

Final
Report



Living Water Exchange Project: Promoting Replication of Good Practices for Nutrient Reduction and Joint Collaboration in Central & Eastern Europe

A UNDP/GEF Project

Final Evaluation Report

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Disclaimer

The content of this paper is the sole responsibility of the Consultant and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of UNDP.

A New Frontier Services Report for UNDP-GEF

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Glossary

BAP	Best Agricultural Practice
BMP	Best Management Practices
CE	Cost Effectiveness
CEE/CEEC	Central and Eastern Europe/ Central and Eastern European Countries
CGAP	Codes of Good Agriculture Practice
DIN	Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen
DREPR	Danube River Enterprise Pollution Reduction Project
DP	(LWE) Demonstration Project
DRP	Danube Regional Project
EECCA	Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GETF	Global Environment & Technology Foundation
GPNM	Global Partnership for Nutrient Management
ICPDR	International Commission for Protection of the Danube River
IW	International Waters
IW:LEARN	International Waters Learning Exchange Network
LF	Logical Framework
LWE	Living Waters Exchange
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MSP	Medium Size Project
N	Nitrogen
NR	Nutrient Reduction
NMP	Nutrient Management Plan
P	Phosphorus
PIR	Project Implementation Review
REC	Regional Environmental Center
THMs	Trihalomethanes
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. ABOUT THE LIVING WATER EXCHANGE PROJECT

The Living Water Exchange (LWE) Project was launched in 2008 as the next phase of the long-term commitment of GEF/UNDP to achieve environmental health and significant nutrient reduction in water resources across the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) regions. Implemented by GETF (Global Environment & Technology Foundation), the LWE project was designed to accelerate the replication of successful nutrient reduction projects by (1) identifying best nutrient reduction (NR) practices, (2) demonstrating successful replication strategies, and (3) disseminating and promoting best practices and replication strategies to practitioners and decision makers. Regarding *Specific Objectives*, the project is composed of three components guided by the following objectives: a) to consolidate, inventory (or “extract”) and critically review/assess the achievements/experience (in NR and multi-country cooperation) of GEF's action in the CEE and EECCA regions¹ in order to document good practices and provide recommendations for their replication and scaling up; b) to identify and demonstrate successful replication strategies; c) to enhance or “extrapolate” replication of good NR practices within the region and beyond (such as the Mediterranean and East Asian Seas), as well as their mainstreaming into multi- and bi-lateral donors’ strategies and programmes.

1.2. EVALUATION CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

This Final Evaluation was initiated by UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre as the GEF Implementing Agency for this project and it aims to provide managers with a comprehensive overall assessment of the project and with a strategy for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders. The purpose of the Evaluation is to: a) assess overall performance against the Project objectives as set out in Project Document and other related documents; b) assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Project; c) critically analyze the implementation and management arrangements of the Project; d) assess the sustainability of the Project’s interventions; e) list and document initial lessons concerning Project design, implementation and management; and f) assess the LWE Project’s relevance to national priorities. The final evaluation was carried out in line with international criteria and professional norms and standards), and included desk research, field visits in Albania and Moldova, a small number of other face to face interviews (at the project’s final meeting in Bratislava), and a significant stakeholder telephone interview programme, comprising in total more than 30 stakeholder interviews.

¹ Black Sea - Danube, Baltic Sea, Caspian Sea.

1.3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The project has experienced a number of challenges during its implementation, including the data collation work from GEF projects and the database development work proving to be more challenging than anticipated. However, significant project team commitment has seen the outputs delivered, and in this respect the LWE project represents an important milestone in chronicling GEF NR-relevant projects, and distilling best practice and best management practice.

Regarding the inventorying of GEF and World Bank projects, the project has identified 38 priority nutrient relevant projects from input from GEF leadership, of which the majority of NR projects that are recent or ongoing. Twelve Best Agricultural Practices (BAPs) on Nutrient Reduction were identified and grouped, and the project developed a list of eight BAPs that have a high potential impact for reducing nitrogen and phosphorous from agriculture. For each BAP project example, information about efficiency and options for Implementation in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are provided. The project's focus on systems of good practice represents added value in terms of seeking to accelerate replication, both within the Europe and CIS Region and in other parts of the world.

The project has performed well with respect to establishing partnerships with relevant stakeholders. This work has had a multifaceted approach with information sessions at key 'sectoral' and regional events, such as the ICPDR Donor Conference (which were used to reinforce the data gathering and data solicitation work from GEF projects), the mobilisation of local stakeholder groups around the demonstration projects, and the organisation of the peer2peer exchange workshops at the local level. The Peer-to-peer exchanges have been found to have been effective and appreciated by stakeholders interviewed, and represent a useful mechanism to build capacity to further replicate practices among local stakeholders.

At a local level, the Demonstration Projects (DPs) have recorded varying levels of success. Each of the demonstration projects completed the core physical work with a short period of time, and overcome in some cases appreciable challenges. Other successes with the DPs included strong local ownership and local mobilisation, significant increases in local awareness of the importance of nutrient reduction, complementary local dialogue and capacity building via the peer to peer exchanges, as well as co-financing levels being secured by the DPs that exceed the original project targets. Weaknesses included insufficient rigour with regard to nutrient monitoring in some DPs with a consequent reduction in their value as demonstration projects, some questions as to the wider strategic value of some of the DP choices², and a number of actions still outstanding to optimise DP impact and sustainability, in particular with regard to the Tirana DP where the current situation is simply not satisfactory. However, these actions can still be taken to increase impact and sustainability, and ironically the Tirana DP might yet provide the largest impact over time if remedial actions are taken within a clear development and maintenance plan for this demonstration project. Moreover, while a more rigorous local management of demonstration projects and strong

² It should however be pointed out that for the LWE project management selection of the demonstration sites was in part motivated by a desire to link to previous (or ongoing) larger projects. While this rationale does not answer the wider question of whether these locations offered optimal impact from a regional perspective, it should be kept in mind that this was the project rationale for DP selection.

monitoring would have helped increase linkages with other projects and wider impact to-date, it is also important to underline that a number of achievements have been recorded in this area, such as linkages made with larger projects (e.g. Serbia, Moldova) and increases in government interest (Albania, Moldova)³.

1.4. LESSONS LEARNED

As per the evaluation terms of reference, an important part of this evaluation is highlighting lessons learned and providing recommendations for the future. The LWE Project provides a series of important lessons that can serve UNDP and GEF well in future attempts to promote NR policies and practices in other parts of the globe. The LWE project team has done a good job in distilling some of these lessons, as for example communicated in the project's final technical report. Key lessons learned by the LWE project stakeholders include challenges of: 1) Securing project data with some GEF project managers and the importance face-to-face meetings; 2) Collecting data on nutrient/stress reduction should be done before GEF projects are completed and a path to identify opportunities for learning as countries assume responsibility should be developed upfront; 3) Developing cost/measure efficiency data should also be built into projects; and, 4) Developing a standard system to identify and collect nutrient reduction measures and data.

Returning to the Demonstration Projects, possibly most importantly of all is that the DPs have provided some good learning and insights for the future, not least in terms of showing that lower-cost NR interventions can be developed locally with reasonable amounts of funding. Most importantly of all, the process lessons from the DPs - including leveraging local ownership, co-financing potential and what the evaluator considers to be likely further options for cost-optimisation - mean that the DPs represent an excellent learning for further scaling and delivering high-impact NR interventions locally with existing for future follow up NR initiatives.

The project outcomes, in particular the LWE 'outputs' that are available online, will represent an important building block for the planned GEF/UNEP "Global Partnership for Nutrient Management (GPNM)" project. Through this project the outcome of the LWE will be taken up and further distributed and it will be ensured that the inventory forms the foundation of the policy tool box of policies, measures and financial instruments under this new project. The database and the associated GPNM Toolbox will reach far beyond the GEF IW portfolio to coastal communities in key nutrient "hot spots." Overall, the high rate of completion of project deliverables, the successes of the project despite a number of weaknesses, has meant that the evaluation has accorded a 'satisfactory' ranking to the LWE project.

1.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations set out in this report are based on the performance and learning of the project in order to: a) continuously develop some of the initial outputs of the LWE project; b) maximise the project legacy; and c) ensure that the project learning and results are reflected in, and

³ See section 6.1.2, page 31 for further details.

leveraged to the maximum, in follow-up projects. Regarding the Demonstration Projects, a number of recommendations are provided in the report with a view to ensuring optimal impact and sustainability from the DPs within the scope of this LWE project, in particular regarding the Tirana DP.

Regarding recommendations beyond the LWE project ('b' above), a first recommendation is that the GEF should consider how it can take up the LWE project recommendations regarding making data collation and reporting on nutrient reduction practices part of standard GEF reporting requirements, as well as taking nutrient reduction into account during project design and formulation, including the setting of specific targets. The evaluation thus endorses the recommendation made by the LWE project itself.

Secondly, while GEF's desire to re-orient its efforts and funding to nutrient reduction in other parts of the world is understandable, it is worth looking at the impact and sustainability of investments to-date. Despite the various successes of the LWE project, it is worth asking the question whether more should be done by GEF and on what basis it should seek to support existing NR work in the Europe and CIS region. As just one example, without further support, will the Ukraine Demonstration Project impact be maximised? The evaluation recommends that GEF and UNDP consider a follow-up programme for the CEE/EECCA region that would: a) map out outline strategies as to how NR objectives can be priorities in CEEC countries. As stated in the LWE project report, different countries and sub-regions can be distinguished, for example EU accession countries are being influenced by the EU Nitrates Directive. (Such outline strategies could include: i) current situation in the country; ii) Progress to-date and key needs (NR knowledge, capacity development, demonstration projects, funding etc.), iii) what is needed to address NR in the country (policy and legislative changes required, type of project-level intervention, and iv) possible NR take-up actors (e.g. existing programmes and actor) and funding sources. A second component – and an important one – would be to provide a technical assistance support in seeking take-up of these strategies. This could be done via a support facility of a small number of dedicated staff that could provide a flexible response capability to advance NR agendas across the CEEC countries through providing the support required at that point in time.

In terms of recommended actions to reinforce the LWE Project's 'online legacy', while the current online 'assets' created by the LWE project are an important step in documenting and making available online good practice, the work is only one part of the process in maximising the impact of such online assets. Further development work is recommended to refine and improve some of these outputs, and in particular, shifting the orientation to 'speak to' would be users and defining their specific needs⁴. Specific recommended actions could include a) a clear concept plan on what such a programme might look like, who would be the target groups, what their needs would be, and why they would use in particular such an online platform; b) a short online and/or telephone survey of target users to support the work of the previous bullet point; c) development of regional and thematic/sectoral short papers, explaining in jargon-free language, why and how nutrient reduction

⁴ For example, a local stakeholder involved in implementing a constructed wetland demonstration project will in some ways need different online messages, content and support compared with a civil servant working in a national ministry that is wondering whether nutrient levels are an issue in their country or region, and if yes whether they have a linkage to food security and water security.

work is important and can contribute to various policy objectives, papers that speak to different target groups in their own 'policy language' (for example, a short paper on how nutrient reduction relates to food security in the Pacific Region).

Another recommendation would be to explore the development of cost-effective low-level e-learning modules (perhaps not more than engaging PowerPoint presentations with a series of video clips). Such modules would increase the capacity of different target groups to progress their own NR agenda and interventions without relying on direct (and more costly) support on-the-ground. As an example, such modules, along with a more user-friendly portal, would allow: a) some capacity for local stakeholders involved in a demonstration project to implement their demonstration project with online support; b) capacity to support a Demonstration Project in building knowledge and capacity among new stakeholder groups as part of a scaling or replication effort; and c) some capacity for local stakeholders involved in a demonstration project to implement their demonstration project with online support.

Another recommendation is that UNDP and GEF should seek to leverage the potential of Demonstration Projects in a follow-up Programme, and specifically consider doing this in part via a Small Grants Programme. The Demonstration Projects, as mentioned earlier, have been as important for learning in terms of the process as much as the concrete actions. They have shown that significant improvements are possible in nutrient reduction at the local level without spending large amounts of money. Moreover, the experience of the DPs suggests that further value for money can be obtained by a) stronger focus on costs optimisation when designing DPs, b) building on the strong co-financing potential achieved in the LWE DPs, c) related to co-financing, systematic focus on optimising in-kind investment through voluntary construction and implementation labour from local would-be target groups and beneficiaries, and d) requesting follow-on replication actions and targets from beneficiary local region. If one removes most of the costs related to the DP managers/contractors, the costs of the DPs construction is reduced significantly. If various cost optimisation scenarios are envisaged (e.g. specific requirements of matching finance or in-kind contributions from local communities (e.g. some local farmers time for assisting in construction of composting platforms, barter arrangements etc.) there may well be the prospects to significantly reduce costs further.

Providing clear 'Do It Yourself' guides on simpler NR solutions, along with ideas on how to manage and reduce costs, could allow for a small grants programme involving clear leverage criteria for funds disbursement to achieve significant benefit as part of a follow-up programme. A small grants programme is likely to make an effort address NR in other parts of the globe more successful, as other regions and stakeholders will see the prospect of securing not only expertise and knowledge transfer but also concrete financial support. Such a grants programme should have highly targeted performance criteria and application conditions that leverage the learning from the LWE EPs (e.g. ensuring motivated project proposers/would-be local champions, high leverage and sustainability requirements etc.).

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of the Final Evaluation is to: a) assess overall performance against the Project objectives as set out in Project Document and other related documents; b) assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Project; c) critically analyze the implementation and management arrangements of the Project; d) assess the sustainability of the Project's interventions; e) list and document initial lessons concerning Project design, implementation and management; and f) assess project relevance to national priorities.

2.2. KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED

The evaluation assessed the following issues: the LWEE Project's concept and design⁵, the Project's implementation,⁶ project outputs, outcomes and impact, and the likely sustainability of project results⁷. The Evaluation Report presents recommendations and lessons of broader applicability for follow-up and future support of UNDP and/or the Governments.

2.3. METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

The final evaluation of the "Living Water Exchange project" was carried out in line with international criteria and professional norms and standards (as adopted by UNEG⁸). The evaluation was carried out via desk research, field visits to two of the four Demonstration Projects (DPs) in Albania and Moldova, a small number of other face to face interviews (at the project's final meeting in Bratislava), and a significant stakeholder telephone interview programme, altogether comprising more than 30 stakeholder interviews. Stakeholder interviews and document review have therefore been the principal means of collecting data on the relevance, performance and success of the project. In addition the project website including its database was assessed upon user friendliness, structure and content. The evaluation approach was participatory and consultative ensuring close engagement of the government counterparts, the Project Manager, the Steering Committee, the project team, and other key stakeholders.

