



## MID-TERM EVALUATION

of the UNDP/GEF Project

“Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Government-NGO Partnership in Romania’s Maramures Nature Park”

*(PIMS 1969)*

**Final Report**



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## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AEWA	African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BD	Biodiversity
BR	Biosphere Reserve
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CO	Country Office
EA	Executing Agency
EC	European Community
EU	European Union
EPA	Environment Protection Agency
FSC	Forestry Stewardship Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographical Information System
GOR	Government Of Romania
GPS	Global Positioning System
IA	Implementing Agency
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
MAB	Man and Biosphere Programme
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MESD	Ministry of Education and Sustainable Development
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MMNP	Maramures Nature Park
MOA	Ministry Of Agriculture
MP	Management Plan
MSP	Medium Size Project
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NDS	National Development Strategy
NFA	National Forest Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Protected Area
PDF	Project Development Facility
PEFC	Pan European Forestry Certification
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PMU	Project Management Unit
POC	Project Oversight Committee
RAF	Resource Allocation Framework
RBM	Results Based Management
ROE	Regional Office for Europe
SOP	Sector Operating Programme
SP	Strategic Priority
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Area
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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The Carpathian Mountains are the largest mountain range in Europe and constitute an important ecological north-south forested corridor for dispersal of flora and fauna across Central Europe. Even large mammal species like wolf and brown bear use the corridor to migrate and repopulate unoccupied territories. The position of the Carpathians as a refuge during the ice age is still visible today in the exceptionally high diversity of species including many endemic and relict species.

Romania is a country with rich biodiversity and a high percentage of relatively undisturbed natural ecosystems - 47% of the land area of the country is covered with natural and semi-natural ecosystems, which is the densest forest cover among the Carpathian countries. Romania encompasses approximately 55 % of the Carpathian range, making Romania by far the most important single country for the protection of the Carpathian biodiversity. The Maramures Mountains bordering Ukraine belong to the Eastern Carpathians and constitute the northernmost mountain range of the Romanian Carpathians. The Maramures Mountains form the headwaters to the Viseu, Vaser and Tisla catchments, all major tributaries to the trans-boundary Tisza River.

The project area - defined as the area of the Maramures Nature Park (MMNP) itself – is situated at an altitude of 340 to 1957m has an approximate surface of 150,000 ha, out of which 60% is represented by forests, 30 % grasslands and alpine pastures and only 4 % by agricultural lands. Lower altitudes are dominated by natural mixed forests of oak (*Quercus spp.*), hornbeam and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), which are replaced at the montane level by pure beech and mixed spruce and fir. The dwarf pines (*Pinus mugo*) stand characteristic of the alpine level were declared a natural monument by the County Council Decision 37/1994. On the volcanic plateau there are a number of bogs preserving numerous glacial relicts. The depression zone is a mosaic of lakes, alluvial meadows, terraces with clogged backwaters, swamps, and ponds, all hosting a rich biodiversity.

Species Diversity: Among the 1,000-recorded vascular plants, more than 90 species are endemic and 101 are included in the Red List of Romania (93 are rare, 7 vulnerable and one is endangered). Some of the rare species are legally protected in Romania as 'natural monuments', including *Cypripedium calceolus*, *Narcissus radiiflorus*, *Angelica archangelica*, *Gentiana lutea*, *Gentiana punctata*, *Rhododendron myrtifolium*, *Taxus baccata* and *Trollius europaeus*.

The fish fauna is diverse with 26 recorded species, 15 of which are listed under the Bern Convention and several are listed as endangered in the IUCN Red data Book. Very rare are *Eudontomyzon danfordi*, the 'Danube Salmon' (*Hucho hucho*, a glacial relict), chub (*Leuciscus souffia agassizi*, endemic to the Maramures mountains), and gudgeon (*Gobio uranoscopus*). *Leuciscus leuciscus leuciscus*, absent in most of the Romanian rivers, has also been recently recorded in the Viseu River. All reported amphibian (8) and reptile (8) species are protected under the Bern Convention, some of them being listed as vulnerable in IUCN Red Data Book, such as *Triturus cristatus*, *Bombina variegata*, *Hyla arborea*, *Rana dalmatina* and *Rana temporaria*, among Amphibia, and *Emys orbicularis*, sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), and Aesculapian snake (*Elaphe longissima*) among Reptilia. The amphibian Carpathian newt (*Triturus montandoni*) is endemic to Eastern Carpathians. The avifauna is very rich with 141 recorded species, 140 of which are listed under the Bern Convention (85 are strictly protected and listed on Annex II and 55 protected - Annex III), 49 species under Bonn Convention with the rare white tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), 54 under the EC Bird Directive and 44 listed under the Agreement on the Conservation of Africa-Eurasian migratory Waterbirds (AEWA). A list of a few focal or indicator bird species recorded nesting in the project site includes golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarina*), corn crane (*Crex crex*), wryneck (*Jynx toquilla*), capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), black grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*), pygmy owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*), Ural owl (*Strix uralensis*), Tengmalm's owl (*Aegolius funereus*), white-backed woodpecker (*Dendrocopos leucotos*), and three-toed woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*). Records list also some rare trans-migrant bird species, such as: *Pandion haliaetus*, *Gavia stellata*, *Anas clypeata*, *Netta rufina* and *Melanitta nigra*.

With 44 species, the mammal fauna is extremely rich with large populations of brown bear (at least 66 individuals recorded in a recent one-off survey in project site, whereas the estimated Romanian population is 5,500 specimens), wolf (40 recorded in project site, and total population in Romanian Carpathians estimated at 3,000) and lynx (estimated 1,500 in Romania, 18 recorded in project site). Rare and declining mammal species include also e.g., the European mink (*Mustela lutreola*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), *Myotis brandti*, and *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*. For many decades, research activity has lacked a systemic approach, and it can be expected that many more rare, vulnerable and endangered species of flora and fauna will be found in future studies.

The project area encompasses approximately 102,800 ha (66% of the total area) of naturally regenerated forests; the government still owns 76,500 ha, private individuals own 3,500 ha and local municipalities own 22,800 ha. The project area includes the territories of Bistra, Petrova, Repedea, Ruscova, Poienile de Sub Munte communities, and Viseu de Sus town, representing about 25% of the County of Maramures area. The park is adjacent to the Rodni National Park and has an estimated combined total population of about 90,000 inhabitants. The main economic activities in the area are mining, Forest and livestock, woodworking, and - just emerging - tourism. The region is one of the poorest in Romania on an economic scale and in modern times, significant numbers of people have chosen to earn their living elsewhere, sending their earnings home to support their families. The PDF-A socio-economic study estimated the emigration of young people at the rate of 4.8 to 6.6% per year.

*Extracts from the Project Document*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UNDP-GEF project “*Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Government-NGO Partnership in Romania’s Maramures Nature Park*” has a total budget of USD 2.306M of which USD 1M is funded by GEF. The project started in May 2005, was extended after its first year by one year and will end now in June 2009. The National Implementing Agency in Romania is the National Forest Administration (NFA) and UNDP is the GEF Implementing Agency.

The project seeks to strengthen Romania’s national system of protected areas by demonstrating effective biodiversity conservation in Maramures Mountains Natural Park in Romania’s northern Carpathian Mountains; encompassing approximately 150,000 ha. Its goal is to strengthen Romania’s national system of protected areas by disseminating lessons and good practices extracted from the Maramures demonstration of an effective protected area model. Its objective is “The biodiversity of Maramures Mountains Natural Park in Romania’s Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model. The project has three expected outcomes: (i) Stakeholders make Maramures Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) are fully operational; (ii) Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramures; and (iii) Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP.

This mid-term evaluation - a requirement of UNDP/GEF procedures – was initiated by UNDP Romania as the GEF Implementing Agency. It provides an in-depth reflection of project progress and future priority actions. This mid-term evaluation was performed by a team of Consultants - Jean-Joseph Bellamy and Lucian Georgescu - on behalf of the UNDP.

This evaluation is based on a desk review of project documents and on interviews with key project informants and project staffs. 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 evaluation are:

Overall the progress of the project so far is highly satisfactory. The project is successfully reaching its expected results and beyond; it should have an important long-term impact for MMNP but also for the protected area system in Romania. Considering the biodiversity importance of the Carpathian mountain range, the project is also contributing to global environmental benefits through the establishment of an effective protection regime for the MMNP; including the possibility of creating a trans-boundary biosphere reserve. The design of the project is strongly rooted in the work done by the Maramures Biodiversity Consortium - a representative group of local Stakeholders. A well-qualified team of professionals, which are the permanent staff of the MMNP Administration, implements the project; therefore, ensuring the continuation of the project achievements after the project ends. The current achievements are in line with the overall implementation strategy and the project gained much authority during this first half; which gives it a clear mandate for the second half to lead the sustainable development process in the MMNP area through environmental services and the development of the necessary management instruments to manage the park; that is a management plan, a monitoring system to monitor the biodiversity and the ecosystem conditions in the park and the corresponding management information systems and GIS needed to store and manage this information. The two recurrent success factors on this project, which are the strong involvement of Stakeholders and a well-qualified project management team that is the permanent management team of MMNP Administration, will positively impact the long-term sustainability of the project achievements.

The project is highly relevant for Romania. It strengthens its national system of protected areas. It responds very well to the development objectives of Romania and to those of UNDP and GEF in Romania. It is highly relevant to the environmental governance framework in place in Romania; particularly the protected area system. The project addresses some socio-economic issues by supporting the development of sustainable economic activities such as ecotourism. The design of the project is also highly relevant for its implementation; it is strongly rooted in the work done by the Maramures Biodiversity Consortium, a

representative group of Stakeholders, which started in 2000. Finally, the project meets the objectives of the UNCBD and the Carpathian Convention.

The project effectiveness is highly satisfactory. It is effective in achieving its expected outcomes that is to develop and test an effective protected area management model for these parks. Capacity development is “embedded” into the design of the project and the project risks are managed adequately. During the first 2 years, the project focused on expected outcome 1 & 2. The MMNP is now set-up officially and has a qualified staff. The project supported awareness raising activities in local communities – including in schools – and supported a few demonstrations to transform sawdust in briquettes with a private operator and use these briquettes as heating energy in a school. The MMNP is now recognized as a full development partner and it is expected that the Administration should lead the development in the MMNP area. The second phase of the project will be challenging but the project has now the “clout” to forge ahead with the development of management instruments for the parks (management plan and monitoring system) and the development of sustainable use of the park’s natural assets such as ecotourism.

The project efficiency is highly satisfactory. It is well managed and the resources are utilized efficiently. It uses adaptive management extensively to secure project outcomes while maintaining adherence to the overall project design; this is especially important in the context of Romania that is going through numerous changes since the revolution. The log-frame is one of the main management tools used to guide the implementation of the project. The project disbursements are in line with the implementation – including the co-financing - and the finances are adequately managed by the UNDP-Atlas system. The project follows UNDP/GEF procedures as well as NFA procedures. A high quality team of professionals that is motivated and dedicated to the project manages the project. An important aspect of the project team is that it is not a typical project staff hired only for the duration of the project. The three project staffs are also the Park Director, the Chief Accountant and the Community Outreach/Procurement Officer of the MMNP Administration; they cumulate the functions. This set-up is extremely valuable for the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. The strong involvement of Stakeholders ensures an excellent project ownership; which will also contribute to the long-term sustainability of project achievements. Finally the project is well monitored using a set of impact oriented performance indicators. The project management team is also using the METT, which indicates a strong gain between the assessment at inception and the mi-term assessment done in June 2007.

The potential to achieve the long-term project goal and objective is satisfactory. In the long run the project should strengthen the Romania’s protected area system by disseminating lessons and good practices extracted from the Maramures demonstration of an effective protected area model. The project is so far highly effective to deliver its expected outputs and, after two years, all conditions exist for a successful project implementation. Considering the biodiversity importance of the Carpathian mountain range, the project is also contributing to global environmental benefits through the establishment of an effective protection regime for the MMNP; including the possibility of creating a trans-boundary biosphere reserve with Ukraine regrouping the Carpathians biosphere reserve and the natural park of Verkhovyna in Ukraine and the MMNP and Rodnei park in Romania. In the long-term the project should also have a positive impact on the local poverty and other socio-economic issues through the demonstration of sustainable income generation activities such as ecotourism. The project will certainly face many challenges ahead but its well-qualified management team and the strong involvement of Stakeholders (partnerships) will contribute to the continued success of the project.

The long-term sustainability of the project achievements is highly satisfactory. A sustainability strategy was developed during the design phase and this mid-term assessment indicates a strong potential for the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. The two recurrent success factors on this project are strong involvement of Stakeholders and a well-qualified project management team that is the permanent management team of MMNP Administration; both factors will positively impact the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. The design of the project is strongly based on the work done by the Maramures Biodiversity Consortium and a well-qualified team of professionals now implements it. Finally the replication of the lessons learned and the best practices are also embedded into the design of the project and the expectations are that the management model developed under this project will be replicated throughout the protected area system in Romania.

Few lessons were identified:



- When the project management is given to an existing management staff of a local institution, the donor control is less but the long-term sustainability of the project achievements is almost guaranteed. The early institutionalization of the process is a very valuable success factor for the sustainability of project achievements;
- The implementation of small community-based projects contributes greatly to building trust with local communities and improves the image of a project. It provides good examples of sustainable use of the natural resources to improve local livelihoods and to conserve local biodiversity;
- A well integrated sustainability and replicability strategy into a project design; including expected replicability results into the set of project expected results, reinforces the focus on these two important factors for the success of a project;
- A project design that is strongly rooted in the work of local stakeholders facilitates the implementation and ensures a greater potential for long-term impact and long-term sustainability; with the results of a strong stakeholders and country ownership;
- Any project supporting a protected area needs to include a strong component to raise the awareness of the local communities living in and around the area and to improve their livelihood. Once they understand the objectives, these communities accept and respect the protected area;
- This type of project emphasizing capacity development requires a longer timeframe to achieve results; 4-5 years should be the minimum. The time it takes to change a piece of legislation or a policy or the creation/strengthening of an institution is often underestimated;
- If a project - with a short timeframe – needs to be extended, it is better to do it early on into its implementation (such as the first year). It allows the project overall implementation strategy to revamp the entire implementation plan and to reallocate the project resources accordingly;
- Hiring project staff in these remote places (the case of a lot of protected areas) is often a challenge. However, patience and the application of the due process often result in the hiring of staff that is responding well to the job requirements;
- A good project staff will build an extensive network including the key stakeholders to implement the project. Once these networks are in place, the implementation of the project is facilitated through these relationships.

Finally, a set of recommendations was identified; based on the findings of this evaluation:

#### Recommendations for the Remaining Implementation Period of the Project

1. Develop or revive the tripartite project committee, which should meet regularly (monthly or bimonthly) to discuss project progress. It will allow the two major project partners (UNDP and NFA) to review the project progress, to discuss replication opportunities and long-term sustainability of the project achievements and to communicate and exchange views on their respective agendas.
2. Organize a project management retreat off site in the last part of 2007 to review progress to date and review the plan for the next two years.
3. The project is currently supporting the biodiversity baseline and a review of the current zoning within the park. It is urgent that this zoning is finalized and clarified. Following this review, the project should support a “communication tour” throughout the local communities and the local development agencies.
4. As part of developing the management plan for MMNP and considering the expectation of the Stakeholders in term of Stakeholder participation in the management of the park, there is a need to develop a community outreach strategy for MMNP.
5. The main channel of communication with the local communities is currently planned through the consultative council of the MMNP Administration. Despite that this approach is good and rationale in the long-term, it is not enough in the near term. More awareness activities are needed; particularly more activities in direct contact with local communities.
6. The project should support the MMNP Administration to strengthen its management systems including its management information system and GIS and its human resource management system complying with NFA guidelines. As part of this recommendation a capacity assessment of the MMNP Administration is recommended.
7. Based on the review of the project performance indicators, it is recommended the following:
  - a. Outcome 1: One indicator should measure the progress in the area of preparing a management plan such as “*A Management Plan in place integrating a biodiversity baseline and monitoring system as well as spatial information (GIS) and responding to the NFA MP guidelines with adequate capacity*”

*at the MMNP Administration”;*

- b. Modify the indicator #8 to encompass all replication activities; such as *“Number of project achievements that are replicated in other protected areas in Romania and abroad”*.
  - c. It is recommended to add an indicator such as *“Local communities understand better the MMNP and started to conserve and use it sustainably”*.
8. It is recommended to set new realistic targets for the METT indicators by the end of the project. It will provide the project management team with the management areas that need attention.
  9. The circulation of the project’s newsletter should be extended to all communities through schools, churches and city halls and other opportunities.
  10. More exchanges should be done and linked with the work plan for the next two years. Study tour themes could be park monitoring (indicators and system) – including the development of a volunteer monitoring system such as the one in place in the North Vzdeme Biosphere Reserve (NVBR) in Latvia applying an EcoWatch approach; compliance and enforcement in protected areas; comprehensive management plan and its application; and, sustainable economic activities in or near a protected area such as ecotourism and sustainable forest exploitation.
  11. The development of an ecotourism strategy supported by the project should be done in close collaboration with the ministry of tourism. It should first conduct an assessment to understand/document the local environment, social and economic situation. It should develop a tourism destination marketing strategy. The project has a role of leading the development process in the MMNP area. It should use its recognition by the main local development partners to set-up the necessary committees for the development of this strategy.
  12. It is time to start a process for collecting the lessons learned and disseminating them in Romania and also in the region and worldwide.
  13. Support a greater involvement of the scientific community in the MMNP; particularly with a focus on the impact of management practices on the biodiversity.
  14. Adapt the approach to implement the output 3.4 *“Certified Forest Production and Marketing Demonstration”* according to the development of the land restitution process.

#### Opportunities for Further Projects

15. Develop a Trans-boundary Biosphere Reserve covering most of the Southeast part of the Carpathian mountain range overlapping part of Ukraine and part of Romania. The concept would be to “merge” the 4 protected areas of the region including the MMNP and the Rodnei National Park on the Romanian side and the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve and the Verkhovena Natural Park on the Ukrainian side.

## Sumar Executiv

Proiectul UNDP-GEF “*Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Government-NGO Partnership in Romania’s Maramures Nature Park*” are un buget total de 2.306M USD din care 1M USD reprezinta finantarea GEF. Proiectul a inceput in Mai 2005, a fost prelungit dupa primul sau an cu inca un an si va fi finalizat in Iunie 2009. Agentia Nationala de Implementare din Romania este Administratia Nationala a Padurilor (NFA) si UNDP reprezinta Agentia de Implementare GEF.

Proiectul cauta sa intareasca sistemul de arii protejate din Romania demonstrand o conservare eficienta a biodiversitatii in Parcul National Muntii Maramures in Carpatii de Nord ai Romaniei, ingloband aproximativ 150.000 ha. Scopul sau este sa intareasca sistemul de arii protejate al Romaniei prin diseminarea bunelor practici rezultate din activitatea din Maramures ca model eficient de arie protejata. Obiectivul sau este “Biodiversitatea Parcului National Muntii Maramuresului din Carpatii de Nord ai Romaniei este conservata in mod eficient prin adoptarea unui model eficient de management al ariilor protejate”. Proiectul are 3 rezultate previzionale: (i) Participantii actioneaza in sensul atingerii operativitatii efective a Parcului National Muntii Maramuresului (MMNP); (ii) Participantii intaresc autoritatea asupra mediului inconjurator in Maramures si (iii) Actionarii recunosc si incep sa realizeze valoarea reala a capitalului natural, intarind legatura intre utilizarea durabila si conservarea acestuia in cadrul MMNP.

Aceasta evaluare intermediara- obligatorie in cadrul procedurilor UNDP/GEF- a fost initiata de UNDP Romania in calitate de Agentie de Implementare a GEF si asigura o reflectie in profunzime asupra progresului proiectului si a actiunilor prioritare in viitor. Evaluarea intermediara a fost realizata de o echipa de Consultanti - Jean-Joseph Bellamy si Lucian Georgescu – pentru UNDP.

Aceasta evaluare este bazata pe studiul documentelor referitoare la proiect si pe interviuri cu persoane cheie implicate in proiect si personal angajat. Metodologia a inclus dezvoltarea unei matrici de evaluare drept ghid in colectarea datelor si analiza acestora. Datele colectate au fost verificate prin utilizarea mai multor surse informationale cand acest lucru s-a averat posibil. Raportul de evaluare este structurat pe cele cinci criterii de evaluare GEF: Relevanta, Eficacitate, Eficienta, Rezultate/Impacturi, si Sustenabilitate.

Principalele informatii obtinute in urma acestei evaluari sunt:

Progresul pe plan global al proiectului este foarte satisfactor. Proiectul indeplineste cu succes rezultatele previzionate si chiar le depaseste; existand posibilitatea sa aiba un impact important pe termen lung pentru MMNP dar si pentru sistemul de arii protejate al Romaniei. Luand in considerare importanta biodiversitatii din Muntii Carpati, proiectul contribuie de asemenea la beneficii globale pe termen lung asupra in domeniul mediului inconjurator prin stabilirea unui regim de protectie eficienta pentru MMNP, incluzand posibilitatea crearii unei rezerve a biosferei la nivel trasfrontalier. Planul proiectului are radacini in activitatea desfasurata de Consorțiul Biodiversitatii Maramures- un grup reprezentativ de participanti locali. O echipa calificata de specialisti, care reprezinta angajatii permanenti ai Administratiei MMNP, implementeaza proiectul, asigurand astfel continuarea activitatii chiar si dupa incheierea proiectului. Realizarile curente se aliniaza strategiei de implementare totala si proiectul a castigat mare autoritate in prima jumatate a perioadei de implementare, ceea ce ii confera un mandat clar pentru cea de-a doua jumatate in vederea controlului asupra procesului de dezvoltare durabila in aria MMNP, prin servicii legate de mediu si dezvoltarea instrumentelor necesare pentru managementul parcului; acestea presupun un plan de management, un sistem de monitorizare a biodiversitatii si calitatii ecosistemului din parc precum si sistemele corespondente de management informational si GIS necesare in vederea stocarii si utilizarii optime a informatiei. Cei doi factori recurenti de succes, reprezentati de puternica implicare a participantilor si de echipa de specialisti calificati a proiectului (reprezentata de echipa permanenta de management a Administratiei MMNP), vor avea un impact pozitiv asupra sustenabilitatii pe termen lung a proiectului.

