				
Indicator 4.2 – Availability of required technical skills and technology transfer	The necessary required skills and technology are not available and the needs are not identified	0	1			2, 3
	The required skills and technologies needs are identified as well as their sources	1				
	The required skills and technologies are obtained but their access depend on foreign sources	2				

Capacity Result / Indicator	Staged Indicators	Rating	Score	Comments	Next Steps	Contribution to which Outcome
	The required skills and technologies are available and there is a national-based mechanism for updating the required skills and for upgrading the technologies	3				
.... Add your own indicator(s)						
CR 5: Capacities to monitor and evaluate						
Indicator 5.1 – Adequacy of the project/programme monitoring process	Irregular project monitoring is being done without an adequate monitoring framework detailing what and how to monitor the particular project or programme	0	2			1
	An adequate resourced monitoring framework is in place but project monitoring is irregularly conducted	1				
	Regular participative monitoring of results in being conducted but this information is only partially used by the project/programme implementation team	2				
	Monitoring information is produced timely and accurately and is used by the implementation team to learn and possibly to change the course of action	3				
Indicator 5.2 – Adequacy of the project/programme evaluation process	None or ineffective evaluations are being conducted without an adequate evaluation plan; including the necessary resources	0	3			
	An adequate evaluation plan is in place but evaluation activities are irregularly conducted	1				
	Evaluations are being conducted as per an adequate evaluation plan but the evaluation results are only partially used by the project/programme implementation team	2				
	Effective evaluations are conducted timely and accurately and are used by the implementation team and the Agencies and GEF Staff to correct the course of action if needed and to learn for further planning activities	3				
.... Add your own indicator(s)						
	Total Score:		24			