

SMALL GRANTS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HABITAT/ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA FOR APPLICANTS

The protection of nature and the promotion of bio-diversity can only be sustainable if the people who are geographically, economically and culturally close to the areas involved are at ease and happy with the protection of nature.

The IUCN office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO), along with the partner organizations – PAP/RAC, GWP-Med, TdV and INCA is in charge of the implementation of the Small Grants Program for NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, University and local communities residing within the Buna River-Velipoje Protected Landscape (BRVPL) located in the Shkodra Municipality of northwestern Albania. The program is financed by the MAVA Foundation.

The SGP is a part of the Buna Delta Protection Project (www.livingbuna.org). The overall goal of the project is to ensure the long-term conservation of species and habitats in the Buna River Velipoje Protected Landscape with particular emphasis on halting or significantly reducing unsustainable development and water abstraction. In order to address these threats site-based measures are planned to be carried out within the frames of Small Grants Program.

1. Small Grants Program objectives

The aim of the Small Grants Program is to contribute to the ecosystem and habitat restoration of the BRVPL through development of small-scale initiatives at the site level while at the same time support improvement of socio-economic situation of local communities residing within the target area being the users of its natural resources. All actions should be in line with the objectives of the Protected Landscape and thus assisting implementation of the Management Plan*. Aimed at preserving Protected Landscape's ecological and cultural values, while developing untapped potentials of socio-economic activities directly linked to the sustainable use of the services granted by the existing ecosystem.

The SGP has the following four thematic priorities:

- 1) Coastal habitat restoration;**
- 2) Agro-environmental incentive schemes including improving sustainability of irrigation systems;**
- 3) Sustainable tourism sector/infrastructure development;**
- 4) Sustainable fisheries.**

* BRVPL management plan objectives are presented in the Annex 1.

2. Amount of financing

The financing approved by the Small Grants Fund will be based on specific needs of every project, as submitted by the applicants through their proposed project budget. The project proposal will be reviewed and approved for financing by the Small Grant's evaluation committee representatives which on the other hand will reserve the right to modify the proposed project budget to better reflect the project's proposed activities or to align the budget with the program requirements. The total budget of the program is 160,000 Euro, which will be shared among four thematic priorities equally:

- **Minimum amount of grant per project: 2,000.00 EUR**
- **Maximum amount of grant per project implemented by individuals/non-legal entities: 5,000.00 EUR**
- **Maximum amount of grant per project implemented by organizations/legal entities/business operators: 10,000.00 EUR**
- **Maximum amount of grant per project for consortium of several partners: 20,000 EUR in case the project covers more thematic priorities the maximum amount can be increased accordingly.**
- **Coastal habitat restoration projects are eligible to receive up to 30,000 EUR each**

Co-financing is also encouraged but is optional and not mandatory.

Priority will be given to the projects that envisage co-financing from applicants.

Note: in case there are unused funds left due low number of applications, the amount of each grant can be increased accordingly.

3. Project duration and Timeline for the Grant Program

Minimum duration of the proposed project is 2 months, while maximum project duration is 7 months. The projects under this Program should be implemented from October 2019, and should have finished by 30 May 2020.

Call for the Small Grants shall be opened on **21 August 2019 at 09:00 and lasts until 23 September 2019 by 14:30.**

All applicants will be notified about the decision in 15 working days from the closing date of the call.

4. Thematic priorities / main activities

The small grants projects will address one or more of the four following thematic priorities:

a) Coastal habitat restoration projects

Brief situational analyses and existing threats:

The BRVPL covers one of the largest and most important wetland systems in Albania. It includes a great variety of wetland habitats; some of them listed in the Habitat Directive 92/43/CEE as being priority areas for conservation. Within the BRPL the overall occurrence of wetlands has been greatly reduced through drainage and conversion to agricultural land. Key wetland areas include the Buna River and delta, Domni Marsh and Viluni Lagoon, and the Velipojë wetlands encapsulated within the core conservation area of the BRPL.

The main threat to water resources is the increasing level of pollution, such as the release of untreated wastewaters; poor management of solid wastes and increased use of agricultural chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides. Solid wastes carried from Shkodra by the Buna River are deposited into the sea, resulting in pollution of coastal areas too. These impacts represent a direct threat to wetland systems and to human populations in the form of contaminated drinking water supplies. The washing up of solid wastes on Velipoje beach also creates a significant concern.

