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LIVING NERETVA

Towards EU standards in the Neretva river basin (BiH)



Technical Progress Report

Reporting Period: 1 January – 30 June 2008

**Submitted to WWF Norway
on 15 July 2008 by WWF-MedPO**

Table of contents

1.	Executive Summary	1
2.	Project Successes	4
3.	Progress on Activities and related financial issues	4
4.	Problems and Constraints.....	7
5.	Unexpected effects	7
6.	Learning and Sharing	7
7.	Adaptive Management	8
9.	Communications activities and achievements	8
10.	Communications/ adaptive management, lessons.....	9
11.	Future Issues/ Challenges.....	9
12.	Overall Assessment of progress	9

Project Title: *Living Neretva Phase II - Towards EU standards in the Neretva river basin (BiH)*

Project Number: BA0001.02

Subject: Biodiversity Conservation, Integrated River Basin Management

Region: Neretva river basin

Countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Duration: 6 months (1 January– 30 June 2008) – Phase 2

Performer: WWF MedPO / WWF Norway

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Abbreviations:

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EF	Environmental Flow
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HD	Habitat Directive
IRBM	Integrated River Basin Management
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RS	Republika Srpska
WB	World Bank
WFD	Water Framework Directive

1. Executive Summary

The project focused on two main pillars of the Water Framework Directive implementation process: the economics analysis (article 4, article 5, annex III) and the use of environmental flow to achieve a good ecological status.

Specific objectives of the project were:

- To provide strategic support to government institutions in using the Water Framework Directive principles and approaches in BiH;
- To raise the awareness raising of the civil society and foster public participation.

The main tools to achieve the project objectives were as follows:

- Support to WFD principles implementation in the Neretva river basin, specifically for environmental flow evaluation and the economic assessment of different management options and environmental services Neretva provides;
- Build the capacity of local stakeholders, especially NGOs, as to promote CSO active participation in the above mentioned processes; the experience and methods of WWF Across The Waters programme was used.

The first phase of Living Neretva project provided a take-off-platform consisting of working groups that advised on action plans for the next phases. This phase moved an important step forward by assessing the previously chosen methodology for EF evaluation; it provided a clear review of its advantages/ disadvantages and proposed improvements to secure the achievement of environmental goals.

In this phase, the economic analysis according to WFD requirements (article 5, article 9 and Annex III of WFD) took off (WATECO guidance document of the Common Implementation Strategy) touching on the economics of water uses, the development of economic baseline scenario, the analysis of trends and water pricing analysis.

A small grants program for local NGOs was implemented. The program allowed the organization of three summer camps and a “Neretva cleaning day”; these activities were put in place by four different local NGOs.. Both summer camps and the “Neretva cleaning day” event targeted pupils of various ages with the objective to bring them closer to the beauty of Neretva river and raising their awareness on its value; in the case of “Neretva Cleaning Day” a media campaign was also run.

More in detail during the reporting period the following activities were implemented:

- Selection and contracting of several consultants (the local coordinator, two international experts, six local experts);
- Preparation and implementation of two environmental flow working group meetings in the town of Ljubuski (river Trebizat area) on April 8-9 and May 26-27. They were attended by representatives of entity ministries and agencies/directorates for water responsible for water management (FBiH and RS entities are responsible for water management and for environment, that is not responsibility of the state level, except for international contacts), representatives of electricity production companies managing hydro-power plants and representative of local farmers;

