



Government of Ukraine, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Romania  
and Republic of Serbia



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Additional partners:

European Commission, UNEP, UNOPS

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**Terminal Evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project**  
**“Integrating multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved**  
**transboundary management for the Tisza River Basin”**

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

APR	GEF Annual Performance Review
BRC	Bratislava Regional Centre of UNDP
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DRP	UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project
EU	European Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GWP	Global Water Partnership
HU	Hungary
IA	Implementing Agency
ICPDR	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River
IMCC	Inter-ministerial Co-ordination Committees
IRBM / IRBMP	Integrated River Basin Management (Plan)
IW	International Waters
IW:LEARN	GEF's International Waters Learning Exchange Resources Network
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	Medium Sized Project
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PIR	GEF Project Implementation Report
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PM	Project Manager
PSC	Project Steering Committee
Rep.	Representative
RO	Romania
RS	Republic of Serbia
SAP	Strategic Action Programme
SK	Slovak Republic
TG	Tisza Group (of the ICPDR)
UA	Ukraine
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WFD	Water Framework Directive (EU)
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

## **Executive Summary**

### ***Introduction***

This is the terminal evaluation of the UNDP/GEF Project “Integrating multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved transboundary management for the Tisza River Basin”. The Project constituted a successive stage in GEF’s support of activities within the wider Danube Basin and had the goal of contributing to the environmental management of the Tisza River Basin by introducing and testing new approaches to minimize the impact of floods and to reduce nutrient pollution through enhanced use of wetlands and floodplains.

As set out in the Project Document the objectives of the project were two fold:

1. To integrate water quality, water quantity, land use, and biodiversity objectives within integrated water resources/river basin management (IWRM/IRBM) under the legal umbrella of the EU and ICPDR and;
2. To begin implementation of IWRM principles through the testing of new approaches on wetland and floodplain management through community-based demonstration activities.

The Project was supported by a wide range of institutional and national funding sources. Financial and in-kind contributions from the EU, ICPDR, UNDP, UNEP and Tisza River Basin Governments (Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Serbia) matched the GEF funding for this Project.

The main purpose of this terminal evaluation is to promote accountability for achievement of GEF objectives. The evaluation follows GEF guidelines for assessing IW projects including a Rating of Progress for the results according to their relevance, effectiveness and efficiency; the likelihood of sustainability; and the Project’s monitoring and evaluation system. It also analyses the factors and processes that affected the attainment of project results and sets out important lessons learned and recommendations applicable to GEF’s larger portfolio of projects.

This evaluation was greatly facilitated by the many participants who worked hard to implement the various activities and achieve the impressive results that it has. Where applicable and deserving the evaluation offers due recognition for results successfully attained, together with constructive commentary where improvement is warranted and deemed relevant for possible future interventions.

The evaluation involved four phases of work – planning, information collection and review, key interviews/questionnaires(see attached list), field visits and report writing. The evaluator’s assignment was made easier by being able to attend the Ministerial Meeting and Final Stakeholder meeting in Uzhgorod April 11-13, 2011 and by conducting a two day site visit to several remote regions of a major Demonstration project in the Zakarpattia Region (Carpathian Mountains), in Western Ukraine. The final part of the evaluation process consisted of desk review and report writing during the period of April-May 2011.

## **Main Achievements**

Overall the project excelled in its efforts to extend existing inter-governmental cooperation at the regional level, enabling the Tisza countries to evolve and progress towards a stronger sustainable level of environmental cooperation in the specific river basin.

The primary accomplishment of the Project relates to how it served as a regional catalyst for a higher and more focused level of cooperation in the Tisza River basin. The Project brought together the strength of familiar institutions, existing professional relationships and supplemented them with new international donors, regional authorities, local communities/local governments and local NGOs. Together they contributed to a more accurate priority setting for the Tisza IWRM and undoubtedly generated valuable synergies which should outlast the project itself.

The strategy of simultaneously implementing a 'top down' -'bottom up' approach by combining IWRM policy development with practical Demonstration projects at the local level proved to be an innovative and effective approach worthy of consideration for replication in other basins.

As a whole the Evaluator considers the project to be a very good example of what may be accomplished with a balanced blend of old and new human and institutional resources, collectively amplified by the enthusiastic engagement of local communities. While the alchemy for generating the latter is often elusive, its successful manifestation, - when it occurs, is immediately recognizable and gives rise to reasonable expectations of sustainability.

The Project's **most significant outcome/achievement** was the successful development of the Integrated Tisza River Basin Management Plan which was endorsed by ministers and high level representatives of the five basin countries in a signed MOU in Uzhgorod, Ukraine on April 11, 2011. The Plan is notable for its full compliance with the EU Water Framework Directive and will now be binding on the participating EU member states. It will also serve as an important impetus to the non-EU countries; Ukraine and the Republic of Serbia, both of whom have benefited from participation in the project while receiving support and encouragement to extend important EU policies to their respective countries. The successful development and endorsement of the Tisza ITRBMP is also timely for the fact that it arrives on the threshold of the adoption of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region which is being considered for the summer of 2011.

The other main outcome/achievement of the Project was the successful design, implementation and completion of three local level Demonstration projects which were intended to provide replicable examples of effective floodplain management strategies and effective responses to increased flood events as a consequence of fluctuating flow regime, nutrient retention, habitat restoration and flood management. All three projects were notable for their varying displays of effective catalyzation of available local resources and examples of adaptive management in often unforeseen circumstances and tight delivery periods.

Demonstration project #1 "Selected Measures Towards integrated Land and Water Management in Upper Tisza, Ukraine". This project was particularly successful in demonstrating

a variety of innovative and cost-effective solutions for typical environmental problems faced by communities in the Upper Tisza floodplains. This component was further subdivided into five additional sub-activities which varied both as to local stakeholders and geographic location. These included:

1. Communal waste management system for the villages of Velyky Bychkiv in Ukraine and Bocicoiu Mare in Romania.
2. A local Flood Risk Management Plan was developed and implemented for the village of Velyky Bychkiv in Ukraine.
3. Physical cleaning of mountain stream, riverbed restoration and revitalization of lake habitat, Ukraine and Romania.
4. Re-opening of water monitoring station in Kobyletska Polyana, Ukraine.
5. New low cost waste water treatment facility designed and constructed for local orphanage and boarding school, Velyky Bychkiv, Ukraine.

This Demonstration project was particularly notable for its exemplary implementation success which the Evaluator believes can be directly attributed to several factors beginning with the exceptional local project management team, the many faceted levels of enthusiastic community support (private and public), together with the full backing of the local village mayor of Velyky Bychkiv.

Demonstration project #2 *"Making Space for Water in the Bodrog River basin"*. This project's main objective was to mitigate the consequences of flooding through consistent and holistic management of flood risk in Bodrog river basin countries, Ukraine, Slovakia and Hungary. The project managed to achieve varying degrees of success by creating partnerships between national and local level stakeholders through the development of a strategy for flood mitigation and offering sustainable solutions for flood prevention. Some delivery setbacks were encountered when site venues needed to be changed and exceptionally inclement weather and flooding conditions occurred during project implementation. The project also highlighted the particular challenges faced by local communities where local environmental initiatives are in competition with over arching economic policies which inhibit acceptance of sacrifice for the public good. Nonetheless the project was important for its successful demonstration of broad stakeholder involvement and the introduction, in some regions, of the concept of public hearings and mobilizing public participation. These latter attributes particularly favour the long term sustainability of project outcomes and concurrent expectations for replicability.

Demonstration project #3 *"Integrated land development (ILD) program to improve land use and water management efficiency in the Tisza basin"*. This project had a threefold objective consisting of the need to: (1) develop a comprehensive ILD manual, (2) select specific pilot sites to demonstrate the practical implementation of the ILD approach in Hungary and in the Republic of Serbia and Romania where similar partner organisations were active; and (3) disseminate the information gathered, the experiences gained and the results obtained to the benefit the Tisza basin as a whole and the wider Danube basin community. Viewed objectively, and in hindsight, the project was felt to be too ambitious in scope both for the time allotted and the limited

resources available. Moreover the project suffered a major setback due to the untimely illness and death of the local project manager who had conceived the project and had provided the initial design. Remedial action taken by the MSP PIU team and the hiring of an outside consultant enabled the project to achieve its objectives in modified form. While the project has undeniably produced a very valuable ILD manual, it may be argued that the more valuable outcome was the project's inadvertent success in identifying the full range of problems surrounding the state of ILD acceptance in the Tisza basin countries. The list of barriers and opportunities is a comprehensive one and includes social, ideological, legal and institutional issues, - all of which, taken together, create a very good baseline which lends itself for further government action and donor attention.

Other notable outcomes/achievements of the Project include:

- Raising the scientific and general understanding of the environmental problems in the region and elevating the previously embryonic concept of the Tisza Basin Countries to that of a more self-assured regional voice which should be capable of increasingly articulating coherent and indigenous policies in the future.
- Substantially enhancing the many existing links between the participating countries both through the Tisza Group and through the active involvement of ICPDR, UNDP, UNEP the secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, the latter collective cooperation of which was particularly strengthened.
- Further evidence that both Ukraine and the Republic of Serbia (the non-EU countries) were embedding WFD principles in their respective development of environmental policy and utilizing the project as a further opportunity to intensify their EU integration efforts.
- Highlighting and raising the profile of the over arching issue of climate change as a wider background threat to the particular geography of the Tisza basin, both as to the mountainous areas in the upper reaches as well as to the flood plains and wetlands below.
- Catalyzing diverse groupings of NGOs to take a more active part in solving local environmental problems and (re)introducing the concept of public consultations to a region where evidence of this tradition is still the subject of historical memory, a tradition that was largely obliterated during the collective communist experience.
- Preparation of a Tisza River Basin Communication Strategy which focuses on coping with floods and droughts, integration issues, pollution issues and water scarcity. The proposed methodology and target groups were well identified and the challenges of working with five countries, five cultures and five languages was particularly well addressed.

The overall implementation and attainment of project objectives is rated as ***highly satisfactory***.

### ***Sustainability***

The project has every reason to expect that its major outcomes will be sustainable over the long period. The successful adoption of the ITRBMP particularly augurs well for this expectation as the plan's implementation measures are now binding on the participating EU countries which form the majority of the Tisza group. The only caution to this expectation is the realization that



these participating countries also represent some of the poorest EU countries and fiscal and economic realities in the region cannot be ignored. However the combined effect of the new ITRBMP, the Danube RBMP and the Carpathian Convention can all be expected to ameliorate certain conditions and act as a supporting foundation for further sustainability. In all of this the governing institutional and stable role played by the ICPDR cannot be overestimated.

Less certain are the prospects for the non-EU countries where, especially in Ukraine, persistent fiscal crisis and ongoing administrative reforms create a very unstable environment for effective policy implementation. Further attention to Ukraine and Serbia in any contemplated new basin initiatives should at the very least prevent backsliding and hopefully preserve and advance the conditions that favor sustainability.

The various activities undertaken in the respective three Demonstration projects were rich and varied. Their diversity as to theme and region makes it also difficult to render a categorical projection as to long term sustainability. What is certain is that the individual activities were sufficiently well conceived as to make them relevant, transferable and generally replicable throughout the basin. It also appears that where future sources of financing have been potentially identified, or where minimal resources are required for replication, the chances of sustainability would appear to be that much greater.

The overall sustainability of project outcomes is rated as ***satisfactory***

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

There appeared to have been more than sufficient monitoring and evaluation of the Project owing to the particular nature of the project design and the number of participating agencies. The lead role was provided by the Steering Committee and was supplemented by the individual reporting requirements of participating agencies together with the imbedded oversight provided by ICPDR. As the hierarchy of leadership was agreed to in theory and conceded in practice the M&E is therefore rated as ***satisfactory***.

### ***Weaknesses***

Although this was a medium sized project there appeared to be a rather large number of expectations and related activities that needed to be realized in a very tight time schedule under ideal conditions. Moreover the project design anticipated that the results of the Demonstration projects would provide relevant input to the development of the IRBMP. However these projects themselves were only scheduled to come on stream much later in the project work plan thereby diminishing somewhat their ability to contribute to the overall IRBMP. In addition the allotted time of 1 ½ years often resulted in a hurried attempt to complete their activities before time or financing ran out, or both.

The logistics of conducting many project activities in a challenging geographical region was further amplified by the untimely occurrence of a bout of major flooding during the course of the project itself. While the challenges themselves were adaptively well met, the caution remains that logistics and/or weather can play a disproportionately greater role in affecting project outputs in such regions and these factors should be addressed more carefully in any future project design. In retrospect it's clear that some activities were far too ambitious both for the region itself and for the timing involved.

