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Terms of references

Job Title: Land use and Pasture management expert
Project Reference: Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into Moldova territorial planning policies and land-use practices (Project Preparation Phase)
Duration of Employment: February - September 2014
Contract type: Individual Contract
Expected workload: 40 working days

I. Background

The Government of Moldova has requested support from GEF to prepare the medium-sized project *"Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Moldova's Territorial Planning Policies and Land-Use Practices"* intended to remove, in an incremental manner, the existing barriers for mainstreaming biodiversity priorities into district territorial planning policies and land use practices. More specifically, at the national level the project aims to establishing an enabling environment for mainstreaming biodiversity into land use planning, compliance monitoring and enforcement and test at the local level models of biodiversity compatible spatial planning and land-use. Capacity building for successful mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation envisaged by the project shall also ensure proper participatory spatial planning (including conflict resolution).

The Preparation Grant for the Project *"Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Moldova's Territorial Planning Policies and Land-Use Practices"* shall establish the baseline, collate and analyze the primary and secondary information and outline the GEF increment for the project through a number of relevant studies and stakeholders consultation with a view to further develop the approved project concept into a fully formulated project document.

The final output of the project preparation phase will be an UNDP-GEF project document and GEF CEO Endorsement request and relevant baseline GEF Tracking tool ready for submission to UNDP and GEF.

Project description

The Republic of Moldova is located in the south-eastern part of Europe occupying a land-locked area of 3,384,300 ha. The country straddles three main European eco-regions: the Central-European mixed forests, the Pontic steppe, and the East European Forest steppe. The country has a rich biota relative to its size. Approximately 15% of the country remains under some form of natural vegetation cover, much of this in a degraded state. The majority of this natural vegetation cover comprises *Forest* habitats. Forests are located predominantly in the central region of the country, with the northern and the southern areas less forested. Forest coverage is estimated at 325,400 ha (~9.6% of the country). Natural *steppe* habitats (including meadows ecosystems) tend to occur predominantly in the north and the south of the country, and account altogether for about 65,000 ha (~1.9% of the territory). Semi-natural steppes and meadows, with rich genetic and species diversity yet used for livestock grazing, occupy about 10% of the country. Vegetation communities associated with the *aquatic ecosystems* – notably marshes in the lower reaches of the Prut and Dniester Rivers, and the southern river valleys - cover about 94,600 ha (~2.8% of the country). Some 3,000 rivers and streams, and 60 natural lakes, are distributed across the country, with more than 95% of the water circulation flowing into one of the two major rivers in Moldova - the Prut or Dniester. Moldova is rich in species diversity considering the absence of mountains and moderate variations in climate.

Currently the system of protected areas in Moldova covers 157,227 ha (or 4.65% of the country) of publicly owned land (state or local authorities). The protected areas that correspond to the IUCN classification system account for only 66,048 ha (or 1.96% of the country).

Most of the cropland outside protected areas is privately owned. Pastures, hay-fields and some smaller forest plots are owned by the village councils (i.e. are "communal ownership"). Massive tracts of forests are owned by the state, with some private and communal ownership of forests. The aforementioned representation of biodiversity creates the need to work at multiple scales and across large areas of global and national biodiversity pattern and process if global biodiversity targets are to be met.

The 4.65% of terrestrial biodiversity that is under formal protection is not representative of species and habitat diversity across the biomes, which means that effective biodiversity management outside protected areas is crucial to maintaining the ecological integrity of Moldova's biomes and ensuring that the wealth of biodiversity assets is conserved. This requires a landscape approach to biodiversity conservation working both within and beyond the boundaries of protected areas, to manage a mosaic of land and resource uses through protection, restoration and mainstreaming biodiversity management into production and sustainable use, in order to deliver ecological, economic and social benefits.

Agricultural land occupies about 75% of the total area of Moldova; land conversion and agricultural practices result in significant threats to biodiversity. The country's heavy reliance on agriculture continues to be a major threat to the integrity of the few remaining tracts of the relict subtropical steppes, wet steppes, dry steppes and river floodplains. Native steppe and steppe-associated wet meadows are being systematically converted to arable farm-land, used for unregulated livestock grazing, or afforested by the introduced black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*). Savanna steppes are almost completely lost. Dry steppes are under severe pressure from unregulated livestock (mostly cattle) grazing and the cessation of hay-making, which in some locations are necessary for the maintenance of rare grass species. Overall for the country, steppes are assessed to be at a stage when the reduction of pressures and their regulated management could still reverse the degradation trend (i.e. moderately degraded); yet, every year chances for this are declining. Soil erosion due to poor farming practices and improper grazing is a considerable problem with both direct and indirect adverse impacts on biodiversity. The lack of rotational grazing and unknown carrying capacity for sheep, goats, and cattle reduces soil cover, while animals trample stream banks adding to the problem. Although wet meadows are not readily plowed and converted to cropland as are the steppe habitats, most wet meadow ecosystems are being drained for subsequent arable farming, "improved" as pasture lands (e.g. seeding with non-native species that are preferred as forage), which is the main threat of Corncrake (*Crex crex*) as an example. Many wetlands are severely degraded, having been mowed and grazed intensively for decades, while others continue to make way for farmland. The excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers in the agriculture sector, coupled with the increased sediments in water due to soil erosion, have detrimental effects on aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity.

