

CEPF Final Project Completion Report

Instructions to grantees: please complete all fields, and respond to all questions, below.

Organization Legal Name	<i>Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE)</i>
Project Title	Living well in harmony with the Drin
CEPF GEM No.	63836
Date of Report	30/06/2016
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CEPF Region: Mediterranean Basin

Strategic Direction: Strategic direction 2: Establish the sustainable management of water catchments and the wise use of water resources with a focus on the priority corridors of the (1) Atlas Mountains, (2) Taurus Mountains, (3) Orontes Valley and Lebanon Mountains and (4) Southwest Balkans

Grant Amount: 200 US\$

Project Dates: 1 March 2014 – 31 May 2016

1. Implementation Partners for this Project (*list each partner and explain how they were involved in the project*)

The implementation Partners included: MIO-ECSDE (Lead Partner); three grassroots/national environmental NGOs, namely BIOSFERA (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), EDEN (Albania) and GREEN HOME (Montenegro); the film production company KAWKA PRODUCTION. Each and every one of the following partners were directly involved in the implementation of the project throughout its 2-year-long duration.

BIOSFERA: It contributed to and supported the implementation of activities related to the NGOs mapping exercise (Act.1.1), the planning process of the NGOs-targeted workshop (Act.1.2), the design and organization of the networking NGO meeting (Act.2.1.), the design and implementation of the Act4Drin awareness raising campaign (Act.3.1.), the development of the 5-language brochure by peer reviewing the final outcome and translating it in its national language (Act.3.2), the organization of a Drin Action Day related events in 2015 & 2016 (Act.3.3), the design and organization of the Act4Drin Spring School 2016 (Act.3.4), the peer reviewing of the Act4Drin travelogue (Act.3.5.) and the short films triplet (Act.3.6) and their translations in its national language, the dissemination of all project outputs and outcomes at local and national levels.

EDEN: It contributed to and supported the implementation of activities related to the NGOs mapping exercise (Act.1.1), the planning process of the NGOs-targeted workshop (Act.1.2), the design and organization of the networking NGO meeting (Act.2.1.), the design and implementation of the Act4Drin awareness raising campaign (Act.3.1.), the development of the 5-language brochure by peer reviewing the final outcome and translating it in its national

language (Act.3.2), the organization of a Drin Action Day related events in 2015 & 2016 (Act.3.3), the design and organization of the Act4Drin Spring School 2016 (Act.3.4), the peer reviewing of the Act4Drin travelogue (Act.3.5.) and the short films triplet (Act.3.6) and their translations in its national language, the dissemination of all project outputs and outcomes at local and national levels.

GREEN HOME: It contributed to and supported the implementation of activities related to the NGOs mapping exercise (Act.1.1), the planning process of the NGOs-targeted workshop (Act.1.2), the design and organization of the networking NGO meeting (Act.2.1.), the design and implementation of the Act4Drin awareness raising campaign (Act.3.1.), the development of the 5-language brochure by peer reviewing the final outcome and translating it in its national language (Act.3.2), the organization of a Drin Action Day related events in 2015 & 2016 (Act.3.3), the design and organization of the Act4Drin Spring School 2016 (Act.3.4), the peer reviewing of the Act4Drin travelogue (Act.3.5.) and the short films triplet (Act.3.6) and their translations in its national language, the dissemination of all project outputs and outcomes at local and national level.

KAWKA PRODUCTION: It was directly involved in the development of the Act4Drin travelogue (Act.3.5.) and the short films triplet (Act.3.6). Specifically the filming company reviewed the film summary and script developed by MIO-ECSDE and carried out the filming missions. Some of the missions were carried jointly with MIO-ECSDE. KAWKA PRODUCTION undertook the post-processing of the footage collected and produced under the close coordination of MIO-ECSDE (Producer) at all steps the final outputs.

Last but not least, it should be highlighted that the environmental NGO **MES** (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) was also directly involved in the project activities even though it was not sub-granted or sub-contracted. MES was implementing in parallel a 'sister' project aiming to showcase how NGOs can implement sustainable water resources and biodiversity conservation projects on the ground. The activities of the Jablanica Mountain demo project entitled "Water for lakes, bogs, streams and people on Jablanica Mountain", focused on increasing knowledge about the status and trends of the area's biodiversity components (habitats and species) and demonstrating best practices related to integrated water resources management and freshwater biodiversity conservation, while developing a joint vision for their sustainable management. MES and MIO-ECSDE promoted each other's project outputs and outcomes. Furthermore, MES was involved in the planning process of the NGOs-targeted workshop (Act.1.2), the design and organization of the networking NGO meeting (Act.2.1.), the design and implementation of the Act4Drin awareness raising campaign (Act.3.1.), the development of the 5-language brochure by peer reviewing the final outcome and helping with the translation it in the respective national language (Act.3.2), the organization of a Drin Action Day related events in 2015 (Act.3.3), the design and organization of the Act4Drin Spring School 2016 (Act.3.4), the peer reviewing of the short films triplet (Act.3.6) and its translation in the respective national language, the dissemination of all project outputs and outcomes at local and national level.

Conservation Impacts

2. Describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile

The proposed project activities were at the heart of the CEPF investment strategy presented in the Ecosystem Profile. They focused on high-priority biological areas rather than political boundaries and examined conservation threats on a sub-regional scale (Drin River Basin). In this respect, the project activities were implemented by a partnership of NGOs from three (3) eligible project countries and used the Drini Delta & Lake Ohrid and surrounding area (Albania); the Ohrid Lake (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and the Bojana Delta (Montenegro) as demonstration areas to highlight the need for a transboundary approach when it comes to water resources management and biodiversity protection, while at the same time building an expanded ownership and raising awareness on the importance of the Drin River Basin as a driver to sustainable development. The Act4Drin project enhanced the abilities and capacities of some 30 representatives from 18 NGOs to act in a constructive way to address conservation needs through coordinated sub-regional efforts. Towards this end catalytic have been more project achievements than those planned such as the Act4Drin NGOs alliance, an initiative of 13 NGOs from the five Drin riparians aiming to protect and conserve freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin. The project directly supported most of the investment priorities identified within the strategic direction 2. More specifically it contributed to the enhanced participation of NGOs in transboundary water resources management through integrated approaches and coordinating their involvement in the Drin Dialogue. Most of the aforementioned NGOs had the opportunity to participate at the inception meeting of the GEF Drin project implementing the Drin MoU. Furthermore, the views have been streamlined into the Drin Core Group Meetings. The development of their capacities to support IRBM policy and legislation has been achieved through exchange of experiences and best practices at the NGO collective and collaborative workshop and the Act4Drin booklet showcasing NGO actions to protect and conserve freshwater ecosystems. Both deliverables also utilized the Jablanica Mountain demonstration project (Act4Drin sister project entitled “Water for lakes, bogs, streams and people on Jablanica Mountain”), to that end.

3. Summarize the overall results/impact of your project

Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal)

List each long-term impact from Grant Writer proposal

The overall long-term objective of the proposed project was to enhance the protection and conservation of freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin and contribute to the promotion of integrated water resources management.

The long-term impacts to which the proposed project aimed to contribute (as stated in the approved proposal) included:

- Enhanced NGO involvement in promoting sustainable water resources management and freshwater biodiversity conservation at local, national and transboundary level in the Drin River Basin through their active participation in all phases of watershed management planning and implementation (design, implementation in the field, operationalization, monitoring and evaluation).