The day to day financial administration of the project also exposed a number of inhibitors to effective implementation that appear to be rooted in cross cultural differences. The evaluation showed that some local partners were less adept at managing financial records in support of their respective activities, while the financial administrative culture at ICPDR was often challenged by 'on the ground' realities of project expenses in remote regions which did not fit their pattern of classical administration. Since conditions in the field must often be accepted as they are, the challenge will always be on the financial administrative side of the project to show that it understand the constraints of regional conditions and is able to offer a robust response that facilitates project implementation while still preserving the necessary integrity of financial accountability. In this respect the Project would have benefited from more insights gathered at the early design stage that could have alerted the PIU to expect a more fluid and challenging financial implementation environment where 'neat' paper trails would often be the exception rather than the rule.

**Summary of Ratings**

See Table 'A' below for a compilation of overall ratings.

In Summary, this Evaluation finds the overall Results rating for the project to be Satisfactory. The three main components of the Results rating -- Relevance, Effectiveness and Efficiency -- received "Highly Satisfactory," "Satisfactory" and "Satisfactory" ratings respectively.

The Evaluation considered Sustainability with respect to project Outcomes and the Four Main Dimensions of Sustainability (Financial, Socio-political, Institutional/Governance, and Environmental). The likelihood of sustainability for project Outcomes is rated Likely and the likelihood of sustainability with respect to the four dimensions is rated Moderately Likely. The project's Monitoring and Evaluation work is rated Satisfactory.

**Table A: Summary of the ratings of the project.**

Project Aspect	Rating
<b>Overall Result:</b>	Satisfactory
<b>Results breakdown:</b>	
- Relevance	Highly Satisfactory

- Effectiveness	Highly Satisfactory
- Efficiency	Satisfactory
<b>Sustainability</b>	
- Sustainability of Outcomes	Likely
- Four dimensions of Sustainability	Moderately Likely
<b>M&amp;E System</b>	Satisfactory

### ***Methodology of the Evaluation***

The terminal evaluation of the Tisza project was scheduled to take place between April 5 and June 30, 2011 and follows the standard UNDP/GEF guidelines stipulated for this activity. Although the evaluation commenced at the conclusion of the project cycle the Evaluator benefited from the opportunity to attend the final Stakeholders meeting in Uzhgorod, Ukraine April 11-12, 2011. The ability to place 'name to face' proved to be a challenging exercise for the large number of people in attendance, however the opportunity was invaluable for making key introductions for the telephone and face to face interviews which followed.. The interviews were also supplemented by a two day site visit to various locations of the Demonstration project implemented in the upper Tisza near Velyky Bychkiv, Ukraine.

The evaluation process combined a mix of the following tools which enabled the evaluation to be conducted within the imposed constraints of time and money that formed the parameters of the evaluation process.

- Documentation desk reviews
- Stakeholder interviews, telephone and face to face
- Field visit to various sites in the upper Tisza region of Transcarpathia, Ukraine
- Questionnaires

## **1. Introduction and Background**

### **1.1 The Project**

#### **1.1.1 Project Setting**

Located in east-central Europe and flowing down the western side of the Carpathian mountains, the Tisza River as the largest tributary of the Danube River. Its basin has been subjected to many anthropogenic influences over the last 150 years that has resulted in a significantly degraded system. These include engineering works on the river for navigation and flood protection leading to the loss of wetlands and floodplains, and accentuating problems of floods downstream, excessive use of agro-chemicals (leading to nutrient and toxic substance pollution) lack of waste water treatments and mining activities releasing toxic substance pollution. In addition, predictions indicate that future growth of agriculture, coupled with climatic changes that already produce record flooding, will increase pressures on the available water resources. *It is noteworthy to mention that the term of the project coincided with one of the worst floods on record, an event that has not been lost on the participating countries monitoring climate change on their respective territories.*

This MSP is a response to the above and a logical extension of GEF's continuous and long standing support of activities within the Danube – Black Sea Basins going back to its inception in 1991. As a major sub-basin of the Danube River, the countries of the Tisza River Basin organized themselves as the Tisza Group and committed themselves at a very early stage to the development and implementation of a Tisza IRBM, a commitment which was restated at the *Environment for Europe* Ministerial Meeting in Belgrade, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2007. It was here that Ministers from all the relevant countries made statements in connection with the importance of the ongoing cooperation in the Tisza River Basin. to date and the need to prepare and implement an integrated river basin management plan failing which “ *it will not be possible to achieve any important objectives (in the basin)*”.

This MSP offers GEF an opportunity for an exit strategy from the region whereby the participating countries would develop an IRBM plan involving water quality, flood and drought issues together with management of land and water that would also lead to lessons that will have benefit globally for IWRM/IRBM. Complementing and adding to this effort would be the implementation of a series of Demonstration projects that will have significant global replication potential building on earlier successes. Finally, the strengthening of the formal roles and responsibilities of the Tisza Group through the activities of this MSP are intended to provide guidance that can be used elsewhere to develop appropriate mechanisms to assist transboundary water-management institutions. The MSP project was due to commence in March 2008 and close at the end of March 2011.

#### **1.1.2 Problems that the project seeks to address**

The Tisza River Basin (together with the Danube River Basin) has been the subject of many analysis (TDA 1999, 2006, Danube Basin Analysis 2005 and Tisza River Basin Analysis 2007). These analysis showed that the transboundary water resources of the basin are seriously threatened by pollution from domestic, agricultural, mining waste and industrial discharges, and

from unsustainable land-water management practices, resulting in flood and droughts that may be aggravated by fluctuating climatic conditions. In addition it was noted that the Tisza River Basin had lost an estimated 87% of the original floodplains and the region was prone to significant flooding, nutrient pollution and lowering of ground waters that the reconnection or restoration of wetlands/floodplains could address.

According to GEF it was considered timely to utilise these assessments and begin to address some of the key water-related environmental concerns in the Tisza River Basin through concrete actions. The Project Document states that GEF support is clearly necessary for the non-EU countries and that the MSP would target activities above the baseline already committed to within the basin. Specifically, the GEF funding would address issues of integration of water quality and quantity together with land and water management. The GEF funding would also support the pilot projects necessary to demonstrate the important multiple benefits that can be accrued from wetlands and floodplain restoration which are not currently supported by in-country activities.

### **1.1.3 Development objectives and outcomes of the project**

It is clear that the environmental problems of the Tisza River basin require concerted action by all the participating countries to develop and implement a more ecosystem-based approach to integrated river basin management and to address, as a priority, wetlands and floodplain restoration and management.

According to the Project Document the Tisza MSP was intended as a response to these river basin needs by implementing two key project objectives resulting with the following expected outcomes:

1. To integrate water quality, water quantity, land use, and biodiversity objectives within integrated water resources/river basin management (IWRM/IRBM) under the legal umbrella of the EU and ICPDR and;
2. To begin implementation of IWRM principles through the testing of new approaches on wetland and floodplain management through community-based demonstration. The community-level pilot activities will link to the development and implementation of an agreed river basin management plan following the principles of IWRM and tested at the regional/local level under the governance arrangements established for management of the Tisza River Basin. The integration of water quality and quantity management is considered to be a significantly **innovative** approach in the basin and the results of this will be utilised elsewhere in the Danube River Basin through catalytic policies and actions of the ICPDR.

The expected **outcomes** from this MSP include:

1. The adoption of policies and legislation (zoning, land use, etc.) within the countries of the Tisza River Basin that promote the optimal use of wetlands / floodplains and other

habitat for flood mitigation, nutrient retention, biodiversity enhancement and social amenity value consistent with the EU WFD and IWRM; and

2. Demonstrations of effective floodplain management strategies including the adaptation to increased flood events as a consequence of fluctuating flow regime for, nutrient retention, habitat restoration, and flood management implemented at local level. These outcomes and project outputs of actual hectares of wetlands reconnected/restored/conserved will encourage the replication of these GEF-funded pilots as new approaches on the use of wetlands with their multiple environmental benefits throughout the region and with potential for global dissemination.

### **1.1.3 Main Stakeholders**

The ProDoc describes the main stakeholders of the proposed project as being the users of the natural resources, and those whose livelihoods depends on the natural resources of the Tisza basin. In that regard the ministries of Environment, ministries with control of land and water resources, as well as new institutions created by the project were to play a key role in the implementation of project activities, thus enhancing capacity within the institutions as well as complementing and strengthening existing national efforts to address environmental issues.

Based on their perceived degree of influence on the project and their express interest in it, the following were identified as the key stakeholders for the purpose of consultations:

- The beneficiary countries (UA, RO, SK, HU, RS) represented by their membership in the Tisza Working Group;
- UNDP through their role as an IA and as financier of an additional Demonstration project;
- The ICPDR as a co-executing agency with UNOPS and body responsible for the operation of the Tisza Group activities and provider of in-kind support to the MSP;
- UNEP through the activities of the Carpathian Convention, and provider of in-kind support to the MSP through participation of experts in joint activities involving wetlands and / or integrated water resource management within the Tisza River Basin;
- European Commission as co-chair of the Tisza Group and provider of a cash contribution specifically to support the activities leading to a river basin management plan for the Tisza River Basin.
- The scientific communities in each beneficiary country;
- Local NGOs.

### 1.1.5 Results expected

The MSP ProDoc foresaw the end of project situation where there was:

- for Component #1; an adopted IRBM plan involving water quality, flood and drought issues together with management of both land and water issues;
- for Component #2; a completed series of Demonstration projects that will have significant global replication potential;
- strengthened formal roles and responsibilities of and within the Tisza Group;

In addition, the ProDoc listed the following as indicators of the satisfactory achievement of the two above two components:

#### Outputs expected from Component 1

- Agreement on strategies to balance water resources and water use, with a specific focus on the utilisation and restoration of wetlands and floodplains;
- Agreement on strategies to reduce nutrient and toxic substance pollution, with a focus on the reductions/retention that can be achieved through improved management of wetlands and floodplains;
- Adoption and implementation of an integrated plan endorsed by all countries;
- Agreement to introduce new policies with regards to wetlands / floodplains within the basin.
- Testing of GEF sub-basin management approaches utilising existing institutional structures.
- Dissemination and replication plan

#### Outputs Expected from Component 2

- Stakeholder workshops and reports
- Agreed demonstration sites and projects
- Completion and evaluation of Demonstration projects
- Results of Demonstration projects having an influence on the development of river basin management plans;
- Demonstration projects resulting in changes in policy at a local and national level with regards to the multiple uses of wetlands and floodplain.
- Dissemination and replication plan.

## 1.2 The Evaluation

### 1.2.1 The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Principles

In accordance with the monitoring and evaluation policy of the GEF<sup>1</sup>, this evaluation is guided by, and has applied, the following principles:

**Independence** The Evaluator is independent and has not been engaged in the Project activities, nor was he responsible in the past for the design, implementation or supervision of the project.

**Impartiality** The Evaluator endeavoured to provide a comprehensive and balanced presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the project. The evaluation process has been impartial in all stages and taken into account all the views received from stakeholders.

**Transparency** The Evaluator conveyed in as open a manner as possible the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied and the intended use of the findings. This evaluation report aims to provide transparent information on its sources, methodologies and approach.

**Disclosure** This report serves as a mechanism through which the findings and lessons identified in the evaluation are disseminated to policymakers, operational staff, beneficiaries, the general public and other stakeholders.

**Ethical** The Evaluator has respected the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and the sources of specific information and opinions in this report are not disclosed except where necessary and then only after confirmation with the consultee.

**Competencies and Capacities** The terms of reference provided to the Evaluator appear in Annex 1 and the methodology for the assessment of results and performance is described below (section 1.3).

**Credibility** This evaluation has been based on data and observations which are considered reliable and dependable with reference to the quality of instruments and procedures and analysis used to collect and interpret information.

**Utility** The Evaluator has strived to be as well-informed as possible and this ensuing report is considered as relevant, timely and as concise as possible. In an attempt to be of maximum benefit to stakeholders, the report presents in a complete and balanced way the evidence, findings and issues, conclusions and recommendations.

### 1.2.2 Evaluation objectives and Terms of Reference

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<sup>1</sup> Global Environment Facility (2006) *The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*.



