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| **GEF DYNA** **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP****Karaš****Pilot Project** | z |
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| **GEF-6 Project "Regional (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Ukraine, Serbia) Danube River Basin Hydromorphology and River Restoration****(GEF DYNA)"****June- August 2018 - Jasenovo, bela Crkva and Vršac, Serbia**  |  |
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# Introduction

Stakeholder positions and opinions for the Karaš Pilot site were assessed in series of meetings. The area was visited in June (one visit) and August 2018 (two visits). Before the first visit an initial mapping of stakeholders was done by consultation with experts working in the region and by internet research. The focus was on local stakeholders: local community, local government and local organizations. However, stakeholders which are not local *sensu stricto* were assessed as well, if their power and interest was estimated as high and relevant for the project.

During the mapping and searching for stakeholders, specific attention was given to gender mainstreaming and equal participation of genders in the assessment. The intention was to look for representatives of less represented gender (in this case women). The target area is multi-ethnic, since it is very close to Romanian border. Therefore, all relevant information about the ethnic minorities or any other vulnerable groups were collected.

All stakeholders who were met during the assessment were asked with standard set of questions (previously agreed within the project team) and then continued with free-form discussion (or semi-structured discussion). All stakeholders were met in the localities around the pilot sites (Jasenovo, Bela Crkva, Vršac) or on the Karaš pilot sites.

The assessment was done by Goran Sekulić (in June) and Ljubomir Pejčić (in August)

# Introduction of participants

The stakeholders met during the assessment can be grouped in a following way:

1. Representatives on national institutional stakeholders – (1 representative)

2. Representatives of regional institutional stakeholders- (3 representatives)

3. Representatives of local government and public companies- (3 representatives)

4. Private companies (2 representatives)

5. Local community (5 representatives)

6. Local organizations (2 representatives)

# Project Presentation

Short presentation of the GEF-DYNA project was given to each stakeholder met (on each meeting). Printed maps and illustrations were used. The content and details provided were adapted to the stakeholders (with professionals the discussion about the project was more detailed.

# Pilot Project Presentation

The presentation of the planned activities on pilot sites was given to each stakeholder (on each meeting). The presentation was adapted according to the stakeholder background. Maps and illustrations were used to ensure easier understanding. With some stakeholders, presentation was done directly on the site, what was found the best way for discussion with local stakeholders.

# Aspects discussed (project & proposed pilot project)

Generally, the discussed issues were focused on the proposed activities on the site. Each of the meeting started with standard questions about the project. In particular, those were:

- *How they find the idea?-* no stakeholder involved in the assessment was strictly against the proposed actions. All of them don’t see the idea as problematic or conflicting their interest. Some of the local stakeholders were sceptic about the functionality and effects of the proposed measures. Many of the interviewed stakeholders (local and those not working in water management or nature conservation) are not familiar with specific issues related to water management and they didn’t have clear idea what the proposed actions will look like in reality.

- *Is it feasible?*- there were no major issues identified in regards feasibility of the actions. Some of the interviewed stakeholders have significant experience with the water management. As well, local stakeholders (fishermen and local environmental organization) have some experience in regulating and management on the Jasenovo locality since they use it for recreation for many years (maintaining of a beach and recreation area by the river). Some local stakeholders raised concerns about feasibility of activities on private land (Straža locality).

- *Is it relevant for them?-* river connectivity is a new topic in Serbia, even among professionals. Public awareness is on ecological connectivity issues or nature based solutions in water management is still very low. Due to that, it was somehow expected that local stakeholders will not recognize or understand the relevance for them. Some of the stakeholders see the high relevance of the pilot activities. Those are mostly institutional stakeholders dealing with water management and nature conservation. As well, some of the local anglers and their organizations have recognized the relevance of the pilot actions but they are not sure whether the activation will be effective. For most of the others, relevance is not that much recognized, primarily because they don’t see any direct connections with their activities. However, any improvement of the Karaš river is welcomed since they find it as an important local resource.

