

GEF - PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT (PIR)

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UNEP GEF PIR Fiscal Year 2024
Reporting from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

1 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

1.1 Project Details

GEF ID: 10839	Umoja WBS: SB-021826
SMA IPMR ID: 136063	Grant ID: S1-32GFL-000839
Project Short Title: Albanian Alps Project	
Project Title: Achieving Biodiversity Conservation through Effective Management and Enhanced Resilience to Climate Change in the Existing Protected area of the North Albanian Mountainous Region	
Duration months planned:	48
Duration months age:	18
Project Type:	Medium Sized Project (MSP)
Parent Programme if child project:	
Project Scope:	National
Region:	Europe
Countries:	Albania
GEF Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity
GEF financing amount:	\$ 1,411,188.00
Co-financing amount:	\$ 8,710,000.00
Date of CEO Endorsement/Approval:	2022-10-17
UNEP Project Approval Date:	
Start of Implementation (PCA entering into force):	2022-12-27
Date of Inception Workshop, if available:	2023-05-19
Date of First Disbursement:	2023-01-16
Total disbursement as of 30 June 2024:	\$ 397,750.00

Total expenditure as of 30 June:	\$ 233,309.00
Midterm undertaken?:	No
Actual Mid-Term Date, if taken:	
Expected Mid-Term Date, if not taken:	2025-01-11
Completion Date Planned - Original PCA:	2025-12-31
Completion Date Revised - Current PCA:	
Expected Terminal Evaluation Date:	2026-06-30
Expected Financial Closure Date:	2025-12-31

1.2 Project Description

The “Albanian Alps” National Park (AANP) has a total area of 82,844.65 ha, and was established under the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 59 dated January 26, 2022. The area encompasses three former protected areas, namely, National Park Thethi, National Park Valbona Valley and Strict Nature Reserve Gashi River. The 2022 declaration has increased the surface area of the PA by 6 times its original size, and the territories are included in three municipalities (Shkoder, Malesi e Madhe and Tropoje), two districts and as such the park is now administered by two Regional Administrations of Protected Areas (RAPAs Shkoder and Diber). Additionally the Albanian Alps are located in the north-eastern part of the country on the state border between Albania and Montenegro (northern border) and between Albania and Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244/99). The region is of great biological importance, representing the southern most part of the European Alps in the line Dinarides Albanides.

The objective of the project is to strengthen the management effectiveness and sustainability of the Albanian Alps protected areas system and increase resilience to climate change. This will be achieved by means of implementation of activities under three components; namely Component 1: Establishing an enabling environment for effective management of the Albanian Alps National Park, Component 2: Strengthening the practical experience and “know-how” of the Albanian Alps NP stakeholders to address threats, and Component 3: Support to national level adoption and up scaling of sustainable PAs management best practices.

1.3 Project Contacts

Division(s) Implementing the project	Ecosystems Division
Name of co-implementing Agency	N/A
Executing Agency (ies)	Ministry of Tourism and Environment, UNEP
names of Other Project Partners	
UNEP Portfolio Manager(s)	Johan Robinson
UNEP Task Manager(s)	Ersin Esen
UNEP Budget/Finance Officer	George Saddimbah
UNEP Support Assistants	Charles Imbezi
Manager/Representative	Harald Egerer, Sonja Gebert
Project Manager	Ornela Shoshi
Finance Manager	Obinna Okafor
Communications Lead, if relevant	

2 Overview of Project Status

2.1 UNEP PoW & UN

UNEP Current Subprogramme(s):	Thematic: Nature action subprogramme
UNEP previous Subprogramme(s):	
PoW Indicator(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature: (iii) Number of countries and national, regional and subnational authorities and entities that incorporate, with UNEP support, biodiversity and ecosystem-based approaches into development and sectoral plans, policies and processes for the sustainable management and/or restoration of terrestrial, freshwater and marine areas • Nature: (iv) Increase in territory of land- and seascapes that is under improved ecosystem conservation and restoration • Nature: (v) Positive shift in public opinion, attitudes and actions in support of biodiversity and ecosystem approaches
UNSDCF/UNDAF linkages	This project is contributing the UNSDCF 2022-2026 for Albania, namely to Outcome 2 "Economic Growth, Innovation and Climate Change"; Output 2.4 - Climate and ecosystem resources.
Link to relevant SDG Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Link to relevant SDG Targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15.1 By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements • 15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally • 15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development • 15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species • 15.8 By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species • 15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts

2.2. GEF Core and Sub Indicators

GEF core or sub indicators targeted by the project as defined at CEO Endorsement/Approval, as well as results

Indicators	Targets - Expected Value			Materialized to date
	Mid-term	End-of-project	Total Target	
1- Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use	30ha	82568 ha	82568 ha	
11.1- Male	All groups of identified stakeholders consulted and informed on the project objectives, and participated in project activities.	41,000	41,000	72
11.2- Female	All groups of identified stakeholders consulted and informed on the project objectives, and participated in project activities.	41,000	41,000	52

Implementation Status 2023: 1st PIR

2.3. Implementation Status and Risks

	PIR#	Rating towards outcomes (section 3.1)	Rating towards outputs (section 3.2)	Risk rating (section 4.2)
FY 2024	1st PIR	MS	MS	M
FY 2023				
FY 2022				
FY 2021				
FY 2020				
FY 2019				
FY 2018				
FY 2017				
FY 2016				
FY 2015				

Summary of status

The project's objective is to strengthen the management effectiveness and sustainability of the Albanian Alps protected areas system and increase resilience to climate change. To achieve this objective, the following activities have been accomplished during the current reporting period:

Following up on the project's inception meeting held in May 2023, two site visits were organized in the Albanian Alps (hereinafter: AA). On July 15-20, 2023, site visits and stakeholder consultations were conducted in Thethi, Malesi e Madhe, Shkoder, Valbone, Kukës, and Tirane. The project team met with the key beneficiaries from the RAPAs (Regional Administrations for Protected Areas) of the two regions covering the AA National Park (Shkodra and Kukës Regional Administration of Protected Areas), to gather relevant data and information (e.g. understand main challenges in managing the park effectively, as well as capacity and resource related gaps and needs) and discuss project outcomes and way forward. The project team met with the local government officials of the three municipalities i.e. Malesi e Madhe, Shkoder, and Tropoje, NGOs active in the areas of Thethi, Malesie e Madhe and Valbone and discussed the key needs within the new National Park.

In Tirana, the project staff met with the National Agency for Protected Areas (NAPA), and Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MoTE) and discussed the ways forward for the joint implementation of the project, as well as key immediate steps to be undertaken in the next few months.

The key observations during these meetings include:

Valbona and Thethi were protected areas before the proclamation of the new larger national park. Malesi e Madhe is a newly added territory to the National Park and as such, stakeholders are not fully aware and do not hold the same level of understanding regarding the needs and responsibilities of the new national park, including the restrictions but also opportunities.

One of the challenges with this project are the vast differences and physical distance between the three municipalities, as well as its distance from policymakers in Tirana. Significant effort is needed to include all areas and communities into the project and mainstream work and results. In discussion with stakeholders, the trainings need on mountain rescue and security was mentioned as important for all areas, especially high-tourist areas. It is necessary to develop a comprehensive and inclusive valorization study as a quality basis for zonation, management plan and all consecutive outputs of the project. The valorization study needs to be conducted at least during two vegetation seasons to provide good ecosystem analysis, habitat maps and zonation revisions, as well as the consequent management plan.

On October 27-29, 2023 a visit to the sites of the Albanian Alps National Park in Malesi e Madhe, namely Lepushe, Vermosh, and Tamare was conducted to meet the key beneficiaries of the park formerly under the Malesi e Madhe Municipality, as the newest area added to the park in 2022 and discuss the way forward with the project, as well as understand main challenges in managing the park effectively, the capacity and resource related gaps and needs. The project team had meetings with members of the community, NGOs and shepherds in the areas of Lepushe, Vermosh, Kelmend and Tamare to understand their main livelihoods, while introducing the project activities and discussing key needs of the park. Meetings with local administrators and community were very fruitful in terms of agreement on the vision of the future activities to be undertaken in the frame of the GEF 7 Project, including the need for a data-based valorization study to feed the elaboration of the management plan, training and equipment needs, as well as possible pilot actions to support the mapping, promotion of the area and sustainable livelihoods for the local community.