- Fostered collaboration, commitment and solidarity among environmental NGOs of the region to protect the Drin River Basin its habitats and species and the invaluable ecosystem services they provide
- Deepened public understanding of the intrinsic values (environmental, economic and cultural) of freshwater ecosystems and corresponding services in the Drin River Basin, which underpin the willingness of individuals to make the necessary changes and actions and to create the “political will” for governments to act.
- Strengthened policies and action plans for sustainable management of water resources and the protection and conservation of biodiversity in the project areas/countries.
- Increased pressure on decision-makers to harmonise and streamline biodiversity concerns into national policies and regulations.
- Strengthened promotion international, European and national participatory frameworks (e.g. the Aarhus Convention, etc.)
- Increased knowledge on the key threats and pressures to freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin and on ways to address them.
- Improved conservation status of freshwater habitats and species in the Drin River Basin, through the better management, creation and/or expansion of protected areas.

The overarching aim of the project was to empower local and national NGOs in effectively and meaningfully promoting integrated water resources management with a special focus on the protection, conservation and restoration of freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin. In an atmosphere of cooperation and trust the collaborating NGOs would develop their capacities to creating the enabling environment through collaborations, development of targeted tools and demonstration projects to expand people’s awareness, and especially of youth, on the intrinsic values of freshwater habitats and species of the region and to promote concrete, comprehensive and continuous actions towards the safeguarding the biodiversity of the Drin River Basin and its invaluable ecosystem services.

The short-term impacts of the proposed project, as a result of its successful implementation included the following:

- Increased capacities of grassroot and national NGOs from the project areas/countries in promoting sustainable water resources management and freshwater habitats and species conservation through their active participation in the implementation of integrated approaches in transboundary settings.
- Enhanced cooperation and networking among and between regional, national and grassroot NGOs in the region working on sustainable water resources management and biodiversity protection/conservation.
- Enhanced activity/mobility of local and national NGOs in designing concrete, relevant and feasible action and eventually securing funding opportunities related to freshwater biodiversity conservation and/or restoration and sustainable management of water resources.
- Increased awareness of local communities and the wider public, on the vital benefits that watershed bodies provide in maintaining healthy freshwater ecosystems and their rich biodiversity, as well as their corresponding ecosystem services.
- Higher awareness and sense of ownership of local communities and the wider public for their common natural heritage, the Drin River Basin.
- Increased public awareness on the key threats and pressures to freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin and on ways to address them.

4. Actual progress toward long-term impacts at completion

Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal)

List each short-term impact from Grant Writer proposal

The actual progress toward long-term impacts at completion included the following:

- Enhanced NGO involvement in promoting sustainable water resources management and freshwater biodiversity conservation at national and transboundary level in the Drin River Basin through their active participation (~ 10 NGOs) at the kick-off of two large-scale projects aiming to promote joint management of the Drin River Basin. In addition, this will be further achieved by the continuous debriefing of the Drin Process related meetings and the encouragement of NGOs to take part in the implementation process of the Drin MoU.
- Fostered collaboration, commitment and solidarity among environmental NGOs of the region to protect the Drin River Basin its habitats and species and the invaluable ecosystem services they provide has been reached via the collective & collaborative learning workshop, the joint NGO publication, the project partnership structure, e-mail communication and exchange of information on various issues with NGOs in the region, etc. Furthermore, the long-term impact related to fostered collaboration is ensured via the establishment of the Act4Drin NGOs Alliance.
- Start-up work towards enhanced public understanding of the intrinsic values (environmental, economic and cultural) of freshwater ecosystems and corresponding services in the Drin River Basin, which underpin the willingness of individuals to make the necessary changes and actions and to create the “political will” for governments to act has taken place via the organization of the DRIN Days 2015 & 2016, the short film triplet & documentary, the Act4Drin publication, the Spring School 2016 and the wide dissemination of these outputs and their outcomes via various communication channels (websites, facebook, twitter, youtube, local TV channels, etc.).
- Prep work towards increased pressure on decision-makers to harmonise and streamline biodiversity concerns into national policies and regulations through the NGO networking meeting and web-call where NGOs were encouraged to contribute to the Drin Process. Furthermore their views were streamlined at the Drin Core Group Meetings (Tirana, December 2015; Athens, June 2016) and it was proposed for the Act4Drin NGOs Alliance to formally participate in the Expert Working Groups (Biodiversity, WFD, Data & Information) of the Drin Process.
- Strengthened promotion of international, European and national participatory framework, in particular of the Aarhus Convention and the WFD via the collective & collaborative workshop (Lin, April 2015).
- Knowledge on the key threats and pressures to freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin and on ways to address them has been enhanced via the development of the ActDrin booklet where all the experiences, findings and results obtained within various NGOs initiatives have been depicted and shared with stakeholders in the Drin River Basin and have also been streamlined into the related policy discussions for the shared Drin River Basin Management. In addition, an Act4Drin survey on the prevailing public views and perceptions towards freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin sheds

light on the comparative importance of identified threats, pressures and potential measures.

- The Act4Drin activities targeted to enhancing the skills and effectiveness of NGOs but also the public awareness raising actions carried out are expected to substantially improve the conservation status of freshwater habitats and species in the Drin River Basin in the years to come, through their better management and creation of the enabling environment for the establishment and/or expansion of protected areas.

5. Actual progress toward short-term impacts at completion

The actual progress toward short-term impacts at completion included the following:

- Enhanced capacities of grassroots and national NGOs from the project areas/countries in promoting sustainable water resources management and freshwater habitats and species conservation in transboundary settings that was achieved mainly via the sub-regional NGOs collective & collaborative learning workshop organized at Lin in April 2015 and attended by some 30 participants. The workshop was tailor made to the NGO needs since its planning was based upon a stocking survey run in 2014. In addition, the capacities were further enhanced by a lessons learned sharing exercise showcasing the added value and particular strengths that the NGO community brings to environmental governance, such as leadership, creativity, flexibility, entrepreneurship and capacity for vision and long-term thinking. The later was achieved through the joint development of the Act4Drin booklet, a tribute to the extent and diversity of concrete NGO actions in promoting integrated water resources management and freshwater biodiversity conservation in the Mediterranean.
- Enhanced cooperation and networking among and between regional, national and grassroots NGOs in the region working on sustainable water resources management and biodiversity protection/conservation was to some extent achieved via the aforementioned workshop, through the project partnership itself made of 4 NGOs, through the identification of relevant NGOs and projects in the region and exchange of information. Furthermore, the invitation of all NGOs active in the region to become Act4Drin promoters and include their logos on the Act4Drin publication was a concrete tangible way to actively involve them in the project, securing enhanced ownership of the final project outputs and serving as demonstration of NGO solidarity in the region. The end result of the aforementioned actions has been a more concrete form for coordinating and strengthening NGO participation in the upcoming policy developments in the region driven by the Drin MoU implementation process, namely the Act4Drin Alliance forged by 13 NGOs: ALBAFOREST, ASSOCIATION 'ADRIATIC BASIN', BIOSFERA, CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY FLOROZON, EDEN CENTER, PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN ALBANIA (PPNEA), GRASHNICA, GREEN HOME, INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY (IEP), INSTITUTE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION IN ALBANIA (INCA), LET'S DO IT KOSOVO, MACEDONIAN ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY (MES) and MIO-ECSDE. Last but not least, NGO collaboration and coordination was even further strengthened at the sub-regional NGO networking meeting held in Tirana (December 2015) back-to-back with the Drin Core Group meeting and the web-

