

Date Submitted:
Application No. (Internal Use Only):

FINAL REPORT

Grant Agreement Number(s):	EA_021
Project Name:	“Strengthening the role of local community as an important stakeholder for biodiversity protection”
Start Date / End Date of the Project:	1st November 2021 – 31st August 2022
Grantee:	AlbNatyra Association
Author of Report:	Migena Kukli
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Reporting Period:	1 March 2022 – 31 August 2022

1. Executive summary to date

Briefly describe activities and results to date (200 words maximum).

The second phase of the project was quite intensive and covered three meetings with the local Governments; with the Elbasan Prefecture, Librazhd Municipality and Prrenjas Municipality. The aim was to introduce with the project and receiving their support, and this was achieved in all the three meetings. Two fairs were organized in the Shebenik area to encourage the women to engage in different activities and to promote their traditional culinary and culture.

Working with the two assigned schools was an exciting engagement for the school children and for our staff as well. Besides the meetings at schools where it was discussed the importance of the biodiversity monitoring there were organized 4 expeditions in the Shebenik Park (two per each school).

Three tailored training in biodiversity monitoring were conducted for the volunteering group (11 people). The first two training were theoretical and interactive and the third training covered a simulation on site in fire-fighting. As well, some equipment and walkie-talkie radios (communication is the biggest problem in the Park area due to the lack of the reception) for helping in the firefighting in Shebenik Park.

AlbNatyra staff organized three campaigns in distributing leaflets and spreading education for the importance of the Protecting the Park and biodiversity monitoring.

2. Objectives

Copy the goals of the project, as established in the approved proposal.

- **General objective**

Strengthening the collaboration between local community and RAPA (ADZM) Elbasan by creating a Monitoring and Reporting Network/Group.

- **Specific objectives**

1. By the end of the project, a Monitoring and Reporting Network/Group for the Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park is established.
2. By the end of the project, at least 50% of local community living inside Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park have gained solid knowledge about values of the area and the need to preserving these values.

3. Project progress:

- a) Please explain in detail the progress on the different activities and milestones in this reporting period in relation to the original timetable.

Objective 1: Expected results

The established Monitoring and Reporting Network/Group fulfils its role as an important stakeholder for biodiversity protection. Related to this specific objective and result the below activities are planned:

1.1. Meetings in each village with the local community. (these meetings will serve to select the members on creating Monitoring and Reporting Network/Group)

There were completed successfully all the meetings (6 meetings) with the local community in the period November 2021-February 2022. These meetings were attended by people of different age groups, 20 to 80, as well as the elders of these villages. Total no. of the participants in these meetings was 71 persons, 6 women and the 65 men. During the meetings, it was discussed the difficulties and problems that these residents encountered in their daily lives, and the importance of this project to minimize the difficulties expressed by the residents.

1.2. Meetings with the relevant local governmental institutions (relevant institutions are police department, firefighter department, local municipality and RAPA);

The entire process of project planning and implementation was done in close cooperation with RAPA and several meetings have been part of this. Besides, there were organized three meetings with the Elbasan Prefecture on 1st March 2022, Librazhd Municipality in which were present also the fire department was met on 16th of March 2022 and the Municipality of Prrenjas and its fire department on 30th of March 2022. In all the meetings were discussed about the cooperation with all the involved and the need for better coordination and communication.

1.3. Compiling a memorandum of cooperation for the group creation (upon having the group created will be signed a cooperation memorandum between the parties that includes members from the villages, representatives from the above mentioned institutions);

The interest in being part of this group has been relatively great. 11 people were registered (as reported previously) and were trained. The memorandum was signed on 5th of May 2022. It covers topics of continuous cooperation and defines the role of each party on regard to biodiversity monitoring.

1.4. Trainings of the group representatives on different subject areas (these trainings will comprise thematics such as monitoring of the fauna and flora and what to monitor and how to report/communicate; fire and other natural hazards that threaten the Park and how to react in such events in an organized manner; how to use trap-cameras for monitoring wild animals);

Three tailored trainings were conducted on the month of June 2022. One training was organized in Fushë Studen where participants from Stebleva and Lunik took part. The second training was organized in Prrenjas and there participated the volunteers from Unit of Dorëz, Hotolish, Qukës and Rajcë. The third training that comprised also a fire-fighting simulation took part in Fushë Studen with all the volunteer group from the 6 Administrative Units. Training program-curriculum was developed in close cooperation with RAPA and included topics such as: What is Biodiversity Monitoring, Flora and Fauna Values of Shebenik Park, Communication in case of detecting a threat, Technicalities and safe interventions in Fire-Fighting, etc.