Other meetings were organized during this reporting period with PONT, GIZ, FAO, ADA, IKI and Global Conservation to share information and build on synergies with other ongoing initiatives in protected areas, such as the Albanian Alps National Park other PAs in Albania, as well as the Protected Areas of neighboring countries in the region. The project progress is regularly reported on with the UN country team in Albania, the Albanian Government (through our annual and bi-annual common joint work program reporting and regular meetings), the State Agency for Strategic Programming and Coordination of Foreign Aid, as well as other donors in the country.

On May 6th 2024, UNEP supported Tropoja Municipality with the organization of the event marking the opening of the tourism season in Valbona Valley located in the protected area of the Albanian Alps. The event was opened by Mr. Rexhe Byberi, Mayor of Tropoja Municipality. In his speech the mayor welcomed participants and emphasized that with improved services and support from donors and institutions, Valbona Valley is moving from a seasonal to an all-year destination, offering elite mountain-oriented tourism. More than 250 000 tourists are expected to visit Valbona this year and it is the preparedness of the municipality, local institutions and local businesses to ensure that this tourism season is successful and sustainable said the mayor in closing.

A short introduction of the project was shared by the local project team, mentioning the main executing partners in Albania, the project objectives, and activities. The recently proclaimed Albanian Alps National Park is of extreme importance for conserving biodiversity, enhancing the resilience to climate change in the mountainous

ecosystem, as well as the support that the project will offer to local communities in sustainable economic development, rational natural resource use and maintenance of traditional cultural heritage values in order to reduce pressures on biodiversity.

The event was organized in the frame of Output 2.1.2: Support to sustainable economic development: strengthening regulations and management of sustainable natural resource management, livelihoods, and cultural heritage within communities in the NP in order to reduce pressures on BD and incentivise sustainable use and livelihoods, and encourage maintenance of cultural heritage, more specifically Activity 2.1.2.4. Support the organization of local festivals promoting products and cultural traditions of the area.

During the event, the UNEP team had discussions with several stakeholder groups representatives from the local community, local guest house owners, tour operators, youth groups, and distinct personalities from the world of arts. Taking into consideration the theme of the day and its relevance towards achieving the project objectives, the discussions were oriented towards the challenges for sustainable economic and tourism development in the National Park, existing community livelihoods and cultural heritage within communities in the NP, as well as participation in future events that the project will undertake in the area.

A few emerging issues were raised during these discussions from which it is worth mentioning that the community is eager to improve the shortages in electrical power, as well as water supply in the area, while being the home of several hydropower plants that furnish the entire country. Local non-timber products collectors mentioned the lack of processing facilities in the area. In the focus of discussions were also the recent changes to the law on protected area in Albania, as well as the possible implications in practical terms not only for the municipality, but also for the local businesses and their activities. UNEP distributed a project leaflet and invited all participants to take part in future events, as well as raise any questions or suggestions. The project banner was also showcased during the event.

The event was followed and featured in the Albanian national media, RTSH (Radio Televizioni Shqiptar), where UNEP also made a short appearance and presented the project along with its objectives for biodiversity conservation and effective management of the Albanian Alps National Park. A total of 500 participants were present in the event. Participants included: Tropoja Municipality, Kukes District Authority, Kukes Prefecture, Members of Parliament, political figures and mayors from municipalities and communes across the border from Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244/99) and Montenegro (Gjakova, Junik, Decan, Peja, Plava and Gucia, Vitia, Dibra e Madhe etc.), local businesses, guesthouses, hotels, tour operators, local community, distinguished guests from the diaspora and tourist. Youth groups were present from the Asim Vokshi High School of Bajram Curri, as well as D'Roots local Digital Apprenticeship group.

The Terms of Reference (TORs) for the first year of the project implementation were developed and consulted with the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, NAPA and RAPAs Shkoder and Kukes. Local partners are being contracted to support the execution of the planned activities. A National Project Coordinator was also engaged for this project.

2.4 Co Finance

Planned Co-finance:	\$ 8,710,000
Actual to date:	1,500,000
Progress	<p>Justify progress in terms of materialization of expected co-finance. State any relevant challenges:</p> <p>The Ministry of Tourism and Environment, NAPA as well as RAPA Shkoder and RAPA Diber, have contributed to the project through data and information sharing, as well as staff participating in meetings, workshops and site visits. The Tropoja Municipality has contributed by sharing information and co-financing the opening of the tourism season in Valbona Valley. PONT has contributed to the project by sharing information, as well as through the execution of their grant project with RAPA Shkoder and Diber.</p>

2.5. Stakeholder

Date of project steering committee meeting	2024-10-15
Stakeholder engagement (will be uploaded to GEF Portal)	<p>A total of 66 participants were present in the Inception meeting, out of which 6 participants followed the event online. Participants were from at least six stakeholder groups including national government, local community, local government and institutions, civil society, development partners, and academia. The gender representation of participants was as follows: 30 women and 36 men. Due to site visits conducted, as well as other coordination meetings, the project team has met face to face with approximately 58 representatives from the local community (22 women, 36 men). While during the opening of the tourism season event in Valbona Valley, the project leaflet was distributed and the project was introduced to approximately 500 representatives from the local community. The project team is following the approved project stakeholder engagement plan, and a communication strategy is soon to be developed. The project has strived to be inclusive in its approach and have a balanced gender participation in its activities and emphasizes the involvement and capacity building of community elders, youth and university students, private sector etc. So far the project has met with several stakeholder groups such as national and local responsible institutions, national and local NGOs and associations, private businesses, tour guides, shepherds and local residents, and elders in the community. Stakeholders have been informed of the projects grievance mechanism during the two inception meetings (PPG phase and implementation phase) and following consultation events, face to face meetings and consultation meetings.</p> <p>The Project's steering committee meeting has not been organized yet.</p>

2.6. Gender

Does the project have a gender action plan?	Yes
Gender mainstreaming (will be uploaded to GEF Portal):	To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, the project conducted stakeholder consultations to understand, among others, the context on gender and identify specific dimensions and entry points for gender mainstreaming. These consultations started at the PPG phase of the project and are continuing during the project implementation. As a result of these consultations, a gender-responsive approach has been identified for the project outcomes, outputs, and activities, and specific gender-sensitive indicators have been developed for the proposed project and integrated into the project results framework for implementation. Gender aspects are cross-cutting and multi-dimensional and therefore it is imperative to recognize and deal with differentiated situation and needs of women, men and various social groups at all phases of the project and secure their equal participation as an essential ground for successful project implementation. This will further facilitate engaging local women, men and different social groups in more appropriate utilization of natural resources, as well as improving their capacities towards climate change resilience building processes and sustainable PA management. Through the inception meeting, as well as other meetings organized with national and local stakeholders on site to date, the project has engaged a total 52 women, and 72 men.

2.7. ESSM

Moderate/High risk projects (in terms of Environmental and social safeguards)	<p>Was the project classified as moderate/high risk CEO Endorsement/Approval Stage?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>If yes, what specific safeguard risks were identified in the SRIF/ESERN?</p> <p>The project is classified as moderate risk. The safeguards identified during SRIF are: Take Good Practice approach, Carry out further assessments (e.g., site visits, experts' inputs, consult affected communities, etc.)</p>
New social and/or environmental risks	<p>Have any new social and/or environmental risks been identified during the reporting period?</p> <p>No</p> <p>If yes, describe the new risks or changes?</p>
Complaints and grievances related to social and/or	<p>Has the project received complaints related to social and/or environmental impacts (actual or potential) during the reporting period?</p> <p>No</p>