The Terminal Evaluation is intended to provide a comprehensive overall assessment of the project and serves as an opportunity to critically assess administrative and technical strategies, issues and constraints. The evaluation sets about attempting to provide answers to the following questions:

- Did the project achieve its objectives?
- Did it do it well?
- Are the results likely to be sustainable

Like all GEF Terminal Evaluations, this TE is being carried out:

- To promote accountability and transparency, and to assess and disclose levels of project accomplishments;
- To synthesize lessons that may help improve the selection, design and implementation of future GEF activities;
- To provide feedback on issues that are recurrent across the portfolio and need attention, and on improvements regarding previously identified issues; and,
- To contribute to the GEF Evaluation Office databases for aggregation, analysis and reporting on effectiveness of GEF operations in achieving global environmental benefits and on quality of monitoring and evaluation across the GEF system.

### **1.2.3 Mission activities and assignment timeline**

The evaluation was conducted by a single independent evaluator and was scheduled to take place between April 5 and June 30, 2011. The evaluation follows the standard UNDP/GEF guidelines stipulated for this activity. Although the evaluation commenced at the conclusion of the project cycle the Evaluator benefited from the opportunity to attend the final Stakeholders meeting in Uzhgorod, Ukraine April 11-12, 2011. The ability to place 'name to face' proved to be a challenging exercise for the large number of people in attendance, however the opportunity was invaluable for making key introductions for the telephone and face to face interviews which followed.. The interviews were also supplemented by a two day site visit to various locations of the Demonstration project implemented in the upper Tisza near Velyky Bychkiv, Ukraine.

In the first week of June the evaluator presented a draft Executive Summary which was circulated to the Heads of Delegation together with a short slide presentation of Fact Findings, Recommendations and Lessons Learned which was presented to the SC meeting in Kyiv June 16-17. Comments were invited from all concerned and a final report was delivered in early July.

## **1.3 Methodology and approach**

### **1.3.1 Evaluation boundaries**

The Tisza project continued to have a flurry of activities right up to project closure however the Evaluator was only engaged in time to attend the final Stakeholder meeting in April, 2011. With limited time and opportunities to visit demonstration sites it was agreed to make an extended visit to the Velykyy Bychkiv site in Ukraine where there was more tangible evidence of the activities which had taken place during the course of the project. Lengthy telephone interviews took place instead with the project managers of the demonstration sites not visited in the neighbouring countries.

A further boundary on the scope of this evaluation relates to the technical aspects of the developed IRBM which is not within the evaluator's terms of reference. However the process applied to produce the plan as well as the likelihood of its sustainability, remains part of this evaluation.

### **1.3.2 The approach adopted**

The evaluation process comprised four phases. The first phase was one of data and information gathering. It started with a review of relevant documents made available electronically by the PIU and various project stakeholders and participating project specialists. In addition, relevant websites were also visited and studied. These were supplemented by attendance at the final stakeholder meeting in Uzhgorod in April, 2011 where more documents were received and initial introductions were made to project managers, specialists, consultants and members of the Tisza Working Group. This was quickly followed by site visits to various Demonstration projects near Velykyy Bychkiv in western Ukraine. The aim was to capture as broad assortment of views and opinions as quickly possible within the time available.

The second phase focused on telephone interviews and questionnaires to key players representing participating agency partners, beneficiary countries and project managers.

The third phase consisted of analysis, discussion and drafting from home base. This phase concluded with the production of a draft Executive Summary of the report which was forwarded to the PIU and Heads of Delegation for their comments.

The fourth and final phase refined the draft in the light of the comments received, and produced this final report. Guidance provided by GEF and UNDP evaluation documents was adhered to in the preparation of this terminal evaluation. As noted in the Acknowledgements, the Evaluator benefited greatly from the wide spectrum of views, opinions and advice that he received during the course of his work however the conclusions reached and the recommendations made represent the independent views of the Evaluator alone.

### **1.3.3 Documents reviewed and consulted**

The Evaluator was provided with an initial list of documents in the Terms of Reference. Further advice on relevant documents, as well as the documents themselves in most cases, was provided by the PIU and project participants attending the previously referred to Stakeholder

meeting. References to documentation are noted, in most cases, in footnotes and the full list of documents reviewed and/or consulted by the Evaluator is in Annex 2.

#### **1.3.4 Consultations**

Consultations by the Evaluator took place primarily by phone and email together with face to face meetings in Velykyy Bychkiv and Kyiv, Ukraine. .

The Evaluator consulted in excess of 30 individuals. These ranged from the key agency partners (ICPDR, UNDP, UNEP, EU and UNOPS) to project personnel and consultants, various government officials and technical specialists and NGOs dealing with water and related issues. Most face to face and telephone interviews followed the same pattern, namely, a brief introduction on the purpose of the mission followed by an identification of the relationship that the person interviewed had with the project, and his/her views on the project. Particular emphasis was placed on whether the person being interviewed had achieved their objectives, whether they had done this effectively, and whether the project's products and benefits were likely to be sustainable. Face-to-face consultations were the exception as telephone and email enabled a far wider range of people to be interviewed scattered throughout the five beneficiary countries and PIU management in Vienna. A full list of persons consulted by the Evaluator is found in Annex 3.

#### **1.3.5 The rating system**

GEF guidance requires certain project aspects to be addressed by a terminal evaluation and a commentary, analysis and rating is required for each of:

Project concept and design

Stakeholder participation in project formulation

Implementation approach

Monitoring and evaluation

Stakeholder participation

Attainment of Outcomes and achievement of Objective.

Each of the aspects has been rated separately with brief justifications based on findings. In addition, the various project elements have also been rated, as has the project as a whole.

The standard GEF rating system was applied, namely:

**Highly Satisfactory (HS):** The project has no shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency

**Satisfactory (S):** The project has minor shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency

**Moderately Satisfactory (MS):** The project has moderate shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency

**Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):** The project has significant shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency

**Unsatisfactory (U):** The project has major shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency

**Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):** The project has severe shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency

#### **1.4 Structure of this report**

The Evaluator has made an effort to keep this report brief, to the point and easy to understand. It is made up of four substantive parts. Following the executive summary that encapsulates the essence of the information contained in the report, the first part provides the introduction and the background to the assignment. It starts with a brief introduction to the project and it then explains the purpose of the evaluation, exactly what was evaluated and the methods used.

The next part is the main substantive part of this report and comprises four inter-related sections. It presents the findings of the evaluation exercise in terms of the basic project concept and design, its implementation, administration and management, its achievements, results and impacts, and the potential for sustainability of the products and services that it produced. The findings are based on factual evidence obtained by the Evaluator through document reviews and consultations with stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The third part is the conclusions section which gathers together a summary of the ratings given and conclusions that had been reached throughout the rest of the report and augments them to create a cohesive ending arising from the investigation. This section in turn leads to the final section comprising the recommendations.

## **2 Findings: Project Formulation**

### **2.1 Project Design**

The ProDoc describes the Tisza River Basin as being subject to many competing demands for water resources and that current predictions include scenarios where future water demand exceeds the available resources. From an over arching perspective the project was designed as an essential response to avoiding these damaging environmental impacts and to reduce possible political tensions between the five countries.

At an implementation level the project was designed to play a catalytic role in bringing the five Tisza river basin countries together for the purpose of transboundary integrated river basin management. Being regional and transboundary in nature, the project was designed to enable the basin countries to improve and build new cooperative frameworks, ensure adherence to

international conventions, as well as strengthen national laws, regulations, and management regimes to improve the likelihood of sustainability of resource use and reduce existing and potential degradation.

The project was also designed to test the ability of a GEF-catalyzed transboundary basin institution to operate at a subsidiary transboundary basin level for the site-specific concerns that sub-group of countries face. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), which has an overall coordination to water management in Danube River Basin has established the *Tisza Group* whose role, as the responsible institution for managing the transboundary issues of the Tisza River Basin, was reaffirmed by all five countries of the basin in a Ministerial Declaration in 2004 and a recent October 2007 restatement of commitments. The formation of the Tisza Group enables the countries of the basin to effectively implement the European Union's (EU) Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the ongoing activities of implementing the agreed Danube River Basin SAP at a different, smaller transboundary scale. Upon successful completion of the MSP, the results will enable replication in other smaller basins of the Danube and capacity building for other basins in the GEF international waters portfolio.

The Project was supported by a wide range of institutional and national funding sources. Financial and in-kind contributions from the EU, ICPDR, UNDP, UNEP and Tisza River Basin Governments (Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Serbia) matched the GEF funding for this Project.

The overall Project consisted of two main components:

- Integrating water quality, water quantity, land use, and biodiversity objectives within integrated water resources/river basin management under the legal umbrella of the EU and ICPDR; and,
- Implementation of IWRM principles through the testing of new approaches on wetland and floodplain management through community-based demonstration.

The MSP also utilised appropriate results from the UNDP/GEF DRP and implemented these in targeted Demonstration projects within the Tisza River Basin as a means to validate the replication potential. This 'scaling down' of a Danube Basin programmes to a sub-basin was an important step in bringing the results of the DRP to the community level and assisted with the development of an IRBM plan that was **innovative for its utilization of both a 'top-down' and a 'bottom-up' approach**. This strategy of combining IWRM policy development with practical Demonstration projects at the local level proved to be an innovative and effective approach worthy of consideration for replication in other basins.

Although this was a medium sized project there appeared to be a rather large number of expectations and related activities that needed to be realized in a very tight three year time frame operating under ideal conditions. Moreover the project design anticipated that the results of the Demonstration projects would provide relevant input to the development of the IRBMP. However these projects themselves were only scheduled to come on stream much later in the

project work plan thereby posing additional challenges for the PIU to effectively integrate them into overall IRBMP development.

The logistics of conducting many project activities in a challenging geographical region was further amplified by the untimely occurrence of a bout of major flooding during the course of the project itself. While the challenges themselves were adaptively well met, the caution remains that logistics and/or weather can play a disproportionately greater role in affecting project outputs in such regions and these factors should be addressed more carefully in any future project design. In retrospect it's clear that some activities were far too ambitious both for the region itself and for the timing involved.

The day to day financial administration of the project also exposed a number of inhibitors to effective implementation that appear to be rooted in cross cultural differences. The evaluation showed that some local partners were less adept at managing financial records in support of their respective activities, while the financial administrative culture at ICPDR was often challenged by 'on the ground' realities of project expenses in remote regions which did not fit their pattern of classical administration. Since conditions in the field must often be accepted as they are, the challenge will always be on the financial administrative side of the project to show that it understand the constraints of regional conditions and is able to offer a robust response that facilitates project implementation while still preserving the necessary integrity of financial accountability. In this respect the Project would have benefited from more insights gathered at the early design stage that could have alerted the PIU to expect a more fluid and challenging financial implementation environment where 'neat' paper trails would often be the exception rather than the rule.

Notwithstanding the above, it was not felt that the occasional slippage experienced in the completion of some of the project activities had a significant impact on the final IRBMP product. In this regard the capable use of adaptive management effectively mitigated any possible negative impacts that the overall integrity of the Plan was not affected. The resulting IRBMP (including the lessons learned from the pilot Demonstration projects) are now legally binding in three of the countries and have the highest political commitment in Ukraine and Serbia. An MoU to this effect was signed at a Ministerial meeting in Uzhgorod Ukraine on April 11, 2011 where Ministers and representatives from all basin countries committed themselves to the implementation of the Plan.

Overall rating for the project concept and design is **Satisfactory**.

## **2.2 Linkages between the project and other interventions**

The Tisza countries are all signatories to the Danube River Protection Convention (DRPC), which is a legally binding document and provides a framework for cooperation between the parties. The Danube countries under the obligations of the DRPC have established the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) creating an institutional framework not only for pollution control and protection of water bodies in the

Danube basin, but also the integrated management and sustainable use of basin's natural resources. In November 2000 the ICPDR adopted its first Joint Action Programme (JAP) for the Danube which addresses pollution from point and non-point sources, wetland and floodplain restoration, priority substances, water quality standards, prevention of accidental pollution, flooding and river basin management. The Tisza MoU, and the formation of the Tisza Group as the responsible institution, provides a strong legal basis for the implementation of the Integrated River Basin Management Plan in the longer-term. It should also meet the commitments of the countries under the Carpathian Convention. Ensuring that this is achieved requires close communication between the main participating parties and a mutual understanding of their objectives and policies.

The GEF had four biodiversity projects in the region that were intended to assist with the identification of Demonstration projects with an IW focus, integrating land and water management.

- The Hungarian project, which focused on conservation and restoration of the globally significant biodiversity of the Tisza river floodplain through integrated floodplain management.
- The Romanian project, which focused on strengthening Romania's protected area system by demonstrating public-private partnership in Romania's Maramures Nature Park.
- The Slovakian project, which focused on integration of ecosystems management principles and practices into land and water management of Slovakia's Eastern lowlands.
- The Ukrainian project, which focused on conserving globally significant biodiversity and mitigating/reducing environmental risk by integrating biodiversity conservation principles and practices into forestry and watershed management in Ukraine's Trans Carpathian region.