- conference organized in May 2016 to update them on the Drin Corda developments and to discuss the follow-up steps of the Act4Drin Alliance.
- A starting point towards enhanced activity/mobility of local and national NGOs in designing concrete, relevant and feasible action and eventually securing funding opportunities related to freshwater biodiversity conservation and/or restoration and sustainable management of water resources was the aforementioned workshop. During the workshop participants had the opportunity to share with each other their experiences on the issue, distil lessons learned and identify promising practices that were captured in the Act4Drin booklet aiming to communicate acquired knowledge and ensure that beneficial information is factored into future NGO activities. The booklet is a collection of concrete NGO actions on the ground that have contributed to the protection and conservation of freshwater ecosystems in SW Balkan and the Mediterranean and an account of the diversity, wide ranging scope and extent of NGO involvement in promoting integrated water resources management and freshwater biodiversity conservation.
 - Increased awareness of local communities and the wider public, on the vital benefits that watershed bodies provide in maintaining healthy freshwater ecosystems and their rich biodiversity, as well as their corresponding ecosystem services was achieved via the Drin Day events organized in May 2015 & 2016. The events were dedicated to raising public awareness about the natural wealth and legacy of the Drin River Basin with the overall goal of inspiring collective actions. BIOSFERA, EDEN, GREEN HOME and MES, all Act4Drin project partners, organized wide-ranging celebrations with a common goal: to protect and conserve the freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin. The events targeted mainly youngsters -as agents of change- but also educators and NGOs. They took place in various locations throughout the extended river basin. In addition, the 'Echoes from the Drin' short films triplet, the dissemination of the Act4Drin publication, the Act4Drin Spring School 2016 and the public views survey contributed to that end as well.
 - Higher awareness and sense of ownership of local communities and the wider public for their common natural heritage, the Drin River Basin was achieved via the aforementioned actions, namely the Drin Day 2015 & 2016 events, the Echoes from the Drin' short films triplet & documentary, the Act4Drin publication, the Act4Drin Spring School 2016.
 - Similarly, increased public awareness on the key threats and pressures to freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin and on ways to address them was achieved to some extent.

6. Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives

The two-year-long journey of the Act4Drin project aiming at raising public awareness, enhancing knowledge and empowering NGOs to protect and conserve freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin was a huge success, leaving behind a rich and lasting legacy of high quality outputs and successful results. More achievements than those planned in its inception were achieved, such as the Act4Drin NGOs Alliance, the Act4Drin Young Ambassadors and the Act4Drin Promoters, demonstrating clearly the type of impact and momentum the project has mobilised.

Given that MIO-ECSDE has a long-standing presence in the region, has established throughout the years a strong working relationship with most of the NGOs in the region based on mutual respect and trust and having long-standing experiences and competences in ensuring good freshwater governance in transboundary settings, there were no major challenges encountered throughout the implementation of the project. Perhaps the only challenge worthwhile mentioning is that political processes and/or large scale projects, such as the GEF Drin project take a lot of time to move forwards making it a bit challenging to plan interdependent actions way in advance. This was the case for the Act4Drin project and the foreseen NGO networking meetings that anticipated the launch of the GEF Drin project and the associated implementation of the Drin MoU for some two years, making the planned back-to-back meeting difficult to implement within the timeframe of the project.

7. Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

The Act4Drin project mobilized great momentum leading to the achievement of more results than those planned in its inception. Some of these are summarized below:

- ✓ Thirteen NGOs (18 including the Act4Drin partners) have agreed to act as Act4Drin promoters and support the Act4Drin publication with their logos which concretely displays their commitment and solidarity to protect and conserve the Drin River Basin. More info: <http://mio-ecsde.org/project/the-natural-wealth-and-legacy-of-the-drin-river-basin-inspiring-our-collective-actions-mio-ecsde-2015/>
- ✓ The Act4Drin short films triplet (deliverable 3.6) has been submitted to the Drin Core Group and it has been officially endorsed as a key vehicle for awareness raising towards supporting the implementation of the Drin MoU.
- ✓ Thirteen NGOs from the five Drin riparians joined forces in early 2016 to form the Act4Drin Alliance aiming to protect and conserve freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin. The Act4Drin Alliance is a coalition of NGOs aiming to act as a forum for coordinating and strengthening NGO participation in the upcoming policy developments in the region driven by the Drin MoU implementation process, enhancing cooperation and networking among and between regional, national and grassroot NGOs in the Drin Basin working on sustainable water resources management and freshwater biodiversity protection/conservation. Furthermore, it is currently under discussion within the Drin Core Group of members of the Act4Drin Alliance to be represented in the Drin Process Expert Working Groups on the Water Framework Directive Implementation, Monitoring and Information Exchange, Biodiversity and Ecosystem. The Act4Drin Alliance, an initiative of MIO-ECSDE, includes the following NGOs: ALBAFOREST, ASSOCIATION 'ADRIATIC BASIN', BIOSFERA, CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY FLOROZON, EDEN CENTER, PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN ALBANIA (PPNEA), GRASHNICA, GREEN HOME, INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY (IEP), INSTITUTE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION IN ALBANIA (INCA), LET'S DO IT KOSOVO, MACEDONIAN ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY (MES) and MIO-ECSDE. More info: <http://mio-ecsde.org/act4drin-ngo-alliance-launched-on-the-occasion-of-world-wetlands-day-2016/>
- ✓ A volunteers group, the Act4Drin Young Ambassadors was created as the concrete outcome of the Act4Drin Spring School 2016. All participants of the Spring School remain active mainly via social media channels and ready to act.

- ✓ An one-month long survey targeted to environmental NGOs in the Drin riparian countries was carried out aiming to take stock of NGO capacities in promoting integrated water resources management and freshwater biodiversity conservation in transboundary settings. The key findings of this survey can be of use for future capacity building activities to ensure that they are tailor made to the real needs of the region's NGOs. More info: <http://act4drin.net/?p=919>
- ✓ Another survey was carried out aiming to shed light on the prevailing public views and perceptions towards freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin. This survey was prepared by MIO-ECSDE and was a pre-assignment of the Act4Drin Spring School 2016, organized by MIO-ECSDE in collaboration and with the support of BIOSFERA, EDEN, MES, GREENHOME, GRASHNICA, PPNEA, PROGEO, SOCA TRIPS and the University of Tirana, under the auspices of the University of Korca. Some twenty six bright natural sciences students from the Drin Riparian countries, namely Albania, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece ran the 2-week survey from 22 April to 6 May 2016, targeting mainly the local communities of the Drin River Basin. A total of 314 questionnaires were filled in out of the 390 targeted respondents (~81% response rate), mostly through direct interviews in person or over the phone. Results are found here: <http://mio-ecsde.org/act4drin-survey-sheds-light-on-the-prevailing-public-views-and-perceptions-towards-freshwater-ecosystems-in-the-drin-river-basin/>

Project Components and Products/Deliverables

Component 1 (as stated in the approved proposal)

List each component and product/deliverable from Grant Writer

Component 1: Increased capacities of local/national NGOs to promote IWRM and freshwater biodiversity conservation in transboundary settings.