environmental impacts	If yes, please describe the complaint(s) or grievance(s) in detail, including the status, significance, who was involved and what actions were taken?
Environmental and social safeguards management	<p>Based on the SRIF screening checklist, the following social and environmental safeguards have been addressed:GP1: At the PPG phase, a Stakeholder Engagement Plan was elaborated describing how relevant stakeholders have been engaged. The stakeholders list was further populated during the inception meeting, as well as through site visits and face to face meetings during this year of the project implementation. The project will further ensure that stakeholders will be positively affected by the project as it will allow the identification of other sources of income and promote ecotourism and private sector engagement. A detailed communication strategy will be developed in the coming months.GP2 "Has the project identified and engaged vulnerable, marginalized people, including disabled people, through the informed, inclusive, transparent and equal manner on potential positive or negative implication of the proposed approach and their roles in the project implementation?": The project has strived to be inclusive in its approach and have a balanced gender participation in its activities and emphasizes the involvement and capacity building of community elders, youth and university students, private sector etc. So far the project has met with several stakeholder groups such as national and local responsible institutions, national and local NGOs and associations, private businesses, tour guides, shepherds and local residents, and elders in the community.GP3 "Have local communities or individuals raised human rights or gender equality concerns regarding the project (e.g. during the stakeholder engagement process, grievance processes, public statements)?":Gender and conservation NGOs have a significant role in our stakeholder analysis; yet also in the social criteria – through project design, with regards the safeguards & screening of investment proposals.GP4 "Does the proposed project consider gender-balanced representation in the design and implementation?":A Gender Action Plan has been elaborated and is being implemented during this phase of the project implementation.3.11 "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and the Logical Framework":The project strategy places particular importance on engaging with women and in designing its activities as gender-sensitive as possible. Demonstrating biodiversity conservation practices at local level need to take local needs and circumstances into account, so that they not only particularly target women and their specific needs, but also include measures for broadening livelihood opportunities or improving nutritional status in line with BD targets.GP5 "Did the proposed project analyze relevant gender issues and develop a gender responsive project approach?":Yes, see above.GP6 "Does the project include a project-specific grievance redress mechanism? If yes, state the specific location of such information.":Yes, the Project will benefit from UNEP's corporate grievance redress mechanism, and these were clearly presented and emphasised during the inception meeting. Participants have also received by email all the presentations and are in possession of the knowledge of accessing the grievance mechanisms and tools for this project.GP8 "Were the stakeholders (including affected communities) informed of the projects and grievance redress mechanism? If yes, describe how they were informed.":Stakeholders have been informed during the two inception meetings (PPG phase and implementation phase) and following consultation events, face to face meetings and consultation meetings.Safeguard Standard 2: Climate Change and Disaster RisksWould the project potentially involve or</p>

	<p>lead to:2.1 "improving resilience against potential climate change impact beyond the project intervention period?":The project will develop and support in the implementation on best practices. The Project will assess the likely climate change scenarios in the Albanian Alps landscape and enhance resilience of the PA system. The team of experts has already been engaged for this task.2.2 "areas that are now or are projected to be subject to natural hazards such as extreme temperatures, earthquakes, extreme precipitation and flooding, landslides, droughts, severe winds, sea level rise, storm surges, tsunami or volcanic eruptions in the next 30 years?": The selected sites may suffer from extreme weather changes due to climate change. However, the project has a dedicated output to analyze the extreme weather events and their impact on the PA system.2.3 "outputs and outcomes sensitive or vulnerable to potential impacts of climate change (e.g. changes in precipitation, temperature, salinity, extreme events)?": The project proposes incorporating climate change impacts into the PA management plan.2.4 "local communities vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and disaster risks (e.g. considering level of exposure and adaptive capacity)?":All stakeholders, particularly PA managers and the communities in and around the national park may be vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and this will be addressed by the project activities in the next reporting period.Safeguard Standard 3: Pollution Prevention and Resource EfficiencyWould the project potentially involve or lead to:3.6 "significant consumption of energy, water, or other material inputs?":The project is currently collecting data on natural resources and their use by the local population especially concerning logging for heating needs. An analysis will be conducted in the following months to promote sustainable livelihood options that are well studied and consider consumption of energy water and other resource use.Safeguard Standard 5: Cultural HeritageWould the project potentially involve or lead to:5.1 "activities adjacent to or within a Cultural Heritage site?":The project area includes cultural heritage site of tangible and intangible values. No negative impacts are anticipated and the zonation activities and awareness raising activities that will take place in the following months will give due consideration to these areas, sites and values. The promotion of the cultural values of Valbona Valey and Tropoja region were supported during the opening of the tourist season in May 2024, and they will continue to be supported in the coming months through several of the project activities.5.6 "identification and protection of cultural heritage sites or intangible forms of cultural heritage":The identification of cultural heritage sites or intangible forms of cultural heritage will be performed in the activities foreseen for the next 6 months of the project implementation.Safeguard Standard 6: Displacement and Involuntary ResettlementWould the project potentially involve or lead to:6.1 "full or partial physical displacement or relocation of people (whether temporary or permanent)?": This is not anticipated. The PA has already been declared, and core zones have been identified also keeping in mind the location of current settlements. There are 110 small, traditional, and scattered rural settlements occurring within the National Park, located mainly in the valleys and slopes, where there are more opportunities for arable land. The villages are not included in the core zone and thus no relocation will take place. This will be further verified and mapped through Output 1.2.1: Comprehensive ecosystem services valuation of the Albanian Alps landscape and assessment of potential options and opportunities for sustainable financing of the Albanian Alps NP. Stakeholder engagement is embedded in every outcome of the project however several foreseen activities inclusive of meetings, site expeditions, zoning, consultation, training, and awareness raising, and participation in these activities will be crucial for the project to convey the meaning of</p>
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	<p>the different zonings of the PA.6.2 "economic displacement (e.g. loss of assets or access to assets affecting for example crops, businesses, income generation sources)?:The project will confirm or re-define the zoning of the protected area; therefore, some local communities may be affected. However significant consultation with stakeholders and the community will be organized during the next phases of the project implementation. During the zonation activities, consultations, site expeditions and awareness raising events, the project will ensure participation and will explain the difference between core zones, and zones where sustainable development can take place, with practical examples. The project will carry out a comprehensive ecosystem services valuation of the Albanian Alps landscape and assessment of potential options and opportunities for sustainable financing of the NP; where stakeholders that are most affected by the zoning will be involved, and alternative livelihoods options will be proposed in consultation with those most affected.6.2 "involuntary restrictions on land/water use that deny a community the use of resources to which they have traditional or recognizable use rights?":Maybe.The project will define the zoning of the protected area; therefore; some stakeholders may be affected. However, significant consultation with stakeholders and the community will be organized during project implementation. During the zonation activities, consultations, site expeditions and awareness raising events, the project will ensure participation and will explain the difference between core zones, and zones where sustainable development can take place, with practical examples. The project will carry out a comprehensive ecosystem services valuation of the Albanian Alps landscape and assessment of potential options and opportunities for sustainable financing of the NP – where stakeholders that are most affected by the zoning will be involved, and alternative livelihoods options will be proposed in consultation with those most affected.Safeguard Standard 7: Indigenous Peoples6.4 "changes in land tenure arrangements, including communal and/or customary/traditional land tenure patterns (including temporary/permanent loss of land)?:The project will either confirm or re-define the zoning of the protected area therefore some people may be affected. This aspect will be further analyzed.SafeguardStandard8: Labor and working conditions8.1 "Will the proposed project involve hiring or contracting project staff ?":The project has recruited and engaged a national officer in the country to oversee the implementation of the project, as well as consultants to support the implementation of several project activities. All staff and consultants have been hired in accordance with national and UN hiring standards and rules.8.5 "the increase of local or regional unemployment?":The project has engaged national consultants and experts to support in the project implementation.</p>
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2.8. KM/Learning

Knowledge activities and products	The project has produced two leaflets containing the key project information and they were distributed to 58 persons (22 women, 36 men) during the inception meeting. While during the opening of the tourism season event in Valbona Valley, the project leaflet was distributed to approximately 500 people. Both leaflets are attached at the end of the section.
Main learning during the period	The lessons learned so far in the project implementation are related to some of the challenges of the project. The very large differences

	<p>in composition and physical distance between the three municipalities within the Albanian Alps National Park, as well as their distance from national institutions in Tirana, require significant effort to best include all areas and communities, while mainstream policies actions and results for an effective management. Furthermore, the three areas of the National Park have different needs and varying compositions in natural asset, as well as socio economic aspects. This will be taken into consideration during the elaboration of the Management Plan reflecting a common vision though addressing varying needs.</p>
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2.9. Stories