Proiectul este de relevanta majora pentru Romania intarind sistemul sau de arii protejate si incadrandu-se foarte bine in obiectivele de dezvoltare a Romaniei precum si a celor UNDP si GEF in Romania. Este foarte relevant pentru cadrul de utilizare sustenabila a mediului inconjurator stabilit in Romania, in special pentru sistemul de arii protejate. Proiectul include solutii de rezolvare a unor probleme de ordin socio-economic

sprijinind dezvoltarea durabila a unor activitati economice precum ecoturismul. Planificarea proiectului este deasemeni foarte relevanta pentru implementarea acestuia; originea acestuia se regaseste in activitatea Consorțiului Biodiversității din Maramures, care a inceput in 2000. In cele din urma, proiectul indeplineste obiectivele UNCBD si a Conventiei Carpatice.

Eficacitatea proiectului este foarte satisfacatoare. Este eficace in realizarea obiectivelor planificate adica in dezvoltarea si testarea unui model eficient de management pentru aceste parcuri. Dezvoltarea capacitatii este inglobata in design-ul proiectului si riscurile acestuia sunt gestionate adecvat. In timpul primilor 2 ani, proiectul s-a bazat pe un rezultat previzionat 1 & 2. MMNP a fost acum creat oficial si are personal calificat. Proiectul a inclus activitati de constientizare a populatiei in comunitatile locale- incluzand scolile- si a a sustinut cateva demonstratii de transformare a rumegusului rezultat in urma taierii lemnului in brichete si utilizarea acestor brichete in vederea obtinerii de energie pentru incalzirea unei scoli. MMNP este acum recunoscut ca partener cu drepturi depline si este de asteptat ca Administratia sa incurajeze dezvoltarea in aria MMNP. Cea de a doua faza a proiectului va reprezenta o provocare dar proiectul are acum “combustibilul” pentru a merge inainte cu dezvoltarea instrumentelor de management pentru parcuri (planul de management si sistemul de monitorizare) si folosirea prin dezvoltare durabila a potentialului natural al parcului precum ecoturismul.

Eficienta proiectului este foarte satisfacatoare. Managementul este bun si resursele sunt utilizate efficient. Utilizeaza managementul adaptativ in mod extensiv pentru securizarea rezultatelor proiectului conservand in acelasi timp aderenta la planul general al proiectului; acest lucru este important in special in contextul Romaniei care trece prin numeroase schimbari in perioada de dupa revolutia din 1989. Notarea tuturor actiunilor intr-un jurnal este unul din principalele instrumente de management utilizate in implementarea proiectului. Sumele cheltuite prin proiect corespund implementarii acestuia – incluzand co-finantarea- si finantele sunt gestionate adecvat prin sistemul UNDP-Atlas. Proiectul urmeaza procedurile UNDP/GEF precum si procedurile NFA. O echipa foarte calificata de profesionisti foarte motivati asigura managementul proiectului. Un aspect important al echipei proiectului este ca nu este vorba de o echipa tipica angajata doar pe perioada de implementare. Principiarii trei membrii din personalul proiectului sunt Directorul Parcului, Contabilul Sef si Ofiterul de Aprovizionare al Administratiei MMNP. Acest aspect este foarte valoros pentru sustenabilitatea pe termen lung a proiectului. Implicarea puternica a partenerilor asigura un control participativ excelent asupra proiectului, ceea ce va contribui de asemenea la sustenabilitatea pe termen lung a activitatilor. In sfarsit, proiectul este bine monitorizat folosind un set de indici de performanta orientati spre impact. Managementul proiectului utilizeaza de asemeni METT, ceea ce indica un castig considerabil intre evaluarea executata la inceput si evaluarea intermediara executata in Iunie 2007.

Potentialul de realizare a scopurilor si obiectivelor proiectului pe termen lung este satisfactor. Pe termen lung, proiectul ar trebui sa intareasca sistemul de arii protejate al Romaniei prin diseminarea bunelor practici rezultate din activitatile MMNP acesta din urma fiind un model de eficienta in conservarea ariilor protejate. Proiectul este pana in prezent eficient in realizarea rezultatelor previzionate si, dupa doi ani, exista deja toate conditiile pentru implementarea cu success actiunilor propuse. Luand in considerare importanta biodiversitatii Muntilor Carpati, proiectul creeaza potentialul unor beneficii globale in domeniul mediului prin stabilirea unui regim eficient de protectie pentru MMNP, incluzand posibilitatea crearii unei Rezervatii a Biosferei transfrontaliere cu Ucraina regrupand zone protejate si parcul natural din Verkhovyna in Ucraina, MMNP si parcul Rodnei din Romania. Pe termen lung proiectul ar trebui sa aiba un impact pozitiv asupra nivelului de dezvoltare economica si sociala locala prin incurajarea activitatilor care genereaza venit durabil precum ecoturismul. Proiectul mai are de infruntat multe provocari dar echipa sa de management puternic calificata si puternica prezenta a partenerilor va contribui la succesul continuu al proiectului.

Sustenabilitatea pe termen lung a rezultatelor proiectului este foarte satisfacatoare. O strategie de sustenabilitate a fost dezvoltata in faza de design si evaluarea intermediara indica un potential puternic pentru sustenabilitatea pe termen lung a rezultatelor proiectului. Cei doi factori recurenti de success in cadrul proiectului sunt puternica implicare a partenerilor si a unei echipe de management bine calificate care este reprezentata de echipa permanenta de management a Administratiei MMNP; ambii factori au impact pozitiv asupra sustenabilitatii pe termen lung a rezultatelor proiectului. Design-ul proiectului s-a bazat pe activitatea Consorțiului Biodiversității din Maramures si a echipei calificate de profesionisti care o implementeaza in acest moment. In sfarsit, replicarea lectiilor invatate si a bunelor practici sunt de asemenea inglobate in design-ul proiectului si se asteapta ca acest model de management dezvoltat in cadrul proiectului

sa fie replicat pe tot sistemul de arii protejate din Romania.

Cateva lectii au fost identificate:

- Cand coordonarea proiectului este acordat sistemului de management al unei institutii locale, controlul donatorului este mai mic dar sustenabilitatea pe termen lung a rezultatelor proiectului este aproape garantata. Institutionalizarea timpurie a procesului este un factor de mare success pentru sustenabilitatea rezultatelor proiectului.
- Implementarea proiectelor de talie mica spre beneficiul comunitatii locale contribuie foarte mult la dezvoltarea climatului de incredere in cadrul comunitatilor locale si imbunatateste imaginea proiectului. Confera exemple bune de utilizare a resurselor naturale pentru imbunatatirea nivelului de trai local si conservarea biodiversitatii locale
- O sustenabilitate bine integrata si o strategie de replicare prevaxuta in designul proiectului, incluzand replicabilitatea rezultatelor asteptate, intareste accentul pe acesti doi factori importanti ai succesului unui proiect.
- Un design al proiectului care isi are originile in munca partenerilor locali faciliteaza implementarea si asigura un potential mai mare de impact pe termen lung precum si sustenabilitatea actiunilor
- Orice proiect care are loc intr-o arie protejata trebuie sa includa un component puternic de constientizare a populatiei din cadrul comunitatilor locale in vederea imbunatatirii nivelului lor de trai. Odata ce au inteles obiectivele, comunitatile le accepta si respecta aria protejata.
- Acest tip de proiect, punand accentual pe dezvoltarea capacitatii cere un orizont mai mare de timp pentru realizarea rezultatelor; 4-5 ani minimum. Timpul necesar schimbarii unei legislatii sau a unei proceduri sau crearii/intaririi unei institutii este de multe ori subestimat.
- Daca un proiect- cu un orizont de timp scurt- trebuie extins, este bine ca acest lucru sa fie facut devreme in cadrul procesului de implementare (ca de exemplu in primul an). Acest lucru permite strategiei totale de implementare sa modifice intregul plan si sa realoce resursele intr-un mod corespunzator.
- Contractarea personalului de proiect in zonele respective (cazul multor arii protejate) este de multe ori o provocare. Cu toate acestea, rabdarea si aplicarea procesului de multe ori rezulta in angajarea personalului care corespunde intocmai cerintelor jobului.
- Un bun personal al proiectului va construi o retea extensiva incluzand parteneri cheie in implementarea proiectului. Odata ce aceste retele sunt activate, implementarea proiectului este facilitata.

In sfarsit, un set de recomandari a fost identificat, pe baza acestei evaluari:

Recomandari pentru Perioada de Implementare ramasa a Proiectului

1. Dezvoltarea sau revigorarea comitetului tripartit de proiect, care ar trebui sa se intalneasca regulat (lunar sau de doua ori pe luna) in vederea discutarii progreselor inregistrate. Acest lucru va permite celor doi parteneri ai proiectului (UNDP si NFA) sa revizuiasca unele aspecte, sa discute oportunitatile de replicare si sustenabilitatea pe termen lung a rezultatelor proiectului, precum si sa comunice si sa schimbe pareri in legatura cu agendele lor respective.
2. Organizarea unui proiect de analiza a managementului off site in ultima parte a anului 2007 pentru a evalua progresele facute si planul pentru urmatorii doi ani.
3. Proiectul sustine baza biodiversitati si o revizuire a zonalitatii existente in parc. Este urgent ca aceasta zonare sa fie finalizata si clarificata. Ca urmare a acestei revizuii, proiectul ar trebui sa sprijine un "tur al comunicarii", prin comunitatile locale si agentiile de dezvoltare locala.
4. Ca parte integranta a planului de management pentru MMNP si luand in considerare asteptarile partenerilor in termeni de participare la managementul parcului, este necesar sa se dezvolte o strategie de apropiere a comunitatii de MMNP.
5. Principalul canal de comunicare cu comunitatile locale este planificat in mod curent de consiliul consultativ al Administratiei MMNP. In ciuda faptului ca aceasta tactica este buna si rationala pe termen lung, nu este suficienta pe termen scurt. Mai multe activitati de constientizare sunt necesare; mai ales activitati de contact direct cu comunitatile locale.
6. Proiectul ar trebui sa sustina Administratia MMNP in intarirea activitatii interne incluzand sistemul de management informational si GIS precum si managementul resurselor umane conforme recomandarilor NFA. O evaluare a capacitatii Administratiei MMNP este recomandata.
7. Bazandu-se pe revizuirea indicatorilor de performanta a proiectului, se recomanda urmatoarele:

- a. Rezultat 1: Un indicator ar trebui sa masoare progresul in zona si sa pregateasca un plan de management ca de exemplu: “ *Un Plan de Management integrand o baza a biodiversitatii si sistemului de monitorizare precum si informatia spatiala (GIS) si raspunzand recomandarilor NFA*”.
  - b. Modificarea indicatorului numarul 8 pentru a cuprinde toate activitatile de duplicare; precum “*Numarul de rezultate ale proiectului care sunt duplicate in alte arii protejate din Romania si din afara ei*”.
  - c. Este recomandat sa se adauge un indicator precum: “ *Comunitatile locale inteleg mai bine MMNP si au inceput sa il conserve si sa il utilizeze in mod sustenabil*”.
8. Este recomandat sa se stabileasca noi tinte realiste pentru indicatorii METT pana la finalul proiectului. Acest lucru va conferi echipei de management a proiectului zonele care necesita atentie deosebita.
  9. Distributia buletinului de informare cu privire la proiect ar trebui extinsa la toate comunitatile prin intermediul scolilor, bisericilor si primariilor, precum si prin alte oportunitati.
  10. Mai multe schimbari ar trebui facute si legate de planul de lucru pentru urmatorii doi ani. Temele de studiu ar putea fi monitorizarea parcurilor (indicatori si sisteme) – incluzand dezvoltarea unui system de monitorizare pe baza de voluntariat, precum cel instaurat in North Vzdeme Biosphere Reserve (NVBR) in Letonia care pune in aplicare sistemul EcoWatch; intarirea sistemului de arii protejate; un plan de management pe intelesul tuturor si punerea lui in aplicare; activitati economice sustinute in sau langa o arie protejata precum ecoturismul si exploatarea forestiera sustenabila.
  11. Dezvoltarea unei strategii de ecoturism sprijinita de proiect ar trebui realizata in colaborare apropiata cu ministerul turismului. Ar trebui in primul rand sa dezvolte o cooperare in vederea intelegerii/ documentarii asupra mediului local, social si economic. Ar trebui sa dezvolte o strategie de marketing in vederea atragerii de turisti. Proiectul are rolul de a conduce procesul de dezvoltare in zona MMNP. Ar trebui sa isi utilizeze influenta asupra partenerilor locali in vederea stabilirii comitetelor necesare in vederea dezvoltarii acestei strategii.
  12. este momentul sa se inceapa un process de colectare a lectiilor invatate si de diseminare a acestora in Romania si de asemenea in regiune ca si in lumea intrega.
  13. Sprijinirea unei implicari mai mari a comunitatii stiintifice in MMNP, in special bazandu-se pe impactul practicilor de management asupra biodiversitatii.
  14. Adaptarea in vederea implementarii pentru rezultatul 3.4 “Certificarea Productiei Forestiere...” conform dezvoltarii procesului de restituire a terenurilor forestiere.

#### Oportunitati pentru Alte Proiecte

15. Dezvoltarea unei Rezerve a Biosferei tranfrontaliere acoperind cea mai mare parte a Lantului Carpatic incluzand o parte din Ucraina si o parte din Romania. Conceptul ar fi sa uneasca cele 4 arii protejate din regiune incluzand MMNP si Parcul national Muntii Rodnei in partea romaneasca si Verkhovena Natural Park in partea ucrainiana.

## **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 Government-NGO Partnership in Romania’s Maramures Nature Park*” (PIMS 1969). 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. The project has emerged from and is built upon a notable local stakeholder-driven process that has created an innovative Government-NGO partnership in Maramures to pursue the conservation and sustainable development of an area comprised of national forestland, protected areas, private forestlands, agricultural land and small urban areas. The project contributes to the expansion and consolidation of Romania’s national system of protected areas by demonstrating effective park management and Government-NGO partnership in the Maramures Nature Park (MMNP).

3. Maramures is a natural and cultural landscape where productive uses of forests predominate and non-consumptive uses of the forest, such as eco-tourism, are growing quickly. Maramures was also a place where protected areas exist on paper more than on the ground. The demonstration of a Government-NGO partnership as a viable option for protected area management and biodiversity conservation constitutes the project’s strategic approach to securing the sustainable long-term conservation of biodiversity in these mountains.

4. 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**

5. The UNDP/GEF project “Strengthening Romania’s Protected Area System by Demonstrating Government-NGO Partnership in Romania’s Maramures Nature Park” is a joint initiative of the UNDP and the Government of Romania. It is funded by the GEF and the National Forest Administration was designated as the Implementing Agency for this project.

6. The project seeks to strengthen Romania’s national system of protected areas by demonstrating effective biodiversity conservation in Maramures Mountains Natural Park in Romania’s northern Carpathian Mountains. The area of the project encompasses approximately 150,000 ha, of which 66% is naturally regenerated forests, 30% meadows and alpine pastures and 4% agricultural lands. With respect to the forestland itself, the Government owns 76,500 ha, private individuals own 3,500 ha and local municipalities own 22,800 ha. It has emerged from and is built upon a notable local stakeholder-driven process that has created an innovative Government-NGO partnership in Maramures to pursue the conservation and sustainable development of an area comprised of national forestland, protected areas, private forestlands, agricultural land and small urban areas. The project will contribute to the expansion and consolidation of the national system of protected areas by demonstrating effective park management and Government-NGO partnership.

7. The goal of the project is to strengthen Romania’s national system of protected areas by disseminating lessons and good practices extracted from the Maramures demonstration of an effective protected area model. Its objective and its three outcomes are presented in table 1 below.

8. The Project started in May 2005 and was planned for three years. However, it was extended for one year in September 2006; it will now end in 2009. It has a budget of USD2.306M of which USD1M is funded by GEF.

**Table 1: Project Expected Results**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
The biodiversity of Maramures Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Stakeholders make Maramures Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational;</li><li>2. Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramures;</li><li>3. Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP.</li></ol>

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION**

9. 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**

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. The evaluation report will provide the Client complete and convincing evidence to support its findings/ratings. The report will include ratings on specific aspects of the project, as described in the Terms of Reference. A particular emphasis will 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 being delivered.

#### **3.2. Scope**

13. This evaluation was conducted in accordance with the “*GEF Monitoring & Evaluation Policy*” to evaluate the activities supported by GEF through this project. As such, this comprehensive mid-term evaluation provides valuable information and useful experience for the project in advance of the terminal evaluation of the project. As per the TORs (*see Annex 1*), The success of project implementation was reviewed, assessed and rated with respect to the aspects presented below:

- *Project concept and design:* The relevance of the project design was assessed. It reviewed the problem addressed by the project and the project strategy, including an assessment of the appropriateness of the objectives, planned outputs, activities and inputs as compared to cost-effective alternatives. The analysis was done in the context of the sustainable strategy for sustainable development in the region and at national level and the transition period particularities. It took into account the EU environmental “*acquis communautaire*” which Romania is obligated to adopt.
- *Implementation:* The evaluation assessed the implementation of the project in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs and efficiency and efficiency of activities carried out. In particular the evaluation assessed the Project team’s use of adaptive management in project implementation. The



analysis reviewed the Inception Report (August 2005) and the annual adaptive management report (August 2006) in order to identify the progress in the Project team vision and experience.

- *Project outputs, outcomes and impact:* The evaluation assessed how effective is the project to achieve the expected outputs, outcomes and impact; including an assessment of the progress of the project in achieving the overall objective of the project and the global environmental benefits. The evaluation also examined if the project has had significant unexpected effects, whether of beneficial or detrimental character.
- *Progress towards results:* Initial evaluation questions to measure the progress towards results were used: Have critically endangered species been properly and adequately protected within the MMNP? Have there been changes in local stakeholder behaviour (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? Is there a partnership between the project team and scientific institutions (e.g. Universities) designed to define a mid and long term strategy for biodiversity conservation?
- *Sustainability:* The evaluation assessed the likely sustainability of project results; particularly the extent to which the benefits of the project will continue, within or outside the project domain, after it has come to an end. The sustainability of the project was analyzed with the opportunity related to the fact that Romania is a new EU member.
- *Project's Adaptive Management Framework:* The evaluation reviewed the adaptive management framework and assessed how well it meets the GEF requirements. It included: the project monitoring system, the application of the GEF tracking tool, the risk management, the logical framework and finally the reporting of adaptive management changes and how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.
- *Underlying Factors:* The evaluation assessed the underlying factors (and assumptions) beyond the project's immediate control that influence results and consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the project's management strategies for these factors.
- *UNDP Contribution:* The role of UNDP against the requirements was assessed; considering the field visits, participation to PSC meeting/TOR follow-up and analysis, PIR preparation and follow-up and GEF guidance.
- *Partnership Strategy:* The involvement of partners and stakeholders in the project's adaptive management framework was reviewed including their involvement in the selection of indicators and other measures of performance and the identification of project strategies – any successful examples will be highlighted. The evaluation also assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the participative approach adopted by the project and suggest improvements if necessary.

### 3.3. Methodology

14. The following methodology is based on the Evaluation Team's M&E experience and experience with GEF specifically. It is compliant with international criteria and professional norms and standards. 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

15. This mid-term evaluation was conducted in accordance with the “*GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*”<sup>1</sup>. It was undertaken in-line with the GEF principles such as independence, impartiality, transparency, disclosure, ethical, partnership, competencies and capacities, credibility and utility. It considered the two overarching 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.

16. The Evaluation Team developed/used tools in accordance with the GEF policy to ensure an effective project evaluation. 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. There are:

- *Relevance* relates to an overall assessment of whether the project kept 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.

17. In addition to the approach described above, the Evaluation Team also applied the following methodological principles to conduct the evaluation: (i) *Participatory Consultancy*: Participatory data gathering activities; (ii) *Applied Knowledge*: the Evaluators’ working knowledge of evaluation theories and approaches and his particular expertise in environmental issues will be applied to this mandate; (iii) *Results-Based Management*: they will customize RBM to the requirements of this mandate; (iv) *Validity of information*: Limited only by the resources brought to bear, multiple measures and sources will be sought out to ensure that the results are accurate, valid and supported by more than one source of information; (v) *Integrity*: Any issue with respect to conflict of interest, lack of professional conduct or misrepresentation will be immediately referred to the client; and (vi) *Respect and anonymity*: All participants had the right to provide information in confidence.

18. Finally, the evaluation provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The findings were triangulated through the concept of “multiple lines of evidence” using different evaluation tools and gathering information from different types of stakeholders and different levels of management. The Evaluation Team was open for discussion on any modification proposed by UNDP-Romania; particularly to finalize the methodology to conduct this evaluation.

### 3.3.2. Evaluation Instruments

19. 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, used as

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<sup>1</sup> <http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html>

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 evaluation methodology to complete the evaluation framework. [*This evaluation framework was presented to UNDP-Romania for approval before the Evaluation Team proceeded 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 (*see Annex 3*) was provided in the TOR and the evaluation team searched other relevant documents through the web and contacts. [*A review of the list of documents was proposed at the start-up of the assignment*].

**Mission Agenda:** An agenda for the 5 working 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 to represent other Stakeholders such as land owners/users, farmers, local elected community leaders, etc. Then, the UNDP-Romania in collaboration with the evaluation team planned the interviews during the week prior to the mission. The objective was to have a well organized and planned mission; which was critical for maximizing data collection and ensuring a broad scan of Stakeholders' views during the time allocated to the mission. [*The final list and the agenda was coordinated with UNDP-Romania*].

**Questionnaire:** An interview guide/questionnaire 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.

**Interviews:** A sample of Stakeholders was interviewed during the mission in Romania. The semi-structured interviews were conducted using the interview guide and adapted to each interview (*see Annex 6*). All interviews were conducted in person with some follow up using emails as needed. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings were 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. A short mission report was provided to UNDP in the following few days after the end of the mission. [*These field visits were coordinated in collaboration with UNDP-Romania*].

**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)*, *Unsatisfactory (U)* and *Not Applicable (NA)*.

20. In addition, the Evaluation Team prepared a draft performance table for the project (*see Annex 7*). This table specifies, for each of the main objectives and outcomes in the project logical framework, levels of performance (and their means of assessment) using the six performance categories above (HS to U). When possible, the consultant provided recommendations for improvement of project performance in each category listed above.

### 3.4. Evaluation Users

This Mid Term Evaluation was initiated by UNDP Romania. The findings will provide the project managers (MMNP Administration, UNDP Romania Country Office, National Forest Administration (NFA) and UNDP/GEF levels) with strategy and policy options to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the

implementation of the project; in order to ensure that the project achieves on time its expected results. These findings will also provide managers and stakeholders some basis for learning and accountability.

21. The 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**

22. The findings and conclusions contained in this report rely primarily on a desk review of project documents, a field mission in the Maramures County and more than 25 interviews with project key informants. Within the given resources allocated to this terminal evaluation, the independent team of consultants conducted a detailed assessment of actual results against expected results.