Examples of the eligible activities (these are only examples and other activities that are aimed at coastal habitat restoration can also be considered):

- Afforestation of degraded and fragmented riverine forest areas along the Buna River;
- Restoration of remnant sand dune areas in order to reconstruct the typical habitat sequence for sand dunes;
- Restoration of important habitats within BRVPL;
- Restoration of rare plants species in order to increase their numbers (if applicable);
- Inventory of Biodiversity rich and vulnerable coastal areas/habitats.

A sound preparatory work and thorough planning should inform all restoration work. Projects should clearly demonstrate that all precautionary measures are taken to prevent damage and/or deterioration of priority habitats or have any other adverse impact.

b) Agro-environmental incentive schemes including irrigation

Situational analyses and existing threats:

Key constrains in agriculture include land fragmentation and the small farm sizes, limited levels of production, difficulties in accessing credit and therefore investing in mechanization and irrigation, and in accessing markets. Additional threats relate to the high risk of flooding and the associated poor status of some of the drainage canals and pump stations. Damage by birds to crops and losses of livestock to wildlife is also present, but are not considered to be significant.

The extent of wetlands within the BRPL have been drastically reduced through drainage works which have enabled their conversion to agricultural uses, to the extent that the bulk of the floodplain area is now under intensive agricultural production. Additional threats come in the form of deteriorating water quality, in particular relating to run-off from adjacent agricultural fields and high levels of utilization by livestock.

Examples of the eligible activities (these are only examples and some other activities that are aimed at creation of agro-environmental incentive schemes can also be considered in order to improve agricultural practices and become more environmentally friendly):

- Environmental friendly storage containers for manure (to reduce leakage of nitrogen into the ground water and afterwards in to the river);
- Protect valuable/rare/endemic habitats within the agricultural land by putting fences to avoid overgrazing by sheep;
- Improve irrigation systems in order to save water;
- Growing of medicinal plants/herbs native to the protected landscape and harvested

- unsustainably/illegally (Salvia);
- Improvement of water quality.

c) Sustainable tourism sector/infrastructure development

Situational analyses and existing threats:

The main tourism activity is summer beach tourism. Visitors typically stay for only a short period (from a few days to two weeks). This type of high volume – low spending tourism results in high pressures to local resources, for example in terms of demand for services and the management of wastes. It is also a key driver for the on-going uncontrolled urban development.

Sand dunes are another component that is highly threatened, largely due to tourism related impacts in the form of both high levels of direct use (beach tourism) and the development of infrastructure to service the beach tourists. Coastal erosion is another important threat, which is related to upstream dam construction resulting in reduced sediment loads in the Buna River, and hence lower rates of sediment deposition in coastal system.

Examples of the eligible activities (these are only examples and some other activities that are aimed at Sustainable tourism sector/infrastructure development can also be considered):

- Development of thematic eco-friendly walking trails;
- Promote most important habitats, species within the BRVPL (information boards);
- Development of sustainable eco-tourism offers (including accommodation/guesthouses);
- Develop eco-friendly bed and breakfast offer;
- Waste management activities.

Note: community groups can create a joint offer in order to link the service providers and establish a tourism supply chain in the village. For example several representatives of the community will work on improvement of their housing facilities for visitors, others can create catering offers, while some others can establish bakery (if applicable) or traditional handicraft workshops etc.

d) Sustainable fisheries:

Lake Shkodra is the main site of fishing within the area, but additional fishing is carried out within the BRPL in the Buna River, in the sea, and in the larger wetland areas, particularly Viluni Lagoon. Freshwater fish catches appear to be declining, probably due to current fishing practices which are considered to be unsustainable and to be reflected in diminishing fish catches. Fishermen in the sea face strong competition from larger vessels that launch from the nearby Port. Increasing levels of pollution pose a potential risk in terms of quality of fish for consumption.

Examples of the eligible activities (these are only examples and some other activities that are aimed at development of sustainable fisheries can also be considered);

- Establishment of eco-friendly small private fish farms;
- Supporting sustainable fish breeding facilities;

- Support traditional extensive and nature-friendly fishing activities (renewal of fishing equipment etc.).

Note: above mentioned activities are just examples and some other additional interventions will also be considered. Proposed activities are based on the Management plan and suggestions of RAPA.

5. Eligibility and geographical coverage

BRVPL represent the initial intervention zone. All projects must be carried out within its boundaries covering the following municipal units: Rrethinat, Ana e Malit, Dajç, Velipojë, Bërdicë, Bushat, Balldren i Ri, Shëngjin.