<p>Stories to be shared</p>	<p>The UN Environment Programme (UNEP), supported Tropoja Municipality with the organization of the event marking the opening of the tourism season in Valbona Valley, in the frame of the activities of the GEF funded project "Achieving biodiversity conservation through effective management and enhanced resilience to climate change in the existing protected areas of the North Albanian Mountainous Region " (GEF7). The event was held in Valbona Valley, located in the protected area of the Albanian Alps, on May 6th, 2024, at 10am.</p> <p>The event was opened by Mr. Rexhe Byberi, Mayor of Tropoja Municipality. In his speech the mayor welcomed participants and emphasized that with improved services and support from donors and institutions, Valbona Valley is moving from a seasonal to an all-year destination, offering elite mountain-oriented tourism. More than 250 thousand tourists are expected to visit Valbona this year and it is the preparedness of the municipality, local institutions and local businesses to ensure that this this tourism season is successful and sustainable said the mayor in closing.</p> <p>There was a short introduction of the project from UNEP team, mentioning the main executing partners in Albania, the project objectives, and activities. The recently proclaimed Albanian Alps National Park is of great importance for conserving biodiversity, enhancing the resilience to climate change in the mountainous ecosystem, as well as the support that the project will offer to local communities in sustainable economic development, rational natural resource use and maintenance of traditional cultural heritage values in order to reduce pressures on biodiversity.</p> <p>The event was organized in the frame of Output 2.1.2: Support to sustainable economic development: strengthening regulations and management of sustainable natural resource management, livelihoods, and cultural heritage within communities in the NP in order to reduce pressures on BD and incentivise sustainable use and livelihoods, and encourage maintenance of cultural heritage, more specifically Activity 2.1.2.4. Support the organization of local festivals promoting products and cultural traditions of the area.</p> <p>During the event, UNEP team had discussions with the several stakeholder groups representatives from the local community, local guest house owners, tour operators, youth groups, and distinct personalities from the world of arts. Taking into consideration the theme of the day and its relevance towards</p>
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	<p>achieving the project objectives discussions with stakeholders were oriented towards, challenges for sustainable economic and tourism development in the National Park, existing community livelihoods and cultural heritage within communities in the NP as well as participation in future events that the project will undertake in the area.</p> <p>The local traditions of shepherding, rural community life and historical events were skillfully featured by local and cross-border groups through songs, dances, traditional clothed and traditional foods and products were served after the event.</p> <p>A few emerging issues were raised during these discussions from which it is worth mentioning that the community is eager to improve the shortages in electrical power, as well as water supply in the area, while being the home of several hydropower plants that furnish the entire country. Local non-timber products collectors mentioned the lack of processing facilities in the area. In the focus of discussions were also the recent changes to the law on protected area in Albania, possible implications in practical terms not only for the municipality, but also for the local businesses and their activities. UNEP distributed a project leaflet and invited all participants to take part in future events as well as raise any questions or suggestions to the contacts outlined in the project leaflet. The project banner was also showcased during the event.</p> <p>The event was followed and featured in the Albanian national media, RTSH (Radio Televizioni Shqiptar), where UNEP also made a short appearance and presented the project along with its objectives for biodiversity conservation and effective management of the Albanian Alps National Park.</p> <p>Feature in the National Media: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4G2GJTsq2M</p> <p>Participation:</p> <p>A total of 500 participants were present in the event. Participants included: Tropoja Municipality, Kukes District Authority, Kukes Prefecture, Members of Parliament, political figures and mayors from municipalities and communes across the border from Kosovo and Montenegro (Gjakova, Junik, Decan, Peja, Plava and Gucia, Vitia, Dibra e Madhe etc.), local businesses, guesthouses, hotels, tour operators, local community, distinguished guests from the diaspora and tourist. Youth groups were present from the Asim Vokshi High School of Bajram Curri, as well as D'Roots local Digital Apprenticeship group.</p>
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3 Performance

3.1 Rating of progress towards achieving the project outcomes

Project Objective and Outcomes	Indicator	Baseline level	Mid-Term Target or Milestones	End of Project Target	Progress as of current period (numeric, percentage, or binary entry only)	Summary by the EA of attainment of the indicator & target as of 30 June	Progress rating
To strengthen the management effectiveness and sustainability of the Albanian Alps protected areas system and increase resilience to climate change	# of ha of Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management (GEF CORE Indicator 1)	0ha of PA under improved management	30ha PA under improved management	Core indicator 1. Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use - 82 568 ha		Collection of data and initial analysis on the park has started.	MS
	Number of direct beneficiaries from project interventions (GEF Core indicator 11)	0 beneficiaries	All groups of identified stakeholders consulted and informed on the project objectives, and participated in project	82 000 beneficiaries (41 000 men and 41 000 women)	10	So far 52 women and 72 men have been engaged in project activities, informed of the project outcomes and consulted.	MS

Project Objective and Outcomes	Indicator	Baseline level	Mid-Term Target or Milestones	End of Project Target	Progress as of current period(numeric, percentage, or binary entry only)	Summary by the EA of attainment of the indicator & target as of 30 June	Progress rating
			activities				
Outcome 1: Albanian Alps National Park (NP) territory valorized, and effective and adaptive management planning put in place	Revised updated gender-responsive and participatory management plan that addresses key threats to biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods Km demarcated boundaries% community members aware of and accept park boundaries apply improved practices	Draft management plan prepared in 2015 No information available to assess community's awareness	Revised and updated draft zonation and gender-responsive Management Plan developed in participation with stakeholders At least 50% of participants in management planning workshops are women	Revised, updated and agreed zonation and gender-sensitive Management Plan addressing key threats to biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods 100 km of demarcated borders 80% of those surveyed (50% M; 50%F) are aware of and agree with park boundary	10%	Collection of data for the revision of the management plan and zonation plan has started. Valorization study is underway.	MS
Outcome 1.2: Sustainable financing of the Albanian Alps NP in place, including sustainable	# of ecosystem services valued# of financial mechanisms implemented	0 ecosystem services valued 0 financial	List of ecosystem services; 3	1 ecosystem service valued and	0	The work for this outcome will start in the second year of the project implementation	S

Project Objective and Outcomes	Indicator	Baseline level	Mid-Term Target or Milestones	End of Project Target	Progress as of current period (numeric, percentage, or binary entry only)	Summary by the EA of attainment of the indicator & target as of 30 June	Progress rating
financing mechanisms tested and functionally established	and generating revenue % increase in finances available to AANP# stakeholders (disaggregated by gender) with improved capacity for participating in sustainable financing mechanisms	mechanisms implemented No business plan available 108,432 USD available for the management of the PA 0 stakeholder representatives trained in sustainable financing mechanisms	financial mechanisms identified and piloting initiatives commenced; 5% increase in funds available to AANP management from baseline	used as decision making tool by key stakeholders 3 financial mechanisms implemented and generating income 20% increase in funds available to AANP management from baseline 50 stakeholders with enhanced capacity for participating in sustainable financing mechanisms post training (ratio M:25; F:25)			

Project Objective and Outcomes	Indicator	Baseline level	Mid-Term Target or Milestones	End of Project Target	Progress as of current period(numeric, percentage, or binary entry only)	Summary by the EA of attainment of the indicator & target as of 30 June	Progress rating
Outcome 1.3: The systemic, institutional, and individual level capacity needs and gaps for effectively implementing the agreed NP management plan addressed (MP program 1)	Individual staff (ensuring gender-balanced representation) capacity scores% increase of management effectiveness score (METT)	No baseline training and capacity needs assessment for staff carried out No baseline METT carried out	A gender-balanced baseline capacity and training needs assessment carried out for key staff (50%F:50%M); Baseline METT carried out	Individual capacity scores increased in both male and female staff by 50% from baselines METT score increased by 30% from baseline	30%	Baseline MET carried out during the PPG phase	S
Outcome 2.1: Threats to biodiversity in the Albanian Alps addressed through the effective initiation of the updated NP management plan programs, and the development of practical experience of key stakeholders to continue implementation in the long term	#ha of protected area under improved management# of gender-responsive livelihood initiatives piloted	#ha of protected area under improved management # of gender-responsive livelihood initiatives piloted 0 ha of PA under improved management 0 livelihood initiatives piloted	30,000ha of protected area under improved management ; 1 gender-responsive livelihood initiative piloted	Core indicator 1. Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use - 82568 ha 3 gender-responsive livelihood	0%	This outcome will be carried out during the next phases of the project implementation	MS