⁵ This encompassed the problem being addressed by the Project and the project strategy, encompassing an assessment of the appropriateness of the objectives, planned outputs, activities and inputs as compared to cost-effective alternatives. The executing modality and managerial arrangements were also judged.

⁶ Including project implementation in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs and efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out, as well as the effectiveness of project management and project monitoring and backstopping by all parties (including use of adaptive management in project implementation).

⁷ Including an assessment of the achievement of the immediate objectives and the contribution to attaining the overall project objectives, as well as considering unexpected effects, and the extent to which project implementation has been inclusive of relevant stakeholders.

⁸ UNEG (UN Evaluation Group).

2.4 STRUCTURE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was structured in accordance with the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. It covers the issues set out in the Terms of Reference for this evaluation. Beyond desk research, the use of stakeholder interviews has been the primary evaluation approach for collection of evaluation evidence, reflecting in part that this project has had important emphasis on working across many areas and relying on local partners and target/beneficiary stakeholders (e.g. the Demonstration Projects), and the emphasis on experience sharing and capacity building activities (e.g. the peer to peer exchanges). Given that this is the terminal (final) evaluation, emphasis has been placed on trying to extract from the project's results and implementation experience, as well as seeking to provide some recommendations for the future.

3. THE PROJECT & ITS DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

3.1. PROJECT START AND ITS DURATION

The project funded by the GEF was launched in 2008 and implemented by GETF (Global Environment & Technology Foundation) from 29th November 2008 to 31st December 2010.

3.2. PROBLEMS THAT THE PROJECT SEEK TO ADDRESS

The “Living Water Exchange Project” addresses Nutrient Reduction Challenges. De-oxygenated “dead zones” in our waterways and oceans, where life is almost non-existent, are estimated at more than 500⁹ worldwide. There is widespread scientific agreement that changes in the global nitrogen cycle and increased nutrient loading, primarily caused by non-point-source pollution (i.e. agricultural activities and storm water runoff), are directly linked to these “dead zones” and other significant negative impacts on our water resources. These negative impacts include for example nuisance levels of algae and aquatic vegetation, increased treatment costs of drinking water (due to formation of disinfection by-products such as trihalo-methanes in drinking water, and taste and odour effects of algae), imbalance of aquatic species, and shifts in the structure of the food chain.

Numerous studies and projects in the CEE region have been carried out to directly address the reduction of point and nonpoint sources of nutrient pollution and to address the trans-boundary or national challenges present in the identified nutrient hotspots. Despite regulatory and legal enforcement of point sources nutrient pollution levels have remained high, necessitating that more be done to address nutrient pollution from non-point or diffuse source discharges. The Living Water Exchange: Promoting Nutrient Reduction Best Practices was therefore launched in December 2008, representing the next phase of the long-term commitment of GEF-UNDP to achieving environmental health and significant nutrient reduction in water resources across the CEE and EECCA regions.

The GEF International Waters (IW) programme - a global partnership among 178 countries, international institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector investing in trans-boundary water issues — has been promoting solutions to address increased nutrient releases and other “non-point-source” issues in CEE for more than 20 years. A wealth of experience is considered to exist regarding nutrient reduction best practices and lessons learned in the CEE region that needs to be replicated within the region and worldwide. However, these experiences have until now not been collected, analysed, summarised or replicated yet in a systematic way until now, and a key goal of the LWE project is to address this challenge.

⁹ Diaz, 2010.

3.3. IMMEDIATE AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

Regarding *overall development goals*, the LWE Project was designed to accelerate the replication of successful nutrient reduction projects by (1) identifying best nutrient reduction practices, (2) demonstrating successful replication strategies, and (3) disseminating and promoting best practices and replication strategies to practitioners and decision makers. Regarding *Specific Objectives*, the project is composed of three components guided by the following objectives:

- 1) To consolidate, inventory (or “extract”) and critically review/assess the achievements/experience (in nutrient reduction and multi-country cooperation) of GEF's action in the CEE and EECCA regions (Black Sea - Danube, Baltic Sea, Caspian Sea) to document the good practices and provide recommendation for their replication and scaling up;
- 2) To identify and demonstrate successful replication strategies;
- 3) To enhance or “extrapolate” replication of good nutrient reduction practices within the region and beyond (such as the Mediterranean and East Asian Seas), as well as their mainstreaming into multi- and bi-lateral donors' strategies and programs.

Regarding Beneficiary Countries, there are 15 beneficiary countries of the project, as set out in the table below.

<i>Overview LWE Project Countries</i>			
Albania	Georgia	Montenegro	Turkey
Azerbaijan	Iran	Russian Federation	Turkmenistan
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Kazakhstan	Serbia	Ukraine
Croatia	Moldova	Slovakia	

3.3.1. MAIN STAKEHOLDERS

GEF and UNDP worked in partnership with the Global Environment & Technology, Foundation (GETF), the Regional Environmental Centers (RECs) and the International Waters Learning Exchange Network (IW:LEARN) to initiate a GEF Medium Size Project (MSP) in order to inventory, assess and accelerate replication of nutrient reduction best practices. In addition to this core group of project promoter and implementing stakeholders, a second group of stakeholders has been other regional project partners including the Regional Environmental Centre (REC) for Central and Eastern Europe, the Regional Environmental Centre for Caucasus, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC), and Central Asia and Russia Environmental Network (CARNet). GETF worked with these regional organizations to identify and harvest good practices/lessons learned on what countries in their region, including national government, local government, NGOs and the private sector, are doing to address nutrient reduction issues. Project managers of previous GEF funded projects may be considered as a third stakeholder group, with these project managers being consulted in order to obtain project profiles and good practices for the inventory work. A fourth stakeholder groups had been those involved in the peer-to-peer exchanges and in the Demonstration Projects (DPs),

including representatives from national government ministries, mayoralities, national and international NGOs, associations/unions and research institutions as well as the EBRD, the ICPDR and the private sector.

3.3.2. EXPECTED RESULTS

The Logical framework sets out a series of objectives and expected outputs, which are set out in the table below.

LWE Project Logframe –Overview Objectives and Expected Outputs

Objectives	Outputs
To consolidate, inventory of (or “extract”) and critically review/assess the achievements/experience (in NR and multi-country cooperation) of GEF's action in the CEE and EECCA regions (Black Sea - Danube, Baltic Sea, Caspian Sea) to document the good practices and provide recommendation for their replication and scaling up	1a. Project information identified and captured 1b. Analysis of project information 1c. In-depth interviews and other experiences 1d. Good nutrient reduction practices criteria and categories developed
To identify and demonstrate successful replication strategies	2a. Selection of good nutrient reduction practices and lessons learned 2b. Selection of two countries for the site of the replication pilot projects 2c. Two replication pilot projects focused on agriculture practices and wetlands
To enhancing or “extrapolate” replication of good nutrient reduction practices within the region and beyond (such as the Mediterranean and East Asian Seas), as well as their mainstreaming into multi- and bi-lateral donors’ strategies and programs.	3a. Nutrient reduction good practices, lessons learned, and successful replication strategies summarized and disseminated via IW:LEARN, RBEC-COP, Water Wiki and Russian-English printed materials 3b. Project information disseminated at World Bank Regional Nutrient Reduction Conference 3c. Project information disseminated at IWC5 3d. Nutrient reduction good practices promoted through outreach, general, trade, national, regional and international media
Project components implemented effectively and efficiently	4a. Effective project Partnership, and oversight
Appropriate implementation of agreed monitoring and evaluation plan and subsequently completed evaluation of project based on project objectives and performance indicators	5a. Mid-Term Audit / 5b. Mid-term External Evaluation / 5.c Final Audit / 5d. Final External Evaluation

A small number of changes were made to the project design and objectives at a later stage, and this is summarised in the following section of the report.

4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1. PROJECT FORMULATION

The project was prepared in consultation with various stakeholders, as per GEF and UNDP procedures. Stakeholder feedback showed the project gestation process to have been particularly protracted, with the project concept document going through many iterations. It is understood that this was at least in part due to differing views regarding what the project should seek to achieve and what constituted the project's core added value.

During the project inception phase a project inception workshop was conducted with the full project team, as well as a number of other key stakeholders and partners, including co-financing partners and the UNDP-GEF Regional Coordinating Unit (RCU) in Bratislava. A fundamental objective of this workshop was to assist the project team to understand and take ownership of the project's goals and objectives, as well as finalize preparation of the project's first annual work plan on the basis of the project's Strategic Results Framework (SRF) matrix. The workshop programme included reviewing the SRF (indicators, means of verification, assumptions), and based on this moving to the finalisation of the Annual Work Plan (AWP). The workshop was also designed to: a) introduce project staff with the UNDP-GEF expanded team which that would support the project during its implementation (relevant OPS and RCU staff), b) detail the roles, support services and complementary responsibilities of OPS and RCU staff vis à vis the LWE project team; c) provide a detailed overview of UNDP-GEF reporting and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements (especially the annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs)) and UNDP project related budgetary planning, budget reviews, and mandatory budget re-phrasings. A Project Inception Report was prepared immediately following the Inception Workshop. It included a detailed Work Plan for Year I divided in quarterly time frames detailing the activities and progress indicators that guided implementation during the first year of the project.

4.1.1. IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

With possibly the benefit of hindsight, the implementation approach can be described as satisfactory. The project ran into a number of challenges and consequent delays, some of which might have been better anticipated, on the other hand these challenges provide valuable learning for UNDP and GEF for any future follow-up activities.

A project implementation review (PIR), required by GEF and UNDP, helped track and monitor project progress. This document further served for self-assessment and was completed on July 31, 2010. The implementation approach has proved to be too optimistic regarding the time and effort required to secure cooperation and feedback from project managers of completed GEF projects, but this is a valuable lesson for the future. There is also a risk that online dimensions also were not take sufficient account of who the target groups of the various online outputs are, what their needs are, and why

they would use this information, however it should be emphasised that this is a learning from the project design and core project assumptions, and not a criticism of the project implementation actors. Another area of challenge has been clarifying the level of support and customisation that could be expected by project stakeholders from IW:LEARN, in order to avoid frustration on both sides. Again, in hindsight, the project design and implementation approach may have been too vague regarding what scale of replication and take-up should be achieved, and what the expectations were with regard to national governments role in this process.

Having a US-based executing agency created some additional co-ordination challenges and costs that the project could have done without, as well as requiring GETF to get up to speed on what had been done in the project region previously. Against this, the project co-ordinator appears to have shown significant motivation levels, and deal with numerous challenges that were not of their making, while also bringing a fresh approach to the project. Having had a co-ordinator from within the region, for example from the Danube region, might have made project implementation easier in a number of respects, on the other hand it might have brought a risk of having a too Danube Region-centred approach and not picked up learning when working across regions. In general, the project stakeholders, with limited resources, have worked hard to solicit involvement from a wide range of stakeholders. Overall, the evaluation findings are that the implementation approach, while having some weaknesses and challenges, can be considered satisfactory.

4.1.2. ANALYSIS OF LFA (PROJECT LOGIC/STRATEGY/ INDICATORS)

The Project Logical framework is well structured and clearly provides objectives, outcomes, outputs, indicators and means of verification. The sequence of the three components is logical and the strategy consistent. However, in hindsight the project relied too much on the goodwill of project managers from completed GEF funded projects to achieve key outputs such as “1b) *Analysis of project information* and 1c) *in-depth interviews and other experiences*”. The assumption that practitioners and stakeholders will be interested is not satisfying and apparently lead to the assumption that this won’t cause any problems.

Indicators and means of verification are in general clear, although in some cases the indicators are too general, such as in the case of output “1a. Project Information identified and captured”: Comprehensive search and capture of GEF and non-GEF NR projects in Central and Eastern Europe regions. Such an indicator doesn’t facilitate learning from the implementation process and doesn’t provide for easy measuring of progress. There is also some imbalance between the project outputs with some encompassing very large work efforts, and other orienting on a single dissemination activity.

4.1.3. LESSONS FROM OTHER RELEVANT PROJECTS

As the aim of the project was to capture best practices and collect lessons learned from other projects the Living Water Exchange (LWE) Project drew from many other projects. In particular, the Danube Regional Project (UNDP/GEF) is a mayor predecessor project the implementing organisations drew lessons from.

At the project formulation stage, it might have been useful to consider the experience of other knowledge collation projects and consider their successes and challenges, with a view to identifying some of the challenges that the LWE project ran up against.

4.1.4. COUNTRY OWNERSHIP

Most of the countries involved have national and international legislation in place regarding Nutrient Reduction. A number of countries are in the EU accession phase, which is also driving policy and legislative development. The level of country ownership however cannot be easily assessed for this project as the involvement of national Ministries was only planned in the four demonstration project countries, however the regional focus of the project means that a number of core activities did not by nature have a specific country focus (e.g. activities such as developing project profiles, good practices and the database), nor was the replication effort focussed on scaling from local examples to country-wide take-up.

The Demonstration Projects generated significant local ownership within their respective regions, as did the peer to peer exchanges. The interest from the Albanian Government in organising an inter-ministerial discuss related to water issues also points to some level of country-level impact of the project.

4.1.5. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Overall, the LWE Project has been characterised by a very satisfactory level of stakeholder participation. In order to develop an inventory of nutrient reduction strategies and practices, a wide range of stakeholders had to be consulted. As mentioned above, the Demonstration Projects achieved significant stakeholder participation in their respective regions and generated significant local ownership. The Peer to Peer exchanges were well subscribed and also were a valuable platform to build capacity of local stakeholders and share experience and knowledge with experts from outside the regions. Stakeholder feedback during the evaluation also points to broad satisfaction with the level of stakeholder participation, and the degree to which some activities such as the Demonstration Projects have succeeded in changing mindsets.

4.1.6. REPLICATION APPROACH

The overall goals of the Living Water Exchange Project are to reduce stress from nutrients and build capacity at the country and farm level to replicate nutrient reduction best practices to improve water quality in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The Living Water Exchange Project therefore evaluated the inventoried practices to provide guidance and help prioritize practices that have demonstrated the most potential for positive impacts on water quality. These practices are replicable and scalable and can be linked or applied in a systematic fashion.

The projects and programmes reviewed laid the foundation for water quality improvements, development of a better documented and more accountable systems approach to BAPs in an adaptive management framework and are essential to achieving the dual goals of a viable farm economy and clean water.

Under the project, eight (8) primary BAPs have been prioritised from the project review work in terms of their (high) potential impact for reducing nitrogen and phosphorous from agriculture, and hence as recommended priority approaches for replication. Outline costs and benefit comments have also been provided, although a more detailed treatment of costs and benefits would have increased their value.