1.5. Study visit and meeting with similar groups for experience exchange (the created group will pay a visit to a nearby area and to share experiences with a similar group);

A trip took place in the National Park of Divjaka, Karavasta lagoon on 12 April 2022. The team of 11 volunteers, 5 staff from RAPA Elbasan and 3 team members from AlbNatyra was welcomed by the RAPA Director of the Divjaka Park. There we were introduced with the values of this Park, challenges and successes along the way of its daily administering. The Director explained also the collaboration with the local community and how important it is their involvement and responsibility to protect what is everyone's duty. The 11 volunteers much appreciated this trip as it was important to them to see that the problems that RAPA Elbasan faces are similar to other protected areas and their main goal to preserve this area is to give a healthy environment and reach biodiversity to the generations to come.

1.6. Defining a communication channel or a way of reporting and data gathering (creating channels of communications between the members of the group on site and other representatives from the institutions);

Communication is one of the most important parts in Biodiversity Monitoring. One of the main problems in the Administrative Unit of Steblevë, Lunik and Rrajcë is the lack of cellphone reception. As well, in the Park there is no coverage and thus makes it difficult almost impossible to communicate and notify in case of a threat and a fire event. For giving a solution to this and creating an direct way of communication it was discussed and provided later some walkie-talkies that will be linked in the same frequencies as RAPA team walkie-talkies and this way eases the communication between the volunteers, RAPA and Fire-department.

Meanwhile there have been organized presentation meetings with the PPNEA for introducing with the 'syri i gjelber platform' as a tool to report for any threat to flora and fauna in the Park.

1.7. Creating a database for the reported cases and data gathered (this database will be created and introduced to the network on how to use it and to put the information observed in the Park area).

This database is in the responsibility of the RAPA team for this time of the project. If there will be continuation volunteers will access it too, but for this phase RAPA will keep track of the reported cases from the volunteers or other community members and together with the AlbNatyra will share the information every time there will be a joint meeting.

Objective 2: Expected results

Local community and other important stakeholders are aware and have solid knowledge about the values of protection and sustainable use of natural resources within Shebenik-Jabllanicë National Park. Below the assigned activities:

1.1. Developing promotion materials such as video documentaries, etc. (such activities will help to make the project more visible and to increase its impact);

Each activity was well documented in pictures and videos and was disseminated in the AlbNatyra's social media channels. There have been created detailed videos that explain thoroughly the objectives and the achieved results.

1.2. Developing an environmental program for the pupils inside the protected area (this program will serve for the below activity in the schools of the assigned area);

Initially were held two meetings with the schools for discussing the programs to be developed in conform to their environmental curriculum and, was kept continuous communication for the finalisation of the program. After it was finalized the program was distributed to the schools and to RAPA.

1.3. Implementing the education programme with the schools inside the protected area (the school children will get an extendet environmental program related to the values of the Park and the importance of preserving and protecting such values);

The first activities were to introducing the schools' children with the Shebenik Park and its characteristics. It was discussed for the importance of protecting and promoting our Park. After this it was followed with practical expedition in the Park. The students appreciated a lot that it was given the opportunity to visit some areas of the Park that they couldn't have done in their school program. Being in the Park makes it more practical to explain and gives to the student the feeling of the real importance of what has been said theoretically in the first meeting.

1.4. Conducting awareness raising campaigns (this campaign will aim to adress the issues which this project deals and to emphasise the importance that each inhabitant should take responsibility in protecting the sorrounding environment);

It was planned and discussed to conduct these campaigns with the help of pupils from the selected schools. One campaign was held in the Librazhd with the school children from Rrajca. The second campaign was organized with the school children from Dorëz in the Park area during the celebration of the Dorëz Day (each village around the Park has a day and they make a big feast in there). There was organized as well a third campaign from AlbNatyra staff in Fushë Studen to give leaflets (these leaflets were created from the Dorëz School) to the daily tourist and explain some friendly advices on how to treat the Park: don't drive in areas other then the road signs, take the trash with you, don't make noise with the honking and watch where you put the tent for not destroying the plants there, etc.