23. 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**

24. 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**

25. The project seeks to strengthen Romania's national system of protected areas by demonstrating effective biodiversity conservation in Maramures Mountains Natural Park in Romania's northern Carpathian Mountains. 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 and Carpathian Convention Objectives**

26. The project is relevant to the implementation of the UNCBD in Romania. It contributes to the objectives of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and is recognized as one demonstration protected area site to pilot new approaches in setting up and managing the nature park.

27. 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. Short-term actions include: 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 extirpated from Romania; the completion of a biodiversity inventory of the primary types of ecosystems; and the realisation of various cost-benefit analyses.

28. 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. From 1998 to 2006, the GEF funded (USD 8M) project “*Biodiversity Conservation*” supported the creation of 3 park administrations in Romania. Currently, there is also a GEF proposal (under enabling environment) to support Romania in the review of its NBSAP.

29. As indicated in the table 2 below, the project objective responds well to the objectives of the Convention:

**Table 2: Relevance of the Project to the UNCBD**

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
Project Outcomes										
1. Stakeholders make Maramures Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational;	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
2. Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramures;	X				X	X		X	X	
3. Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP.	X		X		X	X				

30. As per the UNCBD web site, no specific programs have been developed so far in Romania for the involvement of local communities in the decision-making process regarding specific genetic technologies; however, an ordinance was approved which includes procedures for public consultation, allowing local communities and small farmers to express their points of view. There is also a legal procedure of notification for local communities concerning restrictive genetic techniques. Authorization of any activity with significant impact on biodiversity must be preceded by local community participation regarding the impact studies. In addition, the Council of Administration of a protected area must include representatives of the local communities.

31. Vis-à-vis the implementation of the UNCBD, the analysis in the table above indicates that the project is relevant to the convention’s implementation. The project focuses on setting-up the park and its administration and emphasizes public involvement in decision-making. However, it is not much engaged so far in biodiversity monitoring (article 7) – which will gain momentum during the second half of the project implementation, in developing incentives measures for the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity (article 11) and in research (article 12).

### ***The Carpathian Convention***

32. The project is also relevant to the implementation of the Carpathian Convention. Romania signed (May 2003) and ratified the Carpathian Convention in October 2006 (Law No. 389/2006). It entered into force in Romania on March 6, 2007 of this year. The Carpathian Convention is a framework type convention pursuing a comprehensive policy and cooperating in the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians. Designed to be an innovative instrument to ensure protection and foster sustainable development of this outstanding region and living environment, the Convention is willing to improve the quality of life, to strengthen local economies and communities. It aims as well at providing conservation and restoration of unique, rare and typical natural complexes and objects of recreational and other importance

situated in the heart of Europe, preventing them from negative anthropogenic influences through the promotion of joint policies for sustainable development among the seven countries of the region (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovak Republic and Ukraine).

33. In 2001, United Nations Environment Programme / Regional Office for Europe (UNEP/ROE) was requested by the Government of Ukraine to service a regional cooperation process aiming at the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians, a major trans-boundary mountain range shared by the seven different countries. In response to this request, UNEP/ROE promoted an Alpine-Carpathian Partnership. In 2002, during the UN International Year of the Mountains, the Alpine-Carpathian partnership has been initiated and launched by the Ministry of the Environment and Territory of Italy, at the time President of the Alpine Convention. Since then, UNEP/ROE serviced five negotiation meetings of the Carpathian countries. At the Fifth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Kyiv, May 2003), the Carpathian countries (7) adopted the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians consequently signed by all seven countries.

34. The Convention is defined in a text including 23 articles; the project contributes to the main articles as indicated in the table below:

**Table 3: Relevance of the Project to the Carpathian Convention**

Convention Relevant Articles	Project Outcomes	Stakeholders make Maramures Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational;	Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramures;	Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP.
Article 2: General objectives and principles (a) the precaution and prevention principles, (b) the 'polluter pays' principle, (c) public participation and stakeholder involvement, (d) trans-boundary cooperation, (e) integrated planning and management of land and water resources, (f) a programmatic approach, and (g) the ecosystem approach.	X			
Article 3: Integrated approach to the land resources management	X			
Article 4: Conservation & sustainable use of biological & landscape diversity	X	X	X	
Article 5: Spatial planning	X			
Article 6: Sustainable and integrated water/river basin management	X			
Article 7: Sustainable agriculture and forestry	X			X
Article 8: Sustainable transport and infrastructure				
Article 9: Sustainable tourism				X
Article 10: Industry and energy				X
Article 11: Cultural heritage and traditional knowledge	X	X		
Article 12: Environmental assessment/info. syst., monitoring & early warning				
Article 13: Awareness raising, education & public participation	X	X		

35. The project is well aligned with the objectives of this convention. As per the table above the project intervenes in most areas covered by the Convention. However, a few areas are not covered by the project such as the sustainable and integrated water/river basin management and the environmental assessment/information system, monitoring and early warning.

#### **4.1.2. Development and Environment Objectives of Romania**

36. The project is highly relevant to the development objectives of Romania and also to the environmental governance framework that is being developed by the GOR. The project aims to strengthen Romania's national system of protected areas by disseminating lessons and good practices extracted from the Maramures demonstration of an effective protected area model. It is part of the government strategies identified in the NBSAP (*see Section 4.1.1*) but also in other government strategies and plans such as:

**A National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS)** with a time horizon of 2020 was developed in 1997-1998 and was endorsed by the Government in 1999 (*Governmental Decision no. 305/15.04.1999*).

**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, 2000 (draft)]** 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.

Measures related to protected areas are also planned in the **National Strategy Plan for Rural Development 2007–2013**; which is under the responsibility of an inter-ministerial committee. This plan is to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors and its implementation is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development; which includes institutions related to the MMNP project such as the National Forestry Administration (NFA), National Agency of Mountain Area, National Administration "Romanian Water".

37. The management of the MMNP is linked to the national and local administrative institutions of the County (Maramures County in the case of MMNP); which is similar for all natural and national Parks of Romania. 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 the County Councils are elected within the members of each County Council. The central government authority responsible for relations with local governments (County and City Councils) is the Ministry of Interior and administration reform, represented locally through the offices of County Prefectures headed by a Prefect. At national level the umbrella organizations for elected local officials are the Romanian Federation of Local Authorities and the Romanian Association of Municipalities.

38. In order to understand the context in which the project is implemented, the key elements are presented below including: an overview of the management of protected areas in Romania and its institutional set-up; the land tenure status and the recent Land Restitution Law; the forest certification process implemented in Romania; and, the tourism master plan.

#### ***The protected areas in Romania***

39. The legal status of protected area 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

- Area under special protection for avifauna

40. This year, 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 in each particular protected area and the corresponding boundaries.

41. The same laws define Natura 2000 habitats. Around 90% of the Romanian protected areas are proposed to become NATURA 2000 sites; including MMNP. The list of sites proposed for NATURA 2000 was approved by the Romanian government and should be published in the near future.

42. Currently, 7% of the country's area is protected. 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***

43. Currently, 22 of the 26 national and natural parks of Romania and the Danube Delta Biosphere reserve are under the responsibility of the National Forest Administration (NFA). One other parks 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.

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 (MOA); however, the Minister of Agriculture nominates the General Manager of NFA<sup>2</sup>. This position is a performance-based position (with indicators) and he/she reports to MOA 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 (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 21.3M<sup>3</sup> of wood per year and per ha<sup>3</sup>, 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

<sup>2</sup> Until 2003 the NFA was under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment and Waters.

<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that NFA currently exploit only about 16.5M<sup>3</sup> per year, per ha (legally) plus an estimate of about 0.4M<sup>3</sup> per year, per ha illegally.



forests and under-contract-private forests. These very elaborated/detailed forest management plans are approved by the MOA 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 [Miller, 2004].

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 the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD). Each park has a scientific council to establish regulations and laws including input from the Environment Protection Agency (EPA). 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 the Ministry of Agriculture.

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 (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 [EO 195].

50. At the time of this evaluation, this Agency does not officially exist yet and the Evaluation Team could not obtain information about when it should be created. The same is true for the creation of the Foundation by NFA. Nevertheless, this potential institutional change should not impact the project and its achievements; the parks exist, most park administrations are in place and the management instruments to manage these protected areas are being strengthened. Any institutional change at the national level should not impact negatively the protected area system in place in Romania; including the MMNP.

#### ***Property/land Tenure:***

51. One of the fundamental problems of the transition of Eastern Europe societies was and still remains the question of property; particularly land property and its restitution to its original owners before the communism era – a problem that concerns an important surface of the MMNP area. The evolution of the legislation that rules the aspects related to land tenure and land restitution began in Romania in 1991 (Law 18 which was modified in 1998 by the Governmental Decision 1/23.01.1998). In 2000, the government passed a new Law (Law 1/2000 - Restitution Law) that was modified and completed by numerous Laws and Governmental Decisions (in 2001 and 2004). The last piece of legislation related to land tenure/land restitution passed by the Romanian Parliament is the Law 274/2005 that practically sanctions the principle of “restitution in integrum” for all abusive confiscations within the time period March 22, 1947 to December 1989. Clause VI of this Law refers expressly to land property over agricultural and forestry lands [Law 247/2005].

52. The evolution of legislation concerning land property was both the result of establishing a democratic society and the consequence of the pressure from the EU that imposed to the Romanian government several conditions for the EU accession; particularly the restitution of abusively confiscated properties by the communist regime.

53. Based on the evolution of the Romanian legislation related to land tenure, the restitution process happened in 3 steps: (i) in 1991 the restitution focused on the parcels of less than one ha; (ii) in 2000 the land restitution focused on the parcels of less than 10ha; and, (iii) since 2005 it concerned all parcels. Before the implementation of the last 2005 Law, there were about 850,000 private forest owners. Regardless of the positive effect of these Laws, they caused massive and uncontrolled clearings of forests over the whole Romanian territory. However, after a period of clearings, the problem seems to be under control now.

54. In the MMNP area these clearings were pronounced - especially in the Borsa area. These clearings can be explained by the fact that the economical development of the area is below national average and that the

owners saw in the new land properties an opportunity to regain important sums of money. Another cause of these clearings was the fact that the capacity of the institutions whose purpose was to control the process was not adequate at the time.

55. In order to protect the protected areas, the government of Romania set-up a compensation mechanism to reduce the level of illegal clearings while ensuring economic advantages for the private landowners who respect the status of protected areas. The compensation rules [OMA, 2006] set the stage for the compensation of forest owners who own forests in protected areas; including the MMNP. Based on the actual forest value, each owner may be entitled up to 200 euros per year and per ha of forest. Currently, it corresponds to about 6m<sup>3</sup> of construction wood that is considered low when compared to the potential of about 25m<sup>3</sup> per year per ha of forest (350-400 m<sup>3</sup> of wood capital per ha). This compensation scheme would be detailed in a contract between the government and the private owner; which would also include the fact that NFA would manage the corresponding parcel of forest and the forest owner would pay NFA about 30 euros per ha and per year for this management service (it could also be a private forest management company instead of NFA). However, so far despite the passing of the compensation rules by the government and the completion of several contracts, no compensation cash has been given yet to forest owners.

### ***Forest Certification process***

56. Since 1999, a Romanian working group developed a National Forest Certification process with the support of a WB-GEF project for biodiversity conservation; using the certification process developed by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The FSC certification system is an internationally recognized certification process, which is promoted by the Soil Association Woodmark. It is one of the two main certification processes used throughout Europe - the other one is the Pan European Forestry Certification (PEFC). Woodmark is the soil association's international forestry and chain of custody certification scheme; it is one of the most highly respected and innovative forest certification programmes. It is a programme part of Soil Association Certification Limited and it is managed by Ecosylva Limited; an environmental forestry company specializing in responsible forestry and forest product certification.

57. Despite that Romania had a certification mission this year - which raised some issues - the process is ongoing. In 2002, the certification was obtained for one park (about 31,000 ha) and in 2005 about 1M ha of forests is now certified. In the case of private forest owners they can also get their forests certified which would allow them to sell certified wood to companies such as the international furniture company IKEA that is buying only certified wood. The certification provides a good image (especially international) to the forest owners and provides an economic advantage by selling certified wood. However, the market for certified forest products is still embryonic and it is estimated that it is still too small to create strong interests among private forest owners in Romania.

58. Currently there are 6.4M ha of forest in Romania: 3.6M ha are state forests (56%); 0.8M ha are owned by local municipalities (13%); and 2Mha are private forests (31%). At the completion of the land restitution process, it is estimated that 65% of all forests will be private and only 35% will be owned by the State. It is to be noted that since the last land restitution Law (274/2005), the certification process of public forests is stopped until all land claims are settled; including the land claims in the MMNP area.

### ***Tourism Master Plan***

59. Romania developed a tourism master plan for the next twenty years (2026) including a six-year action programme for the period 2007-2013 tying the programme to the EU structural funds. It replaces a previous tourism development master plan prepared ten years ago. In order to produce this master plan, the government commissioned the United Nations World Tourism Organisation to prepare this master plan. The objective of this plan is the formulation of an overall policy framework for the sustainable development and management of the tourism industry in terms of natural and cultural resources and presented in the form of a long-term Tourism Development Master Plan covering the period 2007-2026. It is anticipated that the people of Romania will participate in the benefits from the development of the tourism sector which is intended to:

- Increase foreign exchange earnings;
- Bring the Romanian economy and society into line with that of existing EU countries
- Improvement in the quality of life;
- Increase and encourage investments in all areas of the tourism sub-sector;

- Stimulate the creation of employment;
- Stimulate development;
- Foster the enhancement and preservation of cultural heritage;
- Assist the development and conservation of the physical and natural resources of the overall country; and
- Distribute the benefits of tourism throughout all parts of Romania.

60. The master plan presents an extensive analysis of the sector – including regional data, which could be used by the MMNP to develop the local tourism strategy – covering a situation analysis, the tourism governance framework (policies, legislation and institutions), and the economic impact of tourism on the Romanian’s economy. It is followed by an identification of strategic initiatives such as rural and ecotourism; geotourism; cultural tourism; and, environment. In term of tourism potential, Maramures is recognized as one area among a group of 6 areas that should be given priority attention in the master plan. However, the action plan does not particularly focus on Maramures; no specific actions are targeted at the Maramures area. It is only through particular actions targeting rural tourism, ecotourism, geotourism and cultural tourism that Maramures could be targeted.

61. Regarding the tourism planning area, the master plan set a series of actions. The relevant actions for the project are:

- *Action 35*: NTA regional development officers to encourage and facilitate the formation of rural area destination and product marketing consortia and associations;
- *Action 36*: Complete tourism components of Regional Plans in order to provide a regional planning context and strategic guidelines to tourism development;
- *Action 37*: Prepare Local Tourism Plans. Prepare integrated tourism development plans for each of the tourism destinations identified of the Regional Tourism Plan. Provide a planning context and strategic guidelines to tourism development;
- *Action 38*: Prepare guidelines and sample documents for the preparation of Tourism zone development Standards and Guidelines. Prepare a comprehensive set of architectural guidelines and planning standards to be met in the development of tourist facilities and areas;
- *Action 40*: Administrators of protected areas to prepare sustainable tourism development plans with detailed development and implementation costs for their areas and apply for EU Structural Fund assistance;
- *Action 40*: Administrators of protected areas to include hiking trail renovation and expansion requirements in their sustainable tourism development plans;
- *Action 13, 60*: Rationalise the network of hiking trails in protected areas in order to minimise negative environmental impact. Prepare a hiking development plan encompassing: GPS mapping, digital cartography, data collection and map production; Acquisition of technical assistance; Market research; Development and implementation of a hiking marketing plan. Revise the hiking trail authorisation requirements to include all the information, GPS readings, etc. required to include new trails in the master database;
- *Action 77*: Give priority to rural and eco tourism attractions and activities as features of an increased programme of media visits to Romania.

#### **4.1.3. UNDP-GEF Objectives in Romania**

62. 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.

63. This country programme framework is based on the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Common Country Assessment (CCA). The CCA is a country-based process for reviewing and analyzing the national development situation and identifying key issues as a basis for advocacy, policy dialogue and the preparation of the UNDAF. The UNDAF is the planning framework for the development operations of the UN System at the country level and is spelt out in a UNDAF document. It consists of common objectives and strategies of cooperation, and lays the foundation for cooperation among the UN System and between it and the Government as well as other development partners; the current UNDAF document is for the same period 2005-2009. Guided by national goals and policy priorities, by global commitments made by the GOR such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and results generated by the UN common country assessment, the UNDAF for Romania 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.

64. 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

65. 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.

66. The project is in conformity with the GEF Operational Programme #4 – Mountain Ecosystems that is to establish sustainable land use practices on mountain slopes in order to protect representative habitats and strengthen the network of conservation areas in the alpine, mountain, grassland, montane forest zones and freshwater ecosystems. The project contributes to the GEF Strategic Priority #1 that is to catalyze the sustainability of the protected area system in Romania. It seeks to conserve the biodiversity through the setting up and the sustainable management of the Maramures Nature Park, which is expanding the PA system in Romania.

67. As for GEF investments in the biodiversity sector in Romania, they are made within the context of the GEF strategic framework in Romania; which is being drafted currently. The GOR already introduced on the national priority projects list 6 biodiversity projects which would fall under GEF4 and which – if approved by the GEF Secretariat - would use the total allocation of GEF investments in biodiversity in Romania under the new Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) for GEF4<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Under GEF4 biodiversity, Romania is part of the “Group” which consists of 93 countries with a group allocation of \$146.8 million. A country in the group can access up to \$3.5 million in GEF-4.

#### **4.1.4. Needs of End-Users Beneficiaries / Local Background**

68. The Maramures area has a particular historical significance for Romania dated from the time of the powerful empires (the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, etc.) that dominated Europe. The Maramures area has remained unconquered and has kept its independence throughout these times. Apart from the forest areas, the agricultural land has remained private property; even during the communist period. The parcels are small, with low productivity and without interest for the Agricultural Production Cooperatives. The individual farms have low surfaces and are normally used to fulfil the basic needs of each family; farmers practice a type of subsistence agriculture. Therefore, the pollution from agriculture in the MMNP area is low due to the limited use of fertilizers and pesticides.

69. Today, the MMNP area is socio-economically poor and people are still leaving the area to go to work in other urban centers in Romania such as Bucharest or Cluj or to Western Europe. For instance, the community of Crosma lost 2,800 people (58%) between 1982 (4,800) and 2007 (2,000). This downward trend is also seen in the agricultural activities in the area; for instance, since the revolution, the community of Bistra lost 75% of the number of sheep and goats. There is a risk that the traditional way of life disappears if no change will occur in the near future; the project objective is, therefore, highly relevant to address some of these problems by using the MMNP as a resource to develop sustainable economic activities such as ecotourism.

70. The local communities regarded the restitution of the forests as an immediate financial opportunity, especially for families who do not have other sources of income. Immediately after the first restitutions followed a period of illegal clearings, caused both by the bad economic situation of the owners as well as by the absence of legislation and the low capacity of the institutions. The Borsa area - which is partially part of the MMNP and partially part of the National Rodnei Mountains Park - is one of the most sensitive areas in Romania; a lot of illegal cuttings took place in this area.

71. After a first “wave” of illegal clearings, the situation has recently improved; however, the danger of illegal clearings still exists. Within this context, some forest owners have regarded the creation of the MMNP as a new form of limiting the use of private property. It was imperative to develop and conduct numerous dissemination activities; to fully explain the role and rules related to the existence of MMNP. The project responded immediately to address this question by conducting numerous information sessions with local communities living in the park area to explain the concept and inform that the MMNP will not take away property ownerships and rights. Additionally, the park administration team participated to all county and local council meetings from September 2005 to February 2006. Currently, local communities have a better idea about the park and they realized that it is not really affecting their local livelihoods.

72. The MMNP administration is involved in community issues and takes part to the decision making process by establishing good relations with the institutions and persons that build and implement local and regional strategies. One noted advantage at the local level is that many of the political class members are ex. high school teachers or university professors and most of them are specialists in sciences like: geography, biology, geology etc. As a result, an excellent cooperation exists between the MMNP Administration and the local political class as well as with the Teachers, Mayors and Priests who are also the major development “agents” in rural Romania.

73. The project conducted a socio-economic survey (prior to the legislation on compensation) and found that most forest owners prefer (1) to exchange their forest parcels or (2) sell them to the State - as opposed to the compensation scheme. However, the legislation is now here and the interested forest owners who did apply are still waiting for any cash compensation. This issue is viewed as the most crucial issue to be dealt with in the near future. Due to its past, there is a tradition in Romania of not trusting these kind of government promises. A move by the government on this issue would impact positively the MMNP and the project by advancing the question of private properties in the park area.

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

74. This UNDP/GEF project is a key demonstration project and is relevant to strengthen the protected area

system in Romania. It supports the NFA to set up the new Maramures Nature Park and emphasizes the participation of the local communities in the decision-making process to manage the park. In addition to this project a few other initiatives are taking place to strengthen the national protected area system; mostly through the EU structural adjustment funds.

75. 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.

76. Since its new EC membership in 2007, the Ministry of Environment & Sustainable Development (MESP) 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 includes four main areas: (i) Waste; (ii) Biodiversity, (iii) Technical Assistance (these funds are only for the Management Authority and Intermediary Bodies for SOP Management); and (iv) Water. 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. In the biodiversity area, this programme will mostly fund activities to strengthen the national protected area system; particularly the development of management plans for the protected areas for an amount of about 215M euros.

77. As it is discussed in Section 4.1.3, all UN agencies coordinate their respective programme through the UNDAF process that is based on a Common Country Assessment (CCA) conducted in Romania in 2003. The process benefited from the first CCA done in 1997-98 and was highly participative with both GOR counterparts and UN agency staff and the coordination of six working groups. This assessment identified the following key emerging issues:

- People in Romania need to be better informed about development issues, whether it is regarding HIV/AIDS, organized crime, new laws protecting their rights, immunization or environmental matters;
- People in Romania need to have better access to safe drinking water, health services, education, information, employment opportunities and to democratic government;
- Administrative capacity, infrastructure development, privatization, the legislative process, access to new technology and the reform process are all areas that need to be strengthened;
- Strengthening partnerships with governmental policy makers, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, private sector and other multilateral and bilateral donors; and
- Root causes for not implementing policy initiatives are often the same or similar in all sectors. They include limited financial resources, while capital investment is inhibited by the persistence of bureaucratic practices, reduced transparency, perceptions of corruption and legal instability.

UNDP is the main UN agency intervening in the environmental sector in Romania; which this project is part of (*see Section 4.1.3*).

