

GEF Project “Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the extended Drin River Basin”

Project Objective

To promote joint management of the shared water resources of the extended transboundary Drin River Basin, including coordination mechanisms among the various sub-basin commissions and committees (Lakes Prespa, Ohrid and Shkoder/Skadar).

Structure – Outcomes, Outputs and Activities

Component 1: Consolidating a common knowledge base

Outcome 1: Joint fact finding facilitates achievement of science based consensus among countries on (i) the transboundary implications of the shared nature of the Basin’s water resources; (ii) key transboundary concerns, including climate change and variability; (iii) need for harmonized monitoring and reporting on common indicators.

Outputs and Activities

(1) Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA): A full fledged TDA of the extended Drin Basin, based on the Situation Analysis (prepared as part of the Baseline Project), and integrating consideration of: (i) the results achieved in the three lakes through previous GEF funded activities (ii) other related environmental and developmental projects pertaining to surface waters (rivers and lakes) in the extended Basin such as the SIDA / World Bank supported intervention in the part of the Drin extending in Albania and the GIZ supported intervention in the three shared lakes (iii) the karstic nature of large sections of the Basin, including of its three major lakes; (iv) surface/groundwater interaction patterns and conjunctive uses throughout the basin; and (v) the coastal ecosystems and shallow marine environment. The TDA will be prepared by national scientists and practitioners with international expert support, and approved by countries (Drin Core Group). The TDA will also include a set of Scenarios of Water Futures for the extended Drin Transboundary Basin with a focus on climate change and variability and on transboundary issues, and if feasible, incorporating projections from numerical modeling and the new insights generated by the enriched knowledge base. The Scenarios building exercise will be developed considering the identified “drivers of change”, by national and international experts and will include extensive stakeholders consultations. Its results are meant to integrate the TDA and inform the visioning process.

(2) Drivers and Indicators: The study of, and agreement on the “main drivers of change” and on the “indicators of current conditions (status indicators)”. The Drin Core Group will approve both drivers and indicators.

(3) Monitoring and Information Management System (IMS): A harmonized Drin Basin Water Monitoring Program applying the UNECE Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers and including the capacity building for the upgrading, operation and maintenance of monitoring stations, implementing related provisions of the WFD and an IMS that will enable to collect, store, analyze and share data produced by the project, information on the extended Drin Basin and its sub-basins, and data produced by monitoring in a consistent way, designed, endorsed by the Drin Core Group, and implemented.

Component 2: Building the foundation for multi-country cooperation

Outcome 2: Visioning process and agreement on priorities for action opens the way for systematic cooperation in the integrated management of the transboundary Drin River Basin.

Outputs and Activities:

(4) Shared Vision. (Horizon of 20 years): A Shared Vision for the Extended Drin Basin, largely based on the Strategic Shared Vision (defined as part of the Baseline project) and updated in the light of outputs 1-4, that will set the environmental quality targets, and strategic development lines and priorities, will be developed and formally agreed upon by the countries,

(5) A Strategic Action Program (SAP) formulated (Horizon 5 years): A SAP consistent with the Shared Vision, addressing main issues of transboundary concern and containing concrete actions (legal, policy, institutional reforms, and investments) at the national and regional levels with focus on issues such as nutrient pollution, mitigation of flood hazards, management of hydraulic infrastructure and hydropower generation schemes, and erosion control, formulated on the basis of the results of the TDA, of stakeholder consultations, and of the experience gained with pilot projects.

Outcome 3: Countries and donors commit to sustain joint cooperation mechanisms and to undertake priority reforms and investments.

Output and Activities:

(6) Partnership Conference: A Partnership Conference consolidates international support for the implementation of the priority actions identified in the SAP.

Component 3: Institutional strengthening for Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM)

Outcome 4: The establishment and strengthening of the institutional and legal frameworks for transboundary cooperation will facilitate balancing of water uses and sustaining environmental quality throughout the extended Drin Basin.

Outputs and Activities:

(7) High Level Joint Commission for the Extended Drin Basin established and capacitated: The Joint Commission will be built on the current joint Drin Core Group and its Expert Working Groups, and will focus on: (i) the strengthening and harmonization of existing multi-country (Ohrid, Prespa and Skadar - Shkoder Lakes sub-basins) and national water management and policy frameworks, (ii) fostering joint management of the extended basin including through the definition of an Integrated River Basin Management Plan, and (iii) implementation of priority actions (SAP).