Project Objective and Outcomes	Indicator	Baseline level	Mid-Term Target or Milestones	End of Project Target	Progress as of current period(numeric, percentage, or binary entry only)	Summary by the EA of attainment of the indicator & target as of 30 June	Progress rating
				initiatives piloted			
Outcome 3.1: Lessons learned, and experiences gained in the establishment and management of the Albanian Alps NP captured and applied to the wider national PA system	# of NP adopting improved management plans and practices.# of key national stakeholders reached	0 NPs adoption best practices 0 key national stakeholders reached	1 best practice guideline adopted by at least one other site	2 best practice guidelines adopted by at least 3 other sites 50 key national stakeholders reached	10%	Two project leaflets have been produced and disseminated to several actors (national and local).	S

3.2 Rating of progress implementation towards delivery of outputs (Implementation Progress)

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
1 Establishing an enabling environment for effective management of the Albanian Alps National Park	Output 1.1.1 Assessment of likely climate change scenarios in the Albanian Alps landscape, implications for biodiversity, land use and livelihoods, and opportunities for mitigation/resilience building	2025-12-31	0	10	Implementation of some activities have started	MS
	Output 1.1.2. Strengthening the role of the Management Committee for Protected Areas in addressing constructed and planned HPP in and adjacent to the Albanian Alps PA.	2026-01-30	0	10	TORs have been drafted, and a consultant is in the process of being engaged for carrying out activities. Data is already being collected with relevant institutions and stakeholders.	MS
	Output 1.1.3. Support to the field demarcation process of the Albanian Alps NP boundaries and zones following an in-depth review and adjustment of draft NP boundary and zonation plans (based any changes in circumstances since initially developed, stakeholder consultation, and identified climate change factors).	2025-09-30	0	0	Activities start next reporting period. Some discussions with the ministry and other stakeholders on the way forward are ongoing with regards to some activities.	S
	Output 1.1.4. Validate, update, and rationalize existing (draft) management plan (including sub-programs) for the Albanian Alps NP based on any changes in circumstances since their initial development, consultation with all stakeholders, identified CC responses.	2026-09-30	0	0	Activities under this output have started and are ongoing. Consultants have been engaged.	MS
	Output 1.2.1. Comprehensive ecosystem services valuation of the Albanian Alps landscape and assessment of potential options and opportunities for sustainable financing of the Albanian Alps NP.	2025-06-30	0	5	A consultant has been engaged and activities are ongoing	MS
	Output 1.2.2. Updating and adjustment of the draft Albanian Alps NP Financing plan to incorporate the financing opportunities / mechanisms identified under Output 1.2.1 (i.e., a budget and sustainable finance plan for the NP)	2025-12-31	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Output 1.2.3. Support to the practical setting up and implementation of at least 3 demonstrations for generating sustainable income for the	2026-12-30	0	10	Activities have started, consultant in process of being engaged	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	NP (depending on those identified as viable under Outcome 1.2 and incorporated into NP financing Plan)					
	Output 1.3.1. A detailed “fit for purpose” assessment carried out of NP management and governance institutions and their legal/operational framework (in the context of the agreed management plan).	2025-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Output 1.3.2. Reforms and adjustments of the NP management and governance institutions and legal/operational frameworks carried out, and key equipment provided, to enable effective implementation of management plan.	2025-06-30	0	10	Activities have started, one consultant has been engaged and another is in process of being engaged	MS
	Output 1.3.3. A comprehensive capacity development program for the NP management staff and other relevant stakeholders (based on an assessment of the gaps in skills/experience for effective implementation of the agreed MP), provision of key equipment	2026-09-30	0	10	TORs for engaging a consultant for carrying out the activities under this output have been compiled. The consultant is expected to be engaged by next month.	MS
	Activity 1.1.1.1. Develop models to define likely climate change scenarios within the Albanian Alps National Park territory by identifying the data needed for developing such scenarios	2024-08-30	0	10	A consultant has been engaged in order to develop models for defining likely climate change scenarios on the territory of the Albanian Alps National Park. Inter-linkages and synergy with another ongoing UNEP project on climate change have been established and will be used by the consultant for the implementation of this activity.	MS
	1.1.1.2. Support the collection of such data for the AANP area.	2025-06-30	0	10	Consultant engaged, data is being collected and synergies with other ongoing UNEP projects established.	MS
	Activity 1.1.1.3. Use models to assess the impact of climate change scenarios on biodiversity, land use patterns and livelihoods of local communities.	2025-09-30	0	0	Activity will start next reporting period	S