The partial change in the orientation of the Demonstration Projects towards demonstration NR actions and results on the ground reflected somewhat of a shift in replication effort from national-level country through capacity building and regional replication to locally-driven replication and take-up. This has made sense in terms of the scale of this project and the resources and time available to it, as well as the fact that some of the initial thinking seems to have supposed national replication from capacity development work (alone), the validity of which the evaluator would question.

The LWE Exchange peer-to-peer exchanges have been used to confirm a number of *pathways for replication* (i.e. strategies and drivers are meant that facilitate the acceleration of practice replication). These pathways comprise the following: a) continue to implement policies at country & local levels that incentivize changes in behaviour; b) promote cooperation among countries (ICPDR leadership supported by the GEF projects in the region); c) developing partnerships among farmers; and d) develop nutrient trading or burden sharing schemes to fund practice replication.

4.1.7. COST-EFFECTIVENESS

There were no large scale investments within this project and cost effectiveness, in terms of infrastructure-type investments. Overall, the LWE project developed realistic costs at the formulation stage. As mentioned elsewhere in this report the work on collating NR-relevant GEF and WB Projects, the development of the BAPs and the Best Management Practices, all hide significant time effort and tedious work that is often 'unseen' to the user or 'consumer' of such project outputs. This has required significant work effort beyond what was originally foreseen, in particular from GETF as well as at least some REC offices. The time contribution of many project stakeholders beyond what was foreseen has meant that the project was in some respects more cost-effective, given that greater work effort was delivered to UNDP and GEF for the same budgetary resources. However, this is of course not the ideal measurement of cost-effectiveness, and the challenges experienced should also be the starting point for reflection by GEF as whether this kind of information collation should be securing during project's lifetime, and comprise part of a project manager's responsibilities.

Beyond the co-financing arrangements for the LWE project at the outset, cost-effectiveness has also been increased by the mobilisation of local stakeholders in the Demonstration Projects, as well as in the co-financing performance of the DPs, which is a promising sign for a future scaling effort.

4.1.8. UNDP COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE

One of key advantages of having UNDP as implementing institution on board is the in-house expertise and experience in international water projects and programmes. In addition, UNDP is an international institution, not binding its partners to employ specific consultants from specific countries and the UN body has a strong management capacity and maintains strong relationships with a vast variety of actors on all tiers of government and civil society. Familiarity with GEF's history

of involvement in nutrient reduction, not to mention familiarity with work and experience from the Danube region, are specific comparative advantages with regard to the LWE project. UNDP's presence across the region, and its not political perception, are other sources of comparative advantage.

The work effort of all project stakeholders, and in particular the project co-ordinator GETF, in involving a wider range of stakeholders, was an important part in ensuring that UNDP's comparative advantage 'assets' were leveraged to the benefit of the LWE project. Two possible areas where UNDP's comparative advantage might have been further exploited are a) using UNDP to 'chase' up former GEF project managers when challenges were being experienced in securing GEF project-level data and feedback from them, and b) co-ordination with UNDP Country Offices (COs), where the evaluation field works suggests that more structured consultation of the UNDP Country Offices (e.g. in Albania) would have given greater awareness of UNDP/GEF activities or experience that might have brought some further improved the demonstration projects in these countries.

4.1.9. LINKAGES BETWEEN PROJECT AND OTHER INTERVENTIONS WITHIN THE SECTOR

The Living Water Exchange Project aligns with GEF 4's¹⁰ call for a move from a testing and demonstration mode to scaling-up of full operations in support of agreed incremental costs of reforms, investments, and management programs needed to reduce stress on trans-boundary freshwater and marine systems. The project is in alignment with GEF 4's increased emphasis on targeted experience sharing and learning among the new and existing GEF IW projects in the portfolio, peer-to-peer sharing among IW projects, development of knowledge management tools to capture good practices, and accelerated replication of good practices.

In addition, the project is aligned with GEF/C.27/13, *GEF Strategy to Enhance Engagement with the Private Sector*, by engaging the private industry in sectors related to nutrient reduction, building GEF-private sector partnerships, and by identifying and replicating/adapting successful non-grant financial instruments to finance new nutrient reduction projects that replicate successful nutrient reduction strategies and practices of GEF projects. In particular, the project conforms with Strategic Program 2: nutrient over-enrichment and oxygen depletion from land-based pollution of coastal waters in large marine ecosystems (LMEs) consistent with the Global program for Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from land based Activities (GPA).

The project also identified and disseminated good practices, lessons learned and innovative practices among non-GEF funded projects¹¹, while LWE's communications and knowledge management strategy also included disseminating good/innovative practices and lessons learned via platforms such as IW:LEARN, Water Wiki and via regional networks such as DELTAmerica. The LWE project's outreach strategy also included generating IW:LEARN (or UNDP/BRC) promotional articles based on

¹⁰ There are three GEF-4 approved Programs that are mentioned in the GEF document "Options for Enhanced Financial Support to Selected GEF-4 Programs" (GEF/C.35/10), considering Option C – the establishment of one new programmatic trust fund for the three selected Council endorsed Programs to be operated by the GEF for the remainder of GEF-4 (a) the Pacific Alliance for Sustainability (PAS), (b) the Strategic Program for Sustainable Forest Management in the Congo Basin (CBSP), and (c) Strategic Program in West Africa (SPWA).

¹¹ Sources of such good/innovative practice and learning included UNECE, the European Environment Agency (EEA), development agencies operating in CEE, national governments and civil society organisations.

project summaries and sending them to targeted trade, international, and national media and via other means. Through IW:LEARN lessons and good practices were shared across the CEE region. In addition, project partners/researchers include regional and local NGOs in all those regions.

4.1.10. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

As mentioned earlier, UNDP was the Implementing Agency in this GEF-funded Medium-Size Project while GETF acted as the Executing Agency, managing and coordinating the efforts of regional sub-contractor organizations and consultants. The Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), which has country and field offices in 16 countries and through them has access to decision-makers and stakeholders at all levels helped collect good practices, implemented the demonstration projects and helped disseminate the results of the project. Other regional project partners include Regional Environmental Centre for Caucasus, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC), and Central Asia and Russia Environmental Network (CARNet). GETF worked with these regional organizations to identify and harvest good practices/lessons learned on what countries in their region (including national government, local government, NGOs and the private sector) are doing to address nutrient reduction issues.

The Implementing Agency (IA): UNDP RBEC in Bratislava played a key role in the support and monitoring of the project. Specifically, support included Management oversight (project launching, participation in steering committee meetings, monitoring of implementation of annual and quarterly work plans, field visits, financial management and accountability, annual audit, budget revisions, etc.); and ensuring reporting and evaluation is undertaken - regular quarterly reporting, Annual Project Reports (PIR/APRs), independent evaluation (helping to contract an independent evaluator, mission planning and support), etc.

A *Project Steering and Coordination Committee (PSC)* under the Chairmanship of the UNDP Regional Technical Water Advisor or his representative, established and contained members of all key stakeholder groups including: UNDP, UNEP, World Bank, UNECE, IW:LEARN, EBRD, European Union, representative of a related GEF co-financed International Waters project (ICPDR), GETF, and the REC. The PSC periodically met (either quarterly or biannually) to review the project progress and agreed on strategic directions or possible revisions proposed by GETF or UNDP to increase the long-term impacts of the project. Regarding use of Technical Experts GETF recruited qualified and capable international and national staff in accordance with UNDP rules and regulations. GETF and its project partners (sub-contractors) - REC, REC-Caucasus, CAREC, and CARNet already had strong “in-house” knowledge and experience in aspects of the project and general experience of operating in the region.


The next section of the evaluation report considers the project implementation experience and results.

5. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

5.1. IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

The table below provides an overview of the core logical flow of the of the LWE Project work strands. Many of the steps were implemented concurrently by the project team:

Overview Core LWE Project Steps

	Step	Core Project Action
	Step 1	Inventory of GEF and World Bank projects
	Step 2	Identification of Best Management Practices (BMP) for nutrient reduction
	Step 3	Implementation of Demonstration Projects (including peer-to-peer exchanges)
	Step 4	Information Dissemination to Build Awareness and Ensure Effective Implementation

In general, the different activities were under the responsibility of different actors as explained in the previous section of this report. The key approach to building capacity for the demonstrations to ensure project sustainability and replication was through peer-to-peer exchanges. This turned out to be a very fruitful approach. The GEF and UNDP also required the completion of a project implementation review (PIR) document to help track and monitor project progress, which served as a self-assessment and was completed on July 31, 2010.

5.2. THE LF USED DURING IMPLEMENTATION AS A MANAGEMENT AND M&E TOOL

The Logical Framework (LF) and especially the PRODOC describe the implementation steps and specific activities, specific outputs, objectively verifiable indicators, assumptions and the implementation timeframe.

The LF has continued to be used during project implementation, for example during project progress presentations and in PSC meetings. This allowed the project team to see where some of the project assumptions, such as those regarding obtaining NR-related project activities, were not holding up, and to adapt in order to address such issues.

The most important change in the project was to implement four demonstration projects and not two as initially foreseen, for a number of reasons including a) funding possibilities based on the size, scope and quality of DP proposals against available funding, b) the fact that four DPs would allow greater scope to demonstrate NR results on the ground, and promote capacity building and replication in the countries and the region. Relate to the above was the decision to orient Demonstration Projects more on demonstrating NR and less on national capacity building.

5.3. EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS ESTABLISHED WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

The project has performed well with respect to establishing partnerships with relevant stakeholders. This work has had a multifaceted approach with information sessions at key 'sectoral' and regional events, such as the ICPDR Donor Conference (which were used to reinforce the data gathering and data solicitation work from GEF projects), the mobilisation of local stakeholder groups around the demonstration projects, and the organisation of the peer to peer exchange workshops at the local level. This work has also involved dissemination and sharing of project output and project learning, which will of course continue beyond the duration of the project.

The wide range of contact with local stakeholders and the inclusive approach of the project co-ordination team on involving and mobilising contributions from local and regional stakeholders have facilitated contact and collaboration with local and regional stakeholders, while the incorporation of representatives of a large number of relevant regional organisations and sectoral actors in the Project Steering Committee has also served to facilitate building project-level partnerships and alliances.

Some of the project work has also led to new impetus at other levels, for example the Albanian Ministry of Environment's interest in convening a sub-regional meeting of environment Ministers from neighbouring countries to discuss policy issues related to water quality. The work on the online dimension to the project, and the project co-ordinator's work to initiate a Community of Practice, will hopefully serve as some examples of how this work can be leveraged beyond the lifetime of the LWE project.

5.4. FEEDBACK FROM M&E ACTIVITIES USED FOR ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

As all interventions, also the LWE project faced several challenges throughout the implementation phase, which required some adaptation:

- One challenge experienced, as mentioned earlier, was obtaining information from previous GEF projects. A part solution was found in applying a more specific and aggressive outreach to project managers, country representatives and others in the region in order to obtain the desired data, and in particular investing greater effort in face-to-face dialogue at meetings (e.g. ICPDR Donor Conference) established personal relationships with key GEF project managers in the region and worldwide.
- Another challenge experienced was differing levels of understanding (and expectation) between some of the project stakeholders and IW:LEARN staff as to the degree of support that could be provided via IW:LEARN, and the level of customisation that could be expected with regard to specific online project. Complete solutions to this were not easily available (e.g. no increased budget resources were available), and require numerous project stakeholders and IW:LEARN to make an extra time investment and 'go the extra mile'.
- Regarding project duration, it was decided to extend the project for three months, in order to facilitate a more robust implementation of the peer-to-peer exchanges and development of a final nutrient reduction report.

- Other challenges included the non-availability of some contractors to carry out work foreseen in the project. This required for example replacement of the original contractor for work on the BAPs, including the engagement of the NGO The Water Stewardship.

Overall, the project implementation team's performance has been satisfactory, and has dealt with challenges along the way, as well as coping with a number of challenges outside of the direct control of the project. In particular, the project co-ordination team deserves praise for 'staying the course' through these challenges, in particular the tedious nature of some of the work in reviewing project and good practice profiles and reviewing database content.

5.5. FINANCIAL PLANNING

The project documents clearly outline the particular budget foreseen for each activity. The amounts are realistic and appropriate with regards to the expected outcomes. As the project was focusing on information capturing, analysing, sharing and disseminating, there were no very large expenditure items (e.g. infrastructural development).

At the end of the Q2 2010, the project reported a total disbursement of \$1,886,386 out of the total budget of \$2,374,662. The PIR reported that budgeting had stayed on track consistent with the level of effort needed to implement specific tasks, and anticipated that expenditure required for travel and execution required for the peer-to-peer exchanges will ensure that the remainder of the budget would be spent by project termination.

5.6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The project developed a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. While the initial project plan included provision for a Mid-Term evaluation, it was decided not to carry out an MTE. A Project Implementation Review (PIR) was carried out in 2010, which recorded a rating of 'satisfactory' progress, with the LWE project deemed to have in general met the deliverable targets set out in the annual work plans approved by the Project Steering Committee. The PIR did signal delays in a few deliverables, in particular the project and practices inventory, owing to the need for further analysis and the database of practices due to several changes in the implementation team at IW:LEARN.

The 2010 Project Implementation Review has however proved some over-optimistic in anticipating that all project activities could be finalized by end of 2010, with finalization work continuing into Q2 2011. A positive feature of the project's implementation has been the role of the Project Steering Committee, which have been significantly involved in the project's implementation and, from the perspective of the project coordinator, have been responsive and constructive in their feedback. In this respect Project Steering Committee meetings have played an important part in the overall monitoring work within the project.

5.7. EXECUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

The LWE project hired a number of external experts to implement the project. Due to close attention paid to the quality of external consultants, the 3 components of the project had been satisfactorily

delivered. This was especially visible with the categorisation of good practices. The contribution of the staff from Water Stewardship, Inc. (NGO) was perceived by a number of stakeholders as very valuable to the project. This concurs with the evaluator's assessment of that contractor's contribution, and the recruitment of this contract has been one of the value-adding actions of GETF in the project, and allowed recovery from the delay experienced due to the lack of availability of the initially foreseen sub-contractor.

Some challenges did occur in the development of the IT and online dimension of LWE 'products', causing some frustration to all concerned. Some of these challenges, such as challenges in obtaining information from GEF Project Managers, some disruption due to internal staff changes in IW:LEARN might have been better anticipated to some extent, but another key challenge was that the remit of the information collation kept expanding which created additional work for IW:LEARN. It is important that UNDP and GEF take the learning from this, which would include a) the need to communicate expectations and service levels (including what level of customisation is feasible), b) the need to assess the work load and a realistic resourcing and timeframe for this service.

