

TERMS OF REFERENCE

FOR

Assessment of the Impacts of Nature-Based Tourism and Collection of Non-Timber Forest Products on the Conservation Status of Ecosystems, Habitats, and Species in Mavrovo and Shar Mountain National Parks

Organization:	CNVP (Connecting Natural Values & People)
CNVP Project Leader	Nehat Ramadani
CNVP assignment focal point:	Evgenija Krstevska
Implementer:	One Consultant from North Macedonia (referred to as the “Implementer”)
Project:	Sustainable use of natural resources for transboundary socio-economic development of protected areas in North Macedonia and Albania (Shar Mountains National Park and Mavrovo National Park)
Region:	Shar Mountains National Park and Mavrovo National Park (Tearce, Jegunovce, Tetovo, Bogovinje, Vrapciste, Gostivar and Mavrovo-Rostuse)
Duration:	February 2023 – September 5
Component:	Project Activities 1.1 and Activity 1.3

1. Introduction and background

The most striking feature of Biodiversity in the Mavrovo National Park is its high degree of species diversity, including 13 endemic species and 29 plant species of national importance. Mavrovo National Park is recognized as the core area of the Balkan lynx, a critically endangered taxon on the Global IUCN Red List. Uncontrolled construction in Mavrovo is one of the barriers that stakeholders need to deal with. Tourism hiking and biking paths are old and the information is outdated. Migration of families and particularly the youth is also a big barrier for the region.

The Shar Mountain National Park encompasses 28 lakes and many other natural resources. Its population of 26,000 people is spread across 30 villages, and it is hoped that the area's new national park status will help revitalize the local economy through eco-tourism. Shar is an area that is considered a treasure trove of biodiversity, a home of two-thirds of all plant species in North Macedonia and rich end endemic plant and animal life. It contains exceptional natural beauty, geological diversity, hydrological characteristics, landscape, and cultural values. One of the endangered species found in this area is the elusive Balkans lynx. Illegal logging has until now plagued the mountain range, resulting in an increased frequency of flash floods; Hereby, the natural environment is still under siege, as businesses seek to develop parts of the park and leverage the land for capital gains. Before the land was converted to a national park, businesses gained from concessions and subsidies to build and operate small hydro plants that appropriate the water from mountain springs. Now that plans for the park are underway, the businesses are refusing to give up their lucrative ventures. In the area, 11 micro hydro power plants have been built and are in use, and four more are under construction. Ecosystem restoration is also essential to slow or reverse species loss.

CNVP Foundation is implementing **“Sustainable use of natural resources for transboundary socio-economic development of protected areas in North Macedonia and Albania (Korab- Koritnik, Sharra and Albanian Alps)”** project with the financial support of PONT. PONT-Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust is the only transboundary conservation trust fund working in the Balkans dedicated to conserving the rich natural heritage of the Prespa -Ohrid, Korab -Shara and Albanian Alps regions, by providing long term funding support to the parks and conservation organizations in the region. The project will be implemented in several protected areas in Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo such as: Korab-Koritnik Nature Park; Shar Mountain National Park, Mavrovo National Park and Albanian Alps National Park and the ecological corridors between them and other protected areas in the PONT Focus Region. In North Macedonia the project will be implemented in the protected areas of 7 municipalities respectively: **Tearce, Jegunovce, Tetovo, Bogovinje, Vrapciste, Gostivar and Mavrovo-Rostuse.**

The PONT project will support local communities in Protected Areas in Albania and North Macedonia to use natural resources in a sustainable way for their socio-economic development. It aims at establishing sustainable models for nature conservation and economic development of the areas, capacity building for the environmental actors, and ensuring government mechanisms are in favour and enable sustainable local development, supporting income generation activities from natural products and services, employment at local businesses, tourist sites and services etc This will be achieved through applying new *Sustainable Use practices*; supporting local organizations, businesses and households; development of *Nature Based Tourism* products and services; marketing and selling techniques; coordinating and involving stakeholders; advocating & lobbying; new governance procedures for Sustainable Use of natural resources; cooperation in transboundary area and Ecological corridors.