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	Activity 1.1.1.4. Identify any opportunities for mitigation and resilience building measures.	2025-12-31	0	0	Activity will start next reporting period	S
	Activity 1.1.2.1. Assess and revise existing legal and institutional frameworks regulating HPP development within protected areas in Albania.	2024-08-30	0	10	ToRs drafted, agreement with consultant will soon be finalized. Data gathering initiated in collaboration with MoTE for the purpose of assessing and revising the existing legal and institutional frameworks on HPP development within the protected areas in Albania. This entails assessment of the legal acts regulating activities in the PA, as well as the legal acts on EIA and SEA, and the energy sector to determine any gaps in legislations, and propose amendments where needed. The legal acts as well as information on existing HPPs and planned HPPs in the Albanian Alps territory have been already gathered during the PPG phase, and confirmed through meetings of the Project Team with stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, and RAPAs. This information will be made available to the consultant for including it in the assessment.	MS
	Activity 1.1.2.2. Assess the status of planned HPPs within the AANP and evaluate their potential impact on biodiversity and local livelihoods.	2024-08-30	0	10	ToRs drafted, agreement with consultant will soon be finalized. Data gathering initiated with collaboration with MoTE for the purpose of assessing the status of planned HPPs within the AANP and their potential impact on biodiversity	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
					and local livelihoods. The legal acts as well as information on existing HPPs and planned HPPs in the Albanian Alps territory have been already gathered during the PPG phase, and confirmed through meetings of the Project Team with stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, and RAPAs. This information will be made available to the consultant for including it in the assessment.	
	Activity 1.1.2.3. Support and strengthen the role of the MC for protected areas in the evaluation of and response to, all current and planned HPPs in the Albanian Alps.	2026-01-30	0	0	Activity starts next reporting period	S
	Activity 1.1.2.4. Support establishment and functioning of a consultation forum for NGOs and representatives of local community interest (ToR, Rules of Procedures, and organize meetings) and facilitate coordination between the PA Management Committee and the Inter-Ministerial Energy and Climate Committee (IECC).	2026-12-30	0	0	Activity starts next reporting period	S
	Activity 1.1.3.1. Carry out a review in participation with stakeholders, of the existing zonation plan(s) while considering any new data on the values and threats to those values, including climate change.	2025-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 1.1.3.2. Support the zonation process of the park and demarcation of boundaries on the ground.	2025-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period.	MS
	Activity 1.1.3.3. Support the process of transfer and registration of new PA areas to the NAPA property register.	2024-12-30	5	0	Discussions with the ministry and the state cadastre are ongoing.	MS
	Activity 1.1.3.4. Develop awareness materials of the park's boundaries and zonation	2025-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 1.1.3.5. Carry out a public awareness campaign of the	2025-06-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	boundaries and the zonation of the Albanian Alps National Park.				period	
	Activity 1.1.4.1. Carry out a baseline information gap analysis of the AANP and support the collection of relevant data to fill knowledge gaps.	2024-09-30	0	10	Through meetings and correspondence with stakeholders conducted and two site visits conducted in the territory of the Albanian Alps, the project staff was able to assess that there have been several studies on biodiversity conservation conducted in and around the territory of the Albanian Alps National Park; however they are dated, do not extend to the now borders of the park and have all been conducted from Tirana as “desk research”. These studies will be referenced and evaluated by the consultant who is hired for carrying out this activity. Conclusion of agreement with local partners and data gathering is finalized and work on data gathering and meeting stakeholders has initiated	MS
	Activity 1.1.4.2. Conduct a habitat mapping and assessment based on methodologies and interpretation manuals developed at EU level for the establishment of the Natural 2000 network.	2026-01-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 1.1.4.3. Support research work and collect field data on key species occurring in the Albanian Alps NP while assessing their distribution and conservation status.	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 1.1.4.4. Strengthen the capacities of relevant institutions (MTE, NAPA), universities, and local CSOs working in botany, zoology, and nature conservation, in understanding the principles and methods for the identification, conservation, and management of relevant	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	habitats and species.					
	Activity 1.1.4.5. Conduct a detailed threat analysis of the AANP and identify appropriate conservation measures to ensure species and habitat conservation by addressing the root causes of identified threats.	2025-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 1.1.4.6. Carry out a socio-economic assessment of the local community livelihoods and development opportunities within the AANP	2025-06-30	0	10	During the site visits conducted in July and October 2023, the project team collected from the three municipalities (Malesi e Madhe, Shkoder and Tropoja) basic data on the size of the population located in the Albanian Alps National Park, the types of livelihoods, as well as the vision of the local community for the future development of the park and economic activities that could support income generation for the community, as well as the Regional Administration of the Protected Areas. Other information was collected on the generation of waste, collection and treatment offered by each municipality. Data on types of tourists visiting the park and their most preferred activities was collected. Shkodra Municipality informed also that they will soon develop a strategic document for the vision of tourism development in their municipality, and this will be shared with the project. This data will be shared with the consultant who will be contracted to	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
					carry out this activity. TOR for this consultant have been drafted and the process of hiring will be completed within next month.	
	Activity 1.1.4.7. Review and update the management plan in participation with stakeholders	2024-12-31	0	0	Activity foreseen for next year. A good valorization study has to be completed before initiating this activity, as agreed with the ministry and other stakeholders. This is to be further discussed and approved in the PSC.	MS
	Activity 1.1.4.8. Develop and implement a solid stakeholder consultation plan.	2026-01-30	0	10	A stakeholder consultation plan has been drafted during the PPG phase of the project. TORs have been drafted and a consultant will be engaged for carrying out this activity within the next month. Several stakeholders have already been identified during inception meetings, site visits, and face to face meetings carried out by the project during the PPG, and initial stages of the project implementation during this reporting period.	S
	1.2.1.1. Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the ecosystem service values of the Albanian Alps NP territory	2025-06-30	0	10	Consultant has already been engaged and work is ongoing for this activity. Possible synergies with UNEP's previous work in good examples from the WB region have already been identified.	MS
	1.2.1.2. Develop impact scenarios on the levels of natural resource use and their impact on ecosystem services.	2024-09-30	0	0	In consultation with main stakeholders this activity has been pushed for next	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
					year due to the fact that a good valorization study is necessary and it is still ongoing. This will be discussed and approved in the PSC.	
	1.2.1.3. Identify and elaborate potential opportunities for the long-term sustainable generation of financing for the management of Albanian Alps National Park, including potential mechanisms and partnerships for income generation.	2024-12-30	0	0	In consultation with main stakeholders this activity has been pushed for next reporting period due to the fact that a good valorization study is necessary and it is still ongoing. This will be discussed and approved in the PSC	MS
	Activity 1.2.2.1. Carry out an assessment to identify opportunities for sustainable revenue flows and work out in detail mechanisms for practically capturing this income for the management of the Albanian Alps National Park.	2025-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 1.2.2.2. Develop a business plan that elaborates the required budget for the implementation of the Albanian Alps National Park management plan and identify business models that contribute to sustainable financing of plan implementation.	2025-06-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	1.2.2.3. Support the monitoring and revision of the financial plan for the AANP in collaboration with key stakeholders and within the time frame of project implementation.	2026-12-31	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	1.2.2.4. Build necessary capacities at NAPA/RAPA level to regularly carry out such monitoring activities and support their implementation.	2026-12-31	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 1.2.3.1. Identify and support all steps required to functionally establish at least three demonstrations of most viable financing mechanisms	2025-08-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 1.2.3.2. Provide on-going support and guidance to implementing parties (RAPA, private businesses, local user groups) on both the management and longer-term development of these	2026-12-31	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	financing opportunities.					
	Activity 1.2.3.3. Organize stakeholder consultations on the identification and implementation of the financial mechanisms.	2024-06-30	0	10	ToRs were drafted and a consultant is in a process of being engaged, while information has been shared with stakeholders during the site visits conducted in the Albanian Alps. During these visits, several local stakeholders (such as guesthouse owners, tour operators and shepherds' association and local NGOs) showed interests on the pilot projects and expressed their ideas on what could be some interesting pilot projects for income generation for the park and improving sustainable livelihoods of the community of the park. Ideas have to do with sporting activities, building of check dams, building of small traditional dairies, as well as improving trails and tourist services in the area. Stakeholders were instructed to draft some short concept notes on their ideas and share them with the project staff for evaluation. Further assistance will be offered to stakeholders on improving these concepts to fit the project objectives.	S
	1.3.1.1. Conduct a functionality analysis of the relevant authorities responsible for nature conservation and develop clear duties and responsibilities, and identify any gaps in required skills and capacities at the various levels.	2025-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	Activity 1.3.1.2. Develop an institutional development plan for institutions involved in nature conservation (MTE, NAPA, RAPA), identifying the necessary adjustment/refinement in terms of structure, mandates, staff, operational procedures, equipment, community roles, etc. The plan should provide for gradual increasing of the staff number and capacities, technical needs assessment for supply of equipment, required budget and mechanisms to consult public.	2025-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 1.3.1.3. Support NAPA/RAPA in identifying required positions related to biodiversity conservation, support the development of job descriptions and qualification requirements for such positions.	2025-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 1.3.2.1. Identify any gaps in legislation and provide recommendations to improve/clarify the legal framework for the effective management of the AANP	2024-09-30	0	15	A consultant has been engaged in order to identify the gaps in legislation and provide recommendations to improve/clarify of the legal framework. Ongoing data gathering in collaboration with MoTE. In July and October, the project staff met with MoTE staff, GEF operational focal point, as well as Directors of NAPA and RAPA Shkoder and Kukes. The existing legal basis on PA was discussed. The ministry has also discussed the proposal for the creation of a new entity managing the entire Albanian Alps National Park. This idea will be further discussed and proposals for amendments in the current legislation will be submitted at a later stage of the project implementation in consultation with project partners, UNEP	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
					and the consultant that will carry out this activity.	
	Activity 1.3.2.2. Establish appropriate community-based structures, with agreed roles and involvement of non-government and private sector entities	2025-03-30	0	10	Ongoing data gathering in collaboration with MoTE. ToR were drafted, ongoing conclusion of agreement. Stakeholders' meetings were held in July and October. One of the necessities raised by the RAPAs and local NGOs was the need for a mountaineering club, as well as community structures to carry out search and rescue activities, be trained in search and rescue, as well as build better communication channels with similar clubs in neighboring Kosovo and Montenegro PAs (as this is part of a larger cross border park).	S
	Activity 1.3.2.3. Train communities to participate in the management and sustainable use of natural resources.	2025-06-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 1.3.2.4. Support the procurement of critical equipment to ensure functionality of governance and management structures.	2025-04-30	0	10	ToRs drafted; consultant is in process of being engaged. Stakeholder meetings held with RAPA Shkoder and Kukes. Equipment and the training needs assessed and shared by both RAPAs.	MS
	Activity 1.3.3.1. Conduct a capacity and training needs assessment for protected area management and governance (including inspection and law enforcement).	2025-03-30	0	10	ToRs drafted, consultant in process of being engaged. Stakeholder meetings held with RAPA Shkoder and Kukes. Training and the trainings needs assessed and shared with the project staff.	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating	
	Activity 1.3.3.2. Develop a tailor-made comprehensive training program (short and long term) and support the delivery of capacity building activities on selected priority topics	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS	
	Activity 1.3.3.3. Develop a series of manuals, guidelines and tool kits in support of the training activities and for use beyond the project's lifespan	2025-06-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS	
	Activity 1.3.3.4. Support information systems for monitoring and reporting on the habitats and species with the use of IT and GIS tools.	2025-06-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS	
2	Strengthening the practical experience and "know-how" of the Albanian Alps NP stakeholders to address threats.	Outcome 2.1: Threats to biodiversity in the Albanian Alps addressed through the effective initiation of the updated NP management plan programs, and the development of practical experience of key stakeholders to continue implementation in the long term.	2026-12-31	0	10	One consultant has been engaged and another consultant is in the process of being engaged. Some data collection is underway and activities are being consulted with stakeholders and relevant institutions.	MS
	Output 2.1.2: Support to sustainable economic development: strengthening regulations and management of sustainable natural resource management, livelihoods, and cultural heritage within communities in the NP in order to reduce pressures on BD and incentivize sustainable use and livelihoods, and encourage maintenance of cultural heritage (MP Program 3)	2026-09-30	0	5	Consultant in process of being engaged	MS	
	Output 2.1.3: Strengthening of regulation and management of HPPs and other infrastructure, through capacity building on EIA and SEA and training law enforcement officers, private sector and community representatives on sustainable natural resource management in order to reduce pressures on BD, and of CC (MP Program 3).	2024-09-30	0	5	Consultant in the process of being hired.	MS	
	Output 2.1.4: Support to the development of educational and awareness building, and scientific research sub-programs, and support a long-term NP monitoring system including a gender-specific and sensitive approach (MP program 4)	2026-09-30	0	2	The consultant is in the process of being engaged. Activities are being consulted with stakeholders and relevant institutions.	MS	