The work on collating NR-relevant GEF and WB Projects, the development of the BAPs and the Best Management Practices, all hide significant time effort and tedious work that is often 'unseen' to the user or 'consumer' of such project outputs. Securing, collating data for new databases is often an undertaking fraught with challenges, not least when one does not own the sources of data provision. Moreover, when one is confronted with varying levels of cooperation and support from information providers, and this is reflected in the project data provided, this drives up the work effort to get to some level of standardised information. Coming after this is the challenge to review the data and ensure that this reflects the NR dimension that is required. All of this required significant work effort on the part of GETF, and other project stakeholders (e.g. REC offices, IW:LEARN), beyond that which was foreseen, and was indicative of the wider sense of stakeholder commitment to the project observed by the evaluator during the stakeholder consultation programme.

5.8. MANAGEMENT BY THE UNDP COUNTRY OFFICE

As this was a regional project, UNDP RBEC in Bratislava, Implementing Agency (IA,) played a key role in the support and monitoring of the project. Specifically, as mentioned earlier, included general management oversight and ensuring reporting and evaluation was undertaken. Overall, stakeholder feedback received shows a perception that UNDP RBEC played a persistent and sometimes vigorous role in ensuring that the project met its objectives and that solutions were found to challenges encountered along the way.

UNDP country offices were involved on an ad-hoc basis, with regard to specific local and national events, for example a representative from UNDP CO in Albania participated at the experts meeting organised in Tirana. The field work visit programme to the demonstration projects in Albania and Moldova revealed some dissatisfaction at UNDP CO in Albania regarding the level of their prior consultation, in particular with regard to prior GEF experience in wetlands in Albania and to the choice of Tirana for the Demonstration Project and the impact and value of this DP. In Moldova, the evaluation wonders whether more consultation with the UNDP Country Office might have allowed greater incorporate of the lessons from the APCCP project in a more systematic sense, as well as

questioning whether greater value for LWE project budgets might have been obtained from co-financing a DP in another CEE country.

5.9. COORDINATION AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES

As mentioned earlier, coordination and operational issues have included challenges with regard to the willingness of the former GEF project managers to spend time on sharing information, challenges in progress speeds and resources for the development of the online LWE products, and some challenges in finalising some of these products.

The next section of the project evaluation report looks at the results obtained by the LWE project and provides an assessment of same.

6. RESULTS

6.1. ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVES

This section of the project evaluation report looks at the results obtained by the LWE project and considers the results and the attainment of project objectives.

6.1.1. COMPONENT 1 - IDENTIFICATION, CAPTURE, ANALYSIS & SUMMMARISATION OF NR BEST PRACTICES

Under Component 1 of the LWE project, all of the outputs have been completed.

Overview Target Outputs and Outcomes – Component 3

Outputs	Status	Outcome/Impact
1a. Project information identified and captured	Complete	38 NR relevant projects captured
1b. Analysis of project information	Complete	23 interviews completed, plus face-to-face meetings with selected GEF project managers
1c. In-depth interviews and other experiences	Complete	See also above, outreach to GEF Project Managers complete
1d. Good NR practices criteria and categories developed	Complete	Criteria developed for good NR Practices, 20 categories developed

Under the first step of the process (*Inventorizing of GEF and World Bank projects*) the project has identified 38 priority nutrient relevant projects from input from GEF leadership, of which the majority of NR projects that are recent or ongoing. Regarding geographical location, more than 75% of these 38 projects (30 projects) are/were located in the Danube-Black Sea region, and only 1 project from each of Central Asia, Baltic region, and Prespa Lakes regions.

Regarding the identification of *Best Management Practices (BMPs)* for nutrient reduction, this process involved the following steps: a) developing categories of nutrient pressures and measures to identify general challenges and solutions in the region; b) developing a questionnaire to send to project managers and other country representatives to gather nutrient reduction best practices and other critical project information; c) engaging GEF project managers and other country representatives to provide the information in the questionnaire; d) researching other key project information through various web sites and project reports and engaging key stakeholders; e) drafting two pagers summarizing practices for specific projects; f) developing a database of projects and practices working with IW:LEARN; and g) evaluating these practices to prioritize them for scaling-up and replication.

The Living Water Exchange project team developed a basic definition of what a BAP is and not is, defining a BAP as “*the best, most appropriate practices can be defined as any management systems, processes and technologies that have a positive and/or beneficial impact on the environment, and a quantifiable reduction in nutrients. These practices are not based on static standards but continuous improvements*”. Twelve BAPs for Nutrient Reduction were identified and grouped, and the project developed a list of eight BAPs that have a high potential impact for reducing nitrogen and phosphorous from agriculture (see table below). For each BAP project example, information about efficiency and options for implementation in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are provided.

LWE Best Agricultural Practices	
1. Riparian Buffers	5. Wetland Restoration/Creation
2. Nutrient Management	6. Erosion Control & Conservation Tillage (Residue Management)
3. Manure Management	7. Grazing Management
4. Ecological/ Organic Production Systems	8. Cover Crops

The above LWE project outputs represents an important milestone in chronicling GEF NR-relevant projects, and distilling best practice and best management practice and making available for third party use. The fact that these outputs will be available online comprises a valuable LWE project legacy going forward. However, what is less clear is which target groups that these knowledge products are aimed at – one has the impression that they are primarily targeted at expert practitioners/stakeholders and those building their knowledge in nutrient reduction. One weakness is that the overall contextual look and feel of the only section in IW:LEARN is rather static and that the visual mix can be improved, issue which also have been raised in the LWE Project final report. These issues are likely to become more important should UNDP and GEF intend to use the online IW:LEARN LWE Project legacy as an online basis for a larger-scale follow-up (this is discussed in the recommendations in the report).

6.1.2. COMPONENT 2 - DEMONSTRATION OF SUCCESSFUL NR REPLICATION STRATEGIES

Under component two all of the outputs have been delivered (with the major change that four demonstration projects were organised instead of the two initially foreseen).

Overview Target Outputs and Outcomes – Component 3

Outputs	Status	Outcome/Impact
2a. Selection of good nutrient reduction practices and lessons learned	COMPLETED	138 NR practices identified and reviewed
2b. Selection of two countries for the site of the replication pilot projects	COMPLETED	Four demonstration sites selected following international Call for Proposals
2c. Two replication pilot projects focused on agriculture practices and	COMPLETED	Four demonstration projects (DPs) implemented

Outputs	Status	Outcome/Impact
wetlands		(centred on low cost NR intervention strategies) One Peer-to-Peer exchange held at each of the 4 DP sites, creating new commitments to build capacity, replicate projects, provide further co-financing etc.

Regarding the LWE **demonstration projects**, this component of the project was intended to highlight a) “on-the-ground” nutrient reduction best practices that have a real impact on reducing stress and improving water quality; b) low cost interventions at the community level that can show a solid opportunity for replication and scalability; c) the importance of engaging the community and farmers to building awareness regarding nutrient management, practices and potential for ecological approaches to help yield as well as improve the environment; d) building capacity at the government and farm levels – through peer-to-peer exchanges – to replicate such practices and promote cooperation, and e) linking to other GEF investments in the region to learn from and replicate their experiences.

On the positive side, each of the demonstration projects completed the core physical work at the heart of the respective demonstration projects. In Albania, the wetland construction was completed (as well as surrounding buffer zone), while in Serbia some 10,000 fir saplings and 300 birch trees were planted in the Rasina river catchment area and around Lake Celije respectively to create a buffer zone, as well as creation of a biological filter at the river in-flow to the lake. In Moldova the composting platform was completed and in the Ukraine the riparian buffers were put in place. Furthermore, in the case of Albania and Ukraine, significant obstacles had to be overcome to secure these results – in Albania hostility and suspicion from local residents required support from the municipal authorities and police intervention, while in the Ukraine a significant communication and buy-in process was required to create sufficient support from local citizens. Another positive dimension is that the physical installation/construct works entailed in the demonstration projects were all completed in a relatively short period, due in part to the short timeframe for implementing the DPs.

Other positive features of the demonstration projects as the engendering of strong local stakeholder support. In Moldova, the local mayoral office (in particular the deputy mayor) threw his support behind the project and became a key project champion, while in Tirana the municipality supported the project against unenthusiastic local residents. A further promising aspect of the DPs was the co-financing, which exceeded project targets, and which all responsible stakeholders, both at the project-level and at the local level, should take credit. Another positive feature is the project awareness-raising and capacity building activities carried out in each of the DP areas, which have contributed to an appreciate shift in awareness (and sometimes significant shifts in awareness), with attendant increases in local ownership. This work appears to have been particularly successful in Moldova and in Ukraine. In Albania, this work has led to shifting attitudes at the municipal government level, with the prospect for further impact at the national level should the planned sub-regional conference take place, however the political stand-off at the national level has significantly reduced the scope for political impact of the project during the past year and is something that was of course outside of the control of the Demonstration Project.

Despite the successes the desk research, site visits and stakeholder interview programme also point to a number of shortcomings of the Demonstration Projects¹². In Albania, stakeholder interviews suggested that many of the stakeholders concluded that the NR result of such a DP would have been more significant in a much smaller municipality, with REC Albania commenting that it is careful about providing grant financing for projects in Tirana, as sustainability tends to be a challenge unless the project is very large. (Regarding the location, it should be pointed out the site chosen was initially clear of housing, although greater consideration could have been given to the risks that land adjacent to the river was the focus of aggressive illegal building).

The project rationale for selection of the Demonstration Project sites was in part driven by a) a desire to link to previous (or ongoing) larger projects¹³ and b) demonstrate through their experience low cost interventions. However, the evaluation field work and stakeholder consultation suggests that the DPs could have achieved more in this respect. In Albania, for example, the choice of Tirana as the site location for a demonstration project does not seem to have been discussed within the context of a structured impact statement about what the project should achieve¹⁴. At least one other site was considered near the coast, but on has the impression of choice of Tirana was in part governed by convenience, in that it was where staff from the project implementer were located. No doubt, it had the significant advantage that it was in the capital city and offered potential visibility effects and awareness-raising potential (e.g. to government stakeholders, political leaders and national media) that would most likely not be available to the same extent elsewhere. However, the huge existing pollution inflows into the river do not seem to have been taken sufficiently into account, in terms of how one would isolate and showcase the effect of the wetland constructed. On top of this, no pre-site monitoring of nutrient inflows into the river in that area were taken so the pre-project baseline was never established, while monitoring carried out afterwards was only carried out once and not at regular intervals. Thus, from a pure demonstration perspective, the site right now does not offer a credible story based on empirical evidence, simply a view on what a constructed wetland looks like and that there were some nutrient reduction levels achieved in the months following the construction of the wetland.

The rationale for the selection of the Demonstration Projects, as put forward by the project, has also not been completely clear, even taking account of the project rationale. The evaluation desk research and analysis suggested for example that the Krusevac DP in Serbia has been under the shadow of the much larger ACP-funded agricultural DREPR (Danube River Enterprise Pollution Reduction) project, which has financed similar projects, and leads one to question the strategic added value of this project despite its successful outcomes on the ground. The project management has argued that this was to connect the previous GEF investments with the LWE demonstrations, and a desire to leverage and replicate the larger DREPR project's experiences¹⁵. However, notwithstanding the impressive

¹² The evaluator can comment more authoritatively on the Albania and Moldova demonstration projects, given that these were included in the field programme, findings with regard to the Serbia and Ukraine demonstration projects are based on desk research and telephone interviews.

¹³ Given the importance for the GEF of seeing that its investments and practice can be replicated, or result in further capacity-building for practice adoption at the local, country and regional level.

¹⁴ The UNDP CO in Tirana also complained of lack of sufficient prior consultation regarding the project, in particular checking experience with the GEF small grants programme.

¹⁵ For example, the DREPR project's development of Code of Good Agricultural Practices was used by the LWE project team as an input for the Krusevac Demonstration Project effort.

mobilisation of resources so create the wetland in a very short space of time, one can question the added value of this DP in Serbia compared to what might have been done elsewhere. Some stakeholder feedback for example, while emphasising that the Krusevac had been a well implemented project, also pointed out that it has attracted little visibility outside of the area and was not well known in other parts of Serbia.

In Moldova, the World Bank supported APCP (Agricultural Pollution Control Project) had a significant manure management component, with this component having financed a number of composting platforms. Under the national Ecological Fund a number of composting platforms are being financed, as part of a follow-up and scaling of APCP's experience. This includes a much larger one in the neighbouring village to the Slobozia Mare DP that will be shared by two villages. This raises the question of whether it might have been more valuable to conduct a DP in another country. It should be emphasized that this is not to question the value of the results of the Moldovan DP per se (and in particular to the local community in Slobozia Mare), rather to raise the question of whether it would have been more valuable to implement a DP in another country in terms of the potential 'demonstration return', in particular as implementation weaknesses in some LWE DP cases appear to have reduced the testing and demonstration value of some of the DPs. As in Tirana, the monitoring approach to the Slobozia Mare project leaves room for improvement. The mayoral office states that it cannot gauge what was the exact impact of the composting platform in reducing pollution, although following discussions during the field visit REC Moldova has undertaken to pursue the issue of NR monitoring.

As mentioned above, the issue of whether the 'demonstration value and return' should be interpreted in the context that for the LWE project management selection of the demonstration sites was motivated by the objective of a) linking the DPs to previous (or ongoing) larger projects and b) demonstrating through their experience low cost interventions. This is a valid point, although it does not entirely address the question of whether more impact could have been secured in other countries where such larger projects had not taken place.

In terms of making linkages to other larger projects, the field work and stakeholder consultation programme has shown strong appreciation for the **peer to peer exchange events** and shown some linkages with the larger programmes, and thus part of this project objective can be considered as having been achieved. However, it is not clear that linkages to larger projects have been fully leveraged. Moreover, the lack of sufficiently rigorous local management and monitoring in some of the demonstration sites has reduced their potential impact in terms of demonstrating cost-effectiveness value, in particular in Albania and to a lesser extent in Moldova. However, there is scope to remedy this to a significant extent, and recommendations on such issues as improving monitoring and follow-up on the demonstration projects are provided to this end later in Section 7 of this report.

While a more rigorous local management of demonstration projects and strong monitoring would have helped increase linkages with other projects and wider impact to-date, it is also important to underline that a number of achievements have been recorded in this area. In both Albania and Moldova, for example, local government has shown interest in further dialogue and in replicate practices was significant, and in Albania addressing the current weaknesses in the demonstration project will likely further increase the positive impact of the project on government interest levels. Another example of a positive linkage is in Serbia where the project was linked to a large Serbia

regional nutrient reduction conference, where six of the ten WB projects and a further two GEF projects attended the conference and shared experiences¹⁶.