Moldovan forests were mostly cleared three times in the twentieth century and the remaining natural forests are largely the result of stump or root sprouts and considered by officials to be of poor quality and less stable than forests produced by regeneration from seed. There are no primary forests left in Moldova and for example, 80% of standing oak forests is of coppice origin. Moldova's forests complexes are highly fragmented with sizes of these fragments ranging between 5 to 1,500 hectares. This is mainly to do with the expansion of the agricultural production sector but infrastructure development has also contributed. Historic unsustainable forest management has also contributed to the current forest status in Moldova. This includes harvesting the most valuable species without properly managing their regeneration, with attendant impact on structure and species composition and afforestation and reforestation with species inappropriate to the site conditions. The need for fuel to heat homes is a substantial threat to the remaining forests in Moldova, while the spread of invasive alien species is a growing problem. The Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) – a dominant component in 38% of Moldovan forests – is invasive in the native forests and grasslands. Similarly, Boxelder (*Acer negundo*) has become an aggressive invasive tree species along the Upper and Middle Prut River. In addition,

as open pastures are degrading, local people are increasingly letting their animals enter into forests for grazing. The combined pressure on forests and neighbouring grasslands is the main contributing factor for the loss of nesting sites of the threatened Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*) and Saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*). Even though the forest nesting sites of these birds-of-prey remain safe in some areas, the grassland and meadows around the forests – their feeding grounds – often get plowed forcing the adult birds to relocate.

Despite the Government's reform efforts, the spatial/territorial planning framework is deficient. The **long term solution** lies in reforming the manner in which agricultural, forestry and other production activities are planned and regulated across different land units and tenure categories at the landscape scale—so as to avoid, reduce and mitigate the pressures leading to biodiversity loss. There are two types of barriers to achieving this long-term solution: (i) inadequate planning and enforcement framework and (ii) inadequate demonstrated experiences in spatial planning and biodiversity-compatible land management practices.

Against this background, the project will be be addressing the gaps in land planning and enforcement systems through development of relevant regulations, standards and legislation to accommodate biodiversity conservation objectives while the gap of limited coordination across sectors will be addressed by establishing a multi-stakeholder committee which will ensure a unified approach in the develoment, implementation and enforcement of land-use plans from the different ministries and departments. In addition, a monitoring system will be emplaced among the various regulatory agencies, assigning responsibilities based on comparative advantage, in order to evaluate acceptable limits of change in biodiversity-important areas. The gap of inadequate demonstrated experiences in spatial planning and biodiversity-compatible land management practices will be tackled through development and testing of biodiversity-compatible district spatial (land-use) plans in 2 districts of Moldova , relying on cross-sectoral working groups, GIS technologies for biodiversity mapping, identifiation of sites of conflict between biodiversity and human activities and others.

II. Scope of work and responsibilities

The responsibility of the national consultant is to assist the National Coordinator and Biodiversity Specialist in collecting data/information and conducting research/analysis helping in development of the relevant project's documentation and defining of the Project Document that will be acceptable to the GEF. More specifically, the national consultant will be responsible to accomplish the tasks as detailed below.

Expected tasks and timeframe

The key products to be delivered are as follows:

1) Assist National Coordinator and Biodiversity Specialist in holding consultations with potential LPAs to finalize selection of the two pilot districts. Provide inputs for the pilot districts profiling in terms of the current land-use and spatial planning practices in the respective areas and support the consultation process with local communities on the measures to be piloted.

2) Under the guidance of the national coordinator, gather and analyze data on standards and norms in agriculture, forestry, livestock management and water management that currently prevent mainstreaming of biodiversity at the local level.

3) Provide an overview of the existing spatial planning and land use legislation concerning both municipal and local level, outline the legislative and regulatory barriers and gaps for mainstreaming biodiversity concerns into spatial planning and land-use.

4) Prepare justifications for the legislative instruments mentioned in Output 1.1, that is:
    a. Regulation on vulnerable species, habitats and ecosystem goods and services during land-use planning

b. Changes to Land Code introducing requirements for identification and incorporation of biodiversity outside protected areas
c. Minimal standards on biodiversity conservation in livestock management, hay-field management, arable farming, forest use, fishing and water-based recreation

5) In consultation with the line ministries, identify the best option for a multi-stakeholders committee entrusted to oversee land-use development, implementation and development with incorporation of biodiversity-related concerns and identify the membership, develop the TORs (regulation), statutory responsibilities and other relevant details as part of the UNDP Project Document

6) Prepare an outline of the system of penalties – and requirements that the project will need to put in place to enact that during the implementation stage

7) Contribute to the analysis of potential incentives (and disincentives) for land-users to modify their practices.