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	Activity 2.1.1.1. Prepare a list of priority species and habitat conservation and restoration measures whose implementation will be supported by the project.	2025-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.2.1. Carry out an assessment on the energy efficiency potential in the area, assessing the feasibility of renovating houses/business structures and introducing alternative renewable energy sources (solar panel, biogas).	2026-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.3.1. Strengthen the efficacy of Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA) by training and educating national and local law enforcement officers, the private sector, and community representatives, on how to better use ESIA guidelines in their planning and implementation.	2024-09-30	0	5	ToRs drafted and consultant hiring procedures expected to be finalized next month.	MS
	Activity 2.1.4.1. Carry out awareness raising activities for local stakeholders and residents, visitors to the area, and national audiences, on the values and importance of the biodiversity and landscape of the AANP.	2026-01-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.1.2. Develop technical specifications for the implementation of these measures and support (fund) their implementation.	2026-12-31	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.2.2. Assess opportunities for an improved waste management system in the area, promoting in particular farm composting and biogas production.	2026-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.3.2. Support the analysis of existing legislation (regulations) on EIA and SEA and based on international best practices, provide recommendations on how to improve existing regulation(s) and enable the proper identification and implementation of mitigation measures, where necessary.	2024-12-31	0	5	ToRs drafted and consultant hiring procedures expected to be finalized next month.	MS
	Activity 2.1.4.2. Help build communication and outreach skills across RAPA,	2026-06-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	Activity 2.1.1.3. Identify rare species and habitats, and develop two conservation management action plans (1 for habitat; 1 for species).	2024-06-30	0	10	Consultant has been engaged for identifying key species and habitats, and work is ongoing.	MS
	Activity 2.1.2.3. Support the implementation of measures from the existing sustainable tourism plan for the AANP, with the main focus on community benefits and cultural heritage conservation.	2026-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.3.3. Support the organization of public consultation meetings on the issues related to infrastructure development in the area.	2025-03-30	0	10	Stakeholders have been identified and informed through stakeholder meetings held in the project area in July and October. During these meetings several community members expressed the need for better connectivity between the parks, track improvements, adding of signals, as well as production of better maps. According to the municipalities, there are no major infrastructure developments planned in the area.	MS
	Activity 2.1.4.3. Support the development and dissemination of outreach materials	2025-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.1.4. Identify monitoring needs and develop/improve monitoring protocols and provide training to RAPA staff in the implementation of these protocols, including ecological and threat monitoring.	2024-12-31	0	10	Consultant has been engaged and work in this activity is ongoing.	MS
	Activity 2.1.2.4. Support the organization of local festivals (at least three) promoting products and cultural traditions of the area.	2026-04-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.3.4. Identify relevant financial institutions and banks which are pivotal to the development of important infrastructure projects in the area of AANP, including building of HPPs	2024-12-31	0	5	ToRs drafted and consultant hiring procedures expected to be finalized next month.	MS
	Activity 2.1.4.4. Develop and deliver environmental education	2026-06-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	programmes in cooperation with local schools.				period	
	Activity 2.1.1.5. Identify specific monitoring equipment needs relevant to the protocols developed and support the procurement of critical equipment accordingly.	2024-09-30	0	10	In consultation with stakeholders priority needs are being identified.	MS
	Activity 2.1.2.5. Provide capacity building to small farmers and small and micro/medium enterprises in addressing biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use issues when applying for rural development support schemes (National schemes, and/or IPARD).	2024-12-31	0	5	TORs for engaging a consultant to support this activity have been drafted and hiring processes should be finalized next month.	MS
	Activity 2.1.3.5. Develop training material and deliver training to representatives of the key financial institutions to properly integrate considerations on environmental and social safeguards on their financing feasibility assessments,	2025-03-30	0	5	ToRs drafted and consultant hiring procedures expected to be finalized next month.	MS
	Activity 2.1.4.5. Support the “Junior Rangers” program for the AANP area.	2026-06-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.1.6. Provide training on data storage and analysis from monitoring activities to both RAPA and NAPA staff.	2024-06-30	0	0	This activity has been pushed for the next reporting period due to the fact that the institutions are not yet ready to receive training on this topic due to lack of data. The project will produce data and this activity will start after the valorization study has been completed.	MS
	Activity 2.1.2.6. Develop and implement a monitoring program for natural resource use levels and resource status together with NAPA/RAPA.	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.4.6. Support RAPA in identifying research priorities and in promoting and facilitating the use of the NP for scientific and socio-economic research in collaboration with the national scientific community.	2024-03-30	0	5	Consultant hiring procedures expected to be finalized next month	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	Activity 2.1.1.7. Support the implementation/delivery of a ranger training program and develop a patrol plan in cooperation with RAPA staff.	2025-03-30	0	5	ToRs drafted, consultant in process of being engaged. The outline of the training for rangers was discussed in the meetings in July and October with RAPAs Shkoder and Kukes, given their needs. Further consultations are needed to develop a detailed training for this purpose.	MS
	Activity 2.1.2.7. Carry out an assessment of the status of cultural values in the area, with the aim to promote such values.	2025-03-30	0	5	TORs for engaging a consultant to support this activity have been drafted and hiring processes should be finalized next month.	MS
	Activity 2.1.4.7. Facilitate the development and maintenance of a RAPA Management Information System.	2026-06-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.1.8. Provide on-the-job training and build capacities for establishing key mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing the new regulations and rules to be applied in the different management zones within the AANP.	2025-06-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.2.8. Enhance technical and methodological capacities of public and private stakeholders, including universities and professional networks to improve their knowledge on Rural development issues (facilitate knowledge transfer and innovation).	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.4.8. Strengthen NAPA's capacities for evaluating MP implementation in particular related to surveillance and law enforcement activities, through increased reporting on results of patrols and indictments.	2025-03-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.1.9. Hold joint training events with representatives of the judiciary system, inspectorate and RAPA staff on surveillance and law enforcement of environmental crimes.	2025-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	Activity 2.1.4.9. Support establishing an appropriate Performance Monitoring System reinforced by a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.1.10. Develop and support the implementation of three threat management plans focusing on invasive alien species, human wildlife conflicts, and wildfires.	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
	Activity 2.1.1.11. Support activities related to minimizing any negative costs for communities as a result of new rules and regulations, (wildlife damage to agriculture or livestock pushing locals to kill wildlife).	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	MS
3 Support to national level adoption and up scaling of sustainable PAs management best practices	Output 3.1.1: In depth evaluation of the critical lessons learned during the establishment and initial management of the NP captured and documented	2026-09-30	0	5	Consultant is in the process of being engaged. Some experience exchange has already been underway with other donors and other UNEP projects.	S
	Output 3.1.2: Positive experiences and lessons learned from Albanian Alps documented and disseminated to key national stakeholders in order to facilitate national scale application (particularly CC resilience and financing).	2026-12-31	0	3	Consultant is in the process of being engaged for undertaking activities under this output. Some knowledge material have already been produced and data collection is underway.	S
	Activity 3.1.1.1. Develop a gender-sensitive/responsive knowledge management and communications and outreach strategy at the start of the project to support implementation and replication of project activities.	2025-01-30	0	5	TORs drafted, and consultant in the process of being hired.	S
	Activity 3.1.2.1. Support implementation of the Communications and Outreach strategy developed in Output 3.1.1 above	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	S
	Activity 3.1.1.2. Deliver knowledge management activities, including: dissemination of best practices, cross-site visits at local and national levels;	2026-09-30	0	5	TORs drafted, and consultant in the process of being hired.	S
	Activity 3.1.2.2. Develop promotional materials and create pathways to share project results to inform local and national stakeholder	2025-09-30	0	2	Two project leaflets containing key project information have been developed	S