Component 1 deliverables include:

- **1.1. A mapping exercise** will be carried out to identify all local/national NGOs interested in working on issues related to IWRM and freshwater biodiversity conservation in the region. In parallel a mapping of their capacities and/or lack of them will be made in order to organize a workshop tailor made to their needs.
- **1.2. A sub-regional workshop** and/or a study visit of ~10-15 local/national NGOs will be organized to develop their capacities and skills to promote IWRM and freshwater biodiversity conservation in transboundary settings.
- **1.3. A handbook** with freshwater biodiversity conservation and restoration examples applicable to the region's specificities will be developed to be used as a source of inspiration by local and national NGOs to seek funding opportunities and develop their own projects on the ground.

8. Describe the results from Component 1 and each product/deliverable

Component 1 and its respective actions contributed substantially to increasing the capacities of local/national NGOs to promote IWRM and freshwater biodiversity conservation in transboundary settings. This component addressed various challenges that hamper their constructive participation in transboundary (and national) settings. The abilities and capacities of NGOs were enhanced through collective and collaborative workshop and provision of appropriate tools (e.g. the NGOs booklet) resulting in enhanced activity/mobility of local and national NGOs in designing concrete, relevant and feasible action and eventually securing funding opportunities related to freshwater biodiversity conservation and/or restoration and sustainable management of water resources.

- 1.1. The mapping exercise was successfully carried out and list of 55 contacts with representatives from 43 local/national environmental NGOs in the project countries was build. Based on their responses to a stock-taking questionnaire, another list with 13 NGOs interested in working on issues related to IWRM and freshwater biodiversity conservation in the Drin River basin was developed.
- 1.2. The Act4Drin project brought to the town of Lin, Albania, on the shore of Lake Ohrid, some 28 representatives from 18 environmental NGOs active in the SW Balkans (28-29 April 2015). Everyone engaged in a collective and collaborative learning process on integrated water resources management and freshwater biodiversity conservation in transboundary settings. Participants had the opportunity to take stock of their experiences on a wide range of issues including technical & research aspects, policy & advocacy, education & awareness raising, participatory science, etc. Intensive discussions and reflections resulted in a set of lessons learned and the identification of promising practices, which are showcased in the Act4Drin booklet. More info: <http://mio-ecsde.org/environmental-ngos-display-solidarity-in-sw-balkans-sharing-experiences-lessons-learned-for-the-protection-of-freshwater-ecosystems-in-the-region/>
- 1.3. The Act4Drin booklet showcasing NGO actions to protect and conserve freshwater ecosystems was successfully developed. This booklet is a tribute to the extent and diversity of concrete NGO actions in promoting integrated water resources management and freshwater biodiversity conservation in the Mediterranean. This publication showcases the added value and particular strengths that the NGO community brings to environmental governance, such as leadership, creativity, flexibility, entrepreneurship and capacity for vision and long-term thinking. The publication features a collection of actions undertaken by ALBAFOREST, SPP, MES, DPPVN, MIO-ECSDE/MEDIES, GREEN HOME, PPNEA, INCA, GRASHNICA and MIO-ECSDE. It was developed by MIO-ECSDE (Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development – a Federation of 130 Mediterranean environmental NGOs) within the framework of the framework of the Act4Drin project funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). More info: <http://mio-ecsde.org/project/ngo-actions-to-protect-and-conserve-freshwater-ecosystems-mio-ecsde-2016/>

Component 2 (as stated in the approved proposal)

List each component and product/deliverable from Grant Writer

Component 2: Enhanced coordination, cooperation and networking of local/national NGOs working in the Drin River Basin and effective involvement local/national NGOs in the Drin Dialogue process and/or other relevant projects.

Component 2 deliverables include:

- 2.1. **Three (3) national networking meetings** will be organized with ~10 participants each back-to-back with the Drin Core Group and/or Working Groups meetings (one per riparian country involved in the project) to inform them on the whole process and associated developments, as well as on ways to be involved.
- 2.2. **Synergies will be built with other relevant initiatives/projects** implemented in the region, such as the H2020 CB/MEP and the MedPartnership, in which MIO-ECSDE is a key partner.
- 2.3. **A web-based coordination platform** will be set up to facilitate information exchange between and among the collaborating NGOs.
- 2.4. **A dedicated web-page** will be developed under MIO-ECSDE's website to communicate all project activities and disseminate all desirables and outputs as wide as possible.

9. Describe the results from Component 2 and each product/deliverable

Component 2 activities were instrumental in facilitating coordination, cooperation and networking of local/national NGOs working in the Drin River Basin through the organization of meetings; setting up the coordination platform; encouraging the involvement of local/national NGOs in the Drin Dialogue process and/or other relevant projects through information sharing. These activities resulted in joint and coordinated efforts of local and national NGOs and are expected in the near future to increase pressure on decision-makers to harmonize and streamline biodiversity concerns into national policies and regulations.

- 2.1. Given the delayed launch of the GEF Drin project and the follow-up of Drin MoU process it was quite challenging to organize the networking meetings back-to-back with the Drin Core Group meetings. Therefore, one physical and one virtual networking meeting were organized on the 16th December 2015 and 31st May 2016, respectively, while in agreement with the CEPF the third meeting was decided not to take place.
(a) Networking meeting held in December 2015: Instead of a national, a sub-regional event was organized back-to-back with the kick-off of the GEF Drin project and the 10th Core Group meeting. A presentation with the main developments related to the Drin Dialogue process was developed and the participants were informed on the opportunities and ways to be involved. Some 12 NGOs, namely the ADRIATIC BASIN ASSOCIATION, ALBAFOREST, DPPVN, EDEN, GRASHNICA, GREENHOME, IEP, INCA, LET'S DO IT KOSOVA, PPNEA, PROGEO and SPP actively participated at the event. The networking meeting discussions explored the contribution of local/national NGOs in the implementation of the Drin Action Programme; took stock of NGO led Drin related projects in the region; defined the key elements and structure of the upcoming Act4Drin Spring School and identified actions related to the Act4Drin Day 2016. Some of the decisions of the meeting were presented the next day at the Drin Core Group meeting. A press release on the main points of discussion of the networking meeting was

developed and was shared via various communication channels, including the Act4Drin webpage (<http://act4drin.net/?p=1157>), the MIO-ECSDE facebook and webpage, etc.

(b) Networking meeting held in May 2016: The 11th Meeting of the Drin Core Group was scheduled for the 13th June 2016 in Athens, therefore it was not possible to organize a networking meeting back-to-back. Instead, a virtual meeting was organized on the 31st of May 2016 focusing on taking stock of the advances of the implementation of the Drin MoU in the region and defining the next steps; exploring the Act4Drin Alliance follow up actions. The NGOs that joined the skype call were: EDEN, GRASHNICA, MES, PPNEA and SPP. Some of the discussions and concerns of the NGOs were reflected in the 11th Drin Core Group Meeting.