This MSP project provided an opportunity to meld the outputs of these prior GEF and other Tisza basin projects into a single integrated land and water management use project platform. There were significant crossover possibilities between the GEF Biodiversity and the International Waters portfolios with the potential for significant synergies for new, more effective future project design. The linkage to the UNDP Carpathian-region Umbrella programme demonstrated the programmatic approach that is keenly advocated by the GEF Council.

### **2.3 Country Ownership**

The Evaluator finds that there was an exceptionally high level of country ownership in the project which has its rationale, both in the institutional arrangements that were put in place, and also in the considerable baseline activities in the region which had preceded the MSP.

Beginning with the latter first, the list of prior GEF activities in the region which began the cooperation process is quite substantial. These included:

- the Danube TDA1999 and TDA2006,
- the ICPDR Danube River Basin Analysis 2005,
- ICPDR Flood Action Programme, and
- a Tisza River Basin Analysis in 2007.

All of these activities provided the various country specialists with an opportunity to work together towards common objectives and fostered the political spirit of national information exchange which lies at the heart of all transboundary cooperation. They also created the imperative to extend the limits of information exchange beyond the boundaries of the original activities. By the time the current MSP came on stream the 'culture' of shared data exchange was well established in the basin and it was quite evident that the respective governments and their scientific agencies were in full ownership and control of the project.

The main political driving force in the MSP was the Tisza Group representing the five countries in the basin. This formal gathering constituted a subset of the ICPDR and was formed on the basis of an earlier MoU signed by the basin countries in December 2004. As a general activity the Tisza Group provides a forum and a formal mechanism for information exchange and coordination of other Tisza related activities in the region. As to its specific role in the MSP, the Tisza group acted as the management advisory panel for the MSP and its members formed part of the Project Steering Committee together with representatives of the Carpathian Convention and GEF Implementing Agencies. Taken together a high degree of country ownership was the final result.

The country ownership/drivenness is rated **Highly Satisfactory**.

## **2.4 Governance: Implementation and Institutional Framework**

The MSP Tisza project was implemented by the UNDP through its Bratislava Regional Centre (BRC) and executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) based in Copenhagen and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) Secretariat, based in Vienna.

The MSP project was guided by a Project Steering Committee composed of members representing the five basin countries, the ICPDR, EU, the three GEF implementing agencies and stakeholders. Additionally, representation from members of the Tisza Group, the Carpathian Convention Secretariat, and other relevant international organizations provided support to the Steering Committee.

The ProDoc states that the project was to be organised under the umbrella of the ICPDR as this organisation was responsible for the management of the whole Danube River Basin and had established the Tisza Group to manage the Tisza River Basin. The ICPDR meanwhile played a vital and adaptive role in the overall management of the project. In the course of the evaluation it was frequently mentioned that the ICPDR co-financed critical activities and provided invaluable in kind support and essential administrative assistance whose scope and duration far exceeded the initial expectations of the parties involved. Taken together, the subtlety and



variety of these many interventions provided incalculable support to the success of the project. In that regard it can be unequivocally stated that the Tisza MSP benefited greatly from ICPDR's vision and the institutional ability to provide rapid response resources to keep the process moving.

The implementation role of UNDP is singled out for special mention especially so for its adaptive management approach and financing critical project activities throughout the project. This was especially evident during the Inception Phase when the need arose to reorganize the project budget from initially supporting an additional Demonstration project to providing technical assistance and supporting additional workshops/dissemination events which were perceived to be of more crucial importance. An example of the latter was UNDP's support for holding sub-regional Integration Workshops, integration being a 'new' topic to water management and an important evolution in the region.

An over arching feature of project implementation was the multiplicity of participating agencies which required individual attention to specific institutional requirements particularly in the reporting process.

Project Governance is rated as **Highly Satisfactory**

## **2.5 Management Arrangements**

The day to day management of the project was handled by a small PIU located in the ICPDR Secretariat in Vienna. Overall management of the project was handled by a part-time Chief Technical Advisor-Project Manager responsible for overall implementation of the MSP together with the support of the ICPDR Executive Secretary. They in turn were further supported by a full time Project Assistant/ Co-ordinator and a part time Project Administrator/Financial Manager. The PIU office in Vienna was responsible for recruiting and managing a diverse group of project managers responsible for implementing the various Demonstration projects in the regions.

Imbedding the PIU at the ICPDR Secretariat proved to be a calculated decision that provided numerous cost benefits during the project ranging from the ability to share in the ICPDR Secretariat's institutional knowledge, its recognition factor, technical expertise as well as the ability to access considerable co-financing.

Stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation process were overwhelmingly in favour of the management arrangements and especially singled out project management personnel for their individual and collective professionalism, expertise and accessibility during the course of the project. Given the budgetary restrictions involved in the Tisza project the management arrangements did indeed turn out to be an exceptionally cost effective solution however the Evaluator recognizes the unique circumstances of this MSP and would not necessarily advocate nor endorse part-time CTA Manager arrangements for other basin jurisdictions.

The Project Implementation and Management arrangement is rated **Highly Satisfactory**.

## **2.6 Analysis of Logical Framework Approach**

A GEF published reader guide describes the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) as an open set of tools for project design and management. Its purpose is to provide a clear, rational framework for planning the envisioned activities and determining how to measure a project's success, while taking external factors into account.

The Tisza MSP utilized this approach and followed a IW Results Based Management Framework containing a suite of departure points (baseline), targets, indicators and risks along the way. The Mid-Term Evaluation drew attention to some minor anomalies in its design and other comments were later received to the effect that several indicators were not 'smart' (in GEF terms) – as they were difficult or impossible to measure (nutrients removed, etc). However through the use of models on nutrients some estimates were made and included in annual reports to the PSC. Such reports were supplemented by semi-annual Risk Log Matrix assessments provided to UNDP.

Taken as a whole it would appear that the IW Results Based Management Framework was used more as a general implementation guideline for PIU management than a detailed reporting tool for PSC consideration.

## **2.7 Stakeholder Participation**

The Tisza MSP did not have a separate Stakeholder Participation Strategy and relied instead on the strategy developed by the ICPDR for public participation throughout the Danube River Basin. This is not intended as a criticism but only as an observation reflecting that prior studies in the wider basin already existed and that the list of potential stakeholders would only need minor adjustment given the 'known' quantity and quality of possible institutional participants.

The ProDoc laid great emphasis on the need to involve the input of stakeholder groups in the development and implementation of the IRBM plan. This input was considered to be a central component of the project with stakeholders from all levels encouraged to collaborate among themselves in the production of this document. Even more emphasis was placed on stakeholder participation in the various Demonstration projects throughout the basin. This was evident by the significant effort to engage the wider NGO community by publicly soliciting calls for proposals within a targeted area. It was here that the project exhibited some of its higher profile successes as many local community NGOs brought a surprisingly high level of energy and enthusiasm to locally organized project activities. Moreover the project was able to attract the participation of well known international NGOs such as WWF, REC, DEF and GWP.

This rich mixture of the old and the new, - international, regional and local NGOs – constituted much valuable broad sector underpinning to the development of the Tisza IRBM, all of which

enhanced its public support and legitimacy. This was augmented by the participation of certain State institutions which had prior involvement in Tisza basin activities, thereby bringing much valuable institutional memory and context to their participation.

Stakeholder participation at the project implementation level is rated **Satisfactory**.

## **2.8 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Tisza MSP utilized a number of monitoring modalities which to some degree reflect the unique management arrangements by which the project was implemented.

The main M&E tool set out in the ProDoc was a four page IW Results Based Management Framework in standard form with outcomes, indicators, sources of verification and risk assumptions clearly delineated therein. In addition the CTA prepared annual work plans which set out timelines for meeting the various objectives on an annual basis. These in turn were approved annually at project SC meetings which provided a narrative reference to progress and/or slippage in the fulfilment of the annual work plan.

Over the course of the project the SC minutes confirm that both progress and slippage were noted thereby confirming the use of the M&E tool during project implementation. In addition there are recorded references to revisions being made to the work plan, time line and indicators, all of which would confirm the usefulness of the IW Results Based Management Framework in practice.

The Evaluator took note of the fact the large number of participating agencies all required the submission of periodic reports which were to be compliant with their specific agency requirements. It remains an open question as to how useful the various reporting requirements were as a tool for project management requirements, however it is clear that the multiplicity placed an additional burden on CTA/PIU time resources. Current practice would suggest that this is the price of joint agency participation and the inherent overlaps and redundancies are institutional issues the agencies will need to address themselves.

The ProDoc and the mid-term evaluation summarized the M&E situation in the project quite thoroughly. The list of CTA reporting requirements which were evident then and continued to the end of the project were as follows::

- CTA produced Quarterly Progress Reports and Risk Matrix Assessments to UNDP and shared with other participating agencies;
- CTA's Annual project report/ project implementation review (APR/PIR) and associated IW Results Based Management Framework presented for discussion and approval to Tripartite meeting (i.e. PSC convening the project, UNDP and governments) and shared with the GEF Regional Coordination Unit;
- CTA prepared detailed yearly reports to UNOPS executing agency.

- An independent MTE to be undertaken in month 18 (November 2009) presented to a tripartite/PSC review held in accordance with UNDP procedures;
- An independent final project evaluation to be undertaken in the last month of implementation of the project (this current report).
- A financial audit according to UNDP/GEF rules and regulations

Progress reports are also expected and presented at key meetings associated with the Project, such as the Tisza Group Meetings, ICPDR Ordinary Meetings.

Taken together it is clear there were more than adequate monitoring modalities utilized in the MSP project and that these multiplicities provided ample opportunities to assess the current implementation status of the project at any given time. However future project design involving many participating agencies may wish to address the utility of what appear to be M&E overlaps and redundancies in the Tisza MSP.

The M&E arrangements are rated **Satisfactory**.

## 2.9 Cost-effectiveness

The ProDoc indicates that, aside from leveraging significant cash and in-kind contributions from the other partners in this MSP, the project's real legacy and indicator of cost-effectiveness will be the commitment of the national governments to continue the work of IWRM after the completion of the MSP.

This would appear to be a valid argument as IWRM implementation in the EU countries is a legal obligation whereas the existing arrangements to implement the EU WFD upon which the IWRM is based has been accepted by the non-EU countries as well. Also, the close involvement of the European Commission DG Environment secures cost-efficient work among all EU partners.

Moreover the MSP has the benefit of institutional support of the ICPDR when the time comes to replicating the IWRM development strategy elsewhere in the Danube River Basin and beyond. As at project's end there is evidence of replication interest in the Danube Delta, for the Prut River in Ukraine and from as far away as Malaysia.

Finally from a management/administrative point of view the decision to locate the PIU at the ICPDR Secretariat in Vienna is also evaluated as a cost-effective decision.

The cost-effectiveness is rated **Highly Satisfactory**.

## 2.10 UNDP Comparative advantage

The ProDoc provides a good summary of the UNDP comparative advantage which traces its

many years of experience to UNDP/GEF engagement in the Danube region back to the early 1990s, notably the UNDP/GEF Pollution Reduction Programme (1998-2002) and UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project (2003-2007). Both supported and facilitated the important early years of implementing the Danube Protection Convention (in force since 1998) and the diverse challenging work of the ICPDR (with its Expert Groups) and the development of the Danube-basin wide coordination of transboundary water management.

Based on UNDP/GEF's Danube TDA 1999, the new WFD-oriented water management was built up since the year 2000 with the benefit of diverse UNDP/GEF-funded studies and important expert support. These activities always included the Tisza basin and its specific subjects (e.g. it was the first in the Danube basin to have a regional analysis of pollution risk spots).

The MSP CTA was deputy head of the UNDP/GEF DRP office during 2004-07 and brought important institutional memory and transfer of UNDP experience into the MSP activities.

## **2.11 Replication Approach**

The ProDoc indicates the MSP would develop and support a replication strategy to ensure the broader dissemination of the lessons learnt and results achieved during the implementation of the MSP. Both the Demonstration projects and the development of the IRBM plan were to provide valuable lessons that would have applicability elsewhere in the Tisza / Danube Basins and more generally, worldwide. To ensure that this important activity was given a high priority a dedicated component was devoted to dissemination and developing replication actions.