The LWE project considered that the overall findings from the demonstration projects can help facilitate replication, and identified a number of learnings from the DPs' implementation experience (see later report section on lessons learned). This is discussed later in this chapter (Section 6.4.)

6.1.3. COMPONENT 3 - DISSEMINATION & PROMOTING OF NR BEST PRACTICES, LESSONS LEARNED AND SUCCESSFUL NR REPLICATION STRATEGIES

Under component three all of the project outcomes have been delivered.

Overview Target Outputs and Outcomes – Component 3

Outputs	Status	Outcome/Impact
3a. NR good practices, lessons learned, and successful replication strategies summarized and disseminated via IW:LEARN, RBEC-COP, Water Wiki & Russian-English printed materials	COMPLETE	LWE project website completed , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of practices from GEF Projects • Online display of all core project outputs (DPs, BAPs etc)
3b. Project information disseminated at World Bank Regional Nutrient Reduction Conference	COMPLETE	LWE project and results presented at the GEF/WB Danube River Enterprise Pollution Reduction project regional conference (Oct 2010) in Belgrade. Promoting practice take-up among other GEF projects
3c. Project information disseminated at IWC5	IWC plenary & Workshop Complete	IWC plenary and work shop held to discuss information needs and interest in cooperation and replication with other GEF project managers from CEEC

Again, completion on LWE Project outcomes is high. Dissemination has been ongoing, although some core target dissemination platforms such as WaterWiki appear to only feature very basic information on the project.

However, the evaluator has some concerns about the project website, as alluded to earlier in this section. The project pages on the IW:LEARN portal are very static and not very enticing to the reader. The style is more in the way of an online document of all project outputs, but little in the way of contextual introduction, explanation of the different types of information available, nor how different types of visitor can make the most of the online visit.

¹⁶ Another example is the Anatolia Watershed project in Turkey, which provided specific technology information to the Serbia DREPR.

As an example, regarding component/objective 3, where one of the indicators includes a yardstick that recognition is given to persons behind good practices – the current look and structure of the website does not make it possible to maximise the impact of the human dimension and effort behind NR good practice and success stories. The evaluator has serious reservations if this website can serve can maximise GEF support and help for future follow-ups, in particular in other regions of the world.

It is noted that the project stakeholders have also highlighted the shortcomings of the website in the project final report. This to some extent seems to reflect the goal of the project which was to identify, collate, and profile NR good practice and place online, a somewhat content push-focussed approach – this is not surprising in many respects, as the project’s mandate was not to develop the platform for a future follow-up initiative and there was not a framework as to how GEF would address nutrient reduction challenges and work in other parts of the world. However, this reflection process does now need to happen, in order to maximise the impact and contribution of the LWE online results. Returning the example above, developing capability to centre the online portal around users and user-groups, for exempling highlight persons with a ‘NR success story to tell’, would be a logical next step in building upon the ground work of the LWE project, as well as being consistent with other efforts such as that to develop a community of practice¹⁷.

6.2. SUSTAINABILITY

The LWE project’s implementation experience has underlined how the various countries involved in the project are at differing stages of readiness and capacity to implement nutrient reduction strategies. In addition to varying development stages, other key factors come to bear such as whether CEEC countries are pursuing accession to the EU and the implications on adopting water and NR-related aspects of the *acquis communautaire*.

LWE Inventory, Systems of practices and recommended BAPs

The website, inventory, systems of practices and the recommended eight practices, the database and the analysis of the best practices will remain fully available beyond the duration of this project. The inventory of nutrient reduction projects and best practices consist of 38 nutrient relevant projects implementing 138 discrete nutrient reduction best practices all of which are accessible via the project website <http://nutrient-bestpractices.iwlearn.org>. Also online available are 14 two-page summaries that summarize the key elements of each project, the nutrient best practices developed and the outcomes.

Moreover, the above will represent an important building block for the planned GEF/UNEP “Global Partnership for Nutrient Management (GPNM)” project. Through this project the outcome of the LWE will be taken up and further distributed and it will be ensured that the inventory forms the foundation of the policy tool box of policies, measures and financial instruments under this new project. The database and the associated GPNM Toolbox will reach far beyond the GEF IW portfolio

¹⁷ The upcoming nutrient management community of practice should be highlighted as one of the additional ways that IW:LEARN can ensure engagement with stakeholders and that the content can be made more dynamic, with the reinforced interaction and dynamism that a well working community of practice could offer.

to coastal communities in key nutrient “hot spots.” On another level, the outcomes and products of the LWE project are intended to contribute to meeting GEF objectives in the region and that nutrient reduction best practices are replicated. To this end the project exit strategy foresees providing suggestions regarding how countries can best continue to build capacity among their authorities to replicate the most effective and cost efficient nutrient reduction best practices.

At one level, the fact that the knowledge ‘products’ (Project Profiles, Best Agricultural Practices, Best Management Practices) of the LWE Project are online and hence available beyond the duration of the project, leaves a clear project legacy, as intended by the project. However, if the objective is how to maximise this legacy – and to further build on it – a number of reflection questions should be considered by UNDP and GEF. It is likely that significant more development, presentation and structure working is needed in order to optimise the value of this work for the wider CEEC region, and in particular other parts of the world. To maximise sustained impact, we recommend that future initiatives need to focus more on considering how potential relevant target groups across the globe can derive maximum benefit from the project, and further increase the LWE project legacy. Recommendations are provided to this effect in the report section on recommendations. These recommendations should be seen as complementing those made by the LWE project in its Working Paper on LWE Products Sustainability¹⁸, which provides excellent replications in terms of the online project outputs and the DPs.

Capacity Building

At the local level, the LWE project, through peer-to-peer exchanges as the key approach to building capacity at the demonstration sites, intended to ensure sustainability and readiness for replication, and have been an important feature of project work on the ground. Such exchanges have created their own momentum but one cannot attach misplaced expectations to what are once-off events.

Such peer to peer exchange could be further developed in a number of ways within the framework of follow-up initiatives. One option to explore could include incorporating a train-the-trainer dimension to provide local stakeholders with the expert to act as a resource point as well as a accelerator of further take-up in other regions. Another option could be using technology and online support in order to make available such experience and exchange on a continuous base to NR project actors working on the ground. Recommendations are made later in the report to this effect.

Demonstration Projects

At a local level, the Demonstration Projects have recorded varying levels of success. Regarding sustainability, sustainability prospects for the Slobozia Mare DP in Moldova are strong. Firstly, the local mayoral office and the Ecological Counselling Center of Cahul will maintain the composting platform pad, while the mayorality is also considering what the best long-term management option for the platform might be. A long-term solution to transport needs to be found, and could come from the municipal waste management company, while a local grouping of farmers might be another option (as has been the case with the APCP project). A clear system for delivery of compost

¹⁸ ‘Exit Strategy of Possible Approaches for Product Sustainability’ (document version of 4th February, 2011).

to manure providers also needs to be hammered out, and this could come as part of Service Level Agreement (SLA). For all of the above issues, a complete experience sharing with the APCP project should take place if this has not happened already. REC Moldova has for example received funding to replicate similar manure management approaches in Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova, which can enhance the replication of good practices.

For the Krusevac DP in Serbia, sustainability prospects also look strong. One positive aspect is that the project team considers that simple and low cost maintenance of the area could be carried out by the local population, while local reed harvesting can provide a 'product' for both building material (e.g. roofing) and a source of renewable fuel. Secondly, further financing may be available from the Dutch Embassy, and if this is the case it is important that these funds should not be used to finance maintenance or other activities that can be 'mainstreamed' into the local community. Given the remote location of the DP, it is less likely that the project will have an important impact at national level, also given the much larger WB-supported APCP project.

For the Ukraine DP in Zakarpattya Oblast, local ownership of what has been carried out looks strong, and could be the basis for replication in other areas. However, maximising sustained impact and catalysing further change will require some changes in legislation in order to make it mandatory to create a buffer system. Not only is funding not available for this work, but it is also difficult to cost such work as it would require changes in land ownership. A second area where policy and legislative action is needed is change national legislation to require producers to measure and report on nutrient contents in food produce – as this is not currently mandatory, there is no incentive for farmers to make an investment in switching to more environmentally safe produce.

Sustainability prospects for the Tirana demonstration project are not satisfactory, and this situation needs to be remedied. While the site has not been visited during the field visit¹⁹, the current situation suggests a clear need to secure the site in order to avoid (or reduce) risks from vandalism or threats due to some third party seeking to appropriate the terrain for construction of dwelling, while signage and information panels appropriate to a Demonstration Project need to be installed. If the site is secured, a maintenance plan put in place, a comprehensive storyboard is constructed to explain the project to visitors, a nutrient monitoring plan is put in place, and a marketing and dissemination and visits programme is put in place, then the site can still perform a valuable function. The recommendations section of the report contains specific recommendations on the above.

The performance of the Regional Environment Centres (RECs) appears to have been somewhat mixed with regard to the demonstration projects. In addition to carrying out the local selection process from application DP promoters, they have in some cases brought value through local knowledge and identifying experienced stakeholders. However, there has been a lack of rigour in their management of selected demonstration projects (e.g. Albania), and insufficient management and follow to ensure that the demonstration aspects of the DPs were being maximised.

The most important learning from the DPs may have been unforeseen and is probably the process of how the results achieved were secured. The demonstration projects, to varying extents (and in

¹⁹ REC Albania staff were not able to locate the demonstration site during the field visit. The evaluator is not complaining about this - while it is understandable that this was in part due to staff changes and the labyrinth of roads and houses along the river, this is however also a reflection of the current wider 'ownership' gap of the Tirana demonstration project.

particular in Ukraine, Moldova and Serbia) mobilised in different ways significant local stakeholder involvement and ownership, and showed that some nutrient reduction solutions can be implemented at manageable costs. This is a significant learning in its own right, if the implications of this can be translated into ideas to further reduce costs and in particular maximise local stakeholder motivation, involvement and ownership that could be used for a possible follow-up programme. This is discussed in the recommendations.

6.3. CONTRIBUTION TO UPGRADING SKILLS OF NATIONAL STAFF

The raising of awareness-levels and knowledge and capacity levels through the peer-to-peer information exchanges and the Demonstration Projects and the established database have led to some upgrading of skills of national (primarily local) staff. The benefits for the wider community emanating from the online availability of the lessons learned from previous projects, of the pathways for replication of best practices, etc. cannot be assessed yet. It is worth highlighting again the need for more practical information, for more user friendly presentation of the outcomes of the LWE project, such as uploading videos about the demonstration sites including interviews with stakeholders who share practical experiences.

Overall, stakeholder feedback has provided consistently positive feedback on the Peer to Peer exchanges, with stakeholders interviewed considering these exchanges to have been well prepared and organised, and of real benefit to local communities. While this will lead to some sustained impact in terms of enhanced capacities, there are other challenges (e.g. lack of legislation on nutrient reporting food produce in the Ukraine) which need to be addressed for further benefit and change to take place, but this is unlikely to be within the capacity of the local Demonstration Project stakeholders.

Having other 'flexible-response' mechanisms within a following-up project could allow some customised support to help address challenges or obstacles (be they of a policy, legislative, regulatory or capacity nature) that are prevent continued benefits from flowing from actions funded, in particular in terms of replicating to other regions and in particular scaling to national-level policy and initiatives. Some recommendations are provided in the following section on this issue.

6.4. LESSONS LEARNED

This section discusses some of the key learning emanating from the LWE project.

LWE Inventory Work

The LWE Project provides a series of important lessons that can serve UNDP and GEF well in future attempts to promote NR policies and practices in other parts of the globe, including sharing the legacy of GEF's support for NR work in Europe and the CIS region over the past 15 years. The LWE project team has also done a relatively good job in distilling some of these lessons, as for example communicated in the project's draft final technical report.

Regarding the inventory of NR Projects and identification and profiling of good practices, the project has emphasised the importance of systems of practices above individual NR practices, and highlights

a number of important components or success factors, such as cooperation between farmers and direct dialogue and consultation with farmers or farmer organisations have the trust of their local members. This is one point that needs reflection and should be mainstreamed elsewhere, in the sense of how to leverage farmer cooperation and farmer organisations more systematically in efforts to scale NR practices to the national level. This is discussed further in the recommendations.

The lack of sufficient outcome measurement on NR interventions across the region is another important learning point (and is something which has also been seen to some extent with the LWE DPs). Based on the evaluation review work, the evaluator also endorses the LWE project report recommendation on the need for increasing monitoring of projects, more systematic data collation and ensuring adequate operations and maintenance. Furthermore, from a process perspective, it is important that GEF considers how the challenges in collecting data from GEF-funded projects can be addressed by building this requirement into project reporting obligations.

LWE Peer to Peer Exchanges

The LWE project report emphasises the value of the Peer to Peer Exchanges mechanism at Demonstration Project sites as a means of building capacity with a view to further replicating practices. The LWE Project also concluded that two-workshop are more effective than one-day workshops and with a limit to participant numbers of not more than 40 persons. The combination of peer to peer exchanges and demonstration projects also appears to have been a promising mechanism for generating interest by other possible ‘take-up’ actors, for example the interest shown by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in Moldova in replicating project practices and the interest expressed by the GEF Small Grants representative at the Albania peer to peer session.

Another important point mentioned the emphasis during peer-to-peer exchanges on the importance of publicity for raising public awareness and public education regarding the need for nutrient reduction. The project’s discussion of pathways to replication is also interesting, and deserves further discussion and deepening, in terms of how different approaches, policy and legislative frameworks, funding sources could be envisaged for different countries or sub-regions with the Europe and CIS region.

Demonstration Projects

The LWE project considered that the overall findings from the demonstration projects can help facilitate replication, and identified a number of learnings from the DPs’ implementation experience, which are set out in the project final technical report and reproduced in the table below.

LWE Demonstration Projects – Lessons Learned by LWE Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The short timeframe made more significant results challenging. b. Technical support will assist projects in more effective monitoring and measuring of outcomes. Follow up also after the project regarding monitoring is necessary to ensure sustainability. c. Local organizations serving a champion, as the Mayoralty of Slobozia Mare in Moldova, can help increase the credibility of BAPs and convince local farmers and other stakeholders to implement those practices. d. Creating local expertise is in general a key factor for success.