The overall objective of the project is:

Promoting sustainable use of the natural resources, through provision and support to local communities for creating a better socio-economic life in harmony with nature

The specific objectives and outputs of the project are:

1. **Sustainable use (SU) of NTFPs in Sharri; Korab-Koritnik and Albanian Alps protected areas contributes to both nature conservation and local community development in these PAs.**

New sustainable use practices are expected to improve biological and cultural diversity, aligning biodiversity protection with social - economic aspirations which is very important for the development of the regions. Sustainable use of PAs can catalyse a wide set of enablers, including transboundary partnerships, stronger local associations, good land management practices, transboundary management of PAs, supporting income generation initiatives, strong leadership, public policies, and polycentric governance of PAs, resulting in market improvements in local wellbeing beyond biodiversity protection. Ecologic corridors can foster tourism development and nature conservation potentially scalable across PAs in three countries while contributing to conserving natural resources in the PAs.

2. **Nature-based tourism (NBT) in Shari; Korab-Koritnik and Albanian Alps protected areas contributes to both nature conservation and local community development in these PAs.**

Nature-based tourism in protected areas of the targeted countries can improve local economies, reduce poverty, and help to develop the rural areas. Protected areas are among the most beautiful areas in the countries and first choices for many tourists and nature lovers. However, it is equally important the sustainable use of PA for tourism purposes by having clear tourism Action Plans, developing tourism products and services

as well as building capacities of rural communities and local businesses to offer tourism services and building the infrastructure considering the habitats and biodiversity protection.

3. Governance mechanisms of Shar, Korab-Koritnik and Albanian Alps enable development of nature-based tourism and other ways of sustainable natural resource use in these PAs.

Identification and harmonisation of governance mechanisms for sustainable development of PAs, among the countries and potentials for governance innovation will be the first intervention of the project. Harmonization of the legal framework for better management of protected areas will be done country based as well as cross border. Transboundary cooperation enables exchange of best practices in managing and benefiting from sustainable management of natural resources. EU new initiatives experiences will be used to improve governance mechanisms in our countries.

2. Objective

This assignment requires for an assessment of the impacts of current and potential nature-based tourism activities and collection of Non-timber Forest Products on the conservation status of ecosystems, habitats, and species in protected areas of Mavrovo and Shar Mountains. It will contribute toward introduction of new practices for protection and sustainable use of natural resource in the area, actions that will bring long term benefits to biodiversity components and communities living in these PAs.

This assignment specifically aims to include activity A.1.1 of the project - rapid assessment targeting information gaps on existing ecosystems, habitats, NTFPs and priority species in Mavrovo and Shar Mountains and A.1.3 - apply new SU practices relevant to priority species including identification of critical threats on biodiversity affected by the ongoing developments, management strategies, climate change and use of these resources, mainly for NFTP-s and nature-based tourism (NBT).

The results of this assignment will provide the basic information and recommendations for two other consultancies for sustainable use of NTFP and development of nature-based tourism in the Protected Areas.

With its specific focus, the assignment will contribute to economic development of rural communities through improvement of harvesting practices and sustainable use of Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP-s) and other natural resources, strengthening capacities for nature-based tourism (NBT) and improving PAs Governance.

3. Tasks, responsibility, and activities

In order to facilitate the successful implementation of the project, CNVP North Macedonia is seeking to engage an external consultant, who is expected to have the below mentioned expertise and qualifications as well as to fulfil the following tasks:

- Desk review (see Attachment 3);
- Desk research on existing documents, management plans, studies, other donor project activities, publications in collaboration with RAPAs (Regional Administration of Protected Areas) staff (see Attachment 3);
- Assess medicinal plants and fungi that are or have the potential to be harvested as NTFPs and assess their conservation status, as well as any harvest restrictions (based on the input from a separate biodiversity consultancy report);
- Identify conservation status of biodiversity & landscape values and potentials for development of nature-based tourism (NBT) including critical threats (based on the input from a separate consultancy report);
- Assess quality data on biodiversity values through participatory approach; RAPAs and other local stakeholders in Mavrovo and Shar Mountains National Park (work together with the other two separate consultants);
- Identify critical threats in both PAs;
- Organize consultation meetings with relevant stakeholders, RAPAs and CNVP; and
- Establish a database on biodiversity values and threats.