In addition Linkages were to be made to the GEF IW-LEARN programme and WaterWiki. The project was to endeavour to make maximum use of their products and services and to support the sustainability of the IW-LEARN website.

The replication Strategy was to consist of two major elements:

1. The MSP was to promote replication of its activities through an intensive monitoring, learning, outreach and evaluation process.
2. Replication of Demonstration Projects throughout the Tisza and wider Danube basin.

By end of project a draft Communication Strategy was developed which is intended to provide an effective record of the achievements of the Tisza MSP and assist with their dissemination via the GEF IW LEARN. It was also intended that the strategy be a guide to the on-going work of the Tisza Group.

The draft Strategy provides an in depth insight into the prospective methods and tactics by which the key messages of the work completed by the project and ICPDR's Tisza group can be conveyed. The details of the strategy and the material to be disseminated are to be agreed with the Tisza MSP PIU and later on by the Tisza Group. The document suggests a recommended approach, level of detail, methodology and target groups of a 'general but interested' audience.

The authors of the Strategy indicated that this should be a living document managed by the Tisza Group and subjected to ongoing review and updated as activities are carried out and implemented. Also, the Strategy would need to be reconciled with the current ICPDR communications strategy in order to provide the Tisza Group with a means to use and sustain it.

The finalised version is to intended to serve as a background material for actual communication activities. As the Danube Day in the region is an ongoing success, it was felt that a corresponding Tisza Day campaign would enhance the impact of this strategy.

The replication approach is rated **Satisfactory**.

## 2.12 Risks and risk management

A detailed breakdown of the indicators, assumptions and risks associated with the project were included in the ProDoc in the form of a four page IW Results Based Management Framework. A summary of the main risks and assumptions for the MSP are presented below.

Assumptions:

- Demonstration project ownership is clearly defined at the national and regional level.
- Appropriate demonstration sites found
- Land-ownership issues resolved
- Willingness of governments to continue work
- Demonstration project have potential and interest for replication
- Ability to obtain formal approval for IRBM plan
- National Plans standardised sufficiently to support IRBM plan
- Willingness to continue the implementation of the IRBM plan at the regional level
- The five basin countries welcome the value of the coordination of environmental governance measures as a means to improve regional sustainable development and cooperative use of shared resources.
- The basin countries see the value of establishing management mechanisms for integrated management of land and water in the Tisza River Basin over and above the minimal national requirements set out in the EU WFD and complementing the ICPDR.
- The various basin wide initiatives can be brought together under a single umbrella (IRBM plan, UNDP Sustainable Development Strategy, EU WFD, Carpathian Convention, etc.).

Risks:

- Reluctance by national authorities to form inter-ministerial co-ordination committees
- Countries unwilling to endorse IRBM plan
- Project fails to address transboundary issue intended

- Lack of financial resources to implement IRBM plan

In addition to the regular reporting requirements of the MSP the CTA/PIU produced at least five periodic risk assessment reports in the form of a Risk Log Matrix. The benefits of these reports are readily apparent as they concisely identified the essential components of a risk threat and the appropriate countermeasures taken by the appropriate agency or management at any given stage in the project. A descriptive itemization of the component matrix includes the following items: (1) risk description, (2) category (political, operational or financial), (3) impact and probability rating, (4) proposed countermeasures, (5) responsible agency, (6) date first identified, (7) last update, (8) current status.

Given the multiplicity of reporting requirements in the project the Risk Log Matrix added another useful tool for effective risk management in project implementation

Risk management approach is rated as **Satisfactory**.

### **2.13 Financial Planning and Co-financing**

The Project was supported by a wide range of institutional and national funding sources. Financial and in-kind contributions from the EC, ICPDR, UNDP, UNEP and Tisza River Basin Governments (Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Serbia) were intended to match the GEF funding for this Project. The procurement/disbursement process was handled by ICPDR through a contractual arrangement with UNOPS and under ICPDR specifications as an inter-governmental body fully subject to audit. In addition the project budget was revised during the Inception Phase with agreement of the PSC to accommodate 3 and not 4 Demonstration projects with slightly more focus on the IRBMP.

Although the main financial streams committed by participating agencies did not all begin to flow immediately at project commencement, the PIU was fortunate to be able to adapt to the circumstances and was able to coherently organize project activities from co-financing sources as they became available in a sequential distribution pattern.

In particular, additional EC DG ENv funding was available at the commencement of the project and allowed activities to get underway early, focusing on support of the EU Water Framework Directive and specifically on finalization of the River Basin Management Plan. The GEF funds, which arrived later, targeted the non-EU countries in particular and addressed issues above the on-going baseline – specifically the pilot floodplain restoration Demonstration projects and extended existing river basin management actions to include a fully Integrated River Basin Management plan. In turn, UNDP later made a significant financial contribution and allowed key ‘adaptive management’ changes to occur following the Regional Integration workshop by organizing three sub-regional integration workshops centred on the Demonstration projects.

There appears to be a general consensus that MSP co-financing exceeded project expectations and this conclusion was held especially by the participating countries who believed they contributed far more than planned. In addition there was an extra cash contribution from the Hungarian Ministry of Environment and the previously mentioned extra in-kind co-financing provided by ICPDR and EC DG ENv. The latter provided co-financing for integration workshop

experts and management of workshops while Coca Cola provided an unexpected \$55,000 for solid waste management activities in Ukraine.

A breakdown of the project sources of financing as taken from the CTA Final Report appears in the table below. It shows the original project budget and end of project status with additional co-financing amounts received during the three year term.

Sources of Financing	Budget at ProDoc USD	Final Budget USD
GEF	1,000,000	1,000,000
UNDP	200,000	200,000
Governments of Tisza Basin	400,000	404,000
ICPDR	100,000	100,000
EU	180,000	220,000
UNEP (Carpathian Convention)	50,000	53,000
Demonstration projects co-financing:		
Upper Tisza	0	90,000
Bodrog	0	75,000
ILD	0	25,000
Other (Coca Cola)	0	55,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,930,000</b>	<b>2,167,000</b>

The financial planning and co-financing is rated **Highly Satisfactory**.

## 2.14 The Mid-Term Evaluation

A Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) was carried on the MSP by a team of independent consultants led by Mr. Alexander Zinke. The MTE took place in 2009 near the midpoint in the project 's three year term and the draft MTE report was presented at the UNDP/GEF Tisza MSP Project Steering Committee December 9th 2009, in Vienna.

The purpose of the MTE was to examine the performance of all activities undertaken in the Tisza MSP project since the beginning of its implementation. The MTE was intended to identify weaknesses and strengths of the project design and execution. It was to also make recommendations for any necessary changes in the overall design and orientation of the project, after first evaluating the adequacy, efficiency, and effectiveness of implementation, as well as assessing the project outputs and outcomes to date. It was to also assess early signs of project success or failure and recommend prompt adjustments if necessary



The MTE report indicated that after a rather short period of only six months of execution, the progress of the Demonstration projects under Component 2 was rated as **Satisfactory**. All three Demonstration projects were rated as **Highly Relevant** for integrated Tisza River trans-boundary resource management and their concepts and/or designs were found to be good. Concurrently it was felt that the objectives for some projects sites seemed too optimistic given the proposed timeframe and other issues. Also the national ownership seemed uncertain given the absence of a solid policy and legal base for sustainable development within the Tisza watershed.

The project performance and efficiency were both rated as **Satisfactory**, however the evaluator was skeptical as to whether there would be sufficient time to effectively strengthen stakeholder capacities and the policy framework. She also recommended improving the risk management to secure project success. For the further execution, the evaluator recommended improving the linkage and cooperation between authorities, stakeholders and decision makers at all levels. It was also recommended that UNDP should specifically guide the ILD project (Hungary) in project management. As a final conclusion the projects were rated to have good replication potential within the Tisza Basin and in other watersheds.

The MTE made a series of recommendations of which the main four are set out as follows:

- Recommendation 1: Strengthen the communication between Components 1 and 2 and the mutual awareness of their key stakeholders.
- Recommendation 2: Improve the project website [http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tisza\\_undp\\_gef.htm](http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tisza_undp_gef.htm)
- Recommendation 3: Secure national commitment: The national adoption of the future ITRBMP is a key outcome of the MSP project and should be secured.
- Recommendation 4: Strengthen integration of other water-related sectors in the upcoming ITRBMP development:

The present Evaluator was advised that a formal management response to the MTE was produced by January 2010 and that all recommendations were fully addressed and acted upon. The full text of the management response is attached in Annex 4.

The management response to the MTE is rated **Satisfactory**.

### **3. Findings: Results and Impacts**

#### **3.1 Attainment of Objectives**

As is typical of many GEF projects the MSP LogFrame defines a single overarching Project Goal to which the project would contribute, while the ProDoc itself sets out two strategic Objectives for which the MSP would be held accountable for achieving during the lifetime of the project, supported by the activities implemented for that purpose.

The single overarching goal is defined as *“contributing to the environmental management of the Tisza River Basin by introducing and testing new approaches to minimize the impact of floods and to reduce nutrient pollution through enhanced use of wetlands and floodplains”*.

This became the departure point for defining the two ‘Strategic’ Project Objectives which in their expanded form read as follows:

**Objective 1:** To integrate water quality, water quantity, land use, and biodiversity objectives into an integrated water resources/river basin management plan under the legal umbrella of the EU and ICPDR, that will improve the Tisza River Basin environment including the reduction of pollution and mitigation of floods and droughts.

**Objective 2:** To begin implementation of IWRM principles through the testing of new approaches on wetland and floodplain management through community-based demonstration. The community-level pilot activities will link to the development and implementation of an agreed river basin management plan following the principles of IWRM and tested at the regional/local level under the governance arrangements established for management of the Tisza River Basin. The integration of water quality and quantity management is considered to be a significantly **innovative** approach in the basin and the results of this will be utilised elsewhere in the Danube River Basin through catalytic policies and actions of the ICPDR.

The Evaluator finds it noteworthy and significant that the MSP does not ascribe a hierarchy of significance to the above two Objectives by organizing separate outcomes and components for each. Instead the two Project Outcomes and two Components which follow are structured in such a fashion as to complement and benefit both of the Project Objectives collectively and indivisibly. This chosen format, while subtle in structure, recognizes the mutual interdependence of both Objectives and their inherent indivisibility for contributing to the overall Project Goal. It also enhances the integrity of the IRBMP which is accorded additional legitimacy through the use of an innovative top down – bottom up approach in the development of the Plan.

The ProDoc also contains a list of ‘Verifiable Indicators’ imbedded in the LogFrame. As such the list is less helpful as an indicator of whether the Tisza River Basin environment has/will be improved, but instead descriptive of the products the MSP is required to produce. This was alluded to as well in the mid-term evaluation. There is however an early reference to the PIU devising an indicator based report presented to a SC meeting which dealt with nutrient pollution reduction and drought mitigation activities in the project. Aside from this reference the main indicators considered, from an evaluation point of view, were the varied and numerous reports produced by the PIU to the individual agencies participating in the project and as required by the project itself. Among others these included SC minutes, quarterly reports, APR/PIR reports, risk assessment reports and interim progress reports.

Referring once again to the above Objectives, evidence for their realization is to be found in the two Project Outcomes, the first of which is defined as follows:

**Outcome 1:** Adoption of policies and legislation that promote optimal use of wetlands / floodplains for nutrient retention, flood mitigation, biodiversity enhancement, etc. consistent with the EU WFD and IWRM.

The ProDoc further expands on this Outcome with a narrative that reads; “To develop an integrated management plan addressing priority concerns in the Tisza River Basin with a focus on wetland and floodplain integration within the river basin planning process.”

A table of verifiable indicators, sources of verification and assumptions of risks accompanies this Outcome which can be summarily distilled as an attempt to confirm the successful development of the IRBMP and its approval/adoption by the beneficiary governments of the participating countries.

### **Component 1: Development and endorsement of an Integrated River Basin Management Plan**

Component 1 focused on: “*Integration of water quality, water quantity, land use, and biodiversity objectives within integrated water resources/river basin management under the legal umbrella of the EU and ICPDR.*”

The list of included activities for Component 1 and their achievements can be summarized as follows:

#### ***Activity 1(i): – Development of a strategy for nutrient pollution reduction.***

The strategy named in this activity was developed through a collaborative process involving local and regional Tisza experts who produced a finalized pollution assessment and a related program of measures. Much importance was placed on the agreed Significant Water Management Issues and on the relevance of integration of water quality and water quantity issues in the Tisza basin. The strategy represents one the main outcomes of the MSP and made a direct contribution to the development Tisza IBMP.