Representatives, legal (organizations) and non-legal (individuals) entities of all communities located within the BRVPL that wish to improve the state of their livelihoods in a sustainable manner through the small grants scheme are eligible to participate. In addition, NGOs, CSOs, University located in the municipality of Shkodra and the adjustment zone are also qualified if proposed projects are within the target PL boundaries. Organizations that are based outside of the target area are only eligible to apply if they verify their experience with BRVPL and work in coalition with locals.

Organizations or community groups are also welcome to create a coalition/alliance and apply for grants.

Note: projects implementing the following activities will be favored:

- **On-the-ground actions** implemented with a participatory and inclusive process, ensuring strong involvement of the target local communities.
- **Income-generating activities** related to the sustainable development of tourism, natural resources, sustainable agriculture and biodiversity.
- **Activities contributing to the objectives of BRVPL**

6. Selection Criteria

Projects will be selected according to the following criteria:

- Technical and economic feasibility of the project;
- Applicants must be permanent residents of the BRVPL
- Projects that demonstrate to be sustainable in the long term
- Contribution to the improved social and economic conditions of local population;
- Expected impact on coastal wetlands, sustainable management of natural resources, sustainable tourism, sustainable fisheries;
- Social and cultural acceptance: involvement of local people, involvement of women;
- For local communities: project that are easy to implement and will result in increased income for household aligned with the PL objectives.

7. Selection and evaluation committee



Applications will be assessed by an Evaluation Committee. The committee will be composed of project partners: IUCN (chairman of the Committee), PAP/RAC, GWP-Med, Tour du Valat, INCA and representatives of NAPA, RAPA-Shkodra. Municipality of Shkodra will act as an observer. The Evaluation Committee will assess and evaluate applications against the mandatory selection criteria using specially designed assessment table with scores. If the mandatory criteria are met, successful applicants will be selected by the Committee and results will be sent to the observer (Municipality of Shkodra) for their final approval.

Evaluation Committee is composed of the following members:

- IUCN
- PAP/RAC
- GWP-Med
- Tour du Valat
- INCA
- 2 Representatives of NAPA/RAPA
- 1 representative of Shkodra Municipality

Throughout the process of implementation, the newly established management committee of the BRVPL will be informed about progress and selection results.

8. Application procedure

All application have to be submitted as a structured documentation package within the given submission deadline to the Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania (INCA) electronically to the following address: info@inca-al.org or as a hard copy directly to RAPA office in Shkodra (ish institute I misrit dhe orizit – Lagija Dobrac, Shkoder – Autostrada Shkoder – Hani i Hotit). Only complete applications will be accepted using the templates provided (Annex 2). Representatives of INCA will be providing support to all prospective applicants in order to assist them with application process and answer their questions.

After the call for receiving project proposals is announced potential applicants will have **32 days** to submit their proposals. The committee will evaluate the proposals and inform all applicants about the selection in **3 weeks** from the submission deadline. Following the Evaluation Committee's decision to award the project, the applicant will be notified about the positive decision on financing and subsequently offered to sign the small grant's agreement.

All applicants must have active bank accounts in euros in order to be able to receive respective installments.

9. Implementation, monitoring and reporting

The signing of the contract and the allocation of funds under the Small Grant Program will take place in October 2019. All applicants will receive the funds in two instalments. The first instalment in the amount of 40% after signing the contract and the other 60% after the approval of the Final Report. When the project reaches the middle of its implementation period the grantees will be requested to submit interim progress reports (templates will



be provided) pertaining to project progress, describing all completed and currently on-going activities, as well as actions planned for the rest of the project period.

After submitting the progress report the field visit by the member of the evaluation committee (representative of RAPA, local project coordinator) will be carried out. The purpose of the monitoring is to assess the progress of the project in implementing the task activities, and to assure that financial expenditures are in accordance with the approved budget for the given period. Monitoring visits will typically include a review of project implementation, as well as in-person meetings with relevant grantee and site visits. If the monitoring visit has identified any concerns, the grant recipient will be required to correct these deficiencies within agreed timelines. Further financing depends on the nature of problem and it will be suspended until the problematic issues are resolved.

Grant recipients are required to submit the final progress report by the completion of the project activities. The final report will be prepared according to the format provided and should include all invoices/receipts for purchasing good and services specified in the application form.

Validation of final report by evaluation committee is a requirement for receiving the final payment

10. Required documents

Non-legal entities (individual applicants):

- Copy of the ID card
- Individual certificate issued by the administrative units not older than three months.