- *Is it in conflict with any other function/activity?* – no major conflicts were identified during discussions with the stakeholders. On Jasenovo locality the situation is pretty much clear. The locality is very much visited by local inhabitants and used for recreation (bathing, fishing, picnics, cultural events). If the proposed actions don’t interfere with this, and it is assumed it will not, they don’t see any issues. However, some potential synergies and additional values are identified as possible and achievable (improving of recreation area, beach etc.). Part of the land around Jasenovo locality is in private hands (Mill Stari Banat). The private owner has supported local activities on the locality before and it is expected they will not oppose the planned activities.

- *Will it affect their work/life?* -the recognized potential impact of planned activities on the stakeholders differs among groups. Professionals working in the institutions see the activities as a great opportunity to scale up the issue of river connectivity. As well, representatives of local governments (tourism organization) see them as an opportunity for raising of the visibility and tourism potentials of the region (although not that high). Local stakeholders are mostly indifferent in regards this question. They don’t see direct impacts by themselves, although they positively react on explanations and discussion with interviewers or other stakeholders.

- *How Karaš river is important for them?* - local stakeholders are very proud of the Karaš river and they would like to protect it and to improve its status. Many recreational and cultural activities are connected with the river. Angling is important activity for locals with some potentials in tourism. Comparing to other neighbouring, bigger waters like Danube-Tisa-Danube chanell or Danube, Kara[ is attracting much less people. Traditional agriculture (cattle grazing) is as well present in and around project localities. The farmers still use the water from the river for cattle and they find that important. Local governments as well find Karaš as an important part of their communities, although some concerns about flooding exists. The regional and national stakeholders emphasize that Karaš is one of the last almost unregulated rivers in Vojvodina province and due to that it has specific significance. Private companies don’t use the water from the river directly (although that was the practice before: mills and hydropower). Now, they recognize it mostly as ambiental/landscape value important for tourism (especially at the Straža locality).

- *Who should be involved/asked about?-* for sure additional discussion have to be done with private companies working in the region. Their representatives always emphasized that their inputs cannot be taken as definite but just as an orientation for future discussions. Local government representatives as well raised the issue of their limited responsibilities.

The stakeholders were allowed to raise additional issues which they find relevant (not necessarily in direct link with the proposed activities). Among them were:

- *Issue of flooding in the area*- the area is very sensitive to flooding. Some serious floods happen in the past period. After regulation works in Romania after 2000, the floods have decreased in the intensity and frequency. Anglers which are regular on the river say that the water level fluctuates for 1 to 1.5 maximally. However, concern about flood disasters is still present among the people living in the area. Some plans for, extensive flood prevention (without river regulation and building of large semi-natural flooding areas) exist but their implementation is questioned.

- *Traditional activities on proposed sites*-on the Jasenovo locality there are a lot of different cultural and recreational activities and the locality is important and often used by the community. They organize artist colonies, picnics, school events and similar activities. Almost all local stakeholders emphasized that.

- *Local economy-* as in other regions of Serbia there is an obvious depopulation trend in rural areas. People are living small villages and settlements and leaving for bigger cities (Pančevo, Vršac, Novi Sad, Beograd). Most of the stakeholders name the current economic situation, especially unfavourable situation in agricultural sectors, as the main cause for that. Some opposite trends are happening, but they are very limited in number and mostly include elder people coming back to rural areas. Generally, this can be pointed out as one of the main issues in the community. Most of them see larger investments and intensive agriculture projects as something which could change the situation.

- *Angling and anglers associations*- they are one of the main beneficiaries of the proposed activities although some of them are not convinced with the effectiveness of the proposed actions. Representatives of anglers association Nera from Bela Crkva were involved in the assessment together with fish-guards from public enterprise Vodevojvodine, which is the user of “Banat” fishing area.

- Eutrophication of the river: the interviewed anglers raised the issue of eutrophication of rivers and step-wise over-growing of wetlands and river banks. This is probably the consequence of recent water regulation measures (upstream in Romania) which has disturbed the natural water regime. As well, decrease in cattle numbers probably contributes to this as well.