- Preparation and implementation of two economic valuation working group meetings in Sarajevo on April 3-4 and in Mostar on May 29-30. They were attended by representatives of entity ministries and agencies/directorates for water that are responsible for water management;
- Continuous work of the two working groups (Environmental Flow working group WFD-WG1, and Economic Valuation working group WFD-WG2) supervised by the international WG leaders, resulting in draft reports in May and final reports at the end of June 2008;
- Selection and recruitment of a local lawyer to provide first draft of sub-law on environmental flow evaluation, resulting in a draft sub-law at end of June 2008;
- Training on “Environmental flow assessment” (Turkey, June 2008). The training - organized in collaboration with WWF Turkey and UNESCO_IHE - was attended by representatives of: ministries responsible for water management in both BiH entities, water agencies/directorates, BiH public energy companies, local NGOs and WWF. The training was attended also by representatives of Turkish water administration;
- Printing of a kit of eight posters focusing on key water issues (importance of water resources conservation, need for a more sustainable management of water resources etc...). These posters will be delivered to 50-100 schools in BiH during the next project phase;
- Exchange visit with the Spanish NGO “Projecte Rius¹” (Spain, May 5-9); the exchange was attended by representatives of BiH civil society with the objective to learn the method (very successful in Spain) used by Projecte Rius’s to involve civil society in rivers’ monitoring activities while raising awareness on the concept of “good ecological status”;
- Selection of the project proposal submitted by the local NGO Mocvara from Capljina focusing on the organization of “Neretva Cleaning Day” (May 2008)
- Selection of the project proposals submitted by three local NGOs (Bura from Mostar, Centar Mladih from Livno, and Center for Environmentally Sustainable Development from Sarajevo) focusing on the organization of summer camps (May and June 2008);
- Maintenance of Living Neretva website www.panda.org/zivjetineretvu;
- Promotional media campaign, through newspapers advertisements, letters to key institutions and individuals, provision of DVDs with video documents prepared during LN phase I, was initiated during June 2008 and will continue through the summer 2008. Bilateral meetings and contacts with international organizations (e.g. World Bank, delegation of the European Commission, Spanish Cooperation, Regional Environmental Center, etc.), public administrations relevant to water management and environment, ministries responsible for environment or water management in both entities and at the state level, and public administrations at a local level responsible for water management. For a complete list of contact made refer to annex 3.

The following results are noteworthy:

- The level of interest showed by BiH authorities responsible for water management was extraordinary and the timely action of WWF in the topics addressed by the project was remarked several times by the BiH authorities (see box below).

¹ Project Rius is active in Spain and has the aim of stimulating the active participation of volunteers and citizens in taking care of a stretch of the river that they symbolically “adopt”. More information at: <http://www.projecterius.org/>

Quoting from the comments received on the two technical reports delivered:

- Representative of Republika Srpska Directorate for waters wrote: *"The WWF project Living Neretva phase II Report arrives at very appropriate timing, since RS Directorate for Waters is currently about to establish the Basin Agency in Trebinje, so this report will in that sense have even higher value. My opinion is that the initiated activities should be continued, since at present we do not have necessary data on water supply cost recovery. For the analysis of water supply cost recovery the water utilities are preparing their own reports that do not show real expenses, since only few water utilities has water meters installed at their sources. Such reports, based mostly on rough estimates are delivered to RS Directorate for Waters and serve as a basis for calculating water fees for water abstraction. This will change soon, since RS Directorate for Waters initiated financing installment of water meters at the source. This information is very important for understanding the situation in Trebisnjica basin, so as for efforts directed to decrease water losses. For RS Directorate for Waters it would be very interesting that in next project phases, after implementing the "cost-effectiveness" analyses, the future program of measures in Neretva-Trebisnjica basin be developed. It would be also good that estimates made by experts of the economic growth be provided in the next phases of the project, as well as the future needs in terms of water, to be used as a basis for future management plans and strategies on Trebisnjica basin management, which would support the work of the about to be established Basin Agency in Trebinje."*
- Representative of Agency for Adriatic Sea from Mostar wrote: *"I have read in details the entire Environmental Flow report and would like to say that I agree with the proposals made and have no major remarks to it. On pages 33 and 47 in the comments to the delivered report I have added few suggestions to describe chemical processes in calcareous sinter development and ions presentation."*
- Representative of Agency for Sava basin from Sarajevo wrote: *"The project on environmental flow evaluation for the river Trebizat, that should be the basis for drafting the sub-law on EF for the federation of BiH and Republic of Srpska, has evaluated key problems and it is satisfactory to start developing the related sub-law. Taking into account that the development of this sub-law is prescribed by the new water law, it is estimated that this project represents a good basis for this purpose. The content of the report is appropriate for initiating the development of the sub-law. Still some parts of the report can be further developed in the next project phase in line with the needs of the basin agencies and with financial support of investors"* – it needs to be underlined that the environmental flow assessment was implemented in the area of Neretva basin which is not under the responsibility of this specific basin agency (responsible for Sava river basin), nevertheless the Sava basin agency was very eager to participate in the process, with the intention of applying the selected methodology in the northern part of BiH. Thus the Agency asked to be involved in the process and WWF was happy to support this initiative which magnify the impact of the project at a national level.