LWE Demonstration Projects – Lessons Learned by LWE Stakeholders

- e. Land ownership is a critical consideration to ensuring the outcomes, security & sustainability of projects.
- f. The strength and importance of good local community (official and non-official) contacts and support improves opportunity for success (as in Zakatpattya oblast).
- g. Local farmers are often reluctant to participate in conservation projects and take land out of production.
- h. More developed organic agriculture markets are needed to ensure that the economics work for farmers to change production methods.
- i. Partnerships among farmers to share equipment can help implement conservation practices and help bring production to scale.
- j. The best value for donor investments includes a combination of on-the-ground practices as in Krusevac and stakeholder engagement as in Slobozia Mare and Zakatpattya oblast to maximize opportunities for replication.
- k. Co-finance for demonstrations was critical to ensuring local commitment and smooth and complete project implementation. and exemplifies the impact of co-financing in such low cost interventions.
- l. The LWE Website needs to be more user friendly for practitioners. Videos about the wetland in Tirana for instance including interviews with implementing stakeholders would give a far more practical insight into good practices and attract more people.

Source: LWE Project Report

The above lessons from the LWE project stakeholders represent a valuable body of learning and insight which UNDP and GEF can use for the future. Some weaknesses have been identified during the evaluation based on the field visits to the Tirana and Slobozia Mare DPs, but this should not divert attention from the important achievements of the DPs, and in particular the insights that they can provide UNDP and GEF with for possible future replication work.

- **DP learning point - (Negative) Impact of Short timeframes:** The impact of the short timeframe has been mentioned earlier in the report, and has no doubt has contributed also to a lack of monitoring and proper follow-up in actions to secure or optimise impact and sustainability. On the other hand, it can also be argued that short timeframes helped focus minds and contributed to building local mobilisation, along with the pressure/demands of local co-financing. This is a key point for reflection by UNDP and GEF, to which the LWE project stakeholder can no doubt also contribute further.
- **DP learning point - Need for Technical support for M&E and Follow-Up Support to DPs:** The evaluator agrees with this observation, with the recommendation that such technical support also should include a project planning phase before the 'live implementation' phase.
- **DP learning point - Importance of local organisations serving as project champions:** A key success factor and one that UNDP and GEF should systematically seek to harness in any future replication work using demonstration projects. However, this should be worked on further and some of the attributes and behaviours of a project champion identified. For example, the successful applicant for the Tirana DP Call IEP was in many respects a motivated implementer and could be described as a project champion, but in contrast to the mayoral office in Slobozia Mare they were a private civil society organisation. Furthermore, this should be linked to desired types of outcomes, and account should be taken that a number of local organisations might jointly fulfil this role.

- **DP learning point - Importance of creating local expertise:** Again, this was one of the strengths of the LWE Demonstration Projects. This aspect could in the future be further supported by a more comprehensive online content and resource repository. Secondly, we recommend that UNDP and GEF consider how such local expertise developed in a DP area can be further leveraged to pass it on to another area (see recommendations).
- **DP learning point - The importance of land ownership for project security & sustainability:** This has indeed been an important factor, and needs to be built systematically into any assessment of future DPs under any follow-up programme.
- **DP learning point - DP learning point - The importance of good local community contacts and support:** Again, an important point, and one that needs to be factored into assessment of future DP proposals under any follow-up programme put in place by UNDP and GEF.
- **DP learning point - Farmers' Reluctance to set aside land for conservation:** Not a surprising learning given traditional conservatism of the farming community, but also the fact that economic rewards can be reduced due to lack of a regulatory or legislative framework that does not reward environmentally-conscious produce is a key related issue.
- **DP learning point – Partnerships among farmers are effective resource-sharing and cost-reduction:** Again this is not a surprising learning, although it is possible that it could have been applied in a more structured sense in the Slobozia Mare project, where resource sharing and farmer cooperation were core facets under the manure management component of the WB APCP. However, it is a tactic that offers the multi-faceted potential to improve impact and sustainability of a replication project, from cooperative type structures to save costs through collective buying, or creating market outlets or collection and distribution mechanisms.
- **DP learning point - best value return for donor investments:** The LWE final report considered that 'donor return' is optimised when DPs include a combination of on-the-ground practices as in Krusevac and stakeholder engagement as in Slobozia Mare and Zakatpattya oblast. The evaluator would agree broadly with this lesson, with the observation that other activities can also be build in to further maximise DP effectiveness.

Beyond the above learning points, it is important also to reflect on the DPs a systemic whole. For LWE project stakeholders, the DPs showed that some nutrient reduction solutions can be implemented at without incurring significant costs. The evaluator shares this view, and believes that there may be scope for further significant cost reduction in DP projects, and believes that the process of how the results achieved were secured is likely to be as important as the specific results. The demonstration projects, to varying extents (and in particular in Ukraine, Moldova and Serbia) mobilised in different ways significant local stakeholder involvement and ownership, and showed that some nutrient reduction solutions can be implemented at manageable costs. This is a significant learning in its own right, if the implications of this can be translated into ideas to further reduce costs and in particular maximise local stakeholder motivation, involvement and ownership that could be used for a possible follow-up programme. This is discussed in the recommendations.

6.5. RATING

Overall, the high rate of completion of project deliverables, the successes of the project despite a number of weaknesses, has meant that the evaluation has accorded a 'satisfactory' ranking to the LWE project (see Annex 2, Section 9.2 for further details).

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation findings, this section sets out recommendations with respect to the Living Waters Exchange project, starting with:

- Recommended follow-up actions or corrective actions with regard to the current LWE project (Section 7.1) , and
- More general recommendations based on the performance and learning of the project (Section 7.2).

7.1. CORRECTIVE ACTIONS FOR DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING & EVALUATION

Regarding the LWE DPs, a number of recommendations are provided with respect to ensuring optimal impact and sustainability from the DPs within the scope of this LWE project:

7.1.1 For the **Tirana DP**, the following actions are recommended:

- A site security and maintenance plan (e.g. possibly including perimeter fencing, Keep-off notices, and surveillance cameras) needs to be discussed and agreed between relevant parties (e.g. the project manager, REC Albania and the municipality) and implemented by IEP and Ekolevizja. Trespasser signage and signage marking the origin of the funding need also to be put in place.
- Inside the perimeter fencing, a storyboard display of the Constructed Wetland, and the rational and benefits of same should be put in place, in order to provide an appropriate level of information and learning for visitors to the DP site.
- A long-term monitoring plan should be put in place, and in this respect it is recommended that this could be taken over by one of the Universities.
- Integration of the project example into the relevance course curricula at the Tirana Universities, with site visits for students.
- A dissemination and promotion plan, as well as a review of possible advocacy actions, with a view to increasing awareness of the demonstration project as one option to nutrient reduction and promoting its uptake in smaller Albanian municipalities.
- Development of a generic costing of the likely cost of creating constructed wetlands in small municipalities, including options for costs reduction and optimisation, as part of a vision for scaling the use of such wetlands.

7.1.2 For the Moldova demonstration project:

- Review the current situation and assess whether protective fencing/netting around the perimeter of the platform can help reduce/block waste from the adjacent municipal dump entering the composting platform
- Start regular monitoring of nutrient levels in the immediate area, both in the river, tributaries and in local farms in Slobozia Mare.

7.1.3 For the Ukraine Demonstration Project:

- Consider whether increased advocacy efforts to national government can offer prospects of securing preferential treatment of green farm produce, such that local farmers have increased economic incentive to adopt NR practices.

7.2. ACTIONS TO FOLLOW UP OR REINFORCE INITIAL BENEFITS FROM THE PROJECT

This section sets out recommendations based on the performance and learning of the project in order to a) continuously develop some of the initial outputs of the LWE project and b) maximise the project legacy and c) ensure the project learning is reflected in follow-up projects:

Recommendations to UNDP and GEF:

- GEF should consider how it can take up the LWE project recommendations regarding making data collation and reporting on nutrient reduction practices part of standard GEF reporting requirements, as well as taking nutrient reduction into account during project design and formulation, including the setting of specific targets.
- While GEF's desire to re-orient its efforts and funding to nutrient reduction in other parts of the world is understandable, it is worth looking at the sustainability of investments to-date. Despite the various successes of the LWE project, it is worth asking the question whether more should be done by GEF and on what basis it should seek to support existing NR work in the Europe and CIS region. As just one example, without further support, will the Ukraine Demonstration Project impact be maximised? The evaluation recommends that GEF and UNDP consider a programme that would:
 - a) Map out outline strategies as to how NR objectives can be priorities in CEEC countries. As stated in the LWE project report, different countries and sub-regions can be distinguished, for example EU accession countries are being influenced by the EU Nitrates Directive. Such outline strategies could include:
 - a. Current situation in the country
 - b. Progress to-date and key needs (NR knowledge, capacity development, demonstration projects, funding etc.)
 - c. What is needed to address NR in the country (policy and legislative changes required, type of project-level intervention,
 - d. Possible NR take-up actors (e.g. existing programmes and actor) and funding sources

- b) Provide a technical assistance support in seeking take-up of these strategies

Recommended actions to reinforce the LWE Project's 'online legacy' with regard to a follow-up programme

1. The current online 'assets' created by the LWE project are an important step in documenting and making available online good practice. However, there are a number of other dimensions that will need to be made available if such work can be optimised - as mentioned earlier, there is scope to further develop and improve some of these outputs, and in particular, shifting the orientation to 'speak to' would be users and defining their specific needs. (For example, a local stakeholder involved in implementing a constructed wetland demonstration project will in some ways need different online messages, content and support compared with a civil servant working in a national ministry that is wondering whether nutrient levels are an issue in their country or region, and if yes whether they have a linkage to food security and water security).

Hence, in order to leverage the outputs and results of the LWE Project, it is recommended that a follow-up programme of actions should include:

- A clear concept plan on what such a programme might look like, who would be the target groups, what their needs would be, and why they would use in particular such an online platform
 - Assessment work of intended target users to validate needs and expectations from such the online dimension of such a programme
 - Development of regional and thematic/sectoral short papers, to be available online, explaining in jargon-free language, why and how nutrient reduction work is important and can contribute to various policy objectives, papers that speak to different target groups in their own 'language' – for example, a short paper on how nutrient reduction relates to food security in the Pacific Region.
2. Another recommendation would be to explore the development of cost-effective low-level e-learning modules (perhaps not more than engaging PowerPoint presentations with a series of video clips). Such modules would increase the capacity of different target groups to progress their own NR agenda without relying on direct (and more costly) interventions from a NR project. As an example, such modules, along with a more user-friendly portal, would allow:
 - Some capacity for local stakeholders involved in a demonstration project to implement their demonstration project with online support
 - Capacity to support a Demonstration Project in building knowledge and capacity among new stakeholder groups as part a scaling or replication effort
 - Some capacity for local stakeholders involved in a demonstration project to implement their demonstration project with online support

Leveraging the potential of Demonstration Projects in a follow-up Programme using a Small Grants Component

3. **Leveraging the potential of Demonstration Projects in a follow-up Programme:** The Demonstration Projects, as mentioned earlier, have been as important for learning regarding the process as much as the concrete actions. They have shown that significant improvements are possible in nutrient reduction at the local level without spending large amounts of money. Moreover, the experience of the DPs suggests that further value for money can be obtained by a) stronger focus on costs optimisation when designing DPs, b) building on the strong co-financing potential achieved in the LWE DPs, c) related to co-financing, systematic focus on optimising in-kind investment through voluntary construction and implementation labour from local would-be target groups and beneficiaries, and d) requesting follow-on replication actions and targets from beneficiary local region. If one removes most of the costs related to the DP managers/contractors, the costs of the DPs construction is reduced significantly. If various cost optimisation scenarios are envisaged (e.g. specific requirements of matching finance or in-kind contributions from local communities (e.g. some local farmers time for assisting in construction of composting platforms, barter arrangements etc.) there may well be the prospects to significantly reduce costs further.

4. **Small Grants Programme:** Providing clear 'Do It Yourself' guides on simpler NR solutions, along with ideas on how to manage and reduce costs, could allow for a small grants programme involving clear leverage criteria for funds disbursement to archive significant benefit as part of a follow-up programme. A grants programme is likely to make an effort address NR in other parts of the globe more successful, as other regions and stakeholders will see the prospect of securing not only expertise and knowledge transfer but also concrete financial support. Such a grants programme should have highly targeted performance criteria and application conditions that leverage the learning from the LWE EPs (e.g. ensuring motivated project proposers/would-be local champions, high leverage and sustainability requirements etc.)

9. ANNEXES

9.1. ANNEX 1 - LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

	Stakeholder Name	Organisation
1	Mr. Mish Hamid	IW:LEARN, UNDP
2	Dr. Thomas W. Simpson	Water Stewardship, NGO
3	Mr. Alexander Bogunovic	DREPR Project, Serbia
4	Mr. Phil Weller	ICDPR (Intern. Comm. for Protection of Danube River)
5	Ms. Diana Heilmann	ICDPR (Intern. Comm. for Protection of Danube River)
6	Ms. Nadya Boneva	Prime Consulting Ltd.
7	Mr Akmaral Mukaeva	CAREC
8	Mr. Chuck Chaitovitz	GETF
9	Ms. Natasa Djereg	CEKOR
10	Ms Ekaterina Strikeleva	CAREC
11	Ms. Olena Marushevska	Zakarpattya Oblast Organization of All-Ukrainian Ecological League, Ukraine
12	Mr. Vadym POZHARSKIY	MoEnviron. Protection, Head of Dept., Int. Coop and Eur. Integ.
13	Ms. Magdolna Toth Nagy	REC Hungary
14	Mr. Peter Whalley	GEF/UNDP Tisza Project
15	Ms. Mihaela Popovici	ICDPR (Intern. Comm. for Protection of Danube River)
16	Dr. Janos Fehér	Vituki Environment & Water Institute, Budapest
17	Ms Jovanka Ignjatovic	REC Hungary
18	Mr. Sandor Tatar	Tavirózsa Association
	<i>Albania Field Visit</i>	
19	Mr. Edvin Pacara	Institute for Environmental Policy
20	Mr. Endri Haxhiraj	Institute for Environmental Policy
21	Ms Adriana Micu	UNDP country office Albania
22	Mr. Mihallaq Qirjo	REC country office Albania
23	Mr. Aleko Miho	University of Tirana, Dep. Of Biology
24	Ms. Margarita Hysko	University of Tirana, Dep. Of Biology
25	Ms. Sonila Duka	University of Tirana, Dep. Of Biology