#### ***Activity 1(ii) – Development of a flood and drought mitigation strategy***

Produced an assessment of ongoing activities of flood and drought management in the Tisza countries resulting in national flood and drought mitigation strategies being developed. These in turn led to the preparation and development of a basin wide strategy. An important finding of the exercise was the determination that, for objective reasons, drought management in the Tisza countries varied significantly from country to country and is not as advanced as flood management. The resulting basin wide strategy created the basis of recommendations for the IBMP.

#### ***Activity 1(iii) – Combination of Tisza River Basin strategies into an Integrated River Basin Management Plan***

This activity focused the development of national strategies on integration and outlining the general concept towards integration issues. The resulting strategies were then combined and integrated into the development of the IBMP.

#### ***Activity 1(iv) Dissemination and replication***

This activity focused on supporting the results of the previous three activities of this Component and produced a diverse set of results which included:

- The organization of six UNDP/GEF Tisza project workshops, two stakeholder conferences, several public hearings, integration workshops and various related consultations;
- The development of a project website for public users as well as for technical experts exchanging project information;
- The distillation and collation of lessons learned from the three Demonstration projects which were subsequently listed as recommendations in the IRBMP.
- The preparation of a popular Summary document in the five Tisza River Basin languages intended for wider public education/distribution: (*Journey to a balanced Tisza Basin – An introduction to the Integrated Tisza River Basin Management Plan*). The Summary is available in English as well.
- The preparation of a Communication Strategy to assist with the dissemination and replication of the achievements of the Tisza MSP and serve as a guide to the on-going work of the Tisza Group. The document will incorporate comments and suggestions from the Final MSP Stakeholder Workshop held in April 2011.

The Evaluation found that the first of the three activities were successfully completed by October 2010 and incorporated into the draft IRBMP. The fourth activity was continuously being updated till end of project owing to the scheduling the Final Stakeholders Workshop and the need to update the project website as the main disseminator of project results during the MSP timeframe. The completion of activities under Component 1 led directly to the attainment of Outcome 1 and the finalization of the IRBMP.

Having reviewed the many forms of reporting utilized in the MSP the Evaluation finds that MSP not only successfully developed the Tisza IRBMP in the manner contemplated within the timeframe allotted but enjoyed the additional success of having the Plan endorsed at the highest government levels. Ministers and high level representatives of the five basin countries convened in Uzhgorod, Ukraine on April 11, 2011 and signed an MOU to that effect. The Plan is notable for its full compliance with the EU WFD and will now be binding on the participating EU member states. It is notable that the Plan also broadened the concept of both the WFD and IWRM and IRBM principles by integrating water quantity and quality issues thereby pioneering a novel concept of integrated management.

The Plan will also serve as an important impetus to the non-EU countries; Ukraine and the Republic of Serbia, both of whom have benefited from participation in the project while receiving support and encouragement to extend important EU policies to their respective countries. As a corollary to the above the successful development and endorsement of the IRBMP is also timely for the fact that it arrives on the threshold of the Strategy for the Danube Region endorsed by the EU in June of 2011.

To a large extent the development of the Plan is only the start of the process. The real cost is to be found in its implementation. Clearly the EU participating countries have a 'higher' obligation to comply with WFD and Floods Directive issues, but all countries (at the Ministerial Meeting) reaffirmed their wish to collaborate and to collectively improve the management of the Tisza river basin.

The second project Outcome related to the Demonstration side of the project which was intended to galvanize broader public support for the development of the IRBMP and its eventual implementation. The Outcome defines this as follows:

**Outcome 2:** Demonstrating effective wetland and floodplain management with multiple environmental benefits, leading to stress reduction (e.g. nutrient reduction, flood mitigation, biodiversity enhancements, etc.) resulting in the motivation of local communities and other stakeholders to continue the implementation of the successful conclusions of the Demonstration projects.

This Outcome, in turn, was to be supported by the implementation of the activities outlined in **Component 2: Community-based Demonstration Projects**

The Demonstration projects were the subject of an earlier separate UNDP financed evaluation which took place at the mid-point in the full MSP project. At that point the Demonstration projects had only been active for some six months and the evaluation exercise was more of an opportunity for management to review assumptions and identify problems that may have arisen in the early stages and could still be quickly addressed. As a result the within evaluation will not focus on the details of individual activities, objectives and outputs in the Demonstration projects but will focus instead on their individual and collective value to the greater Objectives of the MSP.

Component 2 focused on: *“Implementation of IWRM principles through the testing of new approaches on wetland and floodplain management through community-based demonstration”*

The specific list of included activities for Component 2 required the:

1. Identification of potential Demonstration projects
2. Agreement on priority projects to be implemented
3. Implementation of Demonstration projects
4. Feedback and presentation of results – final stakeholder workshop
5. Development of a replication strategy for Demonstration projects

The process of compliance with Component 2 began with a call for proposals that was issued for local organisations to submit outline activities for projects aimed at wetland restoration and / or enhanced protection of wetlands and floodplains. The ‘call’ presented the overall context of the MSP and encouraged collaboration between governmental and nongovernmental organisations, ideally involving more than one Tisza River Basin country.

A total of 16 proposals were eventually received from which a review of the submitted proposals by the MSP agency partners (UNDP, UNEP, EC and the ICPDR) resulted in an initial prioritisation of the projects against the selection criteria and the needs of the Tisza Group. A workshop was organised (linked to an ICPDR Tisza Group Meeting) in September 2008 to review the submitted outline proposals which resulted in a short-list of three projects to be further developed into detailed proposals with UNDP co-funding support. The final project

proposals were submitted to the PSC leading to commencement of implementation of the three Demonstration projects.

**Demonstration project #1** “Selected Measures Towards integrated Land and Water Management in Upper Tisza, Ukraine”. This project was particularly successful in demonstrating a variety of innovative and cost-effective solutions for typical environmental problems faced by communities in the Upper Tisza floodplains. This component was further subdivided into five additional sub-activities which varied both as to local stakeholders and geographic location. These included:

1. Communal waste management system for the villages of Velyky Bychkiv in Ukraine and Bocicoiu Mare in Romania.
2. A local Flood Risk Management Plan was developed and implemented for the village of Velyky Bychkiv in Ukraine.
3. Physical cleaning of mountain stream, riverbed restoration and revitalization of lake habitat, Ukraine and Romania.
4. Re-opening of water monitoring station in Kobyletska Polyana, Ukraine.
5. New low cost waste water treatment facility designed and constructed for local orphanage and boarding school, Velyky Bychkiv, Ukraine.

In addition to the above, the MSP organized an additional Ukraine led project which focused on recycling of plastic waste from Tisza floodplains in Ukraine and was supported by the ICPDR/WWF-DE.

The Evaluation found the project proceeded according to the work plan and the first five activities were already completed by September 2010. The project successfully achieved its goals and clearly demonstrated the importance of strong local support from stakeholders in achieving its objectives. Moreover, the project received an unanticipated endorsement from a major religious affiliation which utilized the resources of its extended parish network to promote the project’s environmental issues among thousands of its parishioners. This support and local press coverage, including TV media, was very beneficial for creating wide publicity of MSP project activities in the region. This latter point highlights the ‘low cost – high impact’ feature of this project which has already demonstrated tangible results in the form of regional mayors requesting an audience with the village of mayor of Velyky Bychkiv for the purpose of obtaining information on how to implement similar initiatives in their home villages.

In summary, this Demonstration project was particularly notable for its exemplary implementation success which the Evaluator believes can be directly attributed to several factors beginning with the exceptional local project management team, the many faceted levels of enthusiastic community support (private and public), together with the full backing of the local village mayor of Velyky Bychkiv.

**Demonstration project #2** “Making Space for Water in the Bodrog River basin”. This project’s main objective was to mitigate the consequences of flooding through consistent and holistic

management of flood risk in Bodrog river basin countries, Ukraine, Slovakia and Hungary. The project managed to achieve varying degrees of success by creating partnerships between national and local level stakeholders through the development of a strategy for flood mitigation and offering sustainable solutions for flood prevention.

After preliminary stakeholder consultations, project activities focused on pilot demonstrations of river bed channel cleaning and original floodplain restoration. Some delivery setbacks were encountered when site venues needed to be changed and exceptionally inclement weather and flooding conditions occurred during project implementation. In general terms the project demonstrated that even when using a relatively small amount of resources, significant improvement could be still achieved if the measures utilized were effective. The effectiveness lies in the recognition that the conditions in the Bodrog River Basin countries are different and that the methodology selected needs to be carefully adjusted and calibrated for these differences in order to achieve success.

The main lesson drawn from the project is that success relies on a multifaceted and long-term engagement with local stakeholders and this engagement needs to showcase practical examples and advantages of alternative solutions. The project also highlighted the particular challenges faced by local communities where local environmental initiatives are in competition with over arching economic policies which inhibit acceptance of sacrifice for the public good.

Taken as a whole the project was important for its successful demonstration of broad stakeholder involvement and the introduction, in some regions, of the concept of public hearings and mobilizing public participation. These latter attributes particularly favour the long term sustainability of project outcomes and concurrent expectations for replicability.

**Demonstration project #3** *“Integrated land development (ILD) program to improve land use and water management efficiency in the Tisza basin”*. This project had a threefold objective consisting of the need to: (1) develop a comprehensive ILD manual, (2) select specific pilot sites to demonstrate the practical implementation of the ILD approach in Hungary and in the Republic of Serbia and Romania where similar partner organisations were active; and (3) disseminate the information gathered, the experiences gained and the results obtained to the benefit the Tisza basin as a whole and the wider Danube basin community.

Viewed objectively, and in hindsight, the project was felt to be too ambitious in scope both for the time allotted and the limited resources available. Moreover the project suffered a major setback due to the untimely illness and death of the local project manager who had conceived the project and had provided the initial design. Remedial action taken by the MSP PIU team and the hiring of an outside consultant enabled the project to achieve its objectives in modified form.

While the project has undeniably produced a very valuable ILD manual, it may be argued that the more important outcome was the project’s inadvertent success in identifying the full range of significant problems surrounding the state of ILD acceptance in the Tisza basin countries. The list of barriers and opportunities is comprehensive and even formidable. The significance of the

challenge should not be underestimated as the list includes social, ideological, legal and institutional issues, - many of which are deeply rooted in the communist legacy of the Tisza basin countries. Taken together, the identified issues create an accurate and candid baseline which lends itself to further government action and donor attention.

As a final observation relating to all the Demonstration projects, the Evaluation notes that linking them to the 'bigger picture' of the development of an IRBMP and setting clear objectives for input to the Plan, – all served to motivate the Demonstration teams and the national TG experts as they experienced the inclusivity in Plan development first hand. This was a key part of the innovative top-down and bottom-up combined approach adopted by the MSP. In addition the Demonstration projects were central to a series of sub-regional Integration Workshops which disseminated the issues discussed at the regional level down to a more local level. This not only served to strengthen the work of the various TG experts but also provided a better understanding of the practical problems encountered at the local level throughout the Tisza River basin.

Other notable outcomes/achievements of the MSP project include:

- Preparation of a Tisza River Basin Communication Strategy which focuses on coping with floods and droughts, integration issues, pollution issues and water scarcity. The proposed methodology and target groups were well identified and the challenges of working with five countries, five cultures and five languages was particularly well addressed.
- Raising the scientific and general understanding of the environmental problems in the region and elevating the concept of the Tisza Basin Countries to that of a more self-assured regional voice which should be capable of increasingly articulating coherent and indigenous policies in the future.
- Substantially enhancing the many existing links between the participating countries both through the Tisza Group and through the active involvement of ICPDR, UNDP, UNEP the secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, the latter collective cooperation of which was particularly strengthened.
- Further evidence that both Ukraine and the Republic of Serbia (the non-EU countries) were embedding WFD principles in their respective development of environmental policy and utilizing the project as a further opportunity to intensify their EU integration efforts.
- Highlighting and raising the profile of the over arching issue of climate change as a wider background threat to the particular geography of the Tisza basin, both as to the mountainous areas in the upper reaches as well as to the flood plains and wetlands below.
- Catalyzing diverse groupings of NGOs to take a more active part in solving local environmental problems and (re)introducing the concept of public consultations to a region where evidence of this tradition is still the subject of historical memory, a tradition that was largely obliterated during the collective communist experience.

The overall implementation and attainment of project objectives is rated as **Highly Satisfactory**.