1.5. Organising traditional fairs (this will help to support the locals and make them visible and promote their products);

The traditional fairs took place in the month of May and June. On 21st of May is celebrated the Shebenik Park Day. The second fair was organized on 4th of June to welcome and to introduce the Ambassador of the Netherland with the area and its tradition in food and culture. Both fairs were organized with RAPA and Administrative Unit of Stebleva. In the first fair 10 women participated and in the second one 5 women participated. They brough atmosphere and the spirit of the area in those training with their cooking and traditional robes.

1.6. Organising informative meetings for general public (these meetings will cover mainly information regarding the created group for the general public to understand their role and to support);

These activities (6 meetings, one per each administrative unit) were covered from the two Focal Points in their assigned Administrative Units while informing the community regarding the project objectives and it's following activities.

1.7. Disseminate information in social media (ensuring visibility of the implemented project and its results). AlbNatyra has been active in posting in social media the completed activites and covering all the other issues in regard to project implementation.

b) Indicate if the originally planned approach and activities have been modified. Explain why and what the changes are.

The overall activities were carried out as per the project planning. The time frame was more flexible given the weather condition in the first phase of the project but everything was remediated later and the completion of the activities was made in time as per the project closure.

The time frame of the project changed from 31st of June to 31 of August, in agreement with PONT and CEPF. In this two-month period was planned to support the RAPA team in wild fire fighting and providing the volunteers with some equipment's and walkie-talkie radios.

Fortunately, this summer even it was a very hot one there was encountered only one case of wild fire and was very soon located and handled safely. We hope that this is a result that the community surrounding the Park has a build an awareness in protecting it and in some of our meetings related to this project we heard from the inhabitants that they undertook initiatives to help protecting and preserving the Shebenik.

4. Obstacles:

- a) *Describe any difficulties or challenges faced in delivering the project so far, operationally or programmatically.*

Like was reported in the first half of the project most difficulties have been encountered in the operational plan, mainly due to bad weather conditions and extremely difficult mountainous terrain. Specifically, due to heavy snowfall in the Administrative Unit Steblevë and the Administrative Unit Rrajcë, we were forced to postpone the planned meetings with the community of these areas until conditions improved. Also, we have had problems with the mobile network in these terrains, making it difficult for us to reach these communities and be in touch with them continuously. Despite the obstacles the activities were carried out on time and with no overlapping or impediment to other activities. Programmatically the project follower the same line as in the project proposal phase.

- b) *Indicate if there have been any expected or new risks in this implementation phase. Describe if they have prevented you from achieving the planned goals or complying with the timetable so far or are expected in the upcoming activities. Please explain how you have solved or plan to solve the situation. Revise the assumptions and risks in the Project Workplan, if necessary.*
 - Apart from the aforementioned risks, such as pandemics and atmospheric conditions, we encountered no other problems. It is worth mentioning the fact that the meeting with the community in the Administrative Unit Rrajcë was forced to be conducted by Armando, as Migena in that period was infected by COVID-19. Also, the difficult weather conditions forced us to adjust our agenda, which came out successfully as everything planned was fulfilled within the deadlines.
 - One more notes we can make regarding the meeting in the Elbasan Prefecture as due to the changes of the new Prefect it was required to postpone the meeting. When the meeting was called it was decided that all the NGOS which work in the area to come in a joint meeting. Such meeting was very useful to introduce the project its aim and what are some main activities related to the support of Park Management Committee where the Prefecture hold the Head position of the Committee.
 - Cooperation with the women of the villages was very difficult. It was made a lot of efforts to have a group of women from Rrajca Unit at the Shebenik Day but they showed no interest in participating. The situation was solved with the discussion of the RAPA team and Stebleva Unit Office and each one of us talked with our contact and encouraged the women to participate and to bring into the fair their products as it help to promote the area and to attract tourism.
 - The School in Rrajca posed some difficulties in arranging the expeditions in the Park due to their exams-calendar. The class that was chosen to participate in this program had some exams and it was not well planned from the Schools. AlbNatyra staff and RAPA team remained flexible and adjusted to adapt to the school agenda and it was achieved this way two wonderful days in the Shebenik Park. The children enjoyed and valued these days a lot.