The priority areas addressed by this ToR are of high conservation importance and at the same time provide unique opportunities for local development. They are under constant pressure from socio-economic threats. In future, additional pressure from tourism development in the PAs will make an impact on the biodiversity. These pressures will be identified through other consultancy and shared to the biodiversity consultant.

Primary **beneficiaries** of the project are: Regional Administrations of Protected Areas (RAPAs), Municipalities, Local Environmental NGOs, Forest and Pasture Users Associations, producer groups, private businesses, and communities.

The project's **target group** includes also: Local NGOs, government units, small enterprises, informal citizen groups, particularly women and youth and the marginalized groups in general.

Target area includes: Mavrovo and Shar Mountains National Park.

The Consultant should complete his/her tasks by:

- Using participatory approach with relevant stakeholders' representatives, especially RAPAs representatives.
- Assessing the awareness and information of the stakeholders on biodiversity values and threats.

4. Main activities & Timelines

The biodiversity consultant will coordinate together with the other selected consultants from North Macedonia, attend meetings and share the findings during conveying the research. The CNVP Project unit will manage timely exchanging information from all contracted consultants' research.

The biodiversity consultant will conduct a desk research on the existing documents, management plans, studies, other donor project activities, publications in collaboration with RAPAs staff and by using the database (see Attachment 3) provided by the CNVP Project unit. A list of existing documents/studies alongside the provided database will be included in the final report by the consultant.

The biodiversity consultant will make an assessment on the medicinal plants and fungi that are or have the potential to be harvested as NTFPs and assess their conservation status, as well as any harvest restrictions. The findings on the conservation status of NTFPs and MAPs will be provided by the biodiversity consultant to the NTFPs consultant to deliver an Informative package/brochure with the rules and regulation for sustainable harvesting. With a coordination with the NTFPs consultant, the biodiversity consultant will provide data on the species of plants, fungi and other NTFP of current or potential economic benefit and respective recommendations.

The biodiversity consultant will identify the conservation status of biodiversity- & landscape values and potentials for development of nature-based tourism (NBT) including critical threats based on the input from the NBT consultant. Data on biodiversity components and their conservation status at the potential sites for nature-based tourism development will be provided by the biodiversity consultant. Exchanging these findings with the NBT tourism consultant will be required for the NBT consultant to provide proposal on potential tourism products for PAs.

The biodiversity consultant will make an assessment of the quality data on biodiversity values through visible participatory approach (involving inputs from RAPAs and other local stakeholders in Mavrovo and Shar Mountains National) combined with the fieldwork days of the NBT and NTFPs consultants. Within this task, identification of critical threats and biodiversity values will be done by the biodiversity consultant.

An overview of existing threats (direct and indirect) and contributing factors for each conservation target identified opportunities for sustainable economic development will be delivered by the biodiversity consultant.

An updated documentation on the area's biodiversity values will be provided by the biodiversity consultant within this task. The biodiversity consultant will establish a database on biodiversity values and threats, collect the existing information, produce an updated layers and information, and visualise the finding to support further conservation and development of the area.

As supporting documents, the consultants will use public documents in the Attachment 3 of this ToR.

The key assignment outputs and deadlines are set out in the table below. The Implementer will keep CNVP updated on progress towards the completion of these outputs through regular meetings and phone calls.

Detailed Plan of activities:

Activities	Deliverables	Deadline
1.Prepare an action plan and methodology on how the work will be conducted. Agree on the plan and continue the implementation.	Action Plan	First month
2.Desk research on existing documents, management plans, studies, other donor project activities, publications in collaboration with RAPAs staff (see Attachment 3)	List of existing documents/studies	First month
3.Assess medicinal plants and fungi that are or have the potential to be harvested as NTFPs and assess their conservation status, as well as any harvest restrictions (coordinating with the NTFPs consultant).	Data on the species of plants, fungi and other NTFP of current or potential economic benefit and respective recommendations	August 15