## **3.2 Fact Findings**

After the completion of a full range of key interviews, desk reviews, completed questionnaires and one site visit the Evaluation finds that the project:

- Contributed to overall increase in scientific and general understanding of the environmental problems in the region.
- Was fully in-line with WFD, consistent with IWRM/IRBM approaches and brought in elements of the Floods Directive into the concept of 'integration'.
- Contained an ideal mix of a policy framework and pilot actions with direct country involvement in preparation of the ITRBM.
- Significantly advanced integration management issues by achieving updated MoU endorsement (2011) all of which will provide critical political support for national implementation.
- Enhanced existing links between the participating countries both through the Tisza Group and through the participation of ICPDR, UNDP and UNEP.
- Brought ICPDR and UNEP CC closer together leading to 'Joint Observer' status in their respective Commissions.
- Intensified ongoing Ukrainian and Serbian EU integration efforts by embedding WFD principles in their respective development of environmental policy.
- Advanced the evolution of the concept of the "Tisza Basin Countries" to that of a more mature, self-assured regional voice.
- Confirmed GEF's vital advocacy role in promoting Demonstration projects and acting as catalyst for critical EU support.
- Confirmed UNDP's lead role in providing policy leadership and substantial financial support.
- Identified the complex nature of legal obstacles, vested interests and financial obstacles impeding land use changes which hinder development of ILD policies in the region.
- Raised the profile of the over arching issue of climate change as a wider background threat to the particular geography of the Tisza basin.
- Demonstrated value of sub-basin activities which, at a macro level, contributed to overall pollution (nutrient reduction) in the Danube River.
- Demonstrated value of imbedding PIU in ICPDR as an effective way to provide stable management, leveraging of resources and accessing representation of relevant ministries, national experts and interested stakeholders.

## **4. Sustainability**

The level of political commitment at Project end is very high and full credit goes to all the MSP stakeholders for achieving this objective. As a result the project has every reason to expect that its major outcomes will be sustainable over the long period. The ministerial signing of the MOU at the conclusion of the MSP and the successful adoption of the IRBMP particularly augurs well for this expectation as the implementation measures are now binding on the participating EU countries which form the majority of the Tisza group.

The only caution to this expectation is the realization that Slovakia, Hungary and Romania represent some of the poorest countries in the EU and that current fiscal and economic realities in the region cannot be ignored. However the combined effect of the new IRBMP, the Carpathian Convention and the new EU Danube Strategy can be expected to ameliorate certain

conditions and act as a supporting foundation for further sustainability. Moreover there are aspirations to make the Tisza outcomes a flagship initiative of the wider EU Danube Strategy and nascent signs of emerging advocacy for the notion of an eventual Tisza Basin Commission. In all of this the leadership and governing institutional and stable role played by the ICPDR cannot be overestimated.

Less certain are the prospects for the non-EU countries where, especially in Ukraine, persistent fiscal crisis and ongoing administrative reforms create a very unstable environment for effective policy implementation. However to its credit, Ukraine has indicated it wishes to commence discussions on possibly replicating the whole Tisza MSP experience in the Prut river of the Dniester basin. Further attention to Ukraine and Serbia in any contemplated new basin initiatives should, at the very least, prevent backsliding and hopefully preserve and advance the conditions that favour sustainability.

The various activities undertaken in the respective three demonstration projects were rich and varied. Their diversity as to theme and region makes it also difficult to render a categorical projection as to long term sustainability. What is certain is that the individual activities were sufficiently well conceived as to make them relevant, transferable and generally replicable throughout the basin. It also appears that where future sources of financing have been potentially identified, or where minimal resources are required for replication, the chances of sustainability would appear to be that much greater.

Another indicator of sustainability is the degree of interest in replication demonstrated by the participating countries in their respective national programs. By this standard the MSP shows additional sustainability as government mainstreaming of the Bodrog project initiatives has already found receptivity in Slovakia. On the whole there is a large potential for reconnecting former floodplains and wetlands in the Tisza Basin and some measures have already been identified to be implemented by 2015

The overall sustainability of project outcomes is rated as **Satisfactory**.

## **5. Lessons Learned**

There are many lessons that can be drawn from the above assessments and while most are specific to the project at hand there are others which may have a broader generic value which may be applicable to other basins in the region and beyond. A list of some of the more important lessons learned from this MSP are as follows:

- Successful results and necessary change are more likely to occur when senior levels of support are combined with highly motivated 'local' stakeholders who can demonstrate good outcomes with limited resources – especially when widely shared in a transnational context.
- The linking of Demonstration projects to a wider policy programme proved central to the confidence and legitimacy of the Tisza IRBMP. This bottom up - top down combination

was a very effective and innovative approach in IRBMP development and worthy of replication.

- Good communication and key stakeholder involvement are important tools ensuring adequate ownership and efficiency levels in the project.
- Decisions on management measures at the basin level need to balance competing local priorities, which cannot be achieved through consideration of the technical and scientific evidence alone. They require appropriate mechanisms of engagement between public bodies, local stakeholders and the wider public consultations introduced during implementation of the Demonstration projects.
- Any Demonstration project advocating policy change with practical implementation in a short three year time frame is **very** ambitious, and requires much greater preparation to assess viability in light of background legal, social and financial conditions.
- The MSP project underlined the potential of sharing a variety of cultural and technical knowledge on a manageable scale that can be replicated in other river basins
- Unanticipated favourable results can be obtained by involving a broad based mainstream Church as an innovative means of spreading environmental awareness.
- The MSP project confirmed the need for more adaptive and flexible financial procedures when administering and implementing in complex and diverse field conditions.

## **6. Recommendations**

- The political commitment realized in the Tisza project is a major achievement and will greatly ensure long term sustainability. It is recommended that ICPDR continue to have a long term role overseeing Tisza IRBM implementation thereby ensuring further basin cooperation and long term sustainability of project outcomes.
- To meet the agreed visions and management objectives in the Tisza IRBM it is essential that all parties understand the sequence of what is needed and where. Although the Tisza IRBM Plan will now be implemented through a mix of regulations, incentives and voluntary measures in the five countries, it is recommended that more **targeted measures** be adopted on a plan by plan basis at the national level in each of the basin countries.
- ICPDR should consider whether other sub-basins such as the Prut river and Danube Delta are currently ready and would benefit from similar interventions as demonstrated in the Tisza.
- Transition issues need to be addressed more carefully in future projects. Valuable momentum and availability of key human resources are often easily lost if transition financing to facilitate greater sustainability is not readily available. The recent UNDP end ENPI end of project announcement of possible prospective financing is a welcome development for the more successful Demonstration project activities in the Tisza.
- The ILD project and its developed tool kit has the potential to be very beneficial through the adoption of a more holistic approach to land-water management. However it clearly has more challenges ahead and it is recommended that means be found to translate its reports/tool kit into the basin languages and to develop more creative compensation proposals for farmers and land-owners making their land available for flood dedication, etc.

- More governments should be encouraged to follow the example of the Slovak government initiatives to mainstream the successful activities in the Bodrog Demonstration project.
- For those Demonstration project activities not intended to continue there should be some thought given to a gradual phase out of activities that would be less abrupt and ease the shock on community stakeholders active in the project.

## **7. Assessment Summary and Ratings**

<b>CRITERION</b>	<b>SUMMARY COMMENTS</b>	<b>RATING</b>
<b>PROJECT FORMULATION</b>		
Project concept and design	The concept was innovative and sound but the timescale could have been longer and the financial administration could have been more flexible.	<b>Satisfactory (S)</b>
<b>PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION</b>		
Project Governance	Effective implementation by UNDP and competent execution by UNOPS and ICPDR. Project SC and TG highly inclusive and effective.	<b>Highly Satisfactory (HS)</b>
Project Implementation and Management	PIU project administration and management was highly valued. Imbedding the PIU at the ICPDR Secretariat provided numerous cost benefits.	<b>Highly Satisfactory (HS)</b>
Country ownership/drivenness	TG main political driving force in the MSP provided exceptionally high level of country ownership both in the institutional arrangements and in baseline activities.	<b>Highly Satisfactory (HS)</b>
<b>Implementation Approach</b>		
Stakeholder participation in implementation	Rich mixture of old and the new, - international and regional institutions and local NGOs – although uneven as between participating countries.	<b>Satisfactory (S)</b>
Risk management	High multiplicity of reporting requirements and the Risk Log Matrix provided ample tools for effective risk management.	<b>Satisfactory (S)</b>
<b>Project finances</b>		
Co-financing	Co-financing was generous and exceeded project expectations. UNDP and EU led by example with Tisza countries and private sector contributing significantly as well.	<b>Highly Satisfactory (HS)</b>

CRITERION	SUMMARY COMMENTS	RATING
Cost-effectiveness	Leveraging significant cash and in-kind contributions from MSP partners and locating PIU at the ICPDR proved cost-effective decision. MSP real legacy and indicator of cost-effectiveness will be the commitment of the national governments to implement the IRBMP.	<b>Highly Satisfactory (HS)</b>
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>		
M&E Arrangements	More than adequate monitoring modalities utilized in the MSP. Some overlap and redundancies as well.	<b>Satisfactory (S)</b>
Management response to the MTE	Formal management response to MTE was produced by January 2010. All recommendations were fully addressed and acted upon.	<b>Satisfactory (S)</b>
<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>		
Overall Sustainability	Level of political commitment at Project end is very high and project has every reason to expect major outcomes will be sustainable over the long period.	<b>Satisfactory (S)</b>
Replication Communication Strategy	Draft Communication Strategy was developed and intended to provide an effective record of achievements and assist with their dissemination via IW LEARN	<b>Satisfactory (S)</b>
<b>PROJECT RESULTS : Attainment of Outcomes and achievement of Objective with reference to the Indicators</b>		
<b>Objective 1:</b> To integrate water quality, water quantity, land use, and biodiversity objectives into an integrated water resources/river basin management plan under the legal umbrella of the EU and ICPDR, that will improve the Tisza River Basin environment including the reduction of pollution and mitigation of floods and droughts.	Substantially enhanced existing links between the participating countries both through the Tisza Group and through the active involvement of ICPDR, UNDP, UNEP the secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, the latter collective cooperation of which was particularly strengthened. Raised the scientific and general understanding of the environmental problems in the region and elevated the concept of the Tisza Basin Countries to that of a more self-assured regional voice which should be capable of increasingly articulating coherent and indigenous policies in the future	<b>Highly Satisfactory (HS)</b>
<b>Objective 2:</b> To begin implementation of IWRM principles through the testing of new	Demonstration projects linked to the 'bigger picture' of the development of an IRBMP and setting clear objectives for	<b>Satisfactory (S)</b>

CRITERION	SUMMARY COMMENTS	RATING
<p>approaches on wetland and floodplain management through community-based demonstration. The community-level pilot activities will link to the development and implementation of an agreed river basin management plan following the principles of IWRM and tested at the regional/local level under the governance arrangements established for management of the Tisza River Basin. The integration of water quality and quantity management is considered to be a significantly <b>innovative</b> approach in the basin and the results of this will be utilised elsewhere in the Danube River Basin through catalytic policies and actions of the ICPDR.</p>	<p>input to the Plan. Demonstration teams and the national TG experts experienced inclusivity in Plan development and was a key part of the innovative top-down and bottom-up combined approach adopted by the MSP.</p>	
<p><b>Outcome 1:</b> Adoption of policies and legislation that promote optimal use of wetlands / floodplains for nutrient retention, flood mitigation, biodiversity enhancement, etc. consistent with the EU WFD and IWRM.</p>	<p>MSP successfully developed the Tisza IRBMP in the manner contemplated within the timeframe allotted and Plan endorsed by Ministers and high level representatives of the five basin countries via signed MOU to that effect on April 11, 2011. Tisza IRBMP notable for its full compliance with the EU WFD and is now binding on the participating EU member states. IRBMP also broadened the concept of both the WFD and IWRM and IRBM principles by integrating water quantity and quality issues thereby pioneering a novel concept of integrated management.</p>	<p><b>Highly Satisfactory (HS)</b></p>
<p><b>Outcome 2:</b> Demonstrating effective wetland and floodplain management with multiple environmental benefits, leading to stress reduction (e.g. nutrient reduction, flood mitigation, biodiversity enhancements, etc.) resulting in the motivation of local</p>	<p>Demonstration projects served to strengthen the work of the various TG experts and also provided a better understanding of the practical problems encountered at the local level throughout the Tisza River basin. Demonstration projects created replication interest demonstrated by the participating countries in their respective national</p>	<p><b>Satisfactory (S)</b></p>