5. Links with other organizations and stakeholders

- a) *Summarize the interaction with any project partners in this project phase. Describe if you intend to change any methods of implementation to improve their involvement.*

During the overall implementation phase of the project, we had full support from the RAPA Elbasan staff. They have been with us at all times and helped in planning and arranging the meetings and trainings. Community in all the 6 Administrative Units have been cooperative and the local Governments representative as well, such as the Elders of the villages and the Head of the Administrative units. The involvement of each of the partners was satisfying and there was not need to change the implementation methodology of the project.

- b) *Summarize any interaction with other stakeholders so far e.g. local communities, and government. Describe if you intend to change any methods of implementation to improve their involvement.*

As described above in addition to RAPA Elbasan, we have seen the readiness of the respective local communities to be part of this project, especially that of the Steblevë Administrative Unit. As well, the head of the Administrative Units and village elders have been another positive asset during the first period of project implementation that was needed to bring the community on board of the project presentation.

The main challenge was the participation of the women. In total there were 6 women participating in these meetings. Therefore, in Qarrishta village was organized a separate meeting only for women. This issue was observed in every project that AlbNatyra has implemented in the area, there are few cases that women have been present in large numbers and mainly this is for meetings or activities addressed to the women only.

- c) *Describe any alliances established as a result of the grant development.*

An alliance was established between the Monitoring group, RAPA Elbasan and the AlbNatyra Association for continuing and cooperating together even after the project ends. RAPA will take care of the equipment's and walkie-talkie radios and AlbNatyra will offer trainings, at least 2 per year, and organize joint meetings to discuss about monitoring and what can be done to improve and make it efficiently.

6. Conflict resolution and safeguards

- a) *Please indicate if any conflicts have occurred during this phase, and how they were resolved. Please describe how proposed mitigation measures have been applied and contributed to the prevention/solving of conflicts. Please state if any new conflicts have been identified.*

Not relevant

- b) *Please summarize the implementation of any required action related to social or environmental safeguards that your project may have triggered, if relevant.*

In general, this project had no links at any social, environmental and safeguards issue. It can be elaborated here the simulation exercise on fire-fighting that took place in the Shebenik area. For this simulation were taken the measures that the fire was under control and there were assigned peoples role to stay around the fire till the final extinguish and were given proper instruction on how to intervene to other participant members. RAPA team was monitoring vigorously the exercise and giving guidance and helping when was needed.

7. Description of activities for next period

Briefly describe the activities that will be undertaken in the next period.

This project ends here. AlbNatyra is making efforts to continue with some of its activites as it is important to consolidate the volunteering team and to enlarge the networking group as an extented wing of RAPA team in the Shebeni Park.

8. Communications

- a) *Describe any documents, products, or news articles that resulted from this project so far (insert web links if relevant).*

Every activity was disseminated in the AlbNatyra Facebook and LinkedIn showing pictures, videos and describing thoroughly the main topics for the activity. The implementation of this project required to develop and produce the Memorandum of Understanding, School program-curricula and Training curricula. These were the main documents. There were kept Minutes of Meetings in the important and scheduled meetings that were distributed after to the participants. For each of the meeting with the community was kept a participant list as well, other meetings with the local government representatives and school children were recorded by taking pictures from the event.

- b) *Please provide high-resolution photographs which document your project activities, if relevant (maximum 5).*

Pictures will be sent separately via wetransfer.

9. Additional Comments/Recommendations

Please use this space to provide any feedback or recommendations to PONT and the CEPF Regional Implementation Team, if relevant.

10. Lessons learned

Emphasize, besides the technical issues, the social and administrative aspects that may be useful in future grants regarding the same topic or developed under similar conditions as well as any related to organizational development and capacity development i.e. improved management/governance, technical skills/knowledge, improved coordination and cooperation (including transboundary coordination).

- The implementation of this project brough in advance the improved coordination and cooperation with the RAPA Elbasan and Local NGOs. Here it should be emphasized that the cooperation with the AgriEn was with value and helped both organizations to arrange efficiently some joint activities.
- For the future there should be anticipated more time and efforts as well finances in the activities related to women engagement. It has a been a major difficulty to bring women in the board of this project implementation and there should be important to think ahead of the project proposal on how to work with the women.
- The success of a project is measured also by the gender and age issues but this should be also a factor to think more deeply about. Spreading the activities to have most of the community involved may decrease also the impact of the project as such it should be advisable to focus in the main objective and not adding additional activities for making the project more holistic.