<p>4. Identify conservation status of biodiversity & landscape values and potentials for development of nature-based tourism (NBT) including critical threats (coordinating with the NBT consultant).</p>	<p>Data on biodiversity components and their conservation status at the potential sites for nature-based tourism development</p>	<p>April 7</p>
<p>5. Assess quality data on biodiversity values through participatory approach; RAPAs and other local stakeholders in Mavrovo and Shar Mountains National Park (work together with the other two separate consultants)</p>	<p>An updated documentation on the area's biodiversity values. Visible stakeholders' input will be required in the process.</p>	<p>April 7</p>
<p>6. Identify critical threats in both PAs. Organize consultation meetings with relevant stakeholders, RAPAs and CNVP</p>	<p>An overview of existing threats (direct and indirect) and contributing factors for each conservation target identified opportunities for sustainable economic development.</p>	<p>April 3</p>
<p>7. Establish a database on biodiversity values and threats</p>	<p>Collect existing information, produce updated layers and information, visualise the finding to support further conservation and development of the area.</p>	<p>August 15</p>
<p>8. Presentation and final report</p>	<p>PP presentation and final report in Macedonian and summary report in English</p>	<p>September 5</p>

Consultations with Implementer	Briefing and debriefing sessions – interviews, consultations and methodology and progress review the field trips and stakeholder engagements.	Regular meetings and phone calls
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5. Reporting requirements

The Consultant will be required to prepare presentations, progress reports after the completion of each specific task accordingly. The final report will be prepared in Macedonian language and the summary report in English. The Consultant shall be responsible for submitting the deliverables as specified in the ToR and the agreement.

6. Time frame

The assignment will be completed between February 2023 and September 2023. CNVP staff will be available to assist throughout this time.

7. Expertise required

The successful Consultant is required to have:

- University degree in Forestry/ Biology/Nature Conservation/Agriculture and related fields. A master and PhD degree will be an advantage;
- At least 10 years of experience on biodiversity evaluation methods, working with conservation projects;
- Good knowledge of Mavrovo Nature Park and Shar Mountains National Park;
- Very good networking and reputation in the target area;
- Knowledge on Adaptive Management in conservation projects;
- Good facilitation, communication, presentation, and reporting skills; and
- Good command of English language.

8. Financials and facilities

The Consultant will receive a consultancy fee based on the delivery outputs as per the work plan. The consultant is expected to provide a methodology of the assignment and a financial framework based on outputs (days and respective fees). After the selection

process, the consultant will sign the agreement with CNVP, with concrete consultancy days and respective consultancy fee outputs.

9. Contacts and reporting

On daily bases, the Consultant will communicate and coordinate with the CNVP Environmental Project Officer Evgenija Krstevska and the project team. The Ultimately supervision is by the Country Director of CNVP North Macedonia, Nehat Ramadani.

10. Applications:

Please send a technical, working plan and financial offer using the form in Attachment 2, and updated CV in English, by email evgenija.krstevska@cnvp-eu.org and nehat.ramadani@cnvp-eu.org by **16:00 CET on February 13, 2023**.

Questions with regard to this Terms of Reference can be addressed until February 6, 2023, end of working hours. The evaluation of the financial and technical offers will be done based on CNVP procurement rules. The preferred shortlisted candidate will be contacted by the CNVPs clarify outstanding issues and/or to start the contracting process.

11. Attachments:

Attachment 1 - Technical and Financial Proposal Form

Attachment 2 - Time writing format Technical

Attachment 3 - Documents for desk review

Attachment 1 - Technical and Financial Proposal Form

1. **Technical Approach.** Please explain your understanding of the objectives of the assignment, the proposed methodology for carrying out the tasks and obtaining the expected deliverables. Highlight the problems expected in carrying out the assignment and explain the technical approach you would adopt to address them (up to 500 words). Explain in detail the process and techniques to be used to consult key stakeholders under Task 3,6 and 7.
2. **Work Plan.** Respecting the deadlines set out in Section 4 of the ToR, fill in the required information in the table presented in Annex: Time writing format In the Your remarks/location column address the detailed steps/activities related to the task, their duration, phasing and interrelations, demonstrating understanding of the ToR and ability to translate them into a feasible working plan.
3. **Financial Offer.** Provide a lump-sum financial offer, based on the estimated number of person days (as shown in the Work Plan) and the price of your daily fee. The offer should also include any travel and translation costs related to the assignment. The submitted rates and prices shall be in Euros and include all costs, insurances, taxes, fees, expenses, liabilities, obligations, risk, and other elements necessary for an effective completion of the Assignment.