- WWF is perceived as a key actor in nature conservation and sustainable development being a neutral international organization.
- Although the project was focusing on Neretva and Trebisnjica basin authorities dealing with other basins showed a vivid interest in using the results of the project for future important water management developments;

- A draft of the sublaw guiding the environmental flow assessment at a national level has been produced under continuous requests of the BiH authorities and is currently under evaluation of the river basin agencies;

2. Project Successes

The following are the project successes:

- The interest (and understanding) of the BiH government on the Water Framework Directive has been highly raised. The water administrations have shown a strong motivation and commitment to implement the WFD, but also the appreciation for WWF support in undertaking this path. Even the energy administration, notoriously resistant in collaborating, has been involved in the project activities thanks to the training in Turkey and its awareness on the need for integrated water resources management raised;
- The two technical reports delivered (environmental flow assessment and economic valuation) are considered by the relevant authorities as the backbone for water management of Neretva basin in the near future;
- The understanding of the Neretva river's ecological value among students of various cities in the Neretva basin has been raised. At the same time, NGOs had the chance to play a more active role in the protection of Neretva river; in the case of "NGO Mocvara" it worth noting that the number of their members increased thanks to the "Neretva Clean Day" initiative.

3. Progress on Activities and related financial issues

Overall

During the reporting period the work-plan was implemented in all its components. The working groups, supervised and lead by international consultants, completed and delivered their reports in due time, even though the project period was extremely short. Reports were reviewed, commented and shaped by local BiH administration representatives. They were made widely accessible through the Living Neretva web site. During this project phase the new Water Law adopted in both Bosnia and Herzegovina entities came fully into force in the Federation of BiH and is expected to happen in Republic of Srpska before the end of 2008. This meant a boost of interest of the administrations being the new water law aligned to the WFD.

Many bilateral meetings were held to harmonize the activities and results of the project with projects/initiatives/policies ongoing in the region and supported by the institutions met, and avoid any duplications. Furthermore the interest of the BiH government on the application of the EU Water Framework Directive has been raised. It needs to be remarked that the GEF World Bank project "Integrated Ecosystem Management of the Neretva and Trebisnjica River Basin" was finally approved in 2008 and it is just taking off at the time this report was finalized. The work done under the WWF project has paved the way for the GEF project to continue the economics approach and environmental flow evaluations for the development of

the river basin management plan and WWF's project next phase will complement and harmonize with the efforts planned under the GEF project.

Objective 1: To provide strategic support to government institutions in using the Water Framework Directive principles and approaches in BiH

Activity 1.1 Working group: Economic valuation according to WFD-requirements

- A group consisting of one international leader and of three local experts was established in March and trained in April 2008. Meetings of the working group were organized together with representatives of BiH water administration (i.e. first joint meeting in Sarajevo on April 3-4 and second joint meeting in Mostar on May 29-30), to deliver the economic analysis of the water uses (*sensu* WFD), that includes basic socio-economic survey of the water uses and users in the Neretva basin. The report was drafted and distributed for internal comments in early June 2008, after which it was reviewed in details and commented by local BiH public administration representatives, specifically by representatives of Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, Republika Srpska Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, FBiH Agency for Adriatic Sea Basin from Mostar, FBiH Agency for Sava River Basin from Sarajevo, so as Repuc of Srpska Directorate Waters from Bijeljina. Based on comments and suggestions received, the working group revised and amended their work and delivered the final report end of June 2008.