78. In 2004, WWF started a project in the Maramures County (to 2009 and about \$50k per year). It is being implemented through NGOs and local communities. It seeks to maintain the mosaic landscape, to conserve the biodiversity and to increase the local livelihoods of the local communities (socio-economic development). The project intervenes in an area adjacent to MMNP covering 19,000 ha of grassland and 900ha of buffer zones and the plan is to replicate the best practices in the Rodnei Nature Park. This WWF project developed a partnership with IKEA Romania (which co-finance the project) to improve forest management practices in the area; including the promotion of the forest certification process (FSC) – which is supported by IKEA – and the integration of forest management plans in 3 pilot forest areas: 1 privately owned forest, 1 publicly owned forest and 1 mix owned forest (association form of forest owners existing since the 19th century).

79. This WWF and IKEA partnership is a cooperation programme, which began in 2002 and intervening in several East European countries (including this project in Romania). A series of projects were developed which promote responsible forest management and sustainable use of forest resources and encourage reliable certification systems (using the FSC system) that is based on extensive consultation of stakeholders. However these activities do not including actions on the demand side (wood buyers).

#### **4.1.6. Internal Design**

80. The project document/design is highly relevant to the implementation of the project; 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) and the overall design is coherent with the actual implementation of the project. The project document reflects well the intention of the key stakeholders at the concept stage and these same stakeholders are also satisfied with the implementation of the project so far.

81. This project has a long history; originally, it was conceptualized by a partnership between the local County Council and the Ecological Society of Maramures. The concept was based on a previous project funded by PHARE in the region. Many consultations were conducted with local communities and local representatives. Following the concept/idea phase, the two main partners recognized the importance of this project for the region and the critical long-term sustainability aspect for the success of the project; consequently they decided to expand the partnership to other key stakeholders – particularly government agencies to ensure this long-term sustainability. At this stage, a group of stakeholders emerged in the County – called the “*Maramures Biodiversity Consortium*” - to develop the project; including the NFA with a key leadership role. This consortium included the prefecture, county council, EPA, forestry directorate, waters authority and the ecological association of Maramures. No local municipalities were part of this consortium but 7 out of 10 local municipalities situated within the park’s boundaries supported the project proposal and supporting letters from these municipalities were included in the project document.

82. The Ecological Society of Maramures played a key role in developing the concept and the strong partnership; which still exists today. This NGO was created in 1991 and its mandate is to conserve biodiversity through environmental education. It has a core membership of about 20 members – mostly in the education sector (professors and teachers) – and an additional membership of about 80 members, representatives from the local community at large. The NGO has 3 ecological clubs in local schools and is funded through sponsorships and their own participation in projects such as this one.

83. In conclusion the project is highly relevant for Romania to strengthen its national system of protected areas. It responds very well to the development objectives of Romania and to those of UNDP and GEF in Romania. It is very relevant to the environmental governance framework in place in Romania; particularly the protected area system. The project addresses some socio-economic issues by supporting the development of sustainable economic activities such as ecotourism. The design of the project is also highly relevant for the implementation; it is strongly rooted in the work done by the Maramures Biodiversity Consortium, a representative group of Stakeholders, which started in 2000. Finally, the project meets the objectives of the UNCBD and the Carpathian Convention.

#### **4.2. Project Effectiveness**

84. Below are 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**

85. The progress of the project to achieve its expected outcomes is highly satisfactory. The objective of the project is to ensure that the biodiversity of Maramures Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model. This protected area management model is to be developed through three expected outcomes:

1. Stakeholders make Maramures Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational;
2. Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramures;
3. Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link

between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP.

86. The interviews conducted during this evaluation indicate that the project is delivering its expected results; a list of the major project achievements is provided in Annex 7. During this first half of project implementation, the activities focussed mostly on outcome 1 and 2. The project supported the creation of the MMNP, which was gazetted in November 2005. The park administration has now an operational office with adequate office equipment and a staff of 9. Seven additional rangers should be hired by December 2007 to complete the administration team of 16 officers. It has a web site to communicate information on the park.

87. The project supported the development of legislation (Law #265) to oblige any new development in the park to obtain approval from the park administration. This legislation is now enforced and any development to be approved by the County Council and EPA necessitates the approval from the MMNP Administration. The project also supported the development of regulations and guidelines for maintaining the traditional building styles in the MMNP area; which is now with the respective municipalities and other Stakeholder groups for their review.

88. The local communities and local community leaders are now more aware about the MMNP, biodiversity conservation and pollution issues; the park is now accepted locally and infractions such as illegal logging are decreasing. The river clean-up program is particularly well received and continues to attract more and more communities. Without exactly knowing, the water pollution due to sawdust decreased in the last few years in the MMNP area. However, more information sessions are still needed particularly to explain the different zones in the park, the related management regimes for each zones and the set of regulations attached to each zone. This is particularly important for local communities to understand what can be done in each zone such as alpine grazing and forest cutting.

89. In the school, the project supported the development of material related to the MMNP and its biodiversity. This educational material is now being incorporated into the material to support the curriculum of primary and secondary schools in the area as well as schools in the Rodnei National Park area.

90. The project is also supporting demonstrations to realize the real value of natural capital in the MMNP. Currently the project is supporting a study on environmental services to value the park natural assets and the ecosystem services and related markets for the MMNP. In the meantime, the project is supporting the renovation of a wagon for a steam train operation (EcoTours Ltd) and should soon support the development of an ecotourism strategy for the area. It has also supported a demonstration to use wood waste (sawdust) as energy to run a central heating system for a school. Finally, the project is also funding a demonstration project to use sawdust as biomass to make briquettes and to be used as combustible.

91. The project implementation is succeeding. The park administration is viewed as a local development partner, which should lead some sustainable development initiatives; including “pushing” ahead new initiatives such as the development of an ecotourism strategy for the area. So far the accumulated experience by the MMNP Administration and the related lessons learned are contributing to the development of an effective protected area management model; the project is on its way to succeed and the NFA expects the project to provide a management model for protected areas – particularly regarding the participative approach to include local Stakeholders in the management of these areas.

People are looking for the road to go ahead!  
*General Director, Ministry of Tourism*

92. However, despite a good success for the first two years, the remaining two years will not be without challenges. There are still forest owners who see the value of their own forests as dollars as opposed to any other values. On the management front, the team needs to develop and finalize the MMNP management plan and start the development of a monitoring system; including a set of indicators to monitor biodiversity and ecosystem conditions in the park. It will also need to develop the related management information systems and GIS to store and give access of MMNP information to the public. Finally, the project will support some demonstrations of sustainable use of the park’s natural assets such as ecotourism and certified forest products; however, the development of a marketplace to foster the knowledge, goods and services of a conservation economy (outcome 3) will not be done without challenges.



#### **4.2.2. Contribution to Capacity Development**

93. The project is clearly developing the local capacity to better manage the MMNP; it is rated as highly satisfactory. Capacity development is part of the project outcomes. Outcome 1 contributes to developing the capacity of the managers of the park as well as increasing the knowledge of the local communities living in the MMNP area. Outcome 2 focuses on removing the key barriers to conservation and local sustainable development such as improving the land-use planning process and the environmental governance. Finally outcome 3 is to develop the capacity of economic agents to improve the local livelihood practices and improve the local socio-economic development.

94. The creation of the MMNP takes place within the context of legislative and institutional changes in Romania. This situation is due to a long transition period from an over-centralized and over-controlled society to a market economy society; to the promotion of the concept of sustainable development; and, to the EU requirements related to Romania's acceptance as a full rights member of the EU. Within this context, the project clearly contributes to the clarification of missions, structures, responsibilities, accountability and reporting, changes in procedures and communications, and changes in the deployment and management of human resources.

95. It is now well recognized that capacity is an aggregate outcome of a series of conditions, intangible assets and relationships that are part of an organisation or system and that are distributed at various levels<sup>5</sup>:

- 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.

96. 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.

97. A review of the work plan that is implemented by the project indicates that numerous activities focus on strengthening the capacity of the MMNP Administration and also the MMNP Stakeholders. The project capacity development contributions go from providing equipment to the MMNP Administration to establish adequate park facilities; to conduct awareness-raising sessions in local communities to increase the knowledge about the park and the need to conserve biodiversity; to develop a participative management model for the MMNP; to strengthen the capacity of the regional planning institutions by integrating the landscape-based approach into local planning; and, to develop sustainable economic activities (demonstrations) which should improve the livelihood of the local communities, such as eco-tourism, use of wood waste as energy and promote the certification of forests.

#### ***Note on the capacity of MMNP Administration***

98. The project management team is made up of a high quality team of professionals (*see Section 4.3.2*). The project activities strengthened their capacity through the various trainings organized during the initial implementation period of the project as well as through the method of "learning by doing". However, as a small government organisation, the Evaluation Team noted a few capacity gaps within the MMNP Administration:

- There is an overall distribution of responsibilities among the Administration staff. However this distribution seems to be done more on an informal basis. Despite that some TORs exist for all project staff, the Administration does not seem to have job description for each of the 16 positions;
- There is no defined system of performance targets in place;

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<sup>5</sup> 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/>).

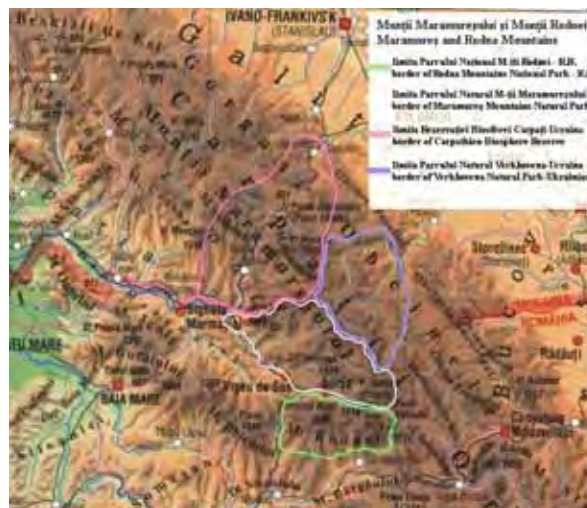
- There are limited career development paths for the Administration staff. However, there are promotion opportunities such as the current Director of the Protected areas and Biodiversity Department within the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development who was the Director of a National Park before holding this position.

#### 4.2.3. Unexpected Project Achievements

99. In addition to the project achievements in line with the expected project outcomes as defined in the project document, this project is also contributing to an unexpected project achievement that is the preparation for the creation of a Trans-boundary Biosphere Reserve (BR) recognized by the UNESCO-MAB network. It is not a complete new concept for the local partners. It was briefly mentioned in the project document in the “Section B: Country Ownership” of the MSP brief as “..... *the Maramures Consortium signed a cooperative agreement in June 2003 with its counterpart consortium in Ukraine, to work for the establishment of a Trans-boundary Ukrainian-Romanian Biosphere Reserve in Maramures and Verkhovyna. This project supports this Romanian initiative*”. However, despite this short statement, no activities of this project were planned to support this initiative.

100. Nevertheless, the process seems to go ahead and one of the key persons on the Romanian side is the MMNP Director who is also the Project Manager. Now that MMNP is created and has an Administration and resources to manage the park, the interest is growing including on the Ukrainian side. The project is not directly supporting this initiative but through its achievements, it positions and prepares the MMNP for this initiative. The evaluation team found that this concept has a lot of support and interest among the MMNP stakeholders; including the WWF that is also active in promoting this initiative with its partners.

101. The concept is to create one trans-boundary BR encompassing the MMNP and the Rodnei National Park on the Romanian side and the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve and the Verkhovena Natural Park on the Ukrainian side (see map). The Carpathian BR in Ukraine is already a recognized UNESCO-MAB BR since 1992. In 1998, for the first time in Ukraine, the European Diploma of the Council of Europe was awarded to the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve. This biosphere reserve is a member of the international organisation Association of the Carpathian National Parks and Reserves. This BR has very similar objectives than the MMNP; it seeks to manage main nature conservation problems such as renewal of the disturbed ecosystems to their natural state, regulation of cattle grazing with the aim of biodiversity conservation of mountain meadows, illegal cuttings and poaching. Another main task of this BR is the preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of sustainable development in the region.



102. In June 2007, a group of local leaders (including the MMNP Administration Director/Project Manager) met to discuss the concept. This meeting was held in Viseu de Sus and the 6 participants signed a letter of intent at the end of the meeting; the participants were: MMNP Administration, CBR (Ukraine BR), Romanian Academy/Commission of Nature Monument, City Hall of Viseu, City Hall of Rakif and Ukrainian Union in Romania.

103. The initiative will not go away and seems to even gain momentum in some quarters of the Romanian Government. Due to its central role in strengthening the set-up of the MMNP, the project has a role to play in supporting more pro-actively this initiative. However, the process of moving to this large trans-boundary biosphere reserve should be carefully approached and appropriately timed. There is a risk that the creation of this BR would produce another “shock” to the local communities; the idea is good but the preparation and the timing are critical.

#### **4.2.4. Risk and Risk Mitigation Management**

104. The management of risks and their mitigation measures is rated as satisfactory. Despite that the project document does not provide a specific review of the risks and their correlated mitigation measures attached to the implementation of the project, some assumptions and risks were identified in the Maramures Logical Framework presented as Annex 1 of the MSP brief; they include:

**Outcome 1:**

- NFA will be able to work effectively with the Consortium.
- Promised budgetary resources will actually materialize.
- NFA could become more risk averse and reduce its support for different approaches.
- This outcome is largely achievable with existing institutions and with some increase of financial resources and personnel from the NFA;

**Outcome 2:**

- Local administrations maintain their level of interest in participating.

**Outcome 3:**

- Overcoming barriers (knowledge, financial, “proof of concept”) will catalyze the self – sustaining adoption of conservation economy ideas and practices, the accessing of new markets for conservation-economy based development, and new protected area management approaches.

105. Subsequently, the project risks were reviewed and updated once a year in the Atlas system of UNDP. In the latest PIR report (June 2007), an updated list of 5 project risks with management responses is presented (*see Annex 8*); they are:

- The NFA cannot reimburse the park administration with the 2005 VAT
- US\$/RON exchange rate loss of about 4,5%, representing around 6,000 US\$
- The approval process of the Scientific and Advisory Council of the park is delayed by the Ministry of Environment and Water Management
- The restructuring of the protected area system in Romania
- Land restitution in Romania could significantly hamper and/or delay forest certification efforts and offers new challenges for Maramures Park management planning

106. Among this list of 5 risks, only the last one above is estimated as critical by the project management team; due to the new legislation on land restitution - which should see the restitution of additional forest parcels from the MMNP to private owners. However, despite being a risk for the project due to the potential for more forest clear-cuttings and to hamper progress on the certification process in the area, the evaluation team does not see this risk as critical for the implementation of the project. It is a manageable risk that is requesting the project management team to use an adaptive management approach going forward.

107. In conclusion the project effectiveness is highly satisfactory. It is effective in achieving its expected outcomes that is to develop and test an effective protected area management model for these parks. Capacity development is “embedded” into the design of the project and the project risks are managed adequately. During the first 2 years, the project focused on expected outcome 1 & 2. The MMNP is now set-up officially and has a qualified staff. The project supported awareness raising activities in local communities – including in schools – and supported a few demonstrations to transform sawdust in briquettes with a private operator and use these briquettes as heating energy in a school. The MMNP is now recognized as a full development partner and it is expected that the Administration should lead the development in the MMNP area. The second phase of the project will be challenging but the project has now the “clout” to forge ahead with the development of management instruments for the parks (management plan and monitoring system) and the development of sustainable use of the park’s natural assets such as ecotourism.

### **4.3. Project Efficiency**

#### **4.3.1. Project Management Approach and Tools / Adaptive Management**

108. Since the launch of the project in July 2005, it is well managed and the management team uses the adaptive management approach adequately to secure project outcomes while maintaining adherence to the overall project design; it is rated as highly satisfactory. The log-frame is one of the main management tools

to guide the implementation of the project; it is also used as a reminder of what the project seeks to achieve. The project team uses adaptive management to constantly adapt to changes; which are particularly numerous in Romania since the revolution (change of political system and EU integration). However, despite these adaptations, the project is still very much in line with the objective and outcomes identified in the log-frame at the design stage.

109. Few changes to the design occurred since the launch of the project. The main one was a one-year extension, which was recommended during the summer of 2006; following the first year of implementation. The main reason was the start-up phase – team hiring, procurement and office set-up - which took longer than expected. The project is now planned to end in June 2009.

110. The only other significant set of changes concerned the strengthening of the set of performance indicators. A first set of indicators was identified in the project document. These indicators were reviewed during the inception phase and again reviewed during the first annual progress-reporting task. The final set of performance indicators includes fewer indicators and more impact oriented (*see also Section 4.3.8*).

111. Other changes at the activity level took place during the inception phase. However, these changes are not modifying the overall project implementation strategy and are more operational changes reflecting a good use of adaptive management to adapt the implementation of the project to the current operational environment in Romania and in the region. For instance, the activity #4 under output 1.4 was changed. Instead of purchasing, as planned, satellite imagery for the Park, the project team secured this imagery from the Ministry of Environment and Water Management, therefore, increasing project co-funding and freeing up project resources to be spent on additional capacity building, training and infrastructure for the employees of the MMNP to facilitate better survey work and eco-tourism management.

112. The project is implemented using a Results-Based-Management (RBM) approach. The project document and the log-frame presents a set of expected results, the project management team implements the project on the basis of results to be achieved and the annual progress reports report the project progress toward the achievements of the expected results.

113. The project document presents an ambitious project. So far its implementation goes well and all indicators are showing the feasibility to achieve the expected results. The project management team works with annual work plans and annual reviews to assess the implementation progress toward the achievement of the expected results. Despite this ambition, there is no scheduling and/or sequencing issues to be raised. From a management perspective, the current project management team will pursue the delivery of the project and it should achieve its ambitious objective.

#### **4.3.2. Financial Planning and Management**

114. 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 with signature authority given to the Director and the Chief Accountant.

115. The accounting and financial system used for the project is the UN ATLAS system and 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 using the instalments and what is spent directly by UNDP-CO.

116. The project financial cycle starts with the approval of annual work plans (AWP), then a request of the first annual instalment of about 50% of the AWP budget and finally the replenishment is done on an ad-hoc basis on the basis of an accepted financial report justifying expenditures paid with cash from the previous instalment(s). The exchange rate management is done by UNDP-CO.

117. The project management team uses the financial and procurement procedures from the GOR and the

NFA in particular; which are known to be stricter than UNDP rules and procedures. The fiscal years for both UNDP-Romania and GOR are calendar years.

118. Based on the information received by the evaluation team, as of the end of June 2007 it is estimated that USD 510,000 was spent from the UNDP-GEF budget of USD 975,000; it represents a total spent of 52% of the budget versus 50% (24 out of 48 months) of the total duration of the project.

**Table 4: UNDP/GEF Fund Disbursement Status**

Item	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007(*)	Total
UNDP/GEF	159,099	245,914	104,987	510,000

(\*) Estimate to end of June 2007

119. The official UNDP financial reports (ATLAS combined delivery reports per activity) signed by the Project Manager, UNDP Resident Representative and NFA Project Director, indicates that so far expenditures are mostly for Outcome 1 as opposed to Outcome 2 & 3. This is logical since outcome 1 represents 57% of the UNDP/GEF budget and it is also the outcome to be implemented in the initial phase of the project – project expenditures are to support the MMNP Administration to become fully operational as a Park Administration. Outcome 2 (10% of the budget) and specially outcome 3 (30% of the budget) will be the focus on the next two years of implementation.

**Table 5: UNDP/GEF Budget per Outcome**

Item	Budget	%
Outcome 1	553,000	57
Outcome 2	100,000	10
Outcome 3	290,000	30
Project Mgmt	32,000	3
Total	975,000	100

120. External auditors audit the project annually. The last audit covered the year 2006 (Jan. to Dec.) and beside minor accounting adjustments regarding the management of the exchange rate, the auditor's report stated that the financial schedules of the project presented fairly the expenditures incurred by the project for the corresponding period as well as the cash balance and the inventory balance. It also said that these schedules are in accordance with UNDP accounting instructions.

#### **4.3.3. Fund Leveraging / Co-financing**

121. The capacity of the project to leverage funds to co-finance project activities is rated as satisfactory. At the design phase, the potential for leveraging funds on this project was estimated at about US\$1,331,100. Since the launch of the project an additional US\$160,000 were found for a total co-financing of US\$1,491,000. It is reported in the PIR 2007 that US\$820,000 were disbursed as co-financing; that is about 55% of the planned co-financing budget vs. 50% (24 out of 48 months) of the total duration of the project. Details about the co-financing of project activities is presented in the table below:

**Table 6: Co-financing from Project Partners**

Partner	Initial Budget (US\$)	Additional co-financing	Actual(*) (US\$)
NFA	1,012,000	40,000	650,000
Local Administration	173,500	10,000	10,000
Pro-Visue and Ecological Society of Maramures	95,600		50,000
UNDP TRAC	50,000		0
UNDP Trust Fund	0	110,000	110,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,331,100</b>	<b>160,000</b>	<b>820,000</b>

(\*) As of the end of June 2007.

122. A large proportion of this co-financing plan is from the NFA (71%); which is the implementing agency of the project. Their contribution is a mix of cash and in-kind through the financing of the project management team (who is also the Park Director and the Park Chief Accountant). The table indicates that 62% of the NFA co-financing budget has been disbursed so far.

123. An additional US\$110k was found through the UNDP-CO energy efficiency trust fund project. An agreement was found for this trust fund to support the use of wood waste as energy in a demonstration project to produce briquettes from sawdust (under output 3.2) and use these briquettes in a school; given 1,600 children a better environment to study in winter and a cost saving on firewood of about 37%. This project - with a relatively small budget - had a large impact on the image of the MMNP project. The local press publicized this project in the local media strengthening the trust between the local communities and the MMNP Administration. It is a good model to demonstrate how small amounts of money can have multiple impacts at various levels: social, economic and environmental.

124. Despite good co-financing numbers it is noted the low actual figures from the local administration; it represents only 5% of the pledged amount at the design stage.

#### **4.3.4. Quality of Technical Assistance / Use of National Capacity**

125. The project is implemented by a high quality team of professionals; the technical assistance used on the project, including the use of national capacity is rated as highly satisfactory. The core project management team was hired at the beginning of the project in 2005 and administratively there are staffs of NFA with NFA employment contract, appointed to the MMNP in Viseul de Sus and paid by NFA. The UNDP/GEF funds are used to finance additional short-term consultants intervening on the project. The project uses a mix of international and national staff to bring the necessary mix of skills and knowledge needed to implement the project and also to develop the capacity of national staff over time.

126. Overall, the staff is highly motivated and is dedicated to the project, going often beyond the call of duty. Moreover, the project manager/Park Director developed excellent working relationships with the project Stakeholders; including key government representatives such as the Prefects and the President of the County Council, a clear sign of mutual respect and collaboration in Romania. He has instant access (mobile phone) to all key stakeholders in the region; a great advantage for a Manager to coordinate participatory processes and succeed in implementing this type of project emphasizing capacity development. Moreover, all project partners recognize the competence of the team. For instance, during the evaluation mission in Baia Mare, floods took place in the area, which could have affected the most sensitive areas of MMNP. The project team was asked by the Prefect to offer specialized assistance and guidance in the decision making process for remedial actions.