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	groups.				and distributed during the inception meeting and opening of the tourism season in Tropopja. Other materials will be developed in following. Consultant to support this activity is in the process of being hired.	
	Activity 3.1.1.2. i) regular coordination meetings with other projects and institutions working on similar issues at national/regional level, and local level.	2026-09-30	0	10	Meetings with donors, RCO and other UN agencies are regularly conducted with project staff, hired consultants and institutions.	S
	Activity 3.1.2.3. Organize and deliver national workshops on traditional knowledge and use natural resources, biodiversity conservation and protected areas management, and on sustainable livelihoods.	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	S
	Activity 3.1.1.2. ii) information exchange with other protected areas related projects at the regional level.	2026-09-30	0	5	Information exchange with other PA projects in the region is ongoing, relating to other UNEP projects as well as projects from international donors such as PONT and Global Conservation.	S
	Activity 3.1.2.4. Promote project results (project reports, newsletters, blogs and reports, social media feed, relevant news articles, photos and videos) via partner websites and/or social media.	2026-12-31	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	S
	Activity 3.1.1.3. Establish an online information portal/knowledge management platform.	2025-03-30	0	5	TORs drafted and consultant is in process of being engaged to draft the design and architecture of the platform.	S
	Activity 3.1.2.5. Develop several short promotional movies to showcase the project achievements.	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	S
	Activity 3.1.1.4. Keep the platform alive and active by sharing lessons, knowledge products and become a repository for all information that	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	S

Component	Output/Activity	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of previous reporting period (%)	Implementation status as of current reporting period (%)	Progress rating justification, description of challenges faced and explanations for any delay	Progress Rating
	can be viewed publicly.					
	Activity 3.1.2.6. Support participation at international workshops to share and discuss project findings and make presentations at relevant international/national conferences organized by others.	2026-09-30	0	0	Activity planned for next reporting period	S

The Task Manager will decide on the relevant level of disaggregation (i.e. either at the output or activity level).

4 Risks

4.1 Table A. Project management Risk

Please refer to the Risk Help Sheet for more details on rating

Risk Factor	EA Rating	TM Rating
1 Management structure - Roles and responsibilities	Low	Low
2 Governance structure - Oversight	Moderate	Substantial
3 Implementation schedule	Moderate	Moderate
4 Budget	Low	Low
5 Financial Management	Low	Low
6 Reporting	Low	Low
7 Capacity to deliver	Low	Low

If any of the risk factors is rated a Moderate or higher, please include it in Table B below

4.2 Table B. Risk-log

Implementation Status (Current PIR)

Insert ALL the risks identified either at CEO endorsement (inc. safeguards screening), previous/current PIRs, and MTRs. Use the last line to propose a suggested consolidated rating.

Risks	Risk affecting: Outcome / outputs	CEO ED	PIR 1	PIR 2	PIR 3	PIR 4	PIR 5	Current PIR	Δ	Justification
Governance structure oversight	All outcomes and outputs may be delayed	M	M						=	Delays are mainly due to changes in the Government structures at the early stages of the project inception and shifting political priorities. The law on protected areas was recently changed (early 2024) that lead to

Risks	Risk affecting: Outcome / outputs	CEO ED	PIR 1	PIR 2	PIR 3	PIR 4	PIR 5	Current PIR	Δ	Justification
										municipalities gaining administrative management of some of the National Parks.
Implementation schedule	All outcomes and outputs may be delayed	M	M						=	Some delays are expected in the implementation schedule due to shifting government priorities, leading to delayed hiring procedure for consultants. However one consultant for the project has been hired already and another consultant is in the final processes of the hiring procedures.
	Moderate	M	M						=	

4.3 Table C. Outstanding Moderate, Significant, and High risks

Additional mitigation measures for the next periods

Risk	Actions decided during the previous reporting instance (PIRt-1, MTR, etc.)	Actions effectively undertaken this reporting period	What	When	By Whom
Governance structure oversight	none	Project staff has engaged in frequent communication with the government partners. and country visits have been conducted for face to face meetings.	Intensify frequency of communications. A National Project Coordinator has been engaged in order to facilitate frequent communication with government partners.	Next reporting period	Project staff and National Project Coordinator.
Implementation schedule	none	Project staff has engaged in	Intensify frequency of	Next reporting period.	Project staff and National

Risk	Actions decided during the previous reporting instance (PIRt-1, MTR, etc.)	Actions effectively undertaken this reporting period	What	When	By Whom
		frequent communication with the government partners. several site visits have been conducted during which con	communications. A National Project Coordinator has been engaged in order to facilitate followup with consultants work. One consultant has been hired. and another is in the process of being hired.		Project Coordinator.

High Risk (H): There is a probability of greater than 75% that assumptions may fail to hold or materialize, and/or the project may face high risks. Significant Risk (S): There is a probability of between 51% and 75% that assumptions may fail to hold and/or the project may face substantial risks. Moderate Risk (M): There is a probability of between 26% and 50% that assumptions may fail to hold or materialize, and/or the project may face only modest risks. Low Risk (L): There is a probability of up to 25% that assumptions may fail to hold or materialize, and/or the project may face only modest risks.

5 Amendment - GeoSpatial

Project Minor Amendments

Minor amendments are changes to the project design or implementation that do not have significant impact on the project objectives or scope, or an increase of the GEF project financing up to 5% as described in Annex 9 of the Project and Program Cycle Policy Guidelines. Please tick each category for which a change occurred in the fiscal year of reporting and provide a description of the change that occurred in the textbox. You may attach supporting document as appropriate

5.1 Table A: Listing of all Minor Amendment (TM)

Minor Amendments	Changes
Results Framework:	No
Components and Cost:	No
Institutional and implementation arrangements:	No
Financial Management:	No
Implementation Schedule:	
Executing Entity:	No
Executing Entity Category:	No
Minor project objective change:	No
Safeguards:	No
Risk analysis:	No
Increase of GEF financing up to 5%:	No
Location of project activity:	No
Other:	No

Minor amendments

5.2 Table B: History of project revisions and/or extensions (TM)

Version	Type	Signed/Approved by UNEP	Entry Into Force (last signature Date)	Agreement Expiry Date	Main changes introduced in this revision

GEO Location Information:

The Location Name, Latitude and Longitude are required fields insofar as an Agency chooses to enter a project location under the set format. The Geo Name ID is required in instances where the location is not exact, such as in the case of a city, as opposed to the exact site of a physical infrastructure. The Location & Activity Description fields are optional. Project longitude and latitude must follow the Decimal Degrees WGS84 format and Agencies are encouraged to use at least four decimal points for greater accuracy. Users may add as many locations as appropriate. Web mapping applications such as OpenStreetMap or GeoNames use this format. Consider using a conversion tool as needed, such as: <https://coordinates-converter.com> Please see the Geocoding User Guide by clicking here

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GEO Name ID	Location Description	Activity Description
Albanian Alps National Park	42.39583	19.77444			

Please provide any further geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions is taking place as appropriate. *

A map showing the location of the Albanian Alps National Park, will be attached to this report.

[Annex any linked geospatial file]

Additional Supporting Documents:

Filename	File Uploaded By	File Uploaded At	
Tropoja leaflet.pdf	Executing Agency	2024-07-30 12:04:56	Download
inception leaflet.pdf	Executing Agency	2024-07-30 12:04:37	Download
AA Map.jpeg	Executing Agency	2024-07-30 12:04:26	Download