Activity 1.2 Working group: Environmental flow calculation

- In this initial phase a pilot “water body” of the Neretva River Basin was selected. Trebizat river, tributary to lower Neretva, was selected thanks to data availability. A group consisting of one international leader and three local experts was established in March and trained in April 2008. Meetings of the working group were organized together with representatives of the BiH water administration (i.e. first joint meeting in Ljubuski, Trebizat area, on April 8-9 and second joint meeting also in Ljubuski on May 26-27). During these meetings the following tasks were accomplished: i) analysis of data gaps needed for the implementation of the methodology selected during the previous phase of the project, ii) identification of priority species and habitats important in Neretva aquatic (and eventually river banks) ecosystems, iii) setting of ecological objectives for the selected pilot water body, iv) training a key water administration (new Agency for Adriatic Sea Basin, responsible for Neretva basin) in applying the methodology thus creating a basis for testing the methodology and further provision of relevant sub-laws on environmental flow as requested by BiH Water Laws (art. 62 Water Law FBiH, art. 65 Water Law RS). The working group delivered a draft of the report in early June 2008, which was then reviewed in details and commented by local BiH public administration representatives, specifically by representatives of Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, Republika Srpska Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, FBiH Agency for Adriatic Sea Basin from Mostar, FBiH Agency for Sava River Basin from Sarajevo, so as RS Directorate Waters from Bijeljina. Based on comments and suggestions received, the working group revised and amended their work and delivered the final report end of June 2008.

Activity 1.3 Support to policy development

- At end of June 2008 the sub law required by both entities and prescribing how to assess environmental flow at a national level was drafted in the three biH languages and submitted to the water administrations.

Objective 2: Raise awareness, build civil society capacity, promote public participation

Activity 2.1 Public consultation

- For time constraint, and since the report from activity 1.1 was a precondition for public consultation, this activity could not be implemented during this project phase.

Activity 2.2 Awareness raising / strengthening civil society

During the project phase following activities were implemented:

- Printing of a kit of eight posters focusing on key water issues (importance of water resources conservation, need for a more sustainable management of water resources etc...); posters will be delivered to 50-100 schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the next project phase;
- Exchange visit to the Spanish NGO “Projecte Rius²” (Spain, May 5-9); the exchange was attended by representatives of BiH civil society with the objective to learn about a specific monitoring approach (very successful in Spain) aimed at involving civil society in securing river ecosystems health and at raising their awareness on the concept of “good ecological status”;
- Selection of the project proposal submitted by the local NGO Mocvara from Capljina; the proposal had as a focus the organization of “Neretva Cleaning Day” in May 2008
- Selection of project proposals submitted by three local NGOs (Bura from Mostar, Centar Mladih from Livno, and Center for Environmentally Sustainable Development from Sarajevo) focusing on the organization of summer camps for schoolboys, in May and June 2008;

Activity.2.3 Communication

During the project phase the following activities were implemented:

1. During the project period, the Living Neretva webpages (www.panda.org/zivjetineretvu and www.panda.org/livingneretva) were maintained and updated. The website aims to share information on nature and sustainable development in Neretva basin with project contacts as a first audience but also with whoever is interested in knowing about our work in the area. A specific web page <http://www.panda.org/bs/vijesti/index.cfm> contains all relevant documents, reports and presentations produced by Living Neretva project, enabling full transparency of its activities.
2. A media campaign was developed to promote further the web pages and continue to raise WWF profile in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the main target of

² Project Rius is active in Spain and has the aim of stimulating the active participation of volunteers and citizens in taking care of a stretch of the river that they symbolically “adopt”. More information at: <http://www.projecterius.org/>

www.panda.org/zivjetineretvu is based. The campaign will be run throughout the summer until October and includes newspapers advertisements, web banners on top media and key institutions websites, as well as a personalized mailing to key decision makers. The contents were prepared with the support of the international advertising agency Ogilvy, which has a branch based in Sarajevo. WWF and Ogilvy have set up a partnership which has been existing at the international level for almost 10 years and foresees the provision by Ogilvy of strategy and design for free, as well as the negotiation of free advertising space in newspapers. This collaboration has not only enabled to benefit from an internationally well known advertising agency with great professionalism, but also to ensure that the right tools for the right targets in the right language were developed. The results of the campaign will be measured in November.

3. In order to give more visibility to the video documents prepared during LN phase I, 70 DVDs were edited, to be distributed to key contacts and advocacy targets. The DVD contains the animation as well as the videos which appear on the web, and a menu from which viewers can choose. It will act as a complementary and interactive tool for decision makers, based on very concrete testimonials.