- 2.2. Some 15 ongoing relevant initiatives/activities in the region were mapped and their potential for synergies was rated. Bilateral communications were made with those who were offering higher synergies potential. The most relevant projects identified included the GEF MedPartnership project and the GEF Drin project, as well as various CEPF projects such as the Act4Drin sister project entitled 'Water for lakes, bogs, streams and people on Jablanica Mountain', the ALBAFOREST 'Integrated Drini River Basin Management', the GREENHOME 'Supporting local communities to implement nature-based tourism practices around Sasko Lake', the GRASHNICA 'Promoting smart water use in farmlands of Ohrid Lake', etc. Synergies were built with regards to the organization of the Act4Drin Days, the development of the Act4Drin NGO booklet, the organization of the Act4Drin Spring School 2016, etc. Promoting the project activities and outputs and building synergies with other relevant initiatives continues to-date ensuring an extended after-life effect of the Act4Drin project and enhanced sustainability.
- 2.3. From the very beginning of the project a web-based coordination platform was set up to facilitate information exchange between and among the collaborating NGOs. An on-line tool was used called basecamp.
- 2.4. A project dedicated webpage was developed (www.act4drin.net). Instead of dedicated a MIO-ECSDE webpage to the project it was decided to develop (with in house resources) a new stand alone page to facilitate the communication activities of the project.

Component 3 (as stated in the approved proposal)

List each component and product/deliverable from Grant Writer

Component 3: Increased awareness of local communities and the wider public on the importance of the Drin River Basin and its freshwater ecosystems.

Component 3 deliverables include:

- 3.1. An **awareness raising campaign** facilitated by the appropriately media channels and using as vehicles targeted tools (brochure, documentary, TV spots) will be developed. This includes the planning (what, how, to whom and when issues) and the actual realization of the campaign at local, national and sub-regional level. Local Partners will be responsible for carrying out this campaign at local and national level. The awareness raising campaign will be targeted to local communities, educators and students and the wider public. This campaign will be continued after the end of the project by the NGO Partners as part of their ongoing efforts to promote the conservation of freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin.

- 3.2. A **4-language-brochure** (English, partner countries languages) highlighting the unique wealth of biodiversity in the Drin River Basin and its key threats will be developed.
- 3.3. **Three (3) Drin Action Day awareness raising events** (1 per each country), targeted to the wider public, will be organized by local NGO partners (Expected to involve directly to ~ 150-200 participants per event).
- 3.4. An **experiential workshop bringing together 20 youth and educators** from the 3 Drin riparian countries (Albania, FYROM, Montenegro) and utilizing the project demo site as an outdoor 'laboratory' to carry out relevant educational activities will be organized. The main message of the workshop will be that a genuine understanding of the significance of biodiversity increases multicultural awareness and appreciation and strengthens social, economic and spiritual well-being. Such an event will mobilize action and enhance the effective cooperation among youths to understand and communicate important values, such as respect for nature, multiculturalism, solidarity, democracy and sustainable development. Participants will have the opportunity to actively participate in a set of activities (practical workshops, field visits, field research, presentations, discussions, cultural evenings, etc.) aiming to promote cooperation and interaction between them, improve their critical thinking and encourage them to be involved in or even stimulate: local and national policy formulation; local community action for the preservation of natural heritage; and increasing awareness about the significance of biological and cultural diversity.
- 3.5. **A documentary (15-18 min)** highlighting the unique wealth of biodiversity in the Drin River Basin and its key threats will be developed in English with subtitles in 3 languages of the partner countries (Albania, FYROM, Montenegro). The documentary will also depict the project's activities and will send out a strong message on how local communities can play a crucial role in protecting and conserving their common natural heritage. It is important to have absolute editorial control over the documentary and therefore it is advised to have it developed in English and then translated.
- 3.6. **Three (3) smart TV spots (~2 min)** will be developed in 4 languages (English, languages of the partner countries) which will deliver in a creative way different environmental messages key to promoting sustainable water resources management and freshwater habitats and species conservation in the Drin River Basin.

10. Describe the results from Component 3 and each product/deliverable

Component 3 enhanced public awareness on the vital benefits that watershed bodies provide in maintaining healthy freshwater ecosystems and their rich biodiversity, as well as their corresponding ecosystem services, which underpin the willingness of individuals to make the necessary changes and actions and to create the "political will" for governments to act. Furthermore, the awareness and sense of ownership of local communities and the wider public for their common natural heritage, the Drin River Basin were substantially strengthened.

- 3.1. A Communication Strategy and corresponding Plan of Action was developed and finalized with the input of the project partners. The appropriate key messages, target groups and media channels were identified. The main communication tools were setup including a mailing list, a facebook page and a project page.
- 3.2. For the first time ever a multilingual (five languages) publication that highlights the exceptional wealth of freshwater biodiversity of the Drin River Basin was produced via a

collective effort of the region's civil society. Entitled "The natural wealth and legacy of the Drin River Basin: inspiring our collective actions", it aims at raising public awareness on the value of our common natural wealth and ultimately triggering individual or collective actions towards safeguarding the basin's biodiversity and its invaluable ecosystem services. This publication concretely displays the commitment and solidarity of environmental NGOs of the region to protect and conserve the Drin River Basin. The Act4Drin project promoters include the following thirteen NGOs: Albaforest, BirdLife Slovenia (DOPPS), Society of bird research and nature protection (DPPVN), Environmental Center for Administration and Technology (ECAT), EIRLA Association, Greens of Montenegro, Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania (INCA), Institute for Environmental Policy (IEP), Environmental Movement "OZON", Permaculture and Organic Agriculture (POA), Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA), PSEDA ILIRIA and Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP).

The publication was disseminated as wide as possible making use of all media channels. Specifically: (1) 600 copies have been sent to the Act4Drin partner organizations, namely BIOSFERA, MES, GREEN HOME and EDEN for distribution at national level; (2) The publication, as well as the project was showcased at a Mediterranean-wide closing event of the GEF MedPartnership and ClimVar projects held on 3-4 November 2015 in Athens, Greece and attended by 120 participants (<http://act4drin.net/?p=1137>); (3) The publication has been launched on the World Rivers Day (September 2015) and a press release has been sent to a mailing list of ~7000 recipients from all over the Mediterranean; (4) Relevant news items have been posted at the Act4Drin website (<http://act4drin.net/?p=1081>), the MIO-ECSDE website and facebook page, the Act4Drin partners pages; (5) The publication has been showcased and distributed at the kick-off of the two large-scale projects aiming to promote joint management of the Drin River Basin; etc. Furthermore, it has been distributed at the Act4Drin Spring School 2016 (May 2016), as well as on a number of other occasions.