127. A very important aspect of the project management team (3 people based in Viseul de Sus) is that, in fact, it cumulates two functions: it constitutes the project implementation team to carry out project activities

and it is also the MMNP Administration staff carrying out the management functions of the park. This particular set-up is extremely valuable for the long-term sustainability of the project. Once the project will end, the staff will be in place to carry-on with the management of the park using their skills and knowledge, which were strengthened through project activities. Despite that this set-up may have some constraints in the short term such as salary differences between public servants and project staff and other short-term benefits attached to projects funded by external donors, the overall assessment of this set-up is that it will contribute greatly to the long-term sustainability of the project achievements; particularly if the staff turnover stays low after the project end.

128. The hiring of the MMNP staff started with the launch of the project (2005), through a hiring panel on which UNDP was an observer. Currently, the administration has a staff of 9 and they should be 16 by the end of 2007. The structure of the administration staff is as follows:

- 1 park director (who is also the project manager)
- 1 park chief accountant (who is also the project financial and administration assistant)
- 1 outreach community officer (who is also the project's procurement officer)
- 1 IT specialist
- 1 biologist
- 1 chief ranger
- 10 rangers (currently only 3 positions are filled, 7 more rangers should be hired before the end of 2007)

129. At the beginning of the project, the two structures (project and Park Administration) had very similar agendas. From both point of views, the project management team/management team of the Park was mandated to set-up the park, conduct numerous information sessions with local communities to explain the park, its constraints but also its opportunities and to start the development of the management plan for the Park. In other words, the project agenda of the first two years of the project were more or less the MMNP Administration's agenda. However, this situation will change over the coming two years. The Park Administration team should be completely hired by the end of 2007 and the MMNP Administration agenda is growing and includes now activities, which are not part of the project. The emerging set of activities to be carried-out by the Park Administration is as follows:

1. Develop the management plan (MP) for MMNP: collect data including the collect of primary data conducted by a team of 10 experts and funded by the project.
2. Mark the park boundaries and zoning including the review of the internal zoning, which is currently supported by the project
3. Conduct awareness raising and environmental education activities supported by the project
4. Administer permits and approvals including the coordination of the review and approval by the scientific council of MMNP (activity with no direct support form the project)
5. Promote alternative economic activities for the sustainable livelihood of local communities; which is supported by the project through the study on environmental services and the support for the development of an ecotourism strategy for the area
6. Ensure compliance with and enforce the Park legislation.

130. This list of activities indicates that more and more functions will be performed by the Administration; which will fall clearly in the mandate of the management of the Park but which are not parts of the expected outcomes of the project. Therefore, the project agenda will become more and more a sub-set agenda of the MMNP Administration agenda. It will require more planning and coordination from the Park Director to address both management requirements from NFA and from UNDP and will require both NFA and UNDP to accept this duality of work plans for a similar goal that is to strengthen Romania's national system of protected areas by disseminating lessons and good practices extracted from the Maramures demonstration of an effective protected area model.

#### **4.3.5. Project Delivery Mechanisms / Partnerships**

131. The project delivery mechanisms are highly satisfactory. There are well defined in the project document and these same mechanisms were implemented 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 implementing agency in Romania is the NFA and the day-to-day project management and implementation tasks is 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. From a project point of view, roles and responsibilities are also well defined. Each organisation involved in project implementation has a well-defined role and responsibilities.

132. In addition to clear delivery mechanisms, the project developed a good collaboration with local NGOs, with NFA and the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development. In return the project benefits from several champions leading project activities in their respective areas, such as the President of the County Council who lead most development processes in the County including the development of the MMNP and the Prefect who, as the central government representative, is a strong supporter of the MMNP and the project; including the development of sustainable economic activities such as eco-tourism. There are also community champions such as the owners/operators of the steam train operations in Viseu de Sus who are leading the development of eco-tourism in their area and the mayor of Bistra who, as a Teacher by Profession, is leading awareness-raising activities within his community. The project benefits also from the support of the consortium who designed the project (ownership) and who are playing a role of champions in their respective constituencies (*see more in Section 4.3.6*).

133. Additionally, what makes the project delivery mechanisms excellent is the project implementation team set-up. Instead of having a traditional project management unit (PMU), the project partners were able to set-up a unique project management organisation. As described in Section 4.3.3, the project management team cumulates two functions: the implementation of the project and the management of the MMNP. This project set-up positioned the project within the NFA process to manage the MMNP. It is also extremely valuable for the long-term sustainability of the project; once the project will end, the staff will be in place to carry-on with the management of the park using their skills and knowledge, which were strengthened through project activities.

134. As per the project document, the project has a Project Oversight Committee (POC) chaired by the NFA. The membership includes also the project consortium members (6) and UNDP-CO. It meets twice a year to review what was done in the past six months and what will happen in the next semester.

#### **4.3.6. Roles, Capacity and Efficiency of UNDP-CO**

135. As the implementing agency of the project, the efficiency of the UNDP-CO is rated as highly satisfactory. It provides project management support to the project management team including financial management and overseeing of expenditures to ensure proper use of GEF resources, project evaluation, reporting and results-based project monitoring; provides an efficient access to project resources; including support for applying the required UNDP procedures such as procurement. Despite high staff turnover (the current UNDP Officer in charge of this project is the third Officer at UNDP-CO to be responsible for this project since July 2005), the project implementation was not affected and the management support to the project was sustained through the different Officers. UNDP's comparative advantage in delivering technical assistance in addressing environmental issues, proven track record in securing environmental financing and access to all key stakeholders are key factors contributing to an effective project management support.

136. Moreover, the stakeholders in the County view the UNDP-CO as a very good partner and most of them developed excellent relationships with the UNDP Officers.

#### **4.3.7. Country Ownership / Stakeholder Participation**

137. The country ownership of the project and the participation of Stakeholders are highly satisfactory. The MMNP project is part of the existing protected area system in Romania; MMNP is one park out of 22 parks that are managed by NFA through park administration. The government commitment through the NFA is strong as indicated by the committed amount of co-financing and the set-up of a park administration with a staff of 9 currently and 17 planned by end of 2007. At the MMNP level, the engagement of Stakeholders is



high and the park uses a strong participative management approach.

138. The day-to-day management of the MMNP is done through the park administration staff, headed by a Director who is also the project Manager. The MMNP has two overseeing bodies - a Scientific Council and a Consultative Council – the memberships for both Councils are proposed by the MMNP Administration to the MESD and the decision for the nomination of members is confirmed through a Ministry Order from this same ministry. In the case of the Scientific Council, the membership proposal is first sent to the Romanian Academy (Commission for Monuments of Nature) before it is sent to MESD. The park Director reports to NFA and to the Scientific Council of the MMNP.

139. The Scientific Council has 13 members and is chaired by the representative from the Ecological Association of Maramures who is also a regular member of the Consulting Committee. The membership is made up of experts/specialists in scientific fields such as biology, environment, architecture, geology, forestry, ecology, etc. The role of the Scientific Council is to approve all actions, which may have a significant potential impact on the park such as environmental impact or architectural impact. It also approves all strategies and plans; including the park management plan. In particular, the Scientific Council approves the environmental impact assessments coordinated by the park administration.

140. The Consultative Committee is a larger inclusive body of Stakeholders with 54 members; including stakeholders such as the Prefecture, the County Council and EPA. Its role is to review and endorse the management plan for MMNP and review other park management matters; this Council has a consultative role which, through a large membership representing the society at large, offer the MMNP Administration the possibility for broad consultations on various topics related to the management and the conservation of the park.

141. In addition to the formal inclusive participation of Stakeholders in the management of MMNP, there is primarily a core group of Stakeholders which are regrouped into the Maramures Biodiversity Consortium and which are the “*champions*” of MMNP. This is a group of concerned citizens representing a cross section of civil society in the Maramures region and which started in 2000; including the signature of a collaborative management agreement. This consortium came together to conserve the biological diversity and ecosystem integrity of the Maramures Mountains. They contributed greatly to the design of this project seeking to strengthen the resource-use planning and environmental governance in this rural area of northern Romania. The consortium includes 6 members: Prefecture, County Council, Forest Directorate, EPA, Waters Management Services and Ecological Society of Maramures. Note that it does not include any municipalities from the MMNP area; however, 7 of the 10 municipalities situated within the MMNP area sent supporting letters with the project document, which were submitted to GEF for funding.

142. Considering the strong involvement of Stakeholders through the supervision bodies and the fact that the project management team is the permanent staff from the MMNP Administration, there is no question that this project is “owned” by Romania and the local Stakeholders. This ownership will be positively reflected in the long-term impact of the project and also its long-term sustainability.

#### **4.3.8. Monitoring Approach and Progress Reporting**

143. The monitoring of the project and the progress reporting is rated as highly satisfactory. It 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). The project document has a monitoring and evaluation plan (section 6) detailing the monitoring process during project implementation; including the roles and responsibilities of the Project Manager and the UNDP-CO. The project is well monitored and once a year a full review is done including a review of the progress (indicators), a review of the implementation, the risks and the finances. The monitoring function includes mainly several management reports, a set of indicators and the tracking tool for GEF biodiversity projects. There are discussed below.

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

*An Inception report* was produced at the end of the inception phase (August 2005) to summarize the project start-up phase, review the key issues and some related recommendations, detailed the

project work plan for the first year (July 2005 to June 2006) and presents the terms of reference for the key short-term expert positions as well as the revised logical framework (change of indicators – see below) and a budget presentation per year for the total duration of the project.

**Annual Work Plans (AWP)** are produced once a year with the corresponding budget for the year. 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.

Once a year, the project management team in collaboration with UNDP-CO are producing **Project Implementation Review (PIR) reports** (so far 2 PIRs). 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.

145. Project progress is measured with a set of indicators, which was identified during the design phase and review at the inception and after the first year of implementation. Following these reviews, the final set of performance indicators includes fewer indicators, which are more impact oriented. The current list is made up of 16 indicators as follows:

1. # ha under strict conservation management;
2. # ha under improved PA management;
3. Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) score;
4. Indicator species maintained at the baseline level:
  - Ursus arctus (bear)
  - Canis lupus(wolf)
  - Tetrao urogalus (grouse/caper kelly)
  - Pinus mugo (mountain pine)
5. Number of staff on NFA payroll for MMNP;
6. MMNP achieves national PA designation, is gazetted and boundaries clearly marked on maps and on the ground;
7. NFA fully funds MMNP staff costs and partial operating costs during project;
8. # of PA that have utilized training modules developed by Maramures team & international/national consultants during the implementation of the project;
9. New joint development review mechanism involving County Council and MMNP meeting quarterly;
10. Conservation and architectural guidelines are/are not incorporated into development review process;
11. Reduced volume of sawdust in Vaser, Ruscova and Viseu River riparian zones;
12. Park Admin’s approval required for any land-use change outside urban area inside MMNP;
13. Hectares of certified forest with biodiversity criteria incorporated;
14. Volume of wood waste consumed annually by biomass boilers in municipal heating demonstrations;
15. # of eco-tourists visiting the Park/yr grows steadily through the project period;
16. Total economic value of MMNP ecosystem services estimated, taught to other PA managers and recognized by local authorities.

146. A Review of these indicators indicates the following:

- Outcome 1 is to support the preparation of a Management Plan (MP) and also to develop management instruments for the Administration such as a biodiversity/ecosystem baseline, a monitoring system and a GIS. There is also the support to develop a landscape biodiversity conservation plan (output 2.2). Finally, all these instruments should produce information, which should be integrated into the management plan of the MMNP. One indicator should measure the progress in this area such as “*A Management Plan in place integrating a biodiversity baseline and*

monitoring system as well as spatial information (GIS) and responding to the NFA MP guidelines with adequate capacity at the MMNP Administration”;

- The list above does not include any indicator to measure awareness level of local communities living in the park. It is recommended to add one such as “Local communities understand better the MMNP and started to conserve and use it sustainably”;
- Indicator #8 measures the replication of the training modules only. Considering that replication is one critical success factor of this project (it is implicitly written in the goal statement), it is recommended to modify the indicator #8 to encompass all replication activities; such as “Number of project achievements that are replicated in other protected areas in Romania and abroad”.

147. The project uses also the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) developed by the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). This tracking tool is used by the GEF to monitor progress towards improving management effectiveness for protected areas<sup>6</sup>. The METT aims to report progress on management effectiveness of protected areas and does not replace more thorough methods of assessment for the purposes of adaptive management. The tracking tool has been developed to provide a quick overview of progress in improving the effectiveness of management in individual protected areas. It is a tool providing assessment information to protected area managers on the management steps for a protected area. It focuses mostly at the output level of a project and is limited in providing an assessment of the achievement of project outcomes.

148. The METT includes a list of 30 indicators, which are given a score by the project management team at the beginning of a project, at the mid-term point and finally at the end. Once available, it is sent to UNDP and GEF. With a maximum score for each indicator of 3, the maximum total score of the tracking tool is 96 points (includes a few additional points for others). Comparing the score between each interval indicates the progress made for a more effective management of the protected area. This total score is also one indicator in the list of indicators to measure project progress.

149. In 2005 (project inception) the total score for the project was 19 points (out of a maximum of 96) and in 2007, the total score was 56. The management team set a target score of only 28 at the end of the project. However it is recommended to review the monitoring tool and set a new target at the end of the project. Below is presented the indicators with a score equals to 1 or 0 in the 2007 METT report:

**Table 7: List of METT Indicators with a Low Score**

Indicator	Max. Score	Inception	2007
7. Management plan: Is there a management plan and is it being implemented?	3	0	1
9. Resource inventory: Do you have enough information to manage the area?	3	0	1
24. Visitor facilities: Are visitor facilities (for tourists, pilgrims etc) good enough?	3	0	1
25. Commercial tourism: Do commercial tour operators contribute to protected area management?	3	0	1
26. Fees: If fees (tourism, fines) are applied, do they help protected area management?	3	0	0
28. Access assessment: Are the available management mechanisms working to control access or use?	3	0	1
29. Economic benefit assessment: Is the protected area providing economic benefits to local communities?	3	1	1
30. Monitoring and evaluation	3	0	1

150. It is interesting to note that the weakest indicators are areas in which the project is/will support the MMNP. A notable improvement can be seen between project inception and June 2007 and this trend should continue in the next two years. The MMNP Administration is preparing its management plan, is currently

<sup>6</sup> GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One: “Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Areas”.

building a shelter facility in the park and the project will focus a lot more on economic benefits during the second part of the project through ecotourism and forest certification. All project activities have been strengthening the management of the MMNP and should contribute to a better METT score at project end.

151. In conclusion, the project efficiency is highly satisfactory. It is well managed and the resources are utilized efficiently. It uses adaptive management extensively to secure project outcomes while maintaining adherence to the overall project design; this is especially important in the context of Romania that is going through numerous changes since the revolution. The log-frame is one of the main management tools used to guide the implementation of the project. The project disbursements are in line with the implementation – including the co-financing - and the finances are adequately managed by the UNDP-Atlas system. The project follows UNDP/GEF procedures as well as NFA procedures. A high quality team of professionals that is motivated and dedicated to the project manages the project. An important aspect of the project team is that it is not a typical project staff hired only for the duration of the project. The three project staffs are also the Park Director, the Chief Accountant and the Community Outreach/Procurement Officer of the MMNP Administration; they cumulate the two functions. This set-up is extremely valuable for the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. The strong involvement of Stakeholders ensures an excellent project ownership; which will also contribute to the long-term sustainability of project achievements. Finally the project is well monitored using a set of impact oriented performance indicators. The project management team is also using the METT, which indicates a strong gain between the assessment at inception and the mid-term assessment done in June 2007.

#### **4.4. Project Impacts**

152. 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***

153. The potential for the project to achieve its long-term goal and objective exists; it is rated as satisfactory. The project goal is to strengthen Romania's national system of protected areas by disseminating lessons and good practices extracted from the Maramures demonstration of an effective protected area model. Its objective is to ensure that the biodiversity of Maramures Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model. It is early to assess the long-term impact(s) of this project but the project implementation is on target to achieve its outcomes (*see Section and 4.2.1*), which should lead to the expected positive impact of conserving the biodiversity in the MMNP and strengthening the Romania's protected area system through replication of the lessons learned.

154. So far, the project support focus on the establishment of the MMNP Administration, raising the environmental awareness in the surrounding communities, passing new legislation to ensure that all new development in the park area are approved by the MMNP Administration, developing regulations and guidelines for maintaining traditional building styles in the park and demonstrating the use of wood waste (sawdust) as energy to produce heat in a school. Ongoing activities include a biodiversity baseline to gather biodiversity data and also to review the management zones within the park and a study on environmental services to value the park natural assets and the ecosystem services and related markets for the MMNP.

155. The project is on its way to deliver its expected results; however, to achieve its long-term impact and ensure that an effective protected area management model is developed, there are much more to do. The second phase of the project should focus on equipping the MMNP Administration with the necessary management instruments to manage the park such as a management plan and a monitoring system including a set of indicators to monitor biodiversity and ecosystem conditions in the park. The project will also continue to support the development of capacities to carrying-out these management functions; including good management information systems and GIS to store and produce necessary information for good decision-making. Additionally, the project will support some demonstrations of sustainable use of the park's natural assets such as ecotourism. The project had already a good first half implementation and everything leads to believe that it will continue during the second phase. There will be challenges but the skills and

knowledge of the MMNP Administration management team and the strong partnerships with key Stakeholders should contribute to the continued success of the project.

156. The long-term impact will also depend on the government of Romania and its policies; particularly those related to the protected areas and to the compensation scheme for forest owners. Over the last few years, the legislation and institutional development in Romania has been reflecting a real preoccupation for a sustainable and coherent policy in the field of PA. However, there are gaps in implementing some of these decisions. There is also some uncertainty around the institutional aspects for the protected areas; NFA is planning to set-up a foundation to regroup all protected areas under and the Ordinance of Emergency #19/52005 created a National Agency for Protected Areas and Conservation of Biodiversity under the MESD. As for the forest owners, the policy is in place for compensating the forest owners who want to be compensated instead of exchanging or selling their parcel of forest; however no cash has been disbursed so far and the future development in this particular area will affect the forest area of the park one way or the other.

#### **4.4.2. Potential to Achieve Global Environmental Benefits**

157. This UNDP/GEF funded project does contribute to global environmental benefits; it is rated as highly satisfactory. By supporting the establishment of the MMNP Administration, the project contributes to global environmental benefits by establishing an effective protection regime for the MMNP. This contribution is done through the support for the integration of a landscape-scale conservation approach into the management of the park, the development of land-use and resource management planning capacity, the removal of barriers for an effective management of this protected area and finally through the promotion of a conservation economy with the valuation of the park natural assets and the total value of ecosystem services and related markets for the MMNP.

158. The Carpathians are internationally recognized for their biodiversity and conservation values. WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) has included the Carpathian Mountains as one of the world's key Palaearctic mountain eco-regions in the list of Global 200 eco-regions representing the world's most outstanding areas requiring targeted conservation efforts. The Carpathian Mountains are also the largest mountain range in Europe and constitute an important ecological north-south forested corridor for dispersal of flora and fauna across the Central Europe. Even large mammal species like wolf and brown bear use the corridor to migrate and repopulate unoccupied territories. Romania encompasses about 55% of the Carpathian mountain range making Romania the most important single country for the protection of the Carpathian mountain range.

159. Among the 1000-recorded vascular plants, more than 90 species are endemic and 101 are included in the Red List of Romania (93 are rare, 7 vulnerable and one is endangered). Some of the rare species are legally protected in Romania as 'natural monuments'. The fish fauna is diverse with 26-recorded species, 15 of which are listed under the Bern Convention and several are listed as endangered in the IUCN Red data Book. The avifauna is very rich with 141 recorded species, 140 of which are listed under the Bern Convention (85 are strictly protected and listed on Annex II and 55 protected - Annex III), 49 species under the Bonn Convention with the rare white tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), 54 under the EC Bird Directive and 44 listed under the Agreement on the Conservation of Africa-Eurasian migratory Water-birds (AEWA). Finally, with 44 species, the mammal fauna is extremely rich with large populations of brown bear (at least 66 individuals recorded in a recent one-off survey in project site, whereas the estimated Romanian population is 5500 specimens), wolf (40 recorded in project site, and total population in Romanian Carpathians estimated at 3000) and lynx (estimated 1500 in Romania, 18 recorded in project site).

160. This rich biodiversity is menaced by a series of threats such as habitat fragmentation due to poor private forest management practices; aquatic habitat degradation due mostly to sawdust that are deposited along the riverbanks; direct exploitation of wildlife and non-timber-forest-product through hunting and collecting; and, uncontrolled tourism that is growing without the necessary institutional and physical infrastructure.

161. The project contributes also to the possibility for the MMNP to become part of a trans-boundary biosphere reserve. The park's area is an important trans-boundary bridge to two parks in Ukraine: the

Carpathians Biosphere Reserve of the Transcarpathian region and the Natural Park of Verkhovyna. Both border MMNP, which would link them to Rodnei Mountain National Park in Romania. The creation of this BR would strengthen the biodiversity protection of this region by “merging” the management of currently four distinct protected areas (see Section 4.2.3).

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

162. There is a high potential for the project to impact positively on the local environment and particularly on poverty and other socio-economic issues; it is rated as satisfactory. One outcome out of three focuses mostly on income generation: “*Stakeholders Recognize and Begin to Realize Real Value in Natural Capital, Strengthening the Link Between Sustainable Use and Conservation within MMNP*”. Under this outcome the project is seeking to:

- Create a marketplace to foster the knowledge, goods, and services of a conservation economy
- Conduct demonstrations reusing wood waste (sawdust) for the production of energy for school or hospital.
- Undertake ecotourism demonstration(s) to introduce the socio-economic potential
- Support the forest certification process and marketing demonstrations to develop distribution channels for certified forest products

163. Currently, the project is supporting a study on environmental services, which is being done by an international expert. This study aims at assessing the total value of ecosystem services and related markets for the MMNP. The investigation will serve the purpose of educating the local institutions, organizations, practitioners and the community living in and around the park about the contributions of nature’s services to local and global economies. The general assessment also addresses the potential for this region and its inhabitants to build a lively local economy by taking advantage of recently developed market mechanisms to protect natural resources, such as payments for ecosystem services. A total of 11 ecosystem services were selected for inclusion in the economic valuation. Out of these, 5 services were considered key ecosystem services: watershed protection, recreation, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and scenic beauty (traditional landscapes). Key ecosystem services were defined as services that have one or more of the following characteristics: 1) are critical for local livelihoods; 2) are critical for attracting future investments; 3) are critical for maintaining traditional uses of the land; 4) are at risk of degradation due to high demand (over-exploitation), unsustainable practices, or changes in social values. The final report is due in the fall 2007.