According to the work plan there were no activities (except activity 2.1 - public consultations – that was found unfeasible during this project phase) lagging significantly behind this plan and not implemented during the project phase that ended on June 30, 2008.

4. Problems and Constraints

No major problems or constraints affected the project progress. A significant change to the external environment in which the project was operating, in comparison to the one existing during the project preparation, is that a new Water Law was in force starting from January 2008 in FBiH, still expected to come into force in RS during next project phase. The new Water Law is highly harmonized with the EU Water Framework Directive. It sets specific deadlines for provision of water management strategy (end of 2009) and water management plans (end of 2012). In its article 207 it prescribes the creation of the Water Agency for the Adriatic Sea basin and the Sava River basin to be established 6 months after the Water Law adoption. Both agencies were established on January 1, 2008. Due to the existence of two entities in BiH which share the two basins two agencies for each of the basins will be established (in total 4 agencies will be established as soon as the Water Law comes fully in force in RS too).

5. Unexpected effects

None.

6. Learning and Sharing

The project fell in a very strategic time when Bosnia and Herzegovina was preparing the making the first official step towards the accession to the European Union: signing the

Stabilisation and Association Agreement (16 June 2008). This created very favorable conditions to the project implementation whose overall aim was to give support to BiH in aligning to EU standards. This favorable condition has granted high interest of key administrations and raised enormously the profile of WWF as a partner organization for the administrations.

7. Adaptive Management

Based on the analysis of data and time availability, it was concluded that the objective of implementing public consultations on socio-economic aspects of water uses and users during this project phase was not feasible, since the report deriving from activity 1.1 was a precondition and was delivered at the end of the project.

At the same time the opportunity to get increased attention on environmental flow assessment from the energy sector was perceived and used to organize an international seminar on environmental flow together with WWF ATW office and WWF Turkey, for representatives of water and energy administration of both BiH and Turkey. This seminar was extremely helpful to establish a collaborative environment with the most difficult water interest group.

9. Communications activities and achievements

The communications work has focused its efforts on maintaining a website www.panda.org/zivjetineretvu and paving the ground for the project visibility, so as to promotional campaign for Living Neretva project. Through discussions with the team the objectives of the web site have been set as follows:

- to inform people in BiH about the Living Neretva project in local language (it also included a summary in English to target people outside BiH);
- to provide accessibility to all Living Neretva documents, reports and presentations, enabling so transparency of the project;
- to raise the profile of Neretva river basin;
- to provide self-explanatory photos describing values of the basin;
- to introduce WWF brand in BiH.

The web site is hosted by WWF International web site www.panda.org under the Mediterranean programme section at www.panda.org/zivjetineretvu. Panda.org receives everyday 15.000 visitors and it is one of the most respected and visited environmental web sites worldwide. This will allow increasing importantly Neretva profile.

In addition, an analysis of the main communications channels and stakeholders in the country has been implemented for developing a communications recommendation and providing guidance for Neretva profile enhancement. One of the resulted is using video materials promoting positions of public administration and NGO sector related to Neretva basin management, so as its incomparable values prepared during previous project phase in complied promotional DVD. Large media campaign was also initiated during June 2008, to last during summer period.

10. Communications/ adaptive management, lessons

No specific difficulty or limitation encountered related to communications or adaptive management to be reported for the reporting period.

11. Future Issues/ Challenges

During this reporting period the background to achieve important results in the near future has been created. Key administrations are fully collaborative and rely on WWF work to deliver important work they are required to do under the newly adopted water law. The next reporting period will face the challenge of legally adopting approaches that will ensure environmental flow in all the rivers of BiH. This important decision may encounter the opposition of key water sectors (e.g. energy sector) who might be asked to release more water to ensure environmental flow.

12. Overall Assessment of progress

In general the project made the expected progress against the action plan. Activities were launched on time and completed according to the proposed schedule. The problems and constraints described in paragraph 5 did not jeopardize the overall implementation process. The funds requested for different activities proved to be adequate. The members of the working groups had enough professional skills and group work ability, and were committed to produce appropriate results, supervised by public administration representatives and engaged international experts. Overall the project delivered very good results which have the potential for a significant impact on how water will be managed in BiH in the near future.