- 3.3. Guidelines for the organization of Drin Action Day awareness raising events were developed and finalized with the input of the partners. A press kit (leaflet, posters, press release) for the Drin Action Day Awareness raising events was developed in all three languages. The organization of these events at local level was coordinated. Instead of 3 Drin Day events, 6 were organized in two Drin Day editions, the second in 2015 and the third in 2016. This was made possible due to some savings made from deliverable 2.1 in coordination with CEPF.
 - (a) Drin Day 2015: May 17 was the Drin Day 2015, an annual initiative dedicated to raising public awareness about the natural wealth and legacy of the Drin River Basin with the overall goal of inspiring collective actions. BIOSFERA, EDEN, GREEN HOME and MES, all Act4Drin project partners, organized wide-ranging celebrations with a common goal: to protect and conserve the freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin. The events targeted mainly youngsters -as agents of change- but also educators and NGOs. They took place in various locations throughout the extended river basin. A synthesis report on these events was developed (<http://act4drin.net/?p=1047>). The synthesis report was disseminated as wide as possible making use of all media channels.
 - (b) Drin Day 2016: May 5 was the 3rd edition of the Drin Day. BIOSFERA, EDEN, GREEN HOME and MES, all Act4Drin project partners, will organize wide-ranging celebrations with a common goal: to protect and conserve the freshwater ecosystems in the Drin River Basin. This year the Act4Drin project and the Drin

Project (www.drincorda.org) financed by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) joined forces. The Drin Day initiative was implemented in support and within the framework of the Drin Corda Process under the coordination of MIO-ECSDE and GWP-Med. The activity was communicated through various media channels: <http://act4drin.net/?p=1232>

- 3.4. A first of its kind transboundary Spring School entitled ‘The natural wealth and legacy of the Drin River Basin: from field observations and knowledge to collective actions towards protecting freshwater ecosystems’ brought together some 28 natural sciences students from the Drin Riparian countries in a joint quest for knowledge along the Drin. All Act4Drin Spring School participants committed themselves into becoming the Act4Drin Ambassadors. From 7 to 15 May 2016 some 28 natural sciences students from the Drin Riparian countries, namely Albania, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece went beyond ‘just learning’ and were ‘immersed’ in nature, experiencing thus the sense of inner harmony that only nature offers to humans. The 9-day Spring School introduced students to the fundamental importance of the Drin River Basin for the region’s ecosystems, livelihoods and overall well-being. Through an interactive and collaborative experience the significance of biodiversity in fostering collective awareness and strengthened social, economic and spiritual well-being was highlighted. Students acquired knowledge, improved their critical thinking and renewed their motivation to become actively involved in their local communities and national policy processes for the preservation of the Drin River Basin natural heritage. Students experienced an exceptional blend of collective and collaborative learning on the science-policy-society interface and fascinating field trips to the Drin River Basin. Students visited key conservation sites along the Drin and carried out field work, such as Golem Grad in Prespa lake, Galicica National Park, the Bird Protection centre in Ezerani, the Mavrovo National Park, Jablanica Mountain, Ohrid lake, Skadar lake, Ulcinj saltern and Buna/Bojana Delta. In a joint quest for knowledge and through a dynamic and holistic learning process, students experienced sharing common values for a better future, such as mutual respect and respect for nature, multiculturalism, solidarity, democracy, social responsibility and sustainable development. The Act4Drin Spring School by MIO-ECSDE in collaboration and with the support of BIOSFERA, EDEN, MES, GREENHOME, GRASHNICHIA, PPNEA, PROGEO, SOCA TRIPS and the University of Tirana, under the auspices of the University of Korca. A draft synthesis report on activities, findings, conclusions of the workshop was developed. The final report was published on <http://mio-ecsde.org/unique-transboundary-spring-school-carried-out-in-the-drin-river-basin/> and a series of press releases were shared via facebook, twitter, MIO-ECSDE & Act4Drin webpages.
- 3.5. The Act4Drin documentary (17 min) immersing us in a fact-filled yet emotional travelogue along the Drin River Basin, the connecting body of five Riparian countries, was launched upon the closure of the project. It captures the outstanding wealth of habitats and species and highlights the crucial role of local communities in protecting and conserving this biodiversity hotspot. This documentary brings forward the core message of the Act4Drin which is all about “Living in harmony with the Drin”. The Drin River Basin is full of life, housing an exceptional wealth of biodiversity, providing important habitats for many species of fauna and flora, while delivering a steady stream of benefits to its residents. The official launch of the documentary (<http://mio-ecsde.org/the-actdrin-travelogue-living-well-in-harmony-with-the-drin-launched-today/>) was made with a wrap-up circular (<http://mio-ecsde.org/the-actdrin-travelogue->

- [living-well-in-harmony-with-the-drin-launched-today/](#)) showcasing all project results and was disseminated through appropriate media channels (mailchimp & mailing list, websites, facebook, twitter). The documentary has been subtitled in the languages of the Drin Riparians, namely Albania, FYROM and Montenegro. The subtitled versions will be widely disseminated in September 2016 in order allow for a re-circulation of this high level product. So far the documentary has been viewed 234 times.
- 3.6. In April 2016 Act4Drin launched the “Echoes from the Drin” short films triplet. The core message that the Act4Drin short films seek to bring forward is all about “Living in harmony with the Drin” (<http://mio-ecsde.org/act4drin-launches-the-echoes-from-the-drin-short-films-triplet/>). The Drin River Basin is full of life, housing an exceptional wealth of biodiversity, providing important habitats for many species of fauna and flora, while delivering a steady stream of benefits to its residents. Whether we consciously realize it or not, freshwater ecosystems together with every bit of biodiversity they support and the ecosystem services they provide, are intimately interwoven with our ‘harmonious’ existence and welfare. Therefore, the protection of our natural common heritage cannot be left only to governments, treaties, top-down regulations and other similar approaches. We, as individuals can make the real difference by simply caring, respecting the right of all beings to enjoy this planet and by taking a holistic ‘life cycle’ view on life based on a sustainable management of natural resources. The short films triplet was widely disseminated through various channels on a continuous basis. The spots were also submitted at the Environmental Film Festival 2016 in Albania and they were also submitted to and endorsed by the Drin Core Group as official communication vehicles for awareness raising of the Drin related political process. In May 2016 the tripled had reached a total of 2313 views at the MIO-ECSDE youtube channel.

Component 4 (as stated in the approved proposal)

List each component and product/deliverable from Grant Writer

Component 4: Project Management and Coordination

Component 4 deliverables include:

- 4.1. Baseline and final CSTTs completed by MIO-ECSDE
- 4.2. Compliance with CEPF procurement policies ensured

11. Describe the results from Component 4 and each product/deliverable

The project ran smoothly and according to plan following all necessary rules and procedures.

- 4.1. The baseline and final CSTTs were completed by MIO-ECSDE, in 2014 and 2016 and sent to the CEPF RIT. In the baseline CSTT MIO-ECSDE’s total score was 85/100, while in the final 86.5/100.
- MIO-ECSDE complied with all CEPF procurement policies throughout the duration of the project.

12. If you did not complete any component or deliverable, how did this affect the overall impact of the project?

The only deliverable that was not implemented precisely as planned was deliverable 2.1 related to the national networking meetings back-to-back with the Drin Core Group meetings due to the delayed kick-off of the GEF Drin projects. Instead of 3 meetings, 2 were organized. In addition, both of these meetings were sub-regional and not national, therefore giving the opportunity to NGOs from all Drin Riparian countries to be acquainted with the Drin process and participate at the kick-off of the MoU implementation process. In conclusion, despite the delays and the slight change of plans the overall impact of this activity was not affected at all.