(8) Inter-ministerial Committees established and functioning: Inter-ministerial Committees (water, environment, energy, agriculture, spatial planning, treasury) established at national level, tasked with coordinating country action at extended basin level and at the level of existing joint sub-basin bodies in response to the overall guidance of the High Level Joint Commission.

(9) SAP endorsement: The SAP will be reviewed and endorsed by the High Level Joint Commission and translated into national actions and policies by the national Inter-ministerial Committees.

(10) Training Program: Implementation of a training program, targeting managers, practitioners, relevant officers and local authorities staff etc. that may include: (a) integrated basin planning and management in accordance with WFD, (b) practices of transboundary water cooperation as guided by the UNECE Water Convention, (c) GIS & spatial planning, (d) EIAs and industrial site inspections, (e) flood management, (f) natural wastewater treatment systems, (g) best agricultural practices, (h) avoidance and containment of invasive species, (i) environmental monitoring system design and management, (j) enforcement of water quality, water abstractions, recharge area protection and biodiversity regulations, (k) scenario building, (l) groundwater management.

Component 4: Demonstration of technologies and practices for IWRM and ecosystem management

Outcome 5: Cooperation on sustainable natural resources management strengthened by piloting on the ground environmentally sound approaches and technologies new to the region.

Outputs and Activities:

(11) A program of on the ground pilot demonstrations designed, and implemented. Program might include:

- Testing of IWRM practices and water use efficiency measures, including obligations arising from WFD and the UNECE Water Convention, on selected sub-basins.
- Reduction of nutrient loads - A pilot project on nutrient reduction from agricultural and domestic sources using engineered/rehabilitated wetland and other environmentally benign ways.
- Land Use Planning / Groundwater protection - Demonstrations and strategy development for land use planning for aquifer recharge protection, focusing on karstic areas, and for soil conservation/erosion control/nutrient runoff reduction.
- Extreme Climatic Events – Action planning in sub-basins and demo interventions to address floods and droughts stemming from increased climatic variability and change.
- Joint ICZM/IWRM management planning – Hands on action-planning and implementation of measures.
- Sustainable Tourism - Nature-based tourism pilots to demonstrate sustainable tourism.
- Enforcement Capacity - Strengthening of enforcement capacity of conservation and management policies.
- Flood Management Plans - Hands on first steps in flood risk management, including early warning.

The pilot demonstrations will be fully designed with associated work plan and budget and final agreement among the countries will be reached during the PPG implementation. Selection criteria's will be developed and approved by the project SC and will take into account country baseline and co-financing commitments, GEF5 IW strategy, as well as co-funding available from other co-financing partners.

Component 5: Stakeholder Involvement, Gender Mainstreaming and Communication Strategies

Outcome 6: Public support and participation to IWRM and joint multi-country management enhanced through stakeholder involvement and gender mainstreaming.

Outputs and Activities:

(12) A Stakeholder Involvement and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy defined and implemented. Based on a Stakeholder Involvement Strategy, specific activities will be implemented to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the project implementation in order to facilitate:

- the building of ownership by the stakeholders;
- long term sustainability of project outcomes;
- better informed implementation (with knowledge at the national and local levels) of the project activities.

A gender mainstreaming approach will be integrated into the project's overall stakeholder involvement strategy by giving visibility and support to both women's and men's contributions individually and by identifying gaps in equality and developing strategies and policies to close those gaps.

Outcome 7: Political awareness at all levels and private sector participation strengthened through higher visibility of the project's developments and targeted outreach initiatives.

Output and Activities:

(13) Information, Communication and Outreach Strategy prepared and implemented: The entire project will be participatory and communication oriented. Based on an Information, Communication and Outreach Strategy, a range of related activities will be implemented to foster:

- the understanding of the issues involved by the general public and the stakeholders, including water users and the private sector, thus enabling their contribution in the development and implementation of solutions;
- the enhancement of awareness at the political level and among decision makers thus creating the enabling environment for action to be taken.

The project will report using the GEF 5 IW Tracking tool.

All the project's main events, findings and achievements will be recorded and disseminated through media events and ICT. The project will establish a website according to IW LEARN guidance and standards to be used as a communication platform and repository of project documentation. The communication and dissemination of the "Shared Vision" and other key messages will occur through a series of regional Outreach Conferences (one in each participating country), and Special Events in coincidence with World Water Forums, the GEF IW Biannual Conferences and other global events.