11. Effects of the project

Have the results of the grant promoted environmental, social or economic changes? How was this determined/measured? Report on the number of people from the local communities, as well as a number of women and young people participating in conservation-related activities using the table format below.

The result of the grant was aiming to directly promote environmental changes with improving the biodiversity monitoring in the Shebenik Park. As indirect impact for the future is expected also social and economic changes if this project will have a continuity. Increasing the awareness in the community for protecting their Park has been a long journey for AlbNatyra that is working for many years in the area, for other NGOs and RAPA Administration. This summer we all witnessed that there were no wild fire in the Shebenik area, only one case to another part of the Protected sites in the Librazhd region. This makes us believe that working with the community has had some visible results and we hope that this will follow also for the future.

In the below table there are presented the figure from each of the activity.

Activity name	# of people from the local communities	# of women	# of young people
Meetings with the local communities	65	6	10
Meeting with the Elbasan Prefecture	-	3	2
Meeting with the Librazhd Municipality	-	3	10
Meeting with the Prrenjas Municipality	2	3	2
Environment Program in Rrajca School	-	-	20
Environment Program in Dorëz School	-	-	12
3 Campaigns	Around 300 people	-	-

12. Conflict resolution

Please describe which conflicts occurred during the implementation and how these conflicts were resolved. Please describe how proposed mitigation measures have been applied and contributed to the prevention/solving of conflicts.

The implementation of the project went smoothly and faced no conflict, as was anticipated in the project proposal. AlbNatyra is prepared and when organizes a meeting keeps contact and inform previously all the stakeholders such as RAPA, Local Government and Elders of the village. For avoiding and mitigating any rising conflict continuous communication and feedback was given to the all groups above including the community.

13. Inclusion and coaching of local organizations

Explain how local-based organizations have been included and coached and how local stakeholders have benefited (including tangible benefits in money/resources and intangible benefits such as improved capacity/increased awareness).

In this project AlbNatyra cooperated in few activites with the AgriEn and offered its expertise to AgriEn staff in organising activites and in other processes of planification and reporting. As well there was given advices form AgriEn in certain topics related to the community engagement and for better cooperation.

RAPA benefited from this project in developing the school program-curricula and to desing a training with its needed logistics and supporting documents.

14. Good management practices

Please describe any new management practices that your grant has developed and tested as a result of the PONT grant, that has been proven to be successful. A good practice is a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means.

No.	Short title/ topic of the good management practice	Description of good management practice and its use during the grant
1	Involvement of the AlbNatyra team and RAPA team in the planning process	In this project there were involved 6 people from AlbNatyra. In every step of the project there were organized team meeting for sharing the information and informing for the next step. In every meeting there was at least one member from RAPA team and the planning of the future activites was made in group and was given an official information to the RAPA director.
2	Requiring feedback and opinions	Requiring feedback from the team, volunteers and RAPA has helped to create an overall picture of the situation and gave insights for improving and remediating.

15. Communication of results

What mechanisms have been used or will be used to communicate the results, and to what audiences? (e.g. www.panorama.solutions)

Direct communication was used to convey and introduce with the results. For RAPA has been also an official communication by email, but for the community is more advisable to meet with them and to explain. For other parties posting information in Facebook page and other chanels will be benneficial as well.

16. Project continuity

Will the processes established by this project continue operating? How will it be done? Who will provide follow-up?

AlbNatyra in cooperation with RAPA will do the follow up with organising joint meetings and continous training for the monitoring group. Aditinally, AlbNatyra will put extra efforts to seek for oportunities that will fund such initiatives and bring further this project and its impacts in biodiversity monitoring.

17. Summary of the financial report

Detailed financial reports are presented in tables in the excel file named “Template D”, attached to this report.

Amount received from PONT (EUR)	11,016
Total expenses allocated to PONT funding in this period (EUR)	11,975
Balance	-959

Amount received from CEPF (USD)	9,940
Total expenses allocated to CEPF funding in this period (USD)	8,843.24
Balance	140.45

Date of completion of report: ____31/08/2022_____

Signature of report author: ____Migena Kukli____

Please attach graphic materials and publications that illustrate the results and are samples of the grant products.