13. Please describe and submit any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results

All project tools and products can be found at the following links:

- i. The **Act4Drin survey taking stock of environmental NGO capacities** in the Drin can be found at: <http://act4drin.net/?p=919>
- ii. The **NGOs collective and collaborative workshop** held in Lin, Albania from 28 to 29 April 2015. More info can be found at: <http://mio-ecsde.org/environmental-ngos-display-solidarity-in-sw-balkans-sharing-experiences-lessons-learned-for-the-protection-of-freshwater-ecosystems-in-the-region/>
- iii. The **Act4Drin booklet** showcasing NGO actions to protect and conserve freshwater ecosystems can be found at: <http://mio-ecsde.org/project/ngo-actions-to-protect-and-conserve-freshwater-ecosystems-mio-ecsde-2016/>
- iv. The **Act4Drin Alliance**, a coalition of NGOs aiming to act as a forum for coordinating and strengthening NGO participation in the upcoming policy developments in the region driven by the Drin MoU implementation process, enhancing cooperation and networking among and between regional, national and grassroots NGOs in the Drin Basin working on sustainable water resources management and freshwater biodiversity protection/conservation. More info can be found at: <http://mio-ecsde.org/act4drin-ngo-alliance-launched-on-the-occasion-of-world-wetlands-day-2016/>
- v. The **dedicated Act4Drin webpage** can be found at: www.act4drin.net
- vi. The **Act4Drin publication** on the natural wealth and legacy of the Drin River Basin can be found at: <http://mio-ecsde.org/project/the-natural-wealth-and-legacy-of-the-drin-river-basin-inspiring-our-collective-actions-mio-ecsde-2015/>
- vii. The **unique transboundary Act4Drin Spring School 2016** entitled 'The natural wealth and legacy of the Drin River Basin: from field observations and knowledge to collective actions towards protecting freshwater ecosystems' held from 7-15 May 2016. More info can be found at: <http://mio-ecsde.org/unique-transboundary-spring-school-carried-out-in-the-drin-river-basin/>
- viii. The **Act4Drin travelogue 'Living well in harmony with the Drin'** can be found at: <http://mio-ecsde.org/the-act4drin-travelogue-living-well-in-harmony-with-the-drin-launched-today/>
- ix. The **Act4Drin "Echoes from the Drin" short films triplet** can be found at: <http://mio-ecsde.org/act4drin-launches-the-echoes-from-the-drin-short-films-triplet/>
- x. The **Act4Drin survey on the prevailing public views and perceptions towards freshwater ecosystems** in the Drin River Basin can be found at: <http://mio-ecsde.org/act4drin-survey-sheds-light-on-the-prevailing-public-views-and-perceptions-towards-freshwater-ecosystems-in-the-drin-river-basin/>

- xi. The **Act4Drin marine litter survey in the delta of the Buna/Bojana river** can be found at: <http://mio-ecsde.org/balkan-students-carry-out-a-marine-litter-survey-in-the-delta-of-the-bunabojana-river/>

CEPF Global Monitoring Data

Respond to the questions and complete the tables below. If a question is not relevant to your project, please make an entry of 0 (zero) or n/a (not applicable).

14. Did your organization complete the CEPF Civil Society Tracking Tool (CSTT) at the beginning and end of your project? Yes/No

If yes, please be sure to submit the final CSTT tool to CEPF if you haven't already done so.

Both CSTTs, baseline and final have been already submitted.

15. List any vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species conserved due to your project

Given that the Act4Drin was more of horizontal project it didn't directly work on vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species, nevertheless it is expected that its actions will make a difference for vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species in the Drin River Basin. Such species are showcased in a series of Act4Drin products, such as the Act4Drin booklet, the Act4Drin publications, the Act4Drin travelogue and short films triplet, etc.

Hectares Under Improved Management

Project Results	Hectares*	Comments
16. Did your project strengthen the management of an existing protected area?	n/a	<i>List the name of each protected area</i>
17. Did your project create a new protected area or expand an existing protected area?	n/a	<i>List the name of each protected area, the date of proclamation, and the type of proclamation (e.g., legal declaration, community agreement, stewardship agreement)</i>
18. Did your project strengthen the management of a key biodiversity area named in the CEPF Ecosystem Profile (hectares may be the same as questions above)		<i>List the name of each key biodiversity area</i> The Act4Drin project did contribute to strengthening biodiversity conservation and/or natural resources management inside the key biodiversity area of Ohrid and Skadar lakes, mainly by building the capacities of grassroot NGOs in the area, involving them in the relevant policy discussions, but also by carrying out awareness raising activities in the area.

19. Did your project improve the management of a production landscape for biodiversity conservation	n/a	<i>List the name or describe the location of the production landscape</i>
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** Include total hectares from project inception to completion*

20. In relation to the two questions above on protected areas, did your project complete a Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), or facilitate the completion of a METT by protected area authorities? If so, complete the table below. (Note that there will often be more than one METT for an individual protected area.)

Protected area	Date of METT	Composite METT Score	Date of METT	Composite METT Score	Date of METT	Composite METT Score

21. List the name of any corridor (named in the Ecosystem Profile) in which you worked and how you contributed to its improved management, if applicable.

The Act4Drin worked in the **Southwest Balkans** priority corridor contributing to its improved managements by undertaking the following actions:

- Empowering NGOs in effectively and constructively contributing to the implementation of the Drin MoU for the joint and integrated management of the extended Drin River Basin.
- Sharing best NGOs practices and lessons learned related to integrated water resources management and integrated river basin management.
- Supporting IRBM policy and legislation and implementation by encouraging NGOs to participation in the respective political process in the Drin River Basin, by carrying out awareness raising activities and building the NGOs capacities.
- Sharing lessons learned from other watershed basin management experiences such as lake Bizerte, the Danube, etc.

Direct Beneficiaries: Training and Education

<i>Did your project provide training or education for . . .</i>	Male	Female	Total	Brief Description
22. Adults for community leadership or resource management positions	14	14	28	The Act4Drin project brought to the town of Lin, Albania, some 28 representatives from 18 environmental NGOs active in the SW Balkans (28-29 April 2015). Everyone engaged in a collective and

				collaborative learning process on integrated water resources management and freshwater biodiversity conservation in transboundary settings. Participants had the opportunity to take stock of their experiences on a wide range of issues including technical & research aspects, policy & advocacy, education & awareness raising, participatory science, etc.
23. Adults for livelihoods or increased income				
24. School-aged children	6	22	28	A first of its kind transboundary Spring School entitled 'The natural wealth and legacy of the Drin River Basin: from field observations and knowledge to collective actions towards protecting freshwater ecosystems' brought together some 28 natural sciences students from the Drin Riparian countries in a joint quest for knowledge along the Drin. From 7 to 15 May 2016 the students were introduced to the fundamental importance of the Drin River Basin for the region's ecosystems, livelihoods and overall well-being.
25. Other				

26. List the name and approximate population size of any “community” that benefited from the project.

Community name, surrounding district, surrounding province, country Population size

Communities along the extended Drin River Basin benefited from the awareness raising campaign of the Act4Drin project and the two editions of the Drin Day celebrations.

Lessons Learned

28. Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that would inform projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community

One of the main lessons learned or re-affirmed is that in order for any a project to achieve its goals it is of crucial importance to involve relevant stakeholders in all phases and activities of the project to the extent possible. For example, the design of the filming missions in the countries has triggered the interest of different stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, hiking groups, decision makers, local communities, etc.) interest and sense of ownership and responsibility towards the final deliverable.

The same applies for the development of other deliverables within this project such as the organization of the NGOs workshop, the organization of the Spring School 2016 and the development of the best practices booklet.