	Stakeholder Name	Organisation
26	Mr. Xhemal Mato	Ekolevizja
	<i>Moldova Field Visit</i>	
27	Ms. Sivia Pana-Carp	UNDP country office Moldova
28	Mr. Victor Cotruta	REC Moldova
29	Ms. Erika Lagzdina	REC country office Moldova
30	Mr. Sergiu Mariceanu	Deputy Mayor, Slobozia Mare
31	Mr. Artur Nebunu	Deputy Mayor, Slobozia Mare
32	Ms. Ecaterina Chiciuc	Representative, Slobozia Mare Kindergarten

9.2. ANNEX 2 - UNDP GEF ASSESSMENT TABLE

Table Legend:

	Green: Completed – indicator shows successful achievement
	Yellow: Indicator shows expected completion by the end of the project
	Red: Indicator show poor achievement - unlikely to be complete by end of Project

Table A9.2.1 - Status of objective / outcome delivery

Objective	Measurable indicators from project logframe	Selected Evaluator Comments	Status of delivery*	Rating
Objective 1: <i>To consolidate, inventory of (or “extract”) and critically review/assess the achievements/ experience (in NR and multi-country cooperation) of GEF’s action in the CEE and EECCA regions to document the good practices and provide recommendation for their replication and scaling up</i>				
Outcome 1 Clearer understanding of ‘good practices and lessons learned’ experiences in nutrient reduction projects.	Comprehensive search and capture of GEF and non-GEF NR projects in Central and Eastern Europe regions Research that includes thorough analysis of project documents, original surveys and in-depth interviews with a variety of practitioners and stakeholders	Significant advancement in NR-related projects activities, good practices and lessons learned. Outputs available online, although improvement in online look, context and user group targeting needed, as part of a clear NR promotion and replication effort globally.		S
Outcome 2 Better understanding of the needs of project practitioners and stakeholders in regards to nutrient reduction expertise needs and means of access to information.	Effectively structured interviews and surveys with project managers, GEF Implementing Agencies and Executing Agency staff, intergovernmental bodies, government focal points to projects, NGOs, scientific and academic institutions, the private sector and others	Significant contact with project practitioners, good understanding of needs of local actors within the context of peer to peer exchanges and demonstration projects.		S
Outcome 3 Better understanding of the nature of criteria for and categories of good nutrient reduction experiences.	Comprehensive review of key nutrient reduction project attributes, published guidelines on good practices, and published and original needs assessments Development of set of clear and concise criteria for nutrient reduction practice Definition of at least 20 nutrient reduction best practices	Significant NR projects reviewed, good practices identified and distilled, selection criteria developed and NR good practice categories developed,		S

Objective	Measurable indicators from project logframe	Selected Evaluator Comments	Status of delivery*	Rating
	categories			
Objective 2: <i>To identify and demonstrate successful replication strategies</i>				
Outcome 1 Clearer understanding of optimal country conditions for successful replication of good nutrient reduction practices	Review of projects and experiences by a review team of experts, using criteria developed for each subject area, as well as a transparent and uniform selection process	Very good understanding and learning regarding general process-related conditions for successful replication from the Demonstration Projects, plus country and local –specific information from DPs and peer to peer exchanges, as well as from project profiles, good practices and BMPs. However, can be developed much further into detailed strategies per country		S
Outcome 2 Enhanced knowledge of successful nutrient reduction replication strategies	Identification of country specific institutional capacity, needs and potential for replication of successful GEF nutrient reduction projects	Good knowledge transfer among peers in areas where peer to peer exchanges held, as with Demonstration Projects, however results less clear regarding country-level impact across project countries, and further work needed in a follow-up project.		S
	Peer-to-peer knowledge transfer among peers from demonstration countries and targeted countries			
	Planning with targeted country officials to implement the replication projects			
	Identification and engagement of business community, trade associations, individual facilities, and opinion-leader businesses focused within specific industry sectors relevant to nutrient reduction, as well as selected other relevant key stakeholders			
Objective 3: <i>To enhance or “extrapolate” replication of good nutrient reduction practices within the region and beyond (such as the Mediterranean and East Asian Seas), as well as their mainstreaming into multi- and bi-lateral donors’ strategies and programs.</i>				
Outcome 1 Increased efficiency and effectiveness of knowledge transfer and communications regarding nutrient reduction among water practitioners	Capture of input from IW practitioners and stakeholders in surveys and interviews	English-language website available with all key LWE project materials and outputs. Some project stakeholders awaiting Russian-language outputs.		MS
	Development of website and all materials in English and Russian			

Objective	Measurable indicators from project logframe	Selected Evaluator Comments	Status of delivery*	Rating
Outcome 2 Enhanced understanding among practitioners and decision makers of the nature of nutrient reduction good practices and lessons learned	Active discussions regarding nutrient reduction issues and practices in RBEC-COP and on Water Wiki	Some discussions promoted and fostered, but with room for improvement (e.g. level of information available on WaterWiki)		MS
	Project participation in a World Bank Regional Nutrient Reduction Conference			
Outcome 3 Nutrient Reduction Promotion experiences inform GEF IWC5	Dissemination of nutrient reduction good practices, lessons learned, and successful NR strategies at IWC5	Nutrient Reduction Promotion experiences discussed with GEF managers, IWC workshop held.		S
Outcome 4 Increased awareness among the region's population and sectors about the importance and impact of nutrient reduction practices	Recognition given to good practices and to the people behind these practices	Recognition give to good practices, promotion work via various dissemination platforms, but constraints due to online platform (e.g. online platform not designed to provide recognition to persons behind success stories, which would be a significant factor in creating a compelling online platform.		MS
	Active promotion of good practices in the IW community at all levels			
	Reduction activities to the general public and industry through trade, international, and national media			

Table A9.2.2 - Project Rating Table

PROJECT COMPONENT/OBJECTIVE	RATING SCALE						RATING
	HU	U	MU	MS	S	HS	
PROJECT FORMULATION					X		<i>S</i>
Conceptualization/Design					X		S
Stakeholder participation						X	HS
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION					X		<i>S</i>
Implementation Approach							
The use of the logical framework					X		S
Adaptive management					X		S
Use/establishment of information technologies					X		S
Operational relationships between the institutions involved					X		S
Technical capacities					X		S
Monitoring and evaluation					X		S
Stakeholder participation						X	HS
Production and dissemination of information						X	HS
Local resource users and NGOs participation						X	HS
Establishment of partnerships						X	HS
Involvement and support of governmental institutions					X		S
Attainment of Outcomes/ Achievement of objectives							
Achievement of objective					X		S
Outcome 1 Clearer understanding of 'good practices and lessons learned' experiences in nutrient reduction projects.					X		S
Outcome 2 Better understanding of the needs of project practitioners and stakeholders in regards to nutrient reduction expertise needs and means of access to information.					X		S
Outcome 3 Better understanding of the nature of criteria for and categories of good nutrient reduction experiences.							S
Outcome 4 Clearer understanding of optimal country conditions for successful replication of good nutrient reduction practices					X		S
Outcome 5 Enhanced knowledge of successful nutrient reduction replication strategies					X		S
Outcome 6 Increased efficiency and effectiveness of knowledge transfer and				X			MS

PROJECT COMPONENT/OBJECTIVE	RATING SCALE						RATING
communications regarding nutrient reduction among water practitioners							
Outcome 7 Enhanced understanding among practitioners and decision makers of the nature of nutrient reduction good practices and lessons learned				X			MS
Outcome 8 Nutrient Reduction Promotion experiences inform GEF IWC5					X		S
Outcome 9 Increased awareness among the region's population and sectors about the importance and impact of nutrient reduction practices				X			MS

Rating: [HU] Highly Unsatisfactory / [U] Unsatisfactory / [MU] Marginally Satisfactory / [MS] Marginally Satisfactory / [S] Satisfactory / [HS] Highly Satisfactory

9.3. ANNEX 3 - EVALUATION MISSION ALBANIA & MOLDOVA - SUMMARY MISSION REPORT

LWE Field Mission Report

1. Field Mission - Timing

Field visits to Albania and Moldova took place in the week 28th February to 4th March 2011, as required in the Terms of Reference.

2. Field Mission Programme:

The Evaluator completed a programme of meetings and discussions with key stakeholders in Albania and Moldova. Interviews were held and Project Demonstration sites visited.

2.1 Albania Visit Programme

The first country visited was Albania, in order to visit the Tirana demonstration project. In Tirana, Albania, representatives from the REC office and the UNDP country office were interviewed. Representatives from the demonstration project in Tirana were interviewed and a site visit of the demonstration was carried out (without success, as the site wasn't found anymore by the project implementation team).

A series of questions regarding the overall performance of the LWE project, the LWE Project management including Monitoring arrangements and the demonstration projects were used for seeking information. These questions are presented in Annex to the main Evaluation Report.

2.2 Stakeholders Met

In Tirana, the following persons were interviewed:

- Mihallaq Qirjo, REC country office
- Adriana Micu, UNDP country office Albania, Environment
- Edvin Pacara, Institute for Environmental Policy
- Endri Haxhiraj, Institute for Environmental Policy
- Aleko Miho, University of Tirana, Dep. Of Biology
- Margarita Hysko, University of Tirana, Dep. Of Biology
- Sonila Duka, University of Tirana, Dep. Of Biology
- Eriola Muka, Municipality Tirana
- Xhemal Mato, Ekolevizja

2.3 Moldova Visit Programme

In Moldova, the first day of the visit programme was used to travel from Chisnau to visit the demonstration project in Slobozia Mare in Cahul. In Cahul, representatives from the REC office and the UNDP country office were interviewed in addition to the site visits that were made. At the demonstration site in Slobozia Mare, other key stakeholders of the implementation team were interviewed like the director of the kindergarten.

A series of questions regarding the overall performance of the LWE project, the LWE Project management including Monitoring arrangements and the demonstration projects were used for seeking information. These questions are presented in Annex to the main Evaluation Report.

2.4 Stakeholders Met

In Moldova, the following persons were interviewed:

- Victor Cotruta, REC Moldova
- Erika Lagzdina, REC Moldova
- Sivia Pana-Carp, UNDP country office Moldova
- Artur Nebunu, Project Manager DP Slobozia Mare, Deputy Mayor, Slobozia Mare
- Sergiu Mariceanu, Deputy Mayor, Slobozia Mare
- Ecaterina Chiciuc, Representative of kindergarten Slobozia Mare

9.4. ANNEX 4 - EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

**Terms of Reference
for
Final Evaluation of the Project**

**Promoting Replication of Good Practices for Nutrient Reduction and Joint
Collaboration in Central and Eastern Europe
PIMS 3505 / Atlas 63332**

The project implemented by GETF – Global Environment & Technology Foundation from 29
November 2008 to 30 June 2011

Project Title: Promoting Replication of Good Practices for Nutrient Reduction and Joint Collaboration in Central and Eastern Europe (the Living Water Exchange project)

Functional Title: Consultant for Independent Evaluation

Duration: estimated 15 working days
within the period of: February 2011 – April 2011.

Terms of Payment: Lump sum payable upon satisfactory completion and approval by UNDP of all deliverables, including the Evaluation Report

Duty Station: Home based with travel to Albania and Moldova.

Travel costs: The costs of mission(s) of the Consultant are to be included in the lump sum.

I. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with UNDP/GEF M&E policies and procedures, all regular and medium-sized projects supported by the GEF should undergo a final evaluation upon completion of implementation.

The Final Evaluation is intended to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project. It looks at signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global and national environmental goals. The Final Evaluation also identifies/documents lessons learned and makes recommendations that project partners and stakeholders might use to improve the design and implementation of other related projects and programs.

The evaluation is to be undertaken in accordance with the “GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy” (see <http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html>).

This Final Evaluation is initiated by UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre as the GEF Implementing Agency for this project and it aims to provide managers with a comprehensive overall assessment of the project and with a strategy for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has four objectives: i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts; ii) to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements; iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and iii) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned. A mix of tools is used to ensure effective project M&E. These might be applied continuously throughout the lifetime of the project – e.g. periodic monitoring of indicators -, or as specific time-bound exercises such as mid-term reviews,

audit reports and independent evaluations. The project team and UNDP are responsible for completing monitoring activities under these objectives.

The selected evaluation contractor shall execute a project terminal evaluation to ensure this project's performance in achieving its objectives as laid out in its UNDP project document, as well as its Operational Work Plan documentation. This evaluation will report on the Living Water Exchange project's performance monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and dissemination requirements as mandated by the GEF and UNDP.

II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Nutrient Reduction Challenges

De-oxygenated “dead zones” in our waterways and oceans, where life is almost non-existent, are estimated at more than 200 worldwide. There is widespread scientific agreement that changes in the global nitrogen cycle and increased nutrient loading, primarily caused by non-point-source pollution (i.e. agricultural activities and storm water runoff) are directly linked to these “dead zones” and other significant impacts on our water resources, including²⁰:

- Nuisance levels of algae and aquatic vegetation (eutrophication, which is the primary consequence of nutrient inputs)
- Increased turbidity — sight-feeding fish, aesthetics, water safety, limits growth of submerged aquatic vegetation, impairment of fisheries and habitat degradation
- Low levels of dissolved oxygen, high levels of ammonia; results of organic decomposition
- Increased drinking water treatment costs — formation of disinfection by-products (e.g. THMs (trihalomethanes)) in drinking water, taste and odour effects of algae
- Imbalance of aquatic species
- Shifts in the structure of the food chain

There have been numerous studies and projects in CEE to directly address the reduction of point and non-point sources of nutrient pollution, and to confront the transboundary or national challenges present in the identified nutrient hotspots. Despite regulatory and legal enforcement of point sources across the region, such nutrient pollution remains high. Therefore, more must be done to address nutrient pollution from non-point or diffuse source discharges.

The Living Water Exchange Project

The Living Water Exchange: Promoting Nutrient Reduction Best Practices was launched on December 4, 2008 as the next phase of the long-term commitment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to achieving environmental health and significant nutrient reduction in water resources across the CEE and EECCA regions.

The GEF International Waters (IW) programme — a global partnership among 178 countries, international institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector investing in

²⁰ USEPA and Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 2007.

transboundary water issues — has been promoting solutions to address increased nutrient releases and other “non-point-source” issues in CEE for more than 15 years. There is a wealth of experience in nutrient reduction best practices and lessons learned in the region that needs to be replicated within the region and worldwide. However, these experiences have not been collected, analysed, summarised or replicated in a systematic way.