Legal entities (NGO, University):

- The Court Registration Act and the Founding Act of the Organization (copy of the original)
- Organization Statute (copy)
- Properly completed Legal Identification Form
- Tax number (NIPT) (copy)
- A document that certifies the active status of NGO (online portal E-Albania)
- A document that certifies zero tax obligations towards state agencies (online portal E-Albania)
- Proof of registry in Albania for at least one year (Shkodra Region)

Legal entities (business operators):

- The registration document from the National center of Business Registration (copy)
- Properly completed Legal Identification Form
- Tax number (NIPT) (copy)
- A document that certifies the active status of Business (online portal E-Albania)
- A document that certifies zero tax obligations towards state agencies (online portal E-Albania)
- Proof of registry in Albania for at least one year (Shkodra Region)

11. Termination of financing

If, after midterm evaluation, the projects that received first installments are not able to show the required progress, the contracts will be terminated and the grant recipients will be obliged to refund all or any part of the amount received.

If the grant recipient terminates the agreement or abandons the project, the grant recipient shall be obliged to refund to the entire amount disbursed to the grant recipient.

Annex 1: Vision and objectives of Buna River Velipoje Protected Landscape

Vision: Management of the BRPL is aimed at preserving its ecological and cultural values, while developing untapped potentials of socio-economic activities directly linked to the sustainable use of the services granted by the Protected Landscape's ecosystem.

Consistently, two main objectives are defined for management of the Protected Landscape as outlined below:

Objective 1: Conservation of ecological and cultural values

- Conservation of rangelands
- Conservation of wildlife
- Conservation of water resources

Objective 2: Development of livelihoods based on sustainable use of ecosystem services

- Development of agriculture and livestock sectors
- Development of tourism sector
- Development of safe supplies of drinking water

Annex 2

SMALL GRANTS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HABITAT/ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

Application form

1. Information about the applicant

Name of the Applicant:

Address, phone, email:

Status (firm, NGO, individual, etc.):

Responsible persons for project implementation:



Organization's experience

Describe why you/your organization is best suited to carry out this project. What relevant experience do you have to address the conservation concern that this project is aiming to address? (maximum 200 words)

Past relevant projects

Provide a brief description of previous projects (maximum 3) your organization has been involved in that are relevant for this application. (maximum 300 words)



2. Project Title (should be short, limited to one line)

Project duration

Duration: <i>(must not exceed 7 months)</i>	Start: DD/MM/YYYY	End: DD/MM/YYYY
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SGP funding request

<i>Project total budget</i>	<i>Own contribution</i>	<i>SGP funding request</i>
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3. Choose thematic priority

Coastal habitat restoration	
Agro-environmental incentive schemes including improving sustainability of irrigation systems	
Sustainable tourism sector/infrastructure development	
Sustainable fisheries	



4. Area of the BVLP that would benefit from the project implementation

Project location

Define the geographic location where project activities will take place, indicating whether the site includes any priority habitats. For habitat restoration/large scale projects, please provide GPS coordinates and a map of the project location and boundaries. (maximum 250 words)

5. Location of the project activities (Municipality, district, village, address if applicable)

6. How many people will be involved in the implementation

Key project staff

Please include the project staff; add rows as needed.

Name:	Position in the project:

Please indicate if the project involves subcontracting and if yes provide details

7. How many people will benefit



Project stakeholders and beneficiaries

Please indicate which stakeholders you plan to involve in the project. Indicate how many people/households will benefit from the project and how. Disaggregate numbers by direct and indirect beneficiaries as well as by gender and age class wherever possible. (maximum 400 words)

8. Project description (describe step by step activities that will lead to the final result, describe what kind of resources are needed in order to implement your project. Who will be the consumer of your service/products? 1-page maximum)

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to write their response to question 9.

9. **Choose which objectives project addresses and** describe what will be achieved through the project, describe an outcome - effect or change that the project is supposed to cause (½ -page maximum)



Objective 1	Objective 1: Conservation of ecological and cultural values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation of rangelands • Conservation of wildlife • Conservation of water resources
Objective 2	Development of livelihoods based on sustainable use of ecosystem services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of agriculture and livestock sectors • Development of tourism sector • Development of safe supplies of drinking water

10. Justification how the project contributes to the objectives of BRVPL (1/3 of the page)

11. Socio-economic and environmental impacts (describe how will your social or economic conditions be improved as a result of the project and what kind of positive effect it can have to the environment/nature in which you live or work. ½ -page maximum)



12. The project result will last for

- a. 1 year
- b. 3-5
- c. More than 5

13. How you will see the future/sustainability of your project (1/3 of the page)

14. Project budget



Total value of the project:
 Requested amount:
 Co-financing from the applicant:

Description of costs (material, services)	Quantity	Unit price	Total price	Requested amount	Co-financing
Total					