The NGOs workshop had a greater impact as it took into consideration the specific needs, capacities and interests of NGOs captured by bilateral communications but also via a survey. Furthermore, NGOs felt more motivated to participate in a collaborative and mutual learning activity where they had the opportunity to present their own work and potential best practices that can eventually deliver a more collective output with enhanced ownership such as the best practice handbook.

Last but not least the Act4Drin Alliance has given NGOs in the region a new impetus for coordinated action.

29. Project Design Process (*aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)

The key elements that ensured the Act4Drin project success were the following:

- ✓ The project was demand driven and not supply driven as it happens to a large number of conservation projects. The project area needs and specificities were well mapped and the project came as a direct follow-up of MIO-ECSDE's persistent efforts to secure resources for advocacy, networking and demonstration actions in the Drin River Basin.
- ✓ All key actors and stakeholders were identified from the planning phased of the project and good working relationships were in place.
- ✓ The project activities and deliverables were clearly and realistically defined.
- ✓ Adequate time was allocated for receiving partner inputs throughout the implementation of the project and all partners were given an active role in almost all project activities since the design phase ensuring an enhanced sense of ownership of the overall project and its eventual results.
- ✓ The foreseen synergies with other ongoing relevant initiatives in the region were crucial for mobilizing the necessary momentum for the success of the project.

30. Project Implementation (*aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)

Having a well planned project in place and following the plan was the major factor of success for the Act4Drin project. On the other hand, the CEPF RIT flexibility related to making small adjustments to the work plan when needed in terms of timing, secured a greater quality for certain deliverables such as the

development of the Drin Documentary where filming missions were extended till spring 2016 or the postponed of the Act4Drin Spring School to May 2016, which truly led to a first of its kind event supported by a large number of actors in the region and ensuring its great impact.

31. Describe any other lessons learned relevant to the conservation community

Some lessons that should be considered by the global conservation community are:

- ✓ It is of crucial importance to engage NGOs throughout policy dialogue processes and projects, from the early planning and design phase all the way to the implementation.
- ✓ A process where competent governmental and non-governmental participants are considered as peers is more likely to generate trust and "buy in" and thus successful and useful results.
- ✓ In order to ensure a meaningful, coordinated and effective participation of NGOs in a transboundary water resources management cycle, there is a need to consider the need to enhance their abilities and capacities to act throughout these processes. The same often applies to administrative staff of the involved authorities.
- ✓ Although a considerable amount of time and resources are needed in order to create an atmosphere of cooperation and trust, the investment definitely pays back.
- ✓ In order to keep NGOs motivated and engaged in the process, opportunities and incentives should be sought for the joint development of concrete outputs.
- ✓ Collaboration and exchange of experiences among NGOs at national and sub-regional level can help to effectively streamline and replicate successful approaches.
- ✓ Small scale pilot projects showcasing rehabilitation measures and/or replicating best practices at local level can provide strategic input and feedback to decision makers and guide their actions at national and transboundary river basin management processes.
- ✓ Pilot projects and small scale demonstration actions in environmental hotspots have a real impact on the ground and not only have the potential to integrate sustainability criteria and biodiversity conservation into local communities' vision and management plans, but they can substantially strengthen the implementation of environment related policies at national level.
- ✓ A balanced blend of field work and awareness raising and education actions are key to establishing the enabling mechanisms for long-term management of natural resources. The creative and holistic approach towards informing local communities on the complexity and benefits of natural resources, coupled with feedback and community dialogue mechanisms, empowers them to shape their own destiny via contributing their indigenous knowledge and acquiring the necessary information to adopt sustainable management options in future decision making processes.

Sustainability / Replication

32. Summarize the success or challenges in ensuring the project will be sustained or replicated

The project activities were designed and implemented in such a way that ensured their long-term sustainability. One of the main strengths to this end is that MIO-ECSDE and the partner NGOs have a long standing history of actions related to environmental protection in the region and are characterized by great commitment. Some of them have large networks reaching out to other networks or reaching out to large numbers of volunteers who are in turn committed to environmental protection at large.

The increasing momentum and political support that the Drin Dialogue has gained in the past few years at national, sub-regional level and regional is expected to lead to more funds dedicated to the issue. One aspect of the project dealt with capacitating NGOs to submit relevant project proposals of better quality, enabling them thus to access the available funding through various funding agencies.

The promotion of the project's harmonized outputs by all partners after the project's end will continue the visibility and transferability of the results in the years to come.

Since the partners' capacities on protection and restoration of freshwater ecosystems were strengthened biodiversity conservation in the region will be placed higher on their agendas, leading to their enhanced actions on leveraging relevant policy reforms and/or implementation of existing legislation at local and national level. This may in turn create a more supportive political and economic framework, promoting funding potential as a follow-up to this and other similar projects.

33. Summarize any unplanned activities that are likely to result in increased sustainability or replicability

The unplanned activities that are expected to substantially increase the after-life effect, sustainability and replicability of the project results and outputs include:

- ✓ The Act4Drin promoters, where 18 NGOs have agreed to act as Act4Drin promoters and support the Act4Drin publication with their logos, concretely displaying their commitment and solidarity to protect and conserve the Drin River Basin.
- ✓ The Act4Drin short films triplet endorsement by the Drin Core Group as a key vehicle for awareness raising towards supporting the implementation of the Drin MoU.
- ✓ The Act4Drin Alliance, a coalition of NGOs aiming to act as a forum for coordinating and strengthening NGO participation in the upcoming policy developments in the region driven by the Drin MoU implementation process, enhancing cooperation and networking among and between regional, national and grassroots NGOs in the Drin Basin working on sustainable water resources management and freshwater biodiversity protection/conservation.
- ✓ The Act4Drin Young Ambassadors, a volunteers group created as the concrete outcome of the Act4Drin Spring School 2016. All participants of the Spring School remain active mainly via social media channels and ready to act.
- ✓ The inclusion of the Act4Drin project in the GEF MedPartnership lessons learned experience notes to be disseminated by the GEF IW:LEARN Team.
- ✓ The showcasing of the Act4Drin project in a number of high impact events such as the closing GEF MedPartnership event, the kick-off GEF Drin project event, etc.
- ✓ The Act4Drin media channels, namely the website and facebook page, staying up and running.
- ✓ The dissemination of the project out outcomes to a list of 3500 relevant stakeholders from the Mediterranean region.

Safeguards

34. If not listed as a separate Project Component and described above, summarize the implementation of any required action related to social, environmental, or pest management safeguards

N/A

Additional Comments/Recommendations

**35. Use this space to provide any further comments or recommendations in relation to your project or
CEPF**

N/A

Additional Funding

36. Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of CEPF investment

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
MIO-ECSDE	A	\$ 10,000	in-kind contribution of personnel involvement in the implementation of the project activities.
KAWKA PRODUCTION	A	\$ 8,750	filming equipment rent: based on 25 days filming equipment rental cost; 25 days x 350 USD/day.
GWP-MED & GEF Drin project	B	\$ 16,000	6 Act4Drin partner NGOs received funding from the GEF Drin project to organize the Drin Day 2016 events as a direct impact of MIO-ECSDE's efforts to secure additional funding for enhanced outreach.
Total		\$ 34,750	

* Categorize the type of funding as:

- A *Project Co-Financing (other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project)*
- B *Grantee and Partner Leveraging (other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project)*
- C *Regional/Portfolio Leveraging (other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project)*

Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

Please include your full contact details below:

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