- Protected area Karaš-Nera: the area is recently established (2015). It is managed by local government, actually Public utility company “Belocrkvanski komunalac” (recently nominated). The area is not including the proposed pilot sites. Karaš river is not within the boundaries of the protected areas which is located south from Karaš towards Nera. Generally, local inhabitants do not recognize the importance of the area, they are not informed or involved in the management and they don’t recognize any specific benefit from it.

- Drinking water supply- Karaš is not significant source of drinking water. There are no larger facilities for water extraction and distribution. Some wells near the river are still present and used by local inhabitants (drinking, farming, for cattle). Irrigation is on a individual scale and incidental.

# Conclusions

Stakeholder assessment for the Karaš pilot site was conducted in June and August 2018 in series of meetings with identified institutional and local stakeholders. No major conflicts with the project idea were identified and almost all interviewed stakeholders expressed themselves positively about the project idea. The relevance of the project is not evenly recognized. Institutional stakeholders working in the field of water management and conservation are much more positive when they rate the project relevance in comparison to local stakeholder. Generally, the awareness on environmental issues and especially river connectivity is very low. Local stakeholders which are not directly engaged in environmental policies don’t have enough knowledge to recognize the significance of such specific activities. During discussions, when some potential positive aspects were explained, local stakeholders were able to link them with their needs and current activities. This points out the need for additional awareness raising and capacity building activities for local people which should be integrated in the project if possible.

No current activities or plans which are in direct conflict with the project were identified. Even the ongoing activities in privately owned areas (hotel reconstruction on Straža locality) are not necessary conflicting.

Jasenovo and Straža locality are very important for local stakeholders because of cultural and recreational activities they practice there. As well, pastures along Karaš near Jasenovo and Straža, are important for farmers and cattle breeders. Some synergies and added values of the project should be considered.

Due to low awareness of the local people additional assessment and engagement process with local inhabitants should be considered. As well, specific attention should be given to private companies and landowners who should be additionally approached with more specific information.

# Next steps

In the assessment process some gaps were identified which should be addressed in the future implementation of the project. These gaps are mainly related to lower participation of local inhabitants and private owners. Due to that, additional activities should be considered:

- to improve assessment of local inhabitants and local community with specific attention on gender and vulnerable group issues

- to improve engagement with major private owners since they prove to be very delicate in accessing and expressing definite positions.

For the engagement of local inhabitants specific efforts for approaching them should be planned. During this assessment several local organizations were identified which could help in this (i.e. local women organization “Jasenovčanke“).

Private owners should be approached with more information and technical details if they are asked to bring more decisive positions. Specific meetings should be organized with support of responsible institutions (water management authorities, nature conservation authorities)

# Gender issue

**QUESTION MAP**

Below you find outlined the questions contributing to the gender mainstreaming in the project. They are formulated as assumed they are asked after the explanation of the essence of the project. Fill in the cells with the summaries of answers. Add comments if needed.

**Notes**

*Predominant feedback* = what most of men or women say, what the commonly agreed ideas are

*Unique feedback* = ideas that are expressed by 1 or 2 members should be documented as well