8) Initiate discussion with the LPAs on the upcoming support in developing/updating the Municipal Spatial Plans accommodating biodiversity concerns, contribute to the development of the project risk matrix and propose an "exit strategy" for this component.

9) Identify areas in the selected 4-6 communities (100ha) to showcase biodiversity-compatible land uses in line with the developed spatial plans.

10) Secure LPA's decisions for land allocation for restoration activities.

11) Based on the consultations with the LPAs, develop an outline of the optimal grazing plan/pasture management plan.

12) Identify the needs for further methodological support required to ensure mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into district territorial planning policies and land-use practices.

The timeframe and duration of activities are estimated to be broken down as follows:

Activity	**Duration (estimated) / days**	**Estimated Timing and deadline**
Consultations with potential LPAs to select two pilot districts, provide inputs for the pilot districts profiling	5	February 2014
Gather and analyze data on standards and norms in agriculture, forestry, livestock management and water management that currently prevent mainstreaming of biodiversity at the local level	5	February – March 2014
Provide an overview of the existing spatial planning and land use legislation concerning both municipal and local level, outline the legislative and regulatory barriers and gaps for mainstreaming biodiversity concerns into spatial planning and land-use and prepare justification for the identified legislative instruments	8	February – March 2014
Identify the best option for a multi-stakeholders committee and develop the TORs (regulation	2	February - April 2014
Prepare an outline of the system of penalties – and requirements that the project will need to put in place to	3	March-April 2014

Activity	Duration (estimated) / days	Estimated Timing and deadline
enact that during the implementation stage		
Contribute to the analysis of potential incentives (and disincentives) for land-users to modify their practices	5	March-April 2014
Initiate discussion with the LPAs on the upcoming support in developing/updating the Municipal Spatial Plans accommodating biodiversity concerns, contribute to the development of the project risk matrix and propose an "exit strategy" for this component	5	February –May 2014
Identify areas in the selected 4-6 communities (100ha) to showcase biodiversity-compatible land uses in line with the developed spatial plans.	3	February- April 2014
Develop an outline of the optimal grazing plan/pasture management plan.	3	February- April 2014
Provide inputs to GEF Secretariat comments	1	September 2014
TOTAL working days	**40**	

*The proposed time frame will be discussed and coordinated with the National Coordinator.

All the work is expected to be completed by September-October 2014. Inputs for the relevant project's documentation and defining of the Project Document that will be acceptable to the GEF are expected to be provided by the national consultant by end-May 2014.

III. Management Arrangements:

Responsibility for Managing the Consultant

The consultant will work under guidance and is primarily reporting to the National Coordinator and Biodiversity Specialist and with the assigned UNDP officer.

Payment for Services

The Expert shall be paid in six installments upon submission and approval of deliverables, and certification by UNDP Moldova Programme Manager that the services have been satisfactorily performed.

Installment	Payment Amount
Consultations with potential LPAs to select two pilot districts completed, acceptable inputs for the pilot districts profiling provided	20%
Overview of the existing spatial planning and land use legislation concerning both municipal and local level provided, and the legislative and regulatory barriers and gaps for mainstreaming biodiversity concerns into spatial planning and land-use and prepare justification for the identified legislative instruments outlined; analysis of the standards and norms in agriculture, forestry, livestock management and water management that currently prevent mainstreaming of biodiversity	30%

Installment	Payment Amount
finalized	
Analysis of potential incentives (and disincentives) for land-users to modify their practices completed and TORs for the multi-stakeholders committee provided; Outline of the system of penalties provided;	20%
Areas in the selected 4-6 communities (100ha) to showcase biodiversity-compatible land uses in line with the developed spatial plans identified and decisions for land allocation for restoration activities secured; the outline of the optimal grazing plan/pasture management plan provided	30%

Responsibility for Expenses and their Reimbursement

The Consultant will be responsible for all personal administrative and travel expenses associated with undertaking this assignment including office accommodation, printing, stationary, telephone and electronic communications, and report copies incurred in this assignment.

IV. Requirements for experience and qualification

Academic Qualification

- Graduate degree related to land-use planning, natural resources management, biodiversity conservation, environmental planning, environmental economics and other related areas

Experience:

- At least 5 years of extended working experience in land-use/biodiversity conservation planning/ pasture management projects
- Extended analytical experience in land-use/biodiversity conservation planning/pasture management areas
- Extended experience of collaboration with central and local public authorities and other relevant stakeholders in the area of land-use/conservation planning/pasture management
- Previous experience in working with international organizations/UNDP

Competencies

- Excellent knowledge of the land-use/biodiversity conservation planning/pasture management national legislation
- Strong interpersonal skills, communication and diplomatic skills, ability to work in a team
- Ability to plan and organize his/her work, efficient in meeting commitments
- Ability to work under pressure and stressful situations
- Strong analytical, reporting and writing abilities

Language requirements:

- Fluent in written and oral communication in English and Romanian
- Knowledge of Russian will be a strong asset