164. In addition to the development of economic activities, the project also conducted numerous awareness raising sessions in local communities and also supported environmental education activities in the school system in the County. An environmental competition is supported annually and an environmental education manual was developed. This manual is currently in the process of becoming part of the regular material to support the curriculum in primary and secondary schools in the area; as well as schools in the Rodnei area. This programme is led by local teachers and should have an impact on the environment in the years to come as children are gaining knowledge on the park, protected areas, biodiversity and the protection of the environment in general.

165. However, there is a general opinion discussed with several interviewees during this evaluation that it is difficult to implement biodiversity conservation programmes in the context of a weak economical development, of population poverty and of the existence of unsolved social issues. The Northwest region of Romania is below the socio-economic development national average. The closing of mines in the Maramures County continues to economically affect the area and people are still leaving the area. The average age of the local population is high, as young people have moved to other centers with more potential. The project success will not be achieved without a positive socio-economic impact on the local communities.

166. In conclusion, the potential to achieve the long-term project goal and objective is satisfactory. In the long run the project should strengthen the Romania’s protected area system by disseminating lessons and good practices extracted from the Maramures demonstration of an effective protected area model. The project is so far highly effective to deliver its expected outputs and, after two years, all conditions exist for a successful project implementation. Considering the biodiversity importance of the Carpathian mountain

range, the project is also contributing to global environmental benefits through the establishment of an effective protection regime for the MMNP; including the possibility of creating a trans-boundary biosphere reserve with Ukraine regrouping the Carpathians biosphere reserve and the natural park of Verkhovyna in Ukraine and the MMNP and Rodnei park in Romania. In the long-term the project should also have a positive impact on the local poverty and other socio-economic issues through the demonstration of sustainable income generation activities such as ecotourism. The project will certainly face many challenges ahead but its well-qualified management team and the strong involvement of Stakeholders (partnerships) should contribute to the continued success of the project.

## **4.5. Sustainability and Replicability**

### **4.5.1. Sustainability Strategy and Project Exit Strategy**

167. The project document contains a sustainability strategy (*Section 3 – Sustainability*); it is rated as highly satisfactory. The strategy is based on the strong initial partnership (*see Section 4.3.6*) regrouped into a consortium and which designed the project in a way that the project-inspired changes will continue upon completion of the project itself. The approach to sustainability reflects several overriding assumptions, which were presented in the project document; including a project response to these assumptions. They are:

- 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;
- Integrating conservation objectives into economic development 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 conservation economy knowledge and practices, the accessing of new markets for conservation-economy based development, and new protected area management approaches;
- Properly managing the emergence of conservation economy services like ecotourism will generate supplementary long-term financing for the protected area.

168. In addition to this strategy, the project has also very supportive national partners such as the NFA and MESD and supportive local partners such as the local EPA, the County Council, the Prefecture, and others. The MMNP project has a solid local, regional and national recognition - which should even increase during the remaining two years - and the NFA, as the project implementing agency, has a combination of financial resources and logistic support to MMNP; both of these factors will contribute greatly to the sustainability of the project achievements.

### **4.5.2. Sustainability of Results Achieved by the Project**

169. The potential for the long-term sustainability of project achievements is good; it is rated as satisfactory. As it is assessed in Section 4.5.1 above, there is already a good strategy embedded in the project design to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. The project is to make the MMNP fully operational, to strengthen the Stakeholders of the park in environmental governance and finally to demonstrate the value of natural capital through its sustainable use to increase the livelihood of the local communities living in the area. The project is now well recognized and it is making progress on these three main fronts in partnership with the relevant Stakeholders in the public sector such as the County Council, Prefecture, EPA, NFA, in the private sector with private operators and in the civil society sector such as the communities living in the area, including the community leaders.

170. All project activities are conducted with a strong partnership with the relevant Stakeholders. The implementation process emphasizes the ownership of these activities with these relevant Stakeholders; therefore, ensuring their long-term sustainability. A review of the major achievements (*see Section 4.2.1*) so far indicates that there are no major issues for these achievements to be sustainable in the long term. The MMNP is now created and its internal boundaries (management zones) are being currently reviewed and will be finalized with NFA; a process to develop the management plan for the park is underway and it is a

requirement for the park to have a management plan under the current Romanian legislation; the administration of the park is being staffed by a well qualified team of Officers which acquired additional skills and knowledge through project activities and which have NFA permanent contracts; a web site to communicate information on the park is now up and running; local communities have now a better understanding about the MMNP; all development applications from the MMNP area requires now the approval from the MMNP Administration as per the Law #265; and, the school of Valea Visului has now a central heating system using sawdust briquettes as energy.

171. As it was discussed in Section 4.1.2, the NFA (project implementation agency) is planning the creation of a foundation to take over the protected area system in Romania. There is also the possible involvement of the National Agency for Protected Areas and Conservation of Biodiversity created through the Ordinance 195/2005 and updated in 2006. However, these potential institutional changes should not affect the future of MMNP. Regardless of the protected area institutional set-up the park is there to stay as well as its Administration. The project achievements - actual and future – will be sustained in the long-term.

172. However, the long-term sustainability of the project achievements is also depending on few key external factors such as the development of the compensation scheme for MMNP forest owners, the local and national political support to protected areas in Romania and particularly to the MMNP, the socio-economic development in the Maramures County and the opportunity for MMNP to be part of a trans-boundary biosphere reserve (*see Section 4.2.3*). These external factors - which can potentially affect the long-term sustainability of the project achievements - could be considered either threats or opportunities depending how the future will unfold. For instance the compensation scheme was set-up by the government; however, despite that some forest owners applied, no money was received yet at the time of this evaluation. In the probable case that forest owners will start receiving their compensations, it should decrease the pressure on forest illegal cuts in the MMNP area; however there is still the possibility that this scheme will not be satisfactory to the forest owners, which would add serious pressure on the exploitation of private forests in the MMNP area.

#### **4.5.3. Financial and Human Resources Sustainability**

173. As it stands currently, there is a strong potential for the financial and human resources long-term sustainability after the project end; it is rated as highly satisfactory. It is one of the best characteristics of this project. The project is not funding any long-term project staff position. The three project staff positions are funded by NFA; moreover the project staff was not hired only as project staff but they were hired as regular NFA employees and have permanent position contracts. As described in Section 4.3.3, the project staff is also the MMNP Administration management team.

174. The management team is competent and they should accumulate more skills and knowledge in the coming two years. However, one potential issue is the wage level and the lack of incentives for this type of remote positions. It has been difficult to fill the existing positions; the job packages do not seem to be appealing enough to attract competent candidates in the respective positions. Currently, 7 positions are opened (rangers).

175. From a financial point of view, the project is supporting activities to strengthen the MMNP Administration and develop its capacity to manage the park. At project end no recurrent cost exist and the NFA budget should be able to fulfill any gaps left with the closure of the project.

176. Additionally, the NFA has the financial power needed to sustain the MMNP Administration (*see Section 4.1.2*). The protected area system and strategies in place in Romania and the soon-coming new PA Law are in line with the project strategies to strengthen the MMNP. In the case of an institutional change (*see Section 4.1.2*) at the national level, it should not impact negatively the protected area system currently in place; including the MMNP and its Administration.

177. Finally, additional financial resources can be found to finance specific activities in the MMNP. There is the possibility of accessing EU structural adjustment funds that will be allocated to finance the SOP (*see Section 4.1.5*). This programme includes biodiversity as one of the four focus areas and more specifically it



will fund viable projects to strengthen the protected area system; including the management plans (up to 215M euros).

#### **4.5.4. Enabling Environment – Policy, Legislation and Institutions**

178. The project contributed greatly to an enabling environment, which will ensure the long-term sustainability of the project achievements; it is rated as satisfactory. Outcome 1 is about making the MMNP fully operational. The project contributed to the establishment of the MMNP; it is now designated as an official (gazetted) protected area and it is part of the PA system of Romania. Additionally, in 2006 the project supported a change of legislation that now requires the MMNP Administration approval for any land-use change inside the MMNP, which are outside of urban areas (Law #265). It confirms the position of the MMNP Administration as an authority among the development institutions in the Maramures County and sets an example for other PAs in Romania.

179. Additionally, the new Government Ordinance #57/2007 will also contribute to a better enabling environment. It is now being reviewed including a review by the MMNP Director and it should become a Law in the months to come. This Law will be the new Law on protected areas for Romania. It will define more accurately what is a protected area and the various types of PA and also set the guidelines for managing these PAs through management plans.

180. These guidelines to develop a management plan for a protected area are already established and published in a manual<sup>7</sup>. These guidelines were established under the GEF funded *Biodiversity Conservation and Management Project* and are used by NFA. It is an 83 pages documents structured into 5 main chapters: (i) Introduction and Context; (ii) Principles of Protected Areas and Planning; (iii) Management Plan Overview; (iv) Developing a Management Plan: The 15 Stage Process; and, (v) Additional Plan Related Activities. It also includes three Appendices: A Tool Kit for All Plan Sections, Protected Area Regulations and Important References. It is a good tool for protected area managers to develop their own management plans and contributes to the provision of an enabling environment for efficient management of protected areas in Romania.

181. Romania has also harmonized its environmental legislation with the “*Acquis Communautaires*”; including the field of environment protection and biodiversity. However, despite a contribution to a better enabling environment, there are still some weaknesses within the context of environmental management in Romania. The Stakeholders met during this evaluation raised the few following points:

- The problem is not a lack of legislation but a weak implementation of this legislation with weaknesses in the development of appropriate institutions and the related technical and financial capacities to implement and enforce these laws.
- Illegal cutting is a direct threat for the forests and the ecosystems; it needs a greater collaboration among institutions involved in the management of the protected areas and state institutions whose duty are to enforce the existing set of Laws and Regulations (police, district attorneys, judges etc). For instance, the NFA registered around 24,000 offences last year – mostly related to illegal cuttings - but only 4 offenders were brought to court.
- One expected result of the MMNP project is to raise awareness and inform local communities and local leaders about the Laws and Regulations for environmental protection. The progress is recognized but more needs to be done to facilitate the compliance with the legislation in place.

#### **4.5.5. Ecological Sustainability**

182. The ecological sustainability of the project is rated as highly satisfactory. There are no environmental risks, which can undermine the future flow of project environmental benefits; no project activities pose a threat to the environment. On the contrary, most of the activities should contribute to improving the ecological sustainability in the MMNP area. The establishment of the MMNP gives a framework to better manage the environment and conserve the biodiversity in the MMNP area. The project activities have (and will have in the future) a positive impact on the environment through ecological awareness raising and the

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<sup>7</sup> Michael R Appleton, 2001, *Protected Area Management Planning in Romania: A Manual and Toolkit*

improvement of the livelihood of local communities through socio-economic development.

183. Moreover, the sustainable conservation of biodiversity and environmental protection rely upon a complex set of actions that include stable partnerships between many partners such as administrative institutions, civil society organisations, local communities, private sector associations, companies, etc. In the absence of these partnerships ecological sustainability cannot be guaranteed. Within this context the MMNP project is assessed as follows:

- The MMNP project is involved in different actions that will have directly or indirectly positive effects upon the environment;
- The MMNP area was negatively affected by human interactions with the environment; however, under the current environmental management and development context in Romania there is an important potential for protecting the environment in the Maramures County through the development of a conservation economy where the environment – particularly the MMNP – is viewed as a positive asset to create sustainable livelihoods for local communities such as ecotourism;
- The MMNP project is developing numerous partnerships with stakeholders such as the development agencies involved in the Maramures County, the communities and community associations and the private sector, particularly in the tourism area. These partnerships are reinforcing the knowledge about the local environment and position the MMNP as a local asset upon which sustainable socio-economic development can/should take place.

#### **4.5.6. Replication and Scaling-Up**

184. A replication strategy is embedded into the design of the project; it is rated as highly satisfactory. The project document includes the “*Section 4 – Replicability*”, which describes the project strategy for the replicability and the scaling-up of the project achievements. The approach is presented in five points:

1. Introduce stakeholders (local community development planners/managers, Forest Department staff, entrepreneurs, and protected area managers) to new knowledge, sources of information, sources of financing, and practices or approaches through workshops and study tours;
2. Establish a modest knowledge network of protected area managers and NGOs. In practical terms, this means a newsletter will be published and annual meetings held where best (and worst) practice experiences will be presented, discussed, and arrangements made to facilitate site visits and training;
3. Outcome 3 is designed to focus on introducing new knowledge, practices and technologies, and helping stakeholders overcome barriers to adopt them replicate them;
4. Identify and disseminate lessons learned and best practices to project partner institutions, and through relevant associations;
5. Train individuals from other PAs to expand the project’s main approaches to other areas. Protected area managers, NGOs, institutional staff will be invited to participate.

185. Additionally, as mentioned in the approach presented above, the set of expected outcomes/outputs includes the replication/scaling-up of project achievements as an expected result. For instance, output 1.5 is the “*Increased likelihood that replication will occur after the project*”, through the adoption by NFA of certain best practices, the development of a knowledge network and the introduction of new learning modules in the curricula of the NFA and EPA’s existing training programmes. There is also the activity “*3.1.4 – Facilitate replication of these approaches*”, which will seek to introduce the concept and the approach of a marketplace of a conservation economy (*Output 3.1*).

186. However, despite that replication and scaling-up are part of the project design, no performance indicators are monitored to assess the achievements in this area and the PIRs are not reporting the progress; due, may be to the fact, that progress in this area would be expected rather in the second half of the project.

187. Overall, the replication potential of this project is high. The MMNP project is well appreciated by stakeholders and is viewed as a pilot by key stakeholders - including the MESD and the NFA; the expectations are that the project achievements will be replicated throughout the PA system in Romania.

188. In conclusion, the long-term sustainability of the project achievements is highly satisfactory. A sustainability strategy was developed during the design phase and this mid-term assessment indicates a strong potential for the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. The two recurrent success factors on this project are strong involvement of Stakeholders and a well-qualified project management team that is the permanent management team of MMNP Administration; both factors will positively impact the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. The design of the project is strongly based on the work done by the Maramures Biodiversity Consortium and a well-qualified team of professionals now implements it. Finally the replication of the lessons learned and the best practices are also embedded into the design of the project and the expectations are that the management model developed under this project will be replicated throughout the protected area system in Romania.

## 5. CONCLUSION / RATINGS SUMMARY

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

**Table 8: Ratings Summary**

Evaluation Criterion	Summary Comments	Rating
Relevance	The project is highly relevant for Romania. It strengthens its national system of protected areas. It responds very well to the development objectives of Romania and to those of UNDP and GEF in Romania. It is highly relevant to the environmental governance framework in place in Romania; particularly the protected area system. The project addresses some socio-economic issues by supporting the development of sustainable economic activities such as ecotourism. The design of the project is also highly relevant for its implementation; it is strongly rooted in the work done by the Maramures Biodiversity Consortium, a representative group of Stakeholders, which started in 2000. Finally, the project meets the objectives of the UNCBD and the Carpathian Convention.	Highly Relevant
Effectiveness	The project effectiveness is highly satisfactory. It is effective in achieving its expected outcomes that is to develop and test an effective protected area management model for these parks. Capacity development is “embedded” into the design of the project and the project risks are managed adequately. During the first 2 years, the project focused on expected outcome 1 & 2. The MMNP is now set-up officially and has a qualified staff. The project supported awareness raising activities in local communities – including in schools – and supported a few demonstrations to transform sawdust in briquettes with a private operator and use these briquettes as heating energy in a school. The MMNP is now recognized as a full development partner and it is expected that the Administration should lead the development in the MMNP area. The second phase of the project will be challenging but the project has now the “clout” to forge ahead with the development of management instruments for the parks (management plan and monitoring system) and the development of sustainable use of the park’s natural assets such as ecotourism.	Highly satisfactory
Efficiency	The project efficiency is highly satisfactory. It is well managed and the resources are utilized efficiently. It uses adaptive management extensively to secure project outcomes while maintaining adherence to the overall project design; this is especially important in the context of Romania that is going through numerous changes since the revolution. The log-frame is one of the main management tools used to guide the implementation of the project. The project disbursements are in line with the implementation – including the co-financing - and the finances are adequately managed by the UNDP-	Highly satisfactory

Evaluation Criterion	Summary Comments	Rating
	<p>Atlas system. The project follows UNDP/GEF procedures as well as NFA procedures. A high quality team of professionals that is motivated and dedicated to the project manages the project. An important aspect of the project team is that it is not a typical project staff hired only for the duration of the project. The three project staffs are also the Park Director, the Chief Accountant and the Community Outreach/Procurement Officer of the MMNP Administration; they cumulate the functions. This set-up is extremely valuable for the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. The strong involvement of Stakeholders ensures an excellent project ownership; which will also contribute to the long-term sustainability of project achievements. Finally the project is well monitored using a set of impact oriented performance indicators. The project management team is also using the METT, which indicates a strong gain between the assessment at inception and the mi-term assessment done in June 2007.</p>	
Impact	<p>The potential to achieve the long-term project goal and objective is satisfactory. In the long run the project should strengthen the Romania's protected area system by disseminating lessons and good practices extracted from the Maramures demonstration of an effective protected area model. The project is so far highly effective to deliver its expected outputs and, after two years, all conditions exist for a successful project implementation. Considering the biodiversity importance of the Carpathian mountain range, the project is also contributing to global environmental benefits through the establishment of an effective protection regime for the MMNP; including the possibility of creating a trans-boundary biosphere reserve with Ukraine regrouping the Carpathians biosphere reserve and the natural park of Verkhovyna in Ukraine and the MMNP and Rodnei park in Romania. In the long-term the project should also have a positive impact on the local poverty and other socio-economic issues through the demonstration of sustainable income generation activities such as ecotourism. The project will certainly face many challenges ahead but its well-qualified management team and the strong involvement of Stakeholders (partnerships) will contribute to the continued success of the project.</p>	Satisfactory
Sustainability	<p>The long-term sustainability of the project achievements is highly satisfactory. A sustainability strategy was developed during the design phase and this mid-term assessment indicates a strong potential for the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. The two recurrent success factors on this project are strong involvement of Stakeholders and a well-qualified project management team that is the permanent management team of MMNP Administration; both factors will positively impact the long-term sustainability of the project achievements. The design of the project is strongly based on the work done by the Maramures Biodiversity Consortium and a well-qualified team of professionals now implements it. Finally the replication of the lessons learned and the best practices are also embedded into the design of the project and the expectations are that the management model developed under this project will be replicated throughout the protected area system in Romania.</p>	Highly satisfactory
Specific Evaluation Criterion to be Rated (from TORs)		

<b>Evaluation Criterion</b>	<b>Summary Comments</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Implementation Approach	See Efficiency summary above and Section 4.3 for more details	Highly satisfactory
Country Ownership/Drivers	See Section 4.3.6	Highly satisfactory
Outcome/Achievements of Objectives	See Effectiveness summary above and Section 4.2.1 for more details	Highly satisfactory
Stakeholders Participation/Public Involvement	See Section 4.3.6	Highly satisfactory
Sustainability	See summary above and Section 4.5 for more details	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	Highly satisfactory
Overall Rating	Overall the progress of the project so far is highly satisfactory. The project is successfully reaching its expected results and beyond; it should have an important long-term impact for MMNP but also for the protected area system in Romania. Considering the biodiversity importance of the Carpathian mountain range, the project is also contributing to global environmental benefits through the establishment of an effective protection regime for the MMNP; including the possibility of creating a trans-boundary biosphere reserve. The design of the project is strongly rooted in the work done by the Maramures Biodiversity Consortium - a representative group of local Stakeholders. A well-qualified team of professionals, which are the permanent staff of the MMNP Administration, implements the project; therefore, ensuring the continuation of the project achievements after the project ends. The current achievements are in line with the overall implementation strategy and the project gained much authority during this first half; which gives it a clear mandate for the second half to lead the sustainable development process in the MMNP area through environmental services and the development of the necessary management instruments to manage the park; that is a management plan, a monitoring system to monitor the biodiversity and the ecosystem conditions in the park and the corresponding management information systems and GIS needed to store and manage this information. The two recurrent success factors on this project, which are the strong involvement of Stakeholders and a well-qualified project management team that is the permanent management team of MMNP Administration, will positively impact the long-term sustainability of the project achievements.	Highly satisfactory

## 6. LESSONS LEARNED

190. Based on the review of project documents, interviews with key informants, and analysis of the information collected, the Evaluation Team collated the following lessons learned from the standpoint of the

design and implementation of the project:

- When the project management is given to an existing management staff of a local institution, the donor control is less but the long-term sustainability of the project achievements is almost guaranteed. The early institutionalization of the process is a very valuable success factor for the sustainability of project achievements. Contrary to a typical project staff hired only for the duration of the project and funded by either the external donor such as UNDP/GEF or the national partner, the management of the project by a local institution contribute to a greater capacity development along the way and for the future as the staff should continue after the project ends. Moreover, the disruption due to the ending of the project should be minimal; a better transition at project end should occur. *This is one of the main lessons learned from this project.*
- The implementation of small community-based projects contributes greatly to building trust with local communities and improves the image of a project such as the transformation of wood waste (sawdust) into briquettes and use them for a central heating system in a local school where winters are harsh and local school resources are poor. It provides good examples of sustainable use of the natural resources to improve the local livelihood; and also at the same time, conserving the local biodiversity. It connects the project with the end-users and provides feedback from these end-users to help the project decision-making process.
- A well integrated sustainability and replicability strategy into a project design; including expected replicability results into the set of project expected results, reinforces the focus on these two important factors for the success of a project. The inclusion of expected replicability results into the regular project chain of results (output-outcome-impact) makes it “mandatory” for the project team to produce replicability results. Being part of the log-frame, the expected replicability will guide the allocation of project resources toward the achievement of this result.
- A project design that is strongly rooted in the work of local stakeholders facilitates the implementation and ensures a greater potential for long-term impact and long-term sustainability. The design becomes “their” design and the result is a strong ownership of the project by Stakeholders and often by extension a good country ownership; right from the start of the project. The implementation is strongly supported by its “designers” and partnerships are easier to set-up.
- Any project supporting a protected area needs to include a strong component to raise the awareness of the local communities living in and around the area and to improve their livelihood. It is critical to increase the knowledge of the local communities living in and around the area and also to seek a positive impact on their daily livelihood by answering “*What in it for them?*”. Once they understand the concept, goal, objectives and the possibility of improving their livelihood, these communities accept and respect the protected area. The protected area becomes a partner in the development of these communities.
- This type of project emphasizing capacity development requires a longer timeframe to achieve results; 4-5 years should be the minimum. The time it takes to change a piece of legislation or a policy or the creation/strengthening of an institution is often underestimated and the overall project duration too short to develop the full necessary capacity to make the change sustainable.
- If a project - with a short timeframe of 2 to 5 years – needs to be extended, it is better to do it early on into its implementation (such as the first year). It allows the project overall implementation strategy to be reviewed early on, to revamp the entire implementation plan and to reallocate the project resources accordingly; as opposed to “patching and stretching” remaining resources when it is done in the last part of the project. A difference should be visible in the overall achievements of the project.
- Hiring project staff in these remote places (the case of a lot of protected areas) is often a challenge. However, patience and the application of the due process often result in the hiring of staff that is responding well to the job requirements. In addition, this staff is often from the region or is connected with the region; and as a consequence has a good local knowledge of the area, is often part of existing local informal networks, which help the implementation of the project.