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area of interest** | **Questions** | **Predominant women’s feedback** | **Unique women’s answers** | **Predominant men’s feedback** | **Unique men’s answers** |
| 1. Needs and interests | 1.1. What are the most salient needs in your area at the moment? | -economic development -depopulation-unemployment |   | economic development -depopulation |  |
| 1.2. What do you lack most of all in the community? | -people (depopulation)- job positions- social content (events, activities)   |   x | -people (depopulation)- developed agriculture |  |
| 1.3. Why are these water resources important to you? | - tradition- recreation- landscape value- culture events  |   XX  | - farming and tradition- recreation-fishing |  |
| 1.4. How do you use these water resources in your everyday life? E.g.:*- everyday activities**- health**- access to food and water**- etc.* | -recreation-farming/ cattle breeding- culture and tourism |   | -farming/ cattle breeding- fishing-recreation  |  |
| 1.5. Do your work and income depend on this water basin? In what ways?* *Your personal?*
* *Your family’s?*
 | - Not directly- Cultural events = |   | -Not directly-For cattle breeding (pastures are depending on water from the river) |  |
| 2. Participation in the implementation of the project | 2.1. Who do you think has the most responsibility for the success of the project? | - national governmental institutions- local governments |   | - national governmental institutions- local governments |  |
| 2.2. Do you feel that the community has knowledge and capacity to contribute to the project? | - yes  |   | - yes- not really |  |
| 2.3. Whose opinions are necessary to account for while implementing the project, to your mind? | - local government (high positions)- private owners |   |   |  |
| 3. Results:expectations, benefits, and potential losses | 3.1. What would you see as the best outcomes of the project?*- For you personally, for your family, for the community?* | - improved public space around the river  |   | - improved fish populations and improved potential for fishing tourism |  |
| 3.2. What do you expect from the project realistically? | - more people visiting the area  | x | - this is more relevant for national and governmental level, not so for local community |  |
| 3.3. Which improvements in the community or in your life do you want to have? | - better economic situation- more people living in the area and visiting the area |   | - better economic situation- improved agricultural production |  |
| 3.4. What are your main concerns and worries about the project? | - disturbing traditional activities  |   | - other ecological issues can undermine the effect of the project |  |
| 3.5. In what ways can the project activities make lives of other members of the community better? Children? Elderly? | - improving of recreational facilities and programs  |   | - Increase the visibility of the region |  |
| 3.6. Are there any reasons why you do not want the project or any of its parts to take place? | -no |   | no |  |

**GENERAL SUMMARY OF THE MEETING** (TO BE FILLED IN AFTER THE MEETING)

1. . Total number of men in the meetings: \_\_\_\_16 + anonymous local inhabitants \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Total number of women in the meetings: \_\_\_\_\_8\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Was there any conflict of interests between and among men and women during the meeting? \_No\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Did men or women dominate over each other considerably in terms of time they spoke, the amount of feedback they gave, etc.? \_\_\_There were no significante difference between women and men during the meetings. However, men were clearly dominating in random talks in the field (farmers, shepards)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Describe briefly how men and women responded to each other’s comments and opinions. (Supportive/indifferent/disapproving? Are they aware of each other’s special needs and expectations?) \_

In talks with institutional stakeholders, the discussion was supportive and there were no significant negative reactions between men and women. Women representatives of local governments and local public companies were reserved in bringing definite conclusions and have emphasized the need of additional consultations with superior. Women were underrepresented among local inhabitants and it is hard to estimate their positions in local community. Additional consultations would be needed.

1. Other comments: no

# Annex - List of participants

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Nr. Crt. | Name | Institution/Country | Position | Contact details |
| 1 | Marija Lazarević | Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Directorate for Waters | Head of department for international cooperation | marija.lazarevic@minpolj.gov.rs |
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| 3. | Đorđe Zlatanović | USR Nera bela Crka | President | zlatanovic.dj@gmail.com |
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| 5. | Tibor Mesaroš | Vršac | Local inhabitant/angler | +381 60 3390655 |
| 6. | Vlada Todorović | Bela Crkva | Local inhabitant/angler | +391 62 212757 |
| 7. | Tanja Bošnjak | Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province | Expert associate | Tanja.bosnjak@pzzp.rs |
| 8. | Laszlo Galamboš | Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province | Expert associate | Laszlo.galambos@pzzp.rs |
| 9. | Srpko Savić | Ecological Society “Karaš” | President | + |
| 10. | Šandor Šipoš | Fish study and protection society |   | Sljandor@gmail.com |
| 11. | Snežana Jungić | Public water management company “Ušće”/ Bela Crkva | Expert associate | +381 69 403 00 47 |
| 12. | Mladen Jordanov | Kovin | Local inhabitant | +381 65 4959250 |
| 13. | Nataša Kovačević | Mlin Stari Banat- Jasenovo- Dubako doo | Privat owner | Interviewed by phone |
| 14. | Milica Vitomirov | Public Utility Company “Belocrkvanski komunalac” | Director | +381 13 2851255 |
| 15 | Tamara Kovačević | Celanova Capital ltd/ Vršac | Director | Interviewed by phone |
| 16. | Jelena Petković | Jasenovo | Local inhabitant | - |