Attachment 2 - Time writing format Technical

Month: _____

Name: _____

		Working hours, spent per (sub) category per day								
	Description of Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	TOTAL hrs:	your remarks/ location
		WEEK 1								
TOTAL HOURS:										
WEEK 2										
	TOTAL HOURS									
WEEK 3										
	TOTAL HOURS									
WEEK 4										
	TOTAL HOURS									

Attachment 3 - Documents for desk review

National legislation:

Law on nature protection

Act for Proclamation of the Forest Area around the Mavrovo Field as National Park" (Official Gazette of the People's Republic of Macedonia No. 10, from May 05, 1949)

Law for Proclamation of a part of Shar Mountains as a National Park (Official Gazette of the People's Republic of Macedonia No. 151, from July 062, 2021)

Management plan for Shar Mountains National Park for 2022-2031

Law on forests

Instructions for registration of purchase of other forest products

Price list for other forest products

Calendar for collection of other forest products

Mushroom picking calendar

Rulebook for other forest products - 1

Rulebook for other forest products - 2

A guide for collectors according to the principles of organic production

Mushroom and lichen collecting manual and monography.

Handbook for collectors and buyers of wild plants, fungi, and lichens according to principles of organic production

Collection Manual

CNVP Documents:

Mapping of potential beneficiaries in Mavrovo National Park and Shar Mountains National Park within the project

Three field reports for Shar Mountains and Mavrovo with collected data from field visits and contacts from the relevant stakeholders for the project

Strategy/Model of Private Sector Driven Agricultural Extension Service for MAPs

Working with producer groups

CNVP Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPS) Market Systems Analysis, Strategy and Intervention plan

"Assessment of blue juniper resources - *Juniperus communis* (L.) in the village of Umlena, Pehčevo"

Assessment of the state of populations and quantities of the bear grape species – *Arctostaphylus uva-ursi* (L.) Spreng. at locations of economic importance in the Republic of North Macedonia

Other documents:

Study for valorization of Shar Mountains

Climate change strategy of municipality of Mavrovo and Rostushe

Socio-economic study on proposed protected area Shar mountain National Park

Atlas i bimëve mjekësore aromatike dhe i kërpudhave

Management plan for the environment and social aspects for Mavrovo-Rostushe municipality

Biodiversity and climate change, vulnerability assessments and adaptation

Manual and monographs for collectors according to the principles of organic production

Manual and monographs for collectors of mushrooms and lichens

“Conduct analysis of national legislation on the use of wild species and selection of most important species to assess annual biomass production”

Manual and monographs for collectors of mushrooms and lichens

Feasibility study on enhancing connectivity conservation in the PONT Focus Region: Albania and North Macedonia

Environmental and social aspects management plan, Municipality of Mavrovo and Rostushe and PE National Park "Mavrovo" "Development of tourism in the Mavrovo Valley"

Publications:

The environment and sustainable tourism in the region of Shar-Polog region

Ecotourism as a concept for tourism development in Republic of Macedonia

Natural successions in the forests of the national park Mavrovo

Non-wood forest products in Europe: Seeing the forest around the trees

Significance of fungi as natural resources

Study about the cultivation of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in the Republic of Macedonia

List of abbreviations

Abbreviations

Meaning

SU

Sustainable use

PAs

Protected areas

NTFPs

Non-timber forest products

MAPs

Medical and aromatic plants

NBT

Nature based tourism

PP

PowerPoint Presentation

RAPAs

Regional Administration of Protected Areas

CNVP operates in the Balkan region. It focuses on natural resource management, forestry, agri-rural development and renewable energy, as well as the impact of climate change on the environment.

As a civil society organisation, CNVP acts as a facilitator to:

- Strengthen community capacity to achieve local development goals;
- Maximize the production and service potential of rural areas through sustainable and locally controlled natural resource management;
- Promote the use of natural resources to improve socio-economic development and rural livelihoods; and
- Conserve the bio-diversity of natural resources at a time of serious environmental and climate change.

Core Values

- **Green** - intervening to build a greener economic environment within the ongoing process of climate change
- **Clean** - promoting renewable energy and improved household/industrial waste management
- **Seen** - operating in the Balkans and the European Neighborhood Space
- **Lean** - improving the efficiency of service delivery continuously and systematically

Connecting Natural Values & People

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Active in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia
and Bosnia-Herzegovina