Project Objectives

The Living Water Exchange Project will:

- Limit the resurgence of agricultural and non-agricultural diffuse nutrient releases
- Identify, capture, analyse and summarise best practices, lessons learned and technologies to reduce the impacts of nutrient loading in the region
- Demonstrate successful replication strategies by facilitating pilot projects (e.g. agricultural improvements, wetlands restoration, other low-cost solutions to nutrient reduction etc.) and transferring knowledge to policy makers and practitioners in the region
- Disseminate and promote nutrient reduction best practices and successful replication strategies in the region, among key decision makers, farmers, industries, other stakeholders and the general public

Beneficiary Countries

The following are the beneficiary countries of the project:

- Albania
- Azerbaijan
- Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Croatia
- Georgia
- Iran
- Kazakhstan
- Moldova
- Montenegro
- Russian Federation
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Turkey
- Turkmenistan
- Ukraine

The project will work with a wide range of local, national and international stakeholders in the region to identify and evaluate the “best”, most appropriate practices and demonstrate that such practices can be cost-effectively and appropriately replicated in a very short demonstration project window of 10 months.

Nutrient Reduction Best Practices

The best, most appropriate practices can be defined as any management systems, processes and technologies that have a positive and/or beneficial impact on the environment, and a quantifiable reduction in nutrients. These practices are not based on static standards but continuous improvements.

A best, most appropriate practice can be changes in management actions to reduce nutrient emissions, for example:

- Minimising nutrient loading in local water resources coming from agglomerations, agriculture and industry
- Implementing procedures to reduce waste and/or loss of fertiliser from agricultural land (this could cover soil analysis, application of fertiliser at the appropriate time and in the appropriate amount, use of buffer strips etc.)
- Improving the storage and application of manure (e.g. manure platforms, equipment for application of manure)
- Enhancing awareness and training for farmers
- More proactive actions by farm extension (advisory) services and assistance to farmers
- Developing farm nutrient budgets
- Accomplishing the reduction or elimination of nutrient loading in a “practical”, cost-effective manner

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE FINAL EVALUATION

The purpose of the Evaluation is:

- To assess overall performance against the Project objectives as set out in Project Document and other related documents
- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Project
- To critically analyze the implementation and management arrangements of the Project
- To assess the sustainability of the Project’s interventions.
- To list and document initial lessons concerning Project design, implementation and management
- To assess Project relevance to national priorities.

Project performance will be measured based on Project Logical Framework (see [Annex 1](#)), which provides clear performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification.

The evaluation should assess:

- Project concept and design

The evaluators will assess the project concept and design. He/she should review the problem addressed by the project and the project strategy, encompassing an assessment of the appropriateness of the objectives, planned outputs, activities and inputs as compared to cost-effective alternatives. The executing modality and managerial arrangements should also be judged. The evaluator will assess the achievement of indicators and review the work plan, planned duration and budget of the project.

- Implementation

The evaluation will assess the implementation of the project in terms of quality and timeliness of inputs and efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out. Also, the effectiveness of management as well as the quality and timeliness of monitoring and backstopping by all parties to the project should be evaluated. In particular, the evaluation is to assess the Project team’s use of

adaptive management in project implementation.

- Project outputs, outcomes and impact

The evaluation will assess the outputs, outcomes and impact achieved by the project as well as the likely sustainability of project results. This should encompass an assessment of the achievement of the immediate objectives and the contribution to attaining the overall objective of the project. The evaluation should also assess the extent to which the implementation of the project has been inclusive of relevant stakeholders and to which it has been able to create collaboration between different partners. The evaluation will also examine if the project has had significant unexpected effects, whether of beneficial or detrimental character.

The evaluation will assess the aspects as listed in evaluation report outline attached in [Annex 2](#).

The Evaluation Report will present recommendations and lessons of broader applicability for follow-up and future support of UNDP and/or the Governments, highlighting the best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to the evaluation scope.

IV. PRODUCTS EXPECTED FROM THE EVALUATION

The key product expected from this final evaluation is a comprehensive analytical report. The report, together with the annexes, shall be written in English and shall be presented in electronic form in MS Word format. The Report of the Final Evaluation will be stand-alone document that substantiates its recommendations and conclusions. The report will have to provide to the GEF Secretariat complete and convincing evidence to support its findings/ratings. The Report will include a table of planned vs. actual project financial disbursements, and planned co-financing vs. actual co-financing in this project, according the table attached in [Annex 3](#) of this TOR.

The Evaluation mission will produce the following deliverables to UNDP/GEF and the Project Steering Committee:

- (i) An executive summary, prepared by the consultant, including findings and recommendations;
- (ii) A detailed evaluation report covering items listed in the Objectives of the Final evaluation with attention to lessons learned and recommendations; and
- (iii) List of Annexes prepared by the consultants, which includes TORs, Itinerary, List of Persons Interviewed, Summary of Field Visits, List of Documents reviewed, Questionnaire used and Summary of results, Co-financing & Leveraged Resources etc.

The Report will be supplemented by Rate Tables, attached in [Annex 4](#) of this TOR.

V. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

An outline of an evaluation approach is provided below; however, it should be made clear that the evaluation team is responsible for revising the approach as necessary. Any changes should be in-line with international criteria and professional norms and standards (as adopted by the UN Evaluation Group²¹). They must be also cleared by UNDP before being applied by the evaluation team.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. It must be easily understood by project partners and applicable to the remaining period of project duration.

The evaluation will take place mainly in the field. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the government counterparts, the Project Manager, Steering Committee, project team, and key stakeholders. The evaluator is expected to conduct missions to interview the project team/visit demonstration projects (Albania and Moldova).

The evaluator is expected to consult all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports – incl. Annual Reports, project budget revision, progress reports, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and any other material that s/he may consider useful for evidence based assessment. The list of documentation to be reviewed is included in [Annex 5](#) of this Terms of Reference;

The evaluator is expected to use interviews as a means of collecting data on the relevance, performance and success of the project. Some of the suggested persons to be interviewed could include:

- CTAs of relevant IW projects (both in the Black Sea - Danube region, but also potential beneficiary GEF IW projects amongst the East Asian Seas Strategic Partnership and Coral Triangle Initiative)
- UNDP Country offices in demonstration site countries (the environmental focal points)
- IW:LEARN PCU
- The GEF Secretariat
- Participants of the peer-to-peer workshops (both IW projects and IW:Learn supported project managers)
- Other project stakeholders

The methodology to be used by the evaluation team should be presented in the report in detail. It shall include information on:

- Documentation reviewed; Project website including its database
- Interviews;
- Field visits;
- Questionnaires;
- Participatory techniques and other approaches for the gathering and analysis of data.

Although the Evaluator should feel free to discuss with the authorities concerned, all matters relevant

²¹ See <http://www.uneval.org/>

to its assignment, it is not authorized to make any commitment or statement on behalf of UNDP or GEF or the project management.

The Evaluator should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

VI. QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Selected independent expert will conduct the evaluation. The evaluator selected should not have participated in the project preparation and/or implementation and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities.

The consultant shall have prior experience in evaluating similar projects. Former cooperation with GEF is an advantage.

Qualifications:

- International/regional consultant with academic and/or professional background in natural resources management and extensive experience in coastal ecosystem, marine science and international water etc. A minimum of 15 years' relevant experience is required;
- Substantive experience in reviewing and evaluating similar technical assistance projects, preferably those involving UNDP/GEF or other United Nations development agencies and major donor;
- Excellent English writing and communication skills; demonstrated ability to assess complex situations in order to succinctly and clearly distill critical issues and draw forward-looking conclusions;
- An ability to assess the institutional capacity and incentives required;
- Excellent in human relations, coordination, planning and teamwork.

Specifically, the international expert will perform the following tasks:

- Lead and manage the evaluation mission;
- Design the detailed evaluation scope and methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis);
- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
- Draft related parts of the evaluation report; and
- Finalize the whole evaluation report.

The evaluation will be undertaken in-line with GEF principles²²:

²² See p.16 of the GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

- Independence
- Impartiality
- Transparency
- Disclosure
- Ethical
- Partnership
- Competencies and Capacities
- Credibility
- Utility

VII. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation lies with UNDP Regional Center for Europe and CIS in Bratislava (UNDP BRC). UNDP BRC will contract the evaluator and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluator. GETF – Global Environment & Technology Foundation and UNDP will be responsible for liaising with the Evaluators team to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the Government etc.

The activity and timeframe are broken down as follows:

Activity	Timeframe
Desk review	Approximately 2 days
Briefings for evaluators by GETF and UNDP	Approximately 1 day
Field visits to Albania and Moldova, interviews, questionnaires, de-briefings	Approximately 5 days
Drafting of the evaluation report	Approximately 3 days
Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of draft reports for comments, meetings and other types of feedback mechanisms	Approximately 2 days
Finalization of the evaluation report (incorporating comments received on first draft)	Approximately 2 days

Estimated Working Days: 15 working days

The draft and final report shall be submitted to the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor, Mr. Vladimir Mamaev, whose address and contact details are as follows: Grosslingova 35, 811 09 Bratislava, Slovakia, tel.: 00421-2-59337 267, e-mail: vladimir.mamaev@undp.org

Prior to approval of the final report, a draft version shall be circulated for comments to the project management: project manager, Project Steering Committee and UNDP/GEF RTA. UNDP and the stakeholders will submit comments and suggestions within 5 working days after receiving the draft.

Timeframe for submission of first draft of the report: within 2 weeks after the mission.

The evaluation should be completed by 30 April 2010.

If any discrepancies have emerged between impressions and findings of the evaluation team and the aforementioned parties, these should be explained in an annex attached to the final report.

9.5. ANNEX 5 - EVALUATION MISSION ALBANIA & MOLDOVA - SUMMARY MISSION REPORT

Evaluation Telephone Interview Guide & Questionnaire

Evaluation Telephone Interview Guide

1. How did the LWE Homepage facilitate a clearer understanding of “good practices and lessons learned” experiences in NR projects so that they can be replicated easier? The technical information provided is for experts and doesn’t explain why the project is relevant for a farmer.
2. The goal of the LWE project was to accelerate the replication of successful nutrient reduction projects. How effective was the project to this end?
3. What indicates the effectiveness of the project (the website, the results of the 4 DP, def. of nutrient reduction best practices categories, etc.)?
4. What was the idea behind the 4 DP and in which way does their implementation serve meeting the goal of the LWE project?
5. Which of the 4 steps made you experience problems and what kind of problems – expected and unexpected ones? [Step 1: Inventory of GEF and World Bank projects / Step 2: Identification of Best Management Practices (BMP) for nutrient reduction / Step 3: Implementation of Demonstrations Projects / Step 4: Dissemination of Information to Build Awareness and Ensure Effective Implementation]
6. The peer-to-peer exchanges involved experts from “good practice countries” and “need for good practice countries”:
 - a. How were these exchange meetings organized and by whom? (they lasted for 2 days is written in the draft final report)
 - b. How often did these meetings take place – one meeting or over a longer period of time recurring meetings?
 - c. Was there an alternative to the (expensive and time intense) peer-to-peer exchanges?
 - d. Were there relationships built between these peers that secured an exchange after the end of the meeting(s)?

7. What were the main NR expertise needs and information or access to information needs of project practitioners captured through the in-depth interviews? Is that information provided on the IW:LEARN website? How many interviews had been conducted and in which regions?
8. How do you assess the quality and timelines of monitoring carried out? In the DP in Ukraine monitoring didn't take place – how about the other DP? What kind of monitoring and in which sequence was it carried out?
9. How did the various implementing actors react to changes and challenges during implementation regarding their manner to manage the LWE project in general and the DPs?
10. Were commitments to local stakeholders fulfilled by UNDP/GEF and were stakeholders adequately involved?
11. How do you assess the sustainability of the LWE project? How do you assess the sustainability of the DPs?
12. How do you assess the project's relevance to national priorities? Have outcomes of the project been incorporated into national sectorial and development plans?
13. Do you think the objectives of the project were achieved? [(1) to document the good practices and provide recommendation for their replication and scaling up, (2) to identify and demonstrate successful replication strategies, (3) to enhance or “extrapolate” replication of good nutrient reduction practices within the region and beyond (such as the Mediterranean and East Asian Seas), as well as their mainstreaming into multi- and bi-lateral donors' strategies and programs and (4) Project components implemented effectively and efficiently.]
14. Were the Project milestones reached on time and within the budget?

Demonstration Projects:

1. Who follows up on the lessons learned in the Demonstration Project (DP)?
2. Do you think that local actors gained an enhanced knowledge of successful nutrient reduction replication strategies?
3. What kinds of partnerships have been established during the implementation of the projects and in which way were stakeholders involved?
4. Was there collaboration created by the LWE between different partners?

5. On which level were partnerships established? (e.g. UNDP country office – national/ regional/ local level)
6. How do you ensure that the knowledge captured by the LWE reaches the farmers, practitioners – through which bodies, actors, etc.?
7. According to the Logframe there were only 2 DP planned. Why were 4 DP implemented?
8. What indicates that the LWE contributed to a more efficient and effective knowledge transfer and communication regarding NR among water practitioners? How do you define the term “Practitioner”? Do you talk about experts or farmers, local authorities, etc.?
9. What indicates that the LWE contributed to an increased awareness among the region’s population and sectors about the importance and impact of nutrient reduction practices?
10. Have there been changes in behavior that can be measured and that will last as direct effect of the LWE project, the DPs?
11. How were Nutrient reduction good practices, lessons learned, and successful replication strategies disseminated?
12. Does dissemination via IW:LEARN, RBEC-COP, Water Wiki mean that information was uploaded on a website or really sent via Email or post to individuals? In case of the latter, to which level was information distributed (national/regional/local)?
13. Dissemination on international conferences also involved experts – how do you secure that the information reaches the ground, the farmers, municipal authorities, etc.?
14. Which co-financing sources did you use: grants, credits, loans, equity, in-kind, etc.?

9.6. ANNEX 6 - DESK RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY

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2. Final Project Report
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4. Project Implementation Review Report (PIR)
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7. Expert studies
8. Maps
9. Project Website
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11. Project Database
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15. Project reports of environmental assessment in Tirana river
16. Chuck Chaitovitz, GETF: Living Water Exchange: Promoting Nutrient Reduction Best Practices in the CEE, Connecting the Dots (PPP) and Living Water Exchange: Promoting Nutrient Reduction Best Practices in the CEE (PPP)
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33. Report: Biodiversity conservation of the lower Dniester river, Moldova
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36. Recommended BAPS, Final LWE project report
37. Summary of cost/benefits of 8 primary BAPS, Final LWE project report
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43. Factsheet on Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova: Best Agricultural Practice on my Farm
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45. Factsheet on Hungary: Reduction of Nutrient Discharges
46. Factsheet on Hungary: Szódrákos Creek Program – Phase 2
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48. Factsheet on Poland: Rural Environmental Protection Project

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51. Factsheet on Russia and Estonia: Development and Implementation of the Lake Peipsi/Chudskoe Basin Management Programme
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