- *Connection, connection, connection!* A good project staff will build an extensive network including the key stakeholders to implement the project. Once these networks are in place, the implementation of the project is facilitated through these relationships. In particular, developing partnerships with the local authorities is essential to “open the doors” and get the necessary support for the project activities.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

191. 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. Develop or revive the tripartite project committee, which should meet regularly (monthly or bimonthly) to discuss project progress. The members should be the Project Manager (MMNP Director), UNDP-CO and NFA-Bucharest. The agenda of the park Director is now evolving and will include more and more activities that are not part of the project delivery but are part of the NFA-Park Administration work plan. Regular meetings will allow the Director to present his team’s progress and the work plan for the coming period. It will allow the two major project partners (UNDP and NFA) to review the project progress, to discuss replication opportunities and long-term sustainability of the project achievements and to communicate and exchange views on their respective agendas. It will provide a more integrated management of the project within the MMNP Administration agenda.
2. Organize a project management retreat off site in the last part of 2007 to review progress to date and review the plan for the next two years. The project is at its mid-point and it also corresponds to the end of the first phase to establish the MMNP Administration. The park is now officially created, an Administration is in place to manage it, some awareness raising activities were conducted with local communities and local leaders, and an initial study is underway to identify the potential for environmental services in the MMNP area. The next phase will focus mainly on (i) strengthening the management capacity of the MMNP Administration through the support for the development of a comprehensive management plan and the development of a monitoring system to monitor the biodiversity and the ecosystem conditions of the park; (ii) developing an ecotourism strategy for the area; and, (iii) supporting demonstrations of small-scale activities in the tourism and forestry sectors.
3. The project is currently supporting the biodiversity baseline and a review of the current zoning within the park. It is urgent that this zoning is finalized and clarified. Local communities and local agencies have an understanding of the park as a protected area. However, so far little is known about the different zones in the park and their related different management regimes. For instance, few people seem to know that alpine grazing is allowed in certain parts of the park and that under certain conditions, the cutting of wood is allowed in certain places in the park. Following this review, the project should support a “communication tour” throughout the local communities and the local development agencies such as forestry inspectorate, EPA, agriculture, to present this zoning and the related regulations. The preparation of these informative sessions should start in the immediate future.
4. As part of developing the management plan for MMNP and considering the expectation of the Stakeholders – particularly NFA – in term of Stakeholder participation in the management of the park, there is a need to develop a community outreach strategy for MMNP; which could be extended to a national community outreach in the future once most of it will be tested in MMNP. This strategy should be part of the management plan for MMNP.
5. The main channel of communication with the local communities is currently planned through the consultative council of the MMNP Administration (54 members representing a broad spectrum of society in the area). After some direct informative sessions conducted within the local communities by the project, it is now planned to channel the communication and education activities through this Council. Despite that this approach is good and rationale in the long-term, it is not enough in the

near term. More awareness activities are needed; particularly more activities in direct contact with local communities (see recommendation #3 above). Opportunities exist in each community to meet and discuss various topics; using these networks will facilitate the preparation of these sessions.

6. The project should support the MMNP Administration to strengthen its management systems including its management information system and GIS and its human resource management system – including job descriptions and related performance targets – complying with NFA guidelines. Activities supported by the project already took place in this area but the Administration is now entering a new phase with NFA strengthening its park administrations (22). For instance each Administration is now required to produce a work plan. This process is somehow similar to the project work plan but more comprehensive and encompassing activities that are not directly supported by the project. A capacity assessment of the MMNP Administration is recommended. It would include a functional analysis, an assessment of the existing capacity and the required capacity, an identification of the prioritized capacity gaps/needs and an action plan.
7. Based on the review of the project performance indicators, it is recommended the following:
  - a. Outcome 1 is to support the preparation of a Management Plan (MP) and also to develop management instruments for the Administration such as a biodiversity/ecosystem baseline, a monitoring system and a GIS. One indicator should measure the progress in this area such as *“A Management Plan in place integrating a biodiversity baseline and monitoring system as well as spatial information (GIS) and responding to the NFA MP guidelines with adequate capacity at the MMNP Administration”*;
  - b. Only indicator #8 measures the replication of the training modules. Considering that this aspect (replication) is one critical success factor of this project, it is recommended to modify the indicator #8 to encompass all replication activities; such as *“Number of project achievements that are replicated in other protected areas in Romania and abroad”*.
  - c. The list of indicators does not include any indicator to measure awareness level of local communities living in the park. It is recommended to add one such as *“Local communities understand better the MMNP and started to conserve and use it sustainably”*;
8. The project is using the METT to track the management effectiveness of the MMNP Administration. A first assessment was done in 2005 (project inception) and the total score for the project was 19 points (out of a maximum of 96). A second assessment was done in 2007 (mid-way) and the total score was 56. At inception the management team set a target score of only 28 by the end of the project. It is recommended to set new realistic targets for each indicator by the end of the project. It will provide the project management team with the management areas that need attention.
9. The project publishes a quarterly newsletter to highlight some project activities. This is a good vehicle to disseminate information about the park. The circulation of this newsletter should be extended to all communities through schools, churches and city halls and other opportunities. It is a good vehicle to communicate the different zones of the park and their related management regimes and also to report back to the communities how good the park is protected by reporting the infractions of the past quarter.
10. The project already supported exchanges for the management team to visit other protected areas and their respective management. It is recommended that more should be done and linked with the work plan for the next two years. Study tour themes could be park monitoring (indicators and system) – including the development of a volunteer monitoring system such as the one in place in the North Vizdeme Biosphere Reserve (NVBR) in Latvia applying an EcoWatch approach; compliance and enforcement in protected areas; comprehensive management plan and its application; and, sustainable economic activities in or near a protected area such as ecotourism and sustainable forest exploitation.
11. A tourism master plan was done in 2006. It names Maramures as one of 6 important areas for the development of tourism. A set of actions is identified and a few of those are related to the project objective in the area of ecotourism for MMNP. Additionally, the ministry is interested in



developing a tourism regional strategy (which is action #36) for Maramures. Considering this national context, it is recommended that the project strategize its approach as follows:

- a. The tourism activity supported by the project should be done in close collaboration with the ministry of tourism. The ministry is interested in supporting the development of a regional tourism strategy for Maramures, including the possibility of co-financing;
  - b. In order to dispose of the necessary information to develop a local (ecotourism?) strategy, it is recommended to conduct first an assessment – possibly with a research institute – to understand/document the local environment, social and economic situation;
  - c. As part of the ecotourism strategy development, one main component should be the development of a tourism destination marketing strategy. The project should focus on supporting the development of Maramures as a destination and in parallel continue to support some demonstrations (small projects) such as the refurbishing of a wagon in partnership with EcoTours Ltd, an NGO/private company operating a steam train in the Vaser River area for tourists;
  - d. As analyzed in chapter 4, the project has a role of leading the development process in the MMNP area. It has the “green light” to undertake this process and should use its recognition by the main local development partners to set-up the necessary committees for the development of this strategy; using the Prefecture as a key partner to move the process, the County Council and its team of 5 people focusing on the development of the local tourism as well as local private operators such as EcoTours Ltd;
  - e. The development of this ecotourism strategy should also be coordinated with the development of the MMNP management plan. Ecotourism is part of the strategies to manage these protected areas and should be incorporated in the management plan.
12. After two years, the project starts to accumulate some best practices and lessons learned. It is time to start a process for collecting them, packaging them and disseminating them in Romania and also in the region and worldwide. The use of the MMNP web site to post them is the first recommended step; publications and possible presentations to related forums are recommended such as national and regional conferences/seminars.
  13. Support a greater involvement of the scientific community in the MMNP; particularly with a focus on the impact of management practices on the biodiversity. This additional research should be undertaken with the involvement of the MMNP Scientific Council and the MMNP Administration and address existing issues. The results will help the Administration to make better-informed decision and they should also be made public through the MMNP web site and other research results dissemination schemes such as academic journals.
  14. Adapt the approach to implement the output 3.4 “*Certified Forest Production and Marketing Demonstration*” according to the development of the land restitution process. The project is to deliver some outputs in this area. However, the last Law on land restitution (274/2005) halted the certification process of public forests until all land claims are settled. Instead of stopping all project-supported activities, it is recommended that some sensitization activities be conducted with private forest owners; emphasizing the benefits of the certification scheme. The project should also focus on the distribution channels in the Maramures area to identify opportunities with certified forest products buyer groups in Romania and elsewhere in Europe; partnering with WWF-Romania and their chain-of-custody certification mechanism. The development of a demand for certified forest products should create a greater interest among forest owners to get their forest certified.

### **Opportunities for Further Projects**

15. **Develop a Trans-boundary Biosphere Reserve covering most of the Southeast part of the Carpathian mountain range overlapping part of Ukraine and part of Romania:** The current project will terminate in June 2009. At this point the MMNP will be fully developed and will have an Administration with the required capacity to manage the park. The next step would be to “merge” the 4 protected areas of the region including the MMNP and the Rodnei National Park on the Romanian side and the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve and the Verkhovena Natural Park on the

Ukrainian side. A few key elements should be considered:

- a. The Maramures County is working on a project to nominate the wooden churches of the region as a UNESCO World Heritage. It is a cultural opportunity which could be integrated in the UNESCO-MAB biosphere reserve;
- b. Several Stakeholders met during this evaluation mentioned this plan and the concept seems to be already broadly accepted. Some meetings already took place to discuss the concept and recently (June 2007) a group of local leaders met in Viseu de Sus and signed a letter of intent;
- c. The creation of one biosphere reserve for the entire area would create a larger protected area and offer better habitats and better migration routes for some wildlife. It would also allow the repopulation of certain species that needs greater protected spaces;
- d. Considering the population living in these areas, the concept of a Biosphere Reserve (BR) is fully adapted to this situation. A BR has three main functions (i) conservation - contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation; (ii) development - foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable; and, (iii) logistic support - support for demonstration projects, environmental education and training, research and monitoring related to local, regional, national and global issues of conservation and sustainable development. The objective of a BR is to achieve a sustainable balance between the sometimes conflicting goals of conserving biological diversity, promoting economic development and maintaining associated cultural values;
- e. The government of Romania signed and ratified the Carpathian Convention through the Law 389/2006. It entered into force in March 2007. This convention is an innovative instrument to ensure protection and foster sustainable development of this outstanding region and living environment, the Convention seeks to improve the quality of life, to strengthen local economies and communities as well as providing conservation and restoration of unique, rare and typical natural complexes and objects of recreational and other importance situated in the heart of Europe.

## Annex 1: Terms of Reference



### Terms of Reference

for

### Mid Term Evaluation of the Project

**Strengthening Romania's Protected Area System by Demonstrating Government-NGO Partnership in  
Romania's Maramures Nature Park  
Atlas project #41462  
PIMS 1969**

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## Background information

This UNDP/GEF project seeks to strengthen Romania's national system of protected areas by demonstrating effective biodiversity conservation in Maramures Mountains Natural Park in Romania's northern Carpathian Mountains. It has emerged from and is built upon a notable local stakeholder-driven process that has created an innovative Government-NGO partnership in Maramures to pursue the conservation and sustainable development of an area comprised of national forestland, protected areas, private forestlands, agricultural land and small urban areas. The project will contribute to the expansion and consolidation of Romania's national system of protected areas by demonstrating effective park management and Government-NGO partnership.

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,
- Baia Mare Forestry Directorate – Maramures Mountains Natural 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 May 2005 and it is available on line, for consultation, in English language, at <http://www.muntimaramuresului.ro/index.php?cmd=prodoc>.

Three project outcomes are defined in the Project Document:

1	Stakeholders make Maramures Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational
2	Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramures.
3	Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP.

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 for the evaluator).

The Project was planned for three years (2005-2008) but in September 2006, one year extension at no cost was granted and the planned end year is 2009.

## 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. He/she 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. Address the following questions, 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:
  - Do they provide the necessary information?
  - Do they involve key partners?
  - Are they efficient?
  - Are additional tools required?
- Reconstruct baseline data if necessary<sup>8</sup>. Reconstruction should follow participatory processes and could be achieved in conjunction with a learning exercise<sup>9</sup>;
- Ensure the monitoring system, including performance indicators, at least meets GEF minimum requirements<sup>10</sup>. 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:
  - Is the UNDP/GEF Risk Management System<sup>11</sup> appropriately applied?
  - How can the UNDP/GEF Risk Management System be used to strengthen project management?

### (c) Work Planning

- Assess the use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation and any changes made to it
  - Ensure the logical framework meets UNDP/GEF requirements in terms of format and content
  - What impact did the retro-fitting of impact indicators have on project management?
- 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 work planning processes result-based<sup>12</sup>? 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;

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<sup>8</sup> See p.67 of UNDP's "Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results", available at <http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>

<sup>9</sup> See Annex C of "Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: approaches to sustainability", available at <http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>

<sup>10</sup> 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>

<sup>11</sup> 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>

<sup>12</sup> RBM Support documents are available at <http://www.undp.org/geo/methodologies.htm>

- 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:
  - Field visits
  - Steering Committee/TOR follow-up and analysis
  - PIR preparation and follow-up
  - GEF guidance
- Consider the new UNDP requirements outlined in the UNDP User Guide<sup>13</sup>, 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:
  - Involving partners and stakeholders in the selection of indicators and other measures of performance
  - Using already existing data and statistics
  - 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

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

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<sup>13</sup> 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>

- 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/Drivenness
    - 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 principles<sup>14</sup>:

- Independence
- Impartiality
- Transparency
- Disclosure
- Ethical
- Partnership

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<sup>14</sup> See p.16 of the GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

- 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 the 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 Group<sup>15</sup>). 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;
- 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

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.uneval.org/>

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 upon signing the contract. The evaluation should be completed by 30 September 2007. 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, debriefings	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 1 – 7 September 2007. The assignment is to commence no later than 15 August 2007.

**APPLICATION:** Please send your applications and a brief concept paper (no more than 3 pages outlining the approach and methodology you will apply to achieve the assignment) to UNDP CO Romania, UN House, 48 A Blvd Primaverii, Bucharest 1, Romania, email: environment.ro@undp.org. Dateline for applications is 1 May 2007.

## Appendix 1 – Logical Framework of the project

Objective/Outcomes	Performance Indicators	Baseline	Target goal	Sources of Verification	Assumptions and Risks
<b>Objective:</b> The biodiversity of Maramures Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by demonstrating an effective PA management model.	Hectares under strict conservation management.  Hectares under improved protected area management.  Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) score	0 ha currently.  No MMNP.  19 (Aug 2005)	7,800 ha by End of Project (EoP)  148,500 ha by EoP.  19 + 30% by yr 2; 19 + 50% by EoP.	Field visits; Government decision.  Government policy records; NP declaration; field visits.  Actual METT test sheet with answers and scores.	
<b>Outcome 1.</b> Stakeholders make Maramures Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational.					Outcome is achievable with existing institutions, and to be increased financial resources and personnel from the NFA.
	MMNP achieves national PA designation, is gazetted and boundaries clearly marked on maps and on the ground.	Not submitted; Not gazetted; Not clearly marked	Designated by yr 1.; Is gazetted by EoY 1; Boundary marked by yr 2.	National policy documents; Official notices. Official documents; Official maps; Field visits	NFA will be able to work effectively with Consortium.
	Number of staff on NFA payroll for MMNP.	Zero.	5 by yr 1 and 10 by yr 2.	Forest dept. budget; Official papers.	Promised budget resources will materialize.
	Staff knowledge in relevant areas of importance for MMNP.	TBD prior to training	Increase in test score by 30%	Before training/After training (BA) knowledge assessment.	NFA could become more risk averse and reduce its support for different approaches.
	NFA fully funds MMNP staff costs and partial operating costs during project.	Zero	\$40,000 disbursed starting/ yr 1;	NFA budget	

			70K/yr 2; 100K year 4.		
	% change in attitude and knowledge of general public and awareness/knowledge of targeted school groups.	Baseline measured in first 3 months.	30% up by EoP.	Annual assessments of awareness and knowledge levels – surveys.	
	# of PA that have utilized training modules.	Zero	Five by EoP.		
<b>Outcome 2.</b> Stakeholders Strengthen Environmental Governance Across Maramures.	New joint development review mechanism involving County Council and MMNP meeting quarterly.	No joint review at all.	Mid-term: mechanism established. EoP: Meeting regularly.	Decision of County Council.	
	Conservation and architectural guidelines are/are not incorporated into development review process.	Are not part of development planning process.	Are incorporated by EoP.	Appendix to the required documents for extra-urban development	
	# of towns in Park utilizing waste management services for all households in the town.	5	Mid-term: EoP:		Increased use of waste management services will result on reduced pollution in main Rivers in the Park.
	Reduced volume of solid waste in Vaser, Ruscova and Viseu Rivers.	# of dump sites in riparian zone; Volume of waste collected in 2005.	Decrease in # of sites by 75% by EoP. No increase in volume between year 1 and 2. Decrease between year 2-3 and 3-4.	Annual measurements in same transect along three rivers.	
<b>Outcome 3.</b> Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between	<b>Value of ecosystem services recognized by ?</b>	Not valued	Mid-term: valued. EoP:	Local economic program planning documents.	New values uncovered by environmental economics analysis will resonate with

sustainable use and conservation.					people in Maramures.
	Hectares of forest under certification with biodiversity criteria incorporated.	Zero hectares.	35,000 ha by EoP.	NFA certification program; FSC.	Certification of forest will lead to new markets or increased price for timber.  Land restitution in Romania could significantly hamper forest certification efforts.
	Volume of wood waste consumed by biomass boilers in 3 municipal heating demonstrations.	Zero tones.	At least 500 tons/yr by 2; 1,500 tons/yr EoP.	Field visits; boiler consumption rates.	Using sawdust in a productive way will reduce the amount of sawdust dumped into local rivers.
	# of eco-tourists grows steadily throughout the project period.  Economic activity generated by eco-tourists continues to grow in the project period.	Zero  Zero	Mid-term: EoP:  Mid-term: EoP	Surveys of local hotels and pensions.  Surveys of tourists.	Larger social and economic forces could slow the growth of tourism in MMNP.
	Measured reduction in sawdust waste in riparian zones in two target areas.	Baseline TBD in two areas.	Significant, reduction by EoP.	Water quality measurements – field data from EPA	

## 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 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 2006/2007
Other relevant materials:	Financial Audit Reports 2005, 2006 Co-financing agreements Mission Reports of International Experts Press articles Maps Various database Research results Minutes of Project Oversight Committee Meetings
GEF and UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy	<a href="http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html">http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html</a>  ( <a href="http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html">http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html</a> ).
Atlas Risk Management System	UNDP-GEF Risk Management Strategy resource kit, available as Annex XI at <a href="http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html">http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html</a>

## 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
<i>Evaluation criteria: 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>				
<i>Is the Project relevant to UNCBD and GEF objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How does the Project support the objectives of the UNCBD</li> <li>▪ How does the Project support the objectives of the GEF for OP2 and SP1?</li> <li>▪ Does the Project participate in the implementation of the UNCBD in Romania?</li> <li>▪ Is the GEF incremental cost principle being respected?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Level of coherence between project objectives and those of the UNCBD Convention</li> <li>▪ Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies in the area of protected areas</li> <li>▪ Level of coherence between the project and EU specific legislation (Directives)</li> <li>▪ UNCBD Convention status in Romania</li> <li>▪ Extent to which the project is actually implemented in line with incremental cost argument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project documents</li> <li>▪ National policies and strategies to implement the UNCBD Convention or related to environment more generally</li> <li>▪ Key government officials and other partners</li> <li>▪ UNCBD web site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Documents analyses</li> <li>▪ Interviews with government officials and other partners</li> </ul>
<i>Is the Project relevant to UNDP objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How does the Project support the objectives of UNDP in this sector?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Existence of a clear relationship between the project objectives and sustainable development objectives of UNDP.</li> <li>▪ Existence of a clear relationship between the project objectives and UNDP Strategic Results Framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project documents</li> <li>▪ UNDP strategies and programmes</li> <li>▪ National policies and strategies to implement the UNCBD Convention or related to environment more generally</li> <li>▪ Key government officials and other partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Documents analyses</li> <li>▪ Interviews with government officials and other partners</li> </ul>
<i>Is the Project relevant to Romania development objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How does the Project support the objectives of the development of Romania?</li> <li>▪ How country-driven is the Project?</li> <li>▪ Does the Project adequately take into account the national realities, both in terms of institutional framework and programming, in its design and its implementation?</li> <li>▪ To what extent were national partners involved in the design of the Project?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Degree to which the project support national environmental objectives</li> <li>▪ Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies</li> <li>▪ Appreciation from national stakeholders with respect to adequacy of project design and implementation to national realities and existing capacities?</li> <li>▪ Level of involvement of Government officials and other partners into the project</li> <li>▪ Coherence between needs expressed by</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project documents</li> <li>▪ National policies and strategies (PRSP and NEP)</li> <li>▪ Key government officials and other partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Documents analyses</li> <li>▪ Interviews with government officials and other partners</li> </ul>



Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Were the GEF criteria for Project identification adequate in view of actual needs?</li> </ul>	national stakeholders and UNDP-GEF criteria		
<i>Is the Project addressing the needs of target beneficiaries?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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?</li> <li>▪ Is the implementation of the Project been inclusive of all relevant Stakeholders?</li> <li>▪ Are local beneficiaries and stakeholders adequately involved in Project design and implementation?</li> <li>▪ Is the project implementation and objectives realistic related to the specificity of a transitions state and the status of new EU member?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strength of the link between expected results from the Project and the needs of target beneficiaries</li> <li>▪ Degree of involvement and inclusiveness of beneficiaries and stakeholders in Project design and implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beneficiaries and stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Needs assessment studies</li> <li>▪ Project documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Document analysis</li> <li>▪ Interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders</li> </ul>
<i>How is the Project relevant in light of other donors?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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?</li> <li>▪ How do GEF-funds help to fill gaps (or give additional stimulus) that are crucial but are not covered by other donors?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Degree to which program was coherent and complementary to other donor programming in Romania and Regionally</li> <li>▪ List of Programs and funds in which the future developments, ideas and partnerships of the project are eligible?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Other Donors' policies and programming documents</li> <li>▪ Other Donor representatives</li> <li>▪ Project documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Documents analyses</li> <li>▪ Interviews with other Donors</li> </ul>
<b>Future directions for the Project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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?</li> <li>▪ How could the Project better target and address the priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data collected throughout evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data analysis</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation criteria: Effectiveness – To what extent are the expected outcomes of the Project being achieved?</b>				
<i>How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the Project being effective in achieving its expected results (identified as outputs in the Prodoc): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stakeholders make Maramures Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational;</li> <li>○ Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramures;</li> <li>○ Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Change in biodiversity conservation through alternatives economic development activities</li> <li>▪ Change in biodiversity habitats</li> <li>▪ Change in capacity for information management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Knowledge acquisition and sharing</li> <li>○ Effective data gathering, methods and procedures for reporting on biodiversity</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Change in capacity for awareness raising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stakeholder involvement and government awareness</li> <li>○ Change in local stakeholder behavior</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Change in capacity in policy making and planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Policy reform to preserve and improve biodiversity conservation</li> <li>○ Legislation/regulation change to improve biodiversity conservation</li> <li>○ Development of national and local</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project documents</li> <li>▪ Key stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Documents analysis</li> <li>▪ Meetings with main Project Partners including UNDP, Gov. of Romania and other Partners</li> <li>▪ Interviews with Project Beneficiaries</li> </ul>

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

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

Evaluated component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<b>Future directions for the Project</b>	competence in biodiversity, sustainable development in ecological sensitive areas etc?			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What lessons can be learnt from the Project on efficiency?</li> <li>▪ How could the Project more efficiently address its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc...)?</li> <li>▪ What changes should be made (if any) to the Project in order to improve its efficiency?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data collected throughout evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data analysis</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation criteria:</b> <i>Impacts - What are the potential and realized impacts of activities carried out in the context of the Project?</i>				
<i>How is the Project effective in achieving its long term objective?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the Project achieving its long term objective that is the biodiversity of Maramures Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model?</li> <li>▪ Is the Project being effective in addressing the threat to the MMNP's biodiversity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Habitat fragmentation and degradation have been identified as the most serious threats to biodiversity in the Maramures area;</li> <li>○ Aquatic habitat degradation: Over 90 small wood mills in the region produce over 43,000 m3 of sawdust per year, which are mainly deposited along riverbanks or in ad hoc dumpsites;</li> <li>○ Direct exploitation of wildlife and Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP): Wildlife is under growing pressure from increased hunting and collecting, but the precise level of this threat is unknown</li> <li>○ Uncontrolled tourism: The area has a very high tourism potential, being already a famous regional tourist destination for its local culture -- its traditional festivals and renowned wooden churches, houses and gates</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ To what extent is the Project focusing on building the capacity of key individuals and institutions at the national and local levels?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Change in management of MMNP</li> <li>▪ Change in capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To pool/mobilize resources</li> <li>○ For related policy making and strategic planning,</li> <li>○ For implementation of related laws and strategies through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance,</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Change to the quantity and strength of barriers such as change in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Level of availability of information</li> <li>○ Level of trained personnel or technical or managerial expertise</li> <li>○ Level of regulatory biases or absence</li> <li>○ Initial capital costs or accessibility to credit for sustainable alternatives</li> <li>○ Perceived level of risks associated with the sustainable alternatives</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Efficient use of sawdust and potential regional extension of environmental friendly solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project documents</li> <li>▪ Key Stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Research findings; if available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Documents analysis</li> <li>▪ Meetings with UNDP and Project Partners</li> <li>▪ Interviews with Project beneficiaries and other stakeholders</li> </ul>
<i>How is the Project effective in achieving the objectives of the UNCBD?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are the impacts or likely impacts of the Project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ On the local environment; particularly protecting the biodiversity;</li> <li>○ On poverty; and,</li> <li>○ On other socio-economic issues</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide specific examples of impacts at those three levels, as relevant</li> <li>▪ List of potential structural funds (specific development funds for EU regions) to be used to assure long term sustainability of UNCBD objectives within MMNP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project documents</li> <li>▪ UNCBD Convention's documents</li> <li>▪ Key Stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data analysis</li> <li>▪ Interviews with key stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>Future directions for the Project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data collected throughout evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data analysis</li> </ul>

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

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

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## Annex 4: Mission Agenda

### Evaluation Mission Agenda

September 9 to 15, 2007

Date and Time	Subject	Location
<b>Sunday September 9</b>		
14:00	JJ Bellamy: Arrival at Otopeni Airport with Air France (pick up arranged by Marshal Tourism)	Otopeni Driver: George Raducu Mobile: 0722205786
14:45	Check in Hotel Helvetia	Hotel Helvetia Charles de Gaulle Square 13 tel. 021-223.0566 fax. +40-21-223.0567 e-mail: <a href="mailto:helvetia@ines.ro">helvetia@ines.ro</a> ( <a href="http://www.helvetia.hotel.tourneo.ro/F_New/">http://www.helvetia.hotel.tourneo.ro/F_New/</a> )
17:00	Preliminary informal meeting: JJ/Lucian/Monica	One of the restaurants around or UNDP office
<b>Monday September 10</b>		
8:00	Breakfast with Philip Desmet	Hotel Helvetia
10:00	Introductory meeting with Mr. Viorel Rosca, Macin Biodiversity project manager	Hotel Helvetia
10:30	Introductory meeting with Deputy Resident Representative Mr Thore Hansen and Ms. Monica Moldovan, Project Manager	UNDP office Primaverii Blvd.48A 021-2017812
11:30	Mr. Dragos Mihai, Head of International Cooperation Department, National Forest Administration (NFA)	NFA office Magheru Blvd 31, Sector 1, <a href="http://www.rosilva.ro">www.rosilva.ro</a> Mobile:0723849096
12:30	Lunch	
14:00	Mr. Silviu Megan, Director of Protected Areas and Biodiversity Department, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD)	MESD office Libertatii Blvd.12 Sector 5, Mobile:0745592881
15:30	Mr Danut Iacob, General Director of Forestry Management Unit, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)	MADR office Carol Blvd. 24, 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor room 134 Mobile:0723667322
17:30	Meeting with Mr. Andrei Blumer, president of the Ecotourism Association in Romania <a href="http://www.eco-romania.ro/cuprins/aboutus/index.php?id=1">http://www.eco-romania.ro/cuprins/aboutus/index.php?id=1</a>	UNDP office
19:00	Pick up by Marshal Turism driver from UNDP office Drive to Otopeni Airport Flight to Baia Mare	UNDP office/Otopeni Airport <b>Hotel Rivulus</b> str. Culturii, nr. 3 Tel/Fax:+40 262 216 302 <a href="http://www.hotelrivulus.ro">www.hotelrivulus.ro</a>
23:00	Dinner with Costel Bucur, Park Director/Project Manager	Hotel Rivulus
<b>Tuesday September 11</b>		
9.30	Ms. Edith Pop and Mr. Vlad Radu, WWF- Baia Mare	WWF offices in Baia Mare Blvd Unirii 18, room 204; tel: 0262224035
10:30	Mr. Iulin Szekely, Director of Area Somes – Tisa, Romanian Waters Authority Ms. Simona Vascan, Engineer Public Relations, Romanian Waters Authority	Apele Romane office Str Hortensiei nr 2 Tel 02620225044

Date and Time	Subject	Location
12:00	Mr. Iancu Vorel, Director Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Baia Mare Mr. Pop Ioan, Biodiversity Unit, EPA Ms. Oana Danci Projects/Programs department, EPA	EPA Baia Mare Iza Str nr 1 Tel 0262-276304
1:00	Lunch	
15:30	Ms. Gyoengyike Bundi, Prefect of Maramures County Mr. Petrus Loan, European Integration Unit	Prefecture Baia Mare Str Gheorghe Sincai 46 Tel 0262-217034
16:30	Ms Delia Ruzsa, Department of European Integration and Projects/Programmes, Maramures County Council Ms. Monica Pacurar, Technical Assistance Department	County Council office Gheoghe Sincai str 46 0262-211947
17:30	Dr. Radu Hotea, Ecological Society of Maramures (ESM)	ESM office Mr Radu Hotea 0741038662
18:30	Trip to Viseu de Sus / discussion with Mr. Costel Bucur, Park Director/Project Manager and Mr. Alin, Park Chief Accountant/Project Financial and Administration Assistant	Park Administration office Gabriela Hotel Manager; Ms Ciolpan Gabriela, tel. 0742425979
22:00	Dinner with Mr. Costel Bucur, Park Director/Project Manager and Mr. Alin, Park Chief Accountant/Project Financial and Administration Assistant	Gabriela hotel
<b>Wednesday September 12</b>		
9:30	Mr. Iom Petrovai, Chief of Ruscova Forest District Mr. Vasile Timis, Territorial Inspectorate for Forest Regime and Hunting	Str 22 Decembrie 36 Tel 0262-211850
11:45	Mr. Bumbar Vasile, Mayor	Municipality of Bistra
12:45	Visit surrounding communities and school of Valea Viseului	
14:00	Lunch	
15:00	Mr. Costel Bucur, Park Director/Project Manager Mr. Alin, Park Chief Accountant/Project Financial and Administration Assistant	MMNP Office
20:00	Dinner with Park Administration Team	MMNP Office
<b>Thursday September 13</b>		
10:30	Mr. Cristian Cornea, MMNP Community Outreach Officer	MMNP Office
11:30	Visit to tourist operator EcoTours limited Mr. Leopold Langtaler, Administrator Mr. Michael Schneeberger	EcoTour offices
13:30	Mr. Ciolpan Vasile, Mr. Coviza Gabriel, and Mr. Pop Gavriila, MMNP Rangers	MMNP Office, Viseul de Sus, Maramures County
14:00	Trip back to Baia Mare and check in Hotel Rivulus	Hotel Rivulus
16:30	Mr. Marinel Kovacs, President Maramures County Council	County Council office
20:00	Dinner with Mr. Costel Bucur, Park Director/Project Manager and Mr. Alin, Park Chief Accountant/Project Financial and Administration Assistant	Restaurant in Baia Mare
<b>Friday December 14</b>		
6:05	Departure from Baia Mare/ Arrival to Bucharest	Otopeni Airport
7:30	Check in hotel	Hotel Helvetia
8:30	Ms. Monica Moldovan, UNDP Project Manager	Hotel Helvetia
9:30	Mr. Octavian Arsene, General Director, General Division for Development and International relations, Ministry for SMEs, Trade, Tourism and Liberal Professions	Dinicu Golescu Boulevard, no. 38, sector 1, Bucharest

Date and Time	Subject	Location
11:00	Mr Mihai Zotta, Director of Protected Areas Unit, NFA	NFA offices Blvd General Gh Magheru 31, Sector 1 Mobile: 0743022772 <a href="http://www.rosilva.ro">www.rosilva.ro</a>
13:30	Lunch with Ms. Monica Moldovan, UNDP Project Officer	
15:45	Ms Maria Elena Teodorescu, GEF Operational Focal Point, MESD	MESD Blvd Libertatii 12, Sector 5 0722798338 <a href="http://www.mappm.ro">www.mappm.ro</a>
17:00	Debriefing Meeting with Mr. Thore Hansen and Ms. Monica Moldovan	UNDP office
<b>Saturday September 15</b>		
10:00	Jean-Jo -pick up from Hotel Helvetia by Marshal transport Lucian- departure to Galati	Hotel Helvetia

## Annex 5: Interview Guide

# Interview Guide

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**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?*

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- 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?

### ***Future directions for the Project***

- I.6. 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.7. How could the Project better target and address the priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries?

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

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- II.1. How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?
  - o Stakeholders make Maramures Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational;
  - o Stakeholders strengthen environmental governance across Maramures;
  - o Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation within MMNP.
- 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?

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

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- 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...)?

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

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- IV.1. Will the Project achieve its long term objective that is the biodiversity of Maramures Mountains Natural Park in Romania's Northern Carpathian Mountains is effectively conserved by adopting an effective protected area management model?
- IV.2. Is the Project effective in addressing the threat to an effective biodiversity conservation and protected areas management?
- Habitat fragmentation and degradation have been identified as the most serious threats to biodiversity in the Maramures area;
  - Aquatic habitat degradation: Over 90 small wood mills in the region produce over 43,000 m3 of sawdust per year, which are mainly deposited along riverbanks or in ad hoc dumpsites;
  - Direct exploitation of wildlife and Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP): Wildlife is under growing pressure from increased hunting and collecting, but the precise level of this threat is unknown
  - Uncontrolled tourism: The area has a very high tourism potential, being already a famous regional tourist destination for its local culture -- its traditional festivals and renowned wooden churches, houses and gates
- IV.3. How is the Project effective in achieving the objectives of the UNCBD?

***Future directions for the Project***

- IV.4. 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?

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

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- 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?

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**VI. ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THE PROJECT?**

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*Thank you very much for your input.*

## Annex 6: List of People Interviewed

Name	Position / Contact	Organization
Alin	MMNP Chief Accountant/Project Financial and Administration Assistant	MMNP Office, Viseul de Sus, Maramures County
Blumer Andrei	President	Ecotourism Association in Romania <a href="http://www.eco-romania.ro/cuprins/aboutus/index.php?id=1">http://www.eco-romania.ro/cuprins/aboutus/index.php?id=1</a>
Bucur Costel	MMNP Director/Project Manager	
Bumbar Vasile	Mayor	Municipality of Bistra
Ciolpan Vasile	MMNP Ranger	MMNP Office, Viseul de Sus, Maramures County
Cornea Cristian	MMNP Community Outreach Officer	MMNP Office, Viseul de Sus, Maramures County
Coviza Gabriel	MMNP Ranger	MMNP Office, Viseul de Sus, Maramures County
Danut Iacob	General Director of Forestry Management Unit, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) Mobile:0723667322	MADR office Carol Blvd. 24, 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor room 134
Desmet Philip	Consultant	
Dinu Adriana	Regional Technical Advisor	UNDP Regional Office, Bratislava
Dragos Mihai	Head of International Cooperation Department, National Forest Administration (NFA) Mobile:0723849096	NFA office Magheru Blvd 31, Sector 1, <a href="http://www.rosilva.ro">www.rosilva.ro</a>
Griffin Jeffrey	Consultant	
Gyoengyike Bundi	Prefect of Maramures County Tel 0262-217034	Prefecture Baia Mare Str Gheorghe Sincai 46
Iancu Vorel	Director Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Baia Mare Tel 0262-276304	EPA Baia Mare Iza Str nr 1
Iom Petrovai	Chief of Ruscova Forest District Tel 0262-211850	Str 22 Decembrie 36
Iulin Szekely	Director of Area Somes – Tisa, Romanian Waters Authority Tel 02620225044	Apele Romane office Str Hortensiei nr 2
Langtaler Leopold	Administrator	EcoTour offices
Marinel Kovacs	President Maramures County Council	Maramures County Council office

Name	Position / Contact	Organization
Mihai Zotta	Director of Protected Areas Unit, NFA	NFA offices Blvd General Gh Magheru 31, Sector 1 Mobile: 0743022772 <a href="http://www.rosilva.ro">www.rosilva.ro</a>
Moldovan Monica	Project Manager	UNDP office Primaverii Blvd.48A 021-2017812
Oana Danci	Projects/Programs department, EPA Tel 0262-276304	EPA Baia Mare Iza Str nr 1
Octavian Arsene	General Director, General Division for Development and International relations, Ministry for SMEs, Trade, Tourism and Liberal Professions	Dinicu Golescu Boulevard, no. 38, sector 1, Bucharest
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## Annex 7: Project Major Achievements

Expected Outcome	Actual Achievements
<p><b>Outcome 1:</b> Stakeholders make Maramures Mountains Natural Park (MMNP) fully operational.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MMNP office refurbished and operational.</li> <li>• Creation of the MMNP Administration as a legal, staffed entity.</li> <li>• Nine park staff hired and employed by NFA. PA staff equipped with modern field equipment. PA staff trained in key park management areas: 5 Park staff trained in GIS; 1 trained in serving as field guide for tourists; 1 trained in developing network of thematic trails for education; 2 staff trained in chain saw use for trail construction and maintenance.</li> <li>• Preliminary outline of Management Plan agreed upon and full management planning process in place. Visitor center for Park completed; first digitized GIS map of Vaser valley produced; Contracts completed for construction of field cabins.</li> <li>• Web site serving as a tool and conduit for students and other stakeholders to learn about the Park, to enquire about study opportunities and to develop and implement work-study programs with the Park.</li> <li>• River clean-up public awareness/involvement program continues to exceed expectations in terms of number of communities involved (seven in 2007 vs. 3 in 2006), participation (over 350 people in 2007, vs. 150 in 2006), level of partnering (trucks donated by city), and area cleaned of solid waste (9 km of river in 2007, vs. 2 km 2006).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 2:</b> Stakeholders Strengthen Environmental Governance Across Maramures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Park Administration approval is now required for any land-use change within Park boundaries. County Council agrees to obtain approval from Park Administration for land designation changes. EPA of Maramures requires that all development applications to be first approved by the Park before it will consider them for approval. There is an increase of the number of people now aware of the law and the role that the Park Administration plays in the development planning review.</li> <li>• GIS Map for Maramures Park will be provided for free by the Ministry of Environment and Water Management. Official letter on this mater from the Ministry has been provided.</li> <li>• Training session on the elaboration of management plan for local stakeholders has been held.</li> <li>• First set of data for the management plan already collected (i.e number of inhabitants, type of land use, land ownership for each village/town etc).</li> <li>• Landscape-scale biodiversity conservation plan under development with input of expert landscape ecologist.</li> <li>• Capacity for regional planning is strengthened among Park, municipal and county council partners through successful study tour to Austria and Slovenia to see how park administrations and local communities work together.</li> <li>• Regulations and guidelines for maintaining traditional building styles in Maramures Park completed and under consideration by main municipalities and stakeholder groups (architects, county council).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 3:</b> Stakeholders recognize and begin to realize real value in natural capital, strengthening the link between sustainable use and conservation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecotourism reps from England tour the Park, launching ecotourism initiative.</li> <li>• Forest certification workshop for public and private owners has been delivered.</li> <li>• Co-funding for energy efficiency/saw dust reduction secured.</li> <li>• Saw dust briquette pilot grantee identified, agreement signed and facility under construction.</li> <li>• Four biomass boilers installed in local school to burn sawdust briquettes with 200 tonnes burned during winter of 2006/2007.</li> <li>• Environmental economics study of ecosystem services in MMNP well underway and scheduled for completion in the Fall 2007.</li> <li>• Cooperation agreement with WWF signed regarding integrated forest management planning in Maramures.</li> <li>• Partnership formed and protocol signed with WWF to find solutions and identify funding sources together with Ukraine and Hungary for sustainable management of floodplain areas in the upper Tisza River catchment.</li> </ul>

Source: MMNP Project PIRs

## Annex 8: Risk Management

Type of Risk	Risk	Management Response	Status
Financial	The NFA can not reimburse the park administration with the 2005 VAT	<p>05/06/2006 The project team will take necessary actions in order to ensure that all acquisition are done without VAT and will continue to work towards getting the 2005 VAT back.</p> <p>12/12/2006 During November 2006, half of the amount was returned to the project budget by the NFA. By the end of the year, the total amount should be reimbursed.</p> <p>19/04/2007 The second tranche of 2005 VAT was recovered by the MMNP administration during February 2007</p>	N
Financial	US\$/RON exchange rate loss of about 4,5%, representing around 6,000 US\$	<p>03/08/2006 This project is NEX executed. UNDP CO is making advance payment in Romanian currency – RON. The financial reports are recorded in Atlas with the date when they are approved (three months later on a quarterly basis). Due to the 2005 UN/RON fluctuation (the US\$ was smaller in the month when we made the advance and bigger when it was reported), we have registered a loss of about 4.5% of the total advance. UNDP CO has requested advise from HQ.</p> <p>12/12/2006 No further developments on this issue.</p>	N
Organisational	The approval process of the Scientific and Advisory Council of the park is delayed by the Ministry of Environment and Water Management	<p>05/06/2006 These structures are in charge of approving the tourist trails, management plans, regulates the activities inside the park.. Any delay in approving these structures will have an impact on the project activities timetable. The project team is lobbying the Ministry of Environment to speed up the apporval process.</p> <p>12/12/2006 The Government Decision has been issued in August, therefore the first Advisory and Scientific Council meetings took place in early September 2006.</p> <p>19/04/2007 Advisory and Scientific Council was approved by the Ministry of Environment and Water Management through the Minister's order nr 563/June 6 2006.</p>	N
Regulatory	The restructuring of the protected area system in Romania	<p>05/06/2006 There is a possibility that protected areas could be moved from under the NFA to the MoE, which would create delays and have unforeseen impacts on the sustainability of MMNP. This is beyond the scope of the project to influence, but the Project Director is lobbying strenuously to prevent this change from occurring.</p> <p>12/12/2006 The political discussion around establishing the National Agency for Protected Areas is still on going. The UNDP CO Environmental Focal Point is observing the process and lobby the Government counterparts. The current law draft will not bring significant changes to the actual sett up, therefore not representing a risk for the projects . The law should be approved in early 2007. UNDP CO will follow up.</p> <p>19/04/2007 The National Agency for Protected Areas will be established within the Ministry of Environment and Water Management ; however it won't be in charge of the administration of protected areas already managed by the NFA but will have a coordinating role with inputs in the management process.</p>	N
Regulatory	Land restitution in Romania could significantly hamper and/or delay forest certification efforts and offers new challenges for Maramures Park management planning	<p>03/08/2006 The project team is discussing its options for moving forward on forest certification in what will be the remaining state-owned lands in the Park with the NFA. The project is increasing its efforts to reach out to private forestland owners. The project is working with private forest owners to establish a private forest owners association and is working with a local NGO to raise awareness among private forest owners regarding the Park and how the Park should be an opportunity for them to add value to their forestlands by participating in forest certification. The project team is also</p>	Y

Type of Risk	Risk	Management Response	Status
		<p>working with WWF to consider different options in working with private forest owners to secure protection of priority areas within the Park and find win-win solutions for private forest owners when their lands are included into priority management areas for the Park.</p> <p>19/04/2007 Restitution of forests is an on-going risk to the conservation efforts. The challenge brought by the land restitution law is still ongoing, as the private owners are currently in possession of 40% of the land but the % is likely to go up to 60%. New landowners are extensively cutting the wood and efforts of raising awareness among the new landowners will remain a priority. Most likely certification process will only be starting once the land restitution claims will be settled.</p>	

Source: MMNP Project Quarterly Progress Report