CRITERION	SUMMARY COMMENTS	RATING
<p>communities and other stakeholders to continue the implementation of the successful conclusions of the Demonstration projects.</p>	<p>programs. Also evidence of replication interest in the Danube Delta, for the Prut River.in Ukraine and from as far away as Malaysia</p>	
<p><b>OVERALL PROJECT RATING</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Contributed to overall increase in scientific and general understanding of the environmental problems in the region.</li> <li>•Was fully in-line with WFD, consistent with IWRM/IRBM approaches and brought in elements of the Floods Directive into the concept of 'integration'.</li> <li>•Contained an ideal mix of a policy framework and pilot actions with direct country involvement in preparation of the ITRBM.</li> <li>•Significantly advanced integration management issues by achieving updated MoU endorsement (2011) all of which will provide critical political support for national implementation.</li> <li>•Enhanced existing links between the participating countries both through the Tisza Group and through the participation of ICPDR, UNDP and UNEP.</li> <li>• Brought ICPDR and UNEP CC closer together leading to 'Joint Observer' status in their respective Commissions.</li> <li>•Intensified ongoing Ukrainian and Serbian EU integration efforts by embedding WFD principles in their respective development of environmental policy.</li> <li>•Advanced the evolution of the concept of the "Tisza Basin Countries" to that of a more mature, self-assured regional voice.</li> <li>• Confirmed GEF's vital advocacy role in promoting Demonstration projects and acting as catalyst for critical EU support.</li> <li>•Confirmed UNDP's lead role in providing policy leadership and substantial financial support.</li> <li>• Identified the complex nature of legal obstacles, vested interests and financial obstacles impeding land use changes which hinder development of ILD policies in the region.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Satisfactory (S)</b></p>

CRITERION	SUMMARY COMMENTS	RATING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Raised the profile of the over arching issue of climate change as a wider background threat to the particular geography of the Tisza basin.</li> <li>•Demonstrated value of sub-basin activities which, at a macro level, contributed to overall pollution (nutrient reduction) in the Danube River.</li> <li>• Demonstrated value of imbedding PIU in ICPDR as an effective way to provide stable management, leveraging of resources and accessing representation of relevant ministries, national experts and interested stakeholders.</li> </ul>	



**EVALUATION REPORT: SAMPLE OUTLINE**  
Minimum GEF requirements<sup>1</sup>

**Executive summary**

- ♣ Brief description of project
- ♣ Context and purpose of the evaluation
- ♣ Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

**Introduction**

- ♣ Purpose of the evaluation
- ♣ Key issues addressed
- ♣ Methodology of the evaluation
- ♣ Structure of the evaluation

**The project(s) and its development context**

- ♣ Project start and its duration
- ♣ Problems that the project seek to address
- ♣ Immediate and development objectives of the project
- ♣ Main stakeholders
- ♣ Results expected

**Findings and Conclusions**

*(In addition to a descriptive assessment, all criteria marked with (\*) should be rated<sup>2</sup>)*

0 **Project formulation**

- ♣ Implementation approach (\*) (i)
- ♣ Analysis of LFA (Project logic /strategy; Indicators)
- ♣ Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) incorporated into project implementation
- ♣ Country ownership/Driveness
- ♣ Stakeholder participation (\*)
- ♣ Replication approach
- ♣ Cost-effectiveness
- ♣ UNDP comparative advantage
- ♣ Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector
- ♣ Management arrangements

0 **Implementation**

- ♣ Implementation approach (\*) (ii)
- ♣ The logical framework used during implementation as a management and M&E tool
- ♣ Effective partnerships arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to GEF guidelines for explanation of Terminology

<sup>2</sup> The ratings will be: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory

- ♣ Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management
- ♣ Financial Planning
- ♣ Monitoring and evaluation (\*)
- ♣ Execution and implementation modalities
- ♣ Management by the UNDP country office
- ♣ Coordination and operational issues

#### 0 Results

- ♣ Attainment of objectives (\*)
- ♣ Sustainability (\*)
- ♣ Contribution to upgrading skills of the national staff

#### Recommendations

- ♣ Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project
- ♣ Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project
- ♣ Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

#### Lessons learned

- ♣ Best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success

#### Annexes

- ♣ TOR
- ♣ Itinerary
- ♣ List of persons interviewed
- ♣ Summary of field visits
- ♣ List of documents reviewed
- ♣ Questionnaire used and summary of results

## **Annex 2 List of documents reviewed and consulted**

1. Tisza MSP Project Document
2. ME of Tisza Project 2009
3. ME of Demo Projects of MSP Tisza 2009
4. Reports Tisza Group Work Plans 2011-2015
5. Project APR/PIR 2009, 2010,2011
6. CTA Progress reports July 2008, Nov 2008, Nov 2010, June 2011
7. CTA Quarterly reports Q2 2008 - Q3 2010
8. Risk Log Matrix April 2010 – April 2011
9. Tisza IRBMP
10. Call for Demo Project ideas
11. Demo Project Upper Tisza Progress Reports June 2010, Final
12. ILD Progress Report March 2009 – Nov 2010, Feb 2011
13. Bodrog Progress Report July – Sept 2010, Ukr 2009, Final March 2011
14. Nutrient Reduction - Ukraine Nov 2009 – Oct 2010
15. Communication Strategy April 2011
16. South Tisza IRD Progress 2009
17. Accidental Pollution and Risk Spots Inventory April 2011
18. Agriculture and Land Use Developments April 2011
19. Reports on the Implementation of the JPM Nov 2010, January 2011
20. Case Study reports on Climate change for Tisza basin April 2011
21. Four SC annual minutes
22. Nine interview questionnaires
23. Periodic budget flow sheets

### Websites;

[http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tisza\\_undp\\_gef.htm](http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tisza_undp_gef.htm)

<http://www.ild.eoldal.hu/cikkek/english.html>

### Annex 3 List of persons interviewed/questionnaires reviewed

	Name	Organization / Institution / Position	Tisza MSP role
1	Whalley Peter	UNDP/GEF MSP -ICPDR	MSP Project Manager
2	Weller Philip	ICPDR Secretariat, Executive Secretary	PIU supervisor, PSC chair
3	Heilmann Diana	UNDP/GEF MSP -ICPDR	MSP PIU, technical assistant Tisza Group
4	Mykola Melenevskiy*	Ambassador at Large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine	President of ICPDR
5	Antonina Karnaukhova	First secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine	MFA Ukraine-advisor to Ukraine delegation
6	Iarochevitch Alexei	Ukrainian Center of Environment and Water Projects	UA rep. Tisza Group National water mgmt. expert
7	Kunikova Emilia	Slovak Water Resources Institute	SK rep. Tisza Group National water mgmt. expert
8	Mamaev Vladimir	GEF Regional Technical Advisor, UNDP Europe and the CIS	Tisza MSP Contact person
9	Marushevskia Olena	Project Manager	UPPER TISZA demo project
10	Manivchuk Vasyl	Project Manager	UPPER TISZA demo project
11	Nood Marieke van	European Commission, DG Environment	Co-chair Tisza Group
12	Rast Georg	WWF Germany, senior water management officer	WWF rep. Tisza Group, UNDP consultant for demo projects
13	Béla Borsos	UNDP/GEF Tisza Project consultant	UNDP GEF Tisza – ILM demo projects – HU
14	Tothova Klara	UNDP BRC, CST Environmental Officer, Europe and the CIS	Tisza MSP project officer
15	Graziella Jula	ANAR, The National Administration "Apele Romane", Romania	Tisza WG Romania
16	Minarik Boris	Representative of the Tisza Group Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute, Slovakia	Tisza WG Slovakia
17	Magdolna Tóth Nagy	The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)	Tisza WG REC Senior Expert
18	Cimborova Andrea	GWP Nat expert - Slovakia	UNDP GEF Tisza – demo projects - SK
19	Bartkova Nora	GWP Nat expert - Slovakia	UNDP GEF Tisza –

			demo projects - SK
20	Islam Oana	UNDP GEF National expert, RO	UNDP GEF Tisza – demo projects - RO
21	Zlenko Odarka	Mayor of Velyky Bychkiv, Ukraine	UPPER TISZA demo project
22	Milovanovic Miodrag	Yaroslav Cerni Institute, Serbia	Tisza WG Serbia
23	Egerer Harald*	UNEP Internat Secretariat Carpathian Convention	UNEP Vienna
24	Pozharskiy Vadym*	Minsitry of Ecology and Nat Resources - Ukraine	Director – Dept. of Intern. Cooperation
25	Yosyp Yosypchuk	School Principal in Velyky Bychkiv	UPPER TISZA demo project
26	Eduard Osiysky	Transcarpathian Water Management - Ukraine	UPPER TISZA demo project
27	Lichtenberg Katrin	UNOPS Portfolio Mnager	Tisza executing partner UNOPS
28	Maria Galambos Received July 11, 2011	Ministry of Rural Development Hungary	Chief Counsellor

\*Denotes brief discussion

## Annex 4 Management response to ME evaluation

### UNDP MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

**Integrating multiple benefits of wetlands and floodplains into improved trans-boundary management**

**for the Tisza River Basin**

**Mid Term Evaluation**

**UNDP-GEF Medium-Site Project (MSP)**

Date of evaluation: **December 2009**

Date of management response status update: **January 2010**

Prepared by: **Klara Tothova**  
**Regional Centre Bratislava, CST**

Position: **Environment Officer**

Unit/Bureau:

Cleared by:

Position:

Unit/Bureau:

Input into and update in ERC:

Position:

Unit/Bureau:

**Overall comments:** At mid-term stage of the MSP project, various planned progress was made towards attaining all objectives, including an advanced 4th draft of the IRBMP (Overall Objective), drafts Tisza basin strategies on nutrient pollution as well as floods and droughts (Objective 1) and 3 local projects with various stakeholder involvement successfully started (Objective 2). Pending question is how much the upcoming agreed policy, in particular the new Tisza IRBMP, will bring about an effective change/improvement of current management practices, also in the light of experiences made in the demonstration projects. The project sustainability benefits from the fact that this work is embedded within the ICPDR structures and specifically its Tisza Group. The ICPDR is financially sustainable; though not necessarily the TG (its current MoU will soon end). The project also benefits from the past GEF Danube - Black Sea Partnership (DRP) experience and from increased multi-stakeholder and community level support. Future sustainability shall be ensured with the adoption of the integrated Tisza basin plan and national integrated plans and with the government commitment to effectively implement them: Securing this is a key task for the final phase. Both the demonstration projects and ITRBM Plan are expected to provide valuable lessons for applicability elsewhere in the Tisza / Danube Basins and

beyond. The project's *Replication Strategy* will be fully developed over the next months. It will focus on stakeholder engagement in both components at local practical and national policy levels. The GEF project is also contributing to upgrading skills of the national staff through the integrated resource analysis and the management planning process at national and Tisza Group levels. The rather small group of currently engaged staff will have to secure the wider dissemination and replication of their skills upgrading for other national staff. The conclusion of the mid-term evaluation is a **satisfactory** rating of the Tisza MSP project.

Shortly before this Mid-term evaluation, UNDP contract another independent consultant (*Vasiljevic Branislava 2009*) to examine the three demonstration projects (via desk study and field interviews). The UNDP pilot and demonstration component aims at developing and implementing three trans-boundary community-led projects that promote sustainable development through integrated land and water management (ILWM) practices in all Tisza countries. After a rather short period of only six months of execution, the progress of the demonstration projects was rated as *satisfactory*. All three are rated as *highly relevant* for integrated Tisza River trans-boundary resource management and their concepts and/or designs were found as good, but for some projects sites the objectives seem too optimistic given the proposed timeframe and other issues.

**Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 1:** Strengthen the communication between Components 1 and 2 and the mutual awareness of their key stakeholders.

**Management Response:** Demonstration project executants will be regularly informed about Component 1 subjects and progress in larger extent than previously.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
- More time will be set aside during future TG meetings and Stakeholder Workshops to secure mutual information and feedback.	On-going until June 2011	Project Management Unit		

**Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 2:** Improve the project website [http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tisza\\_undp\\_gef.htm](http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/tisza_undp_gef.htm)

**Management Response:** Project website will be improved

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
- Establish the weblink to IW:learn	March 2010	Project Management Unit	Completed	

- Improve structure of the webpage, i.e. separate Component 1 and 2 as well as demo projects, at best via new sub-folders.	March 2010	Project Management Unit	Completed	
- Keep information about the project activities up-to-date, e.g. move outdated news away or to the general information level.	March 2010	Project Management Unit	Completed	On-going commitment
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3:</b> Secure national commitment: The national adoption of the future ITRBMP is a key outcome of the MSP project and should be secured. If the MSP resp. TG work shall make a difference in basin management practices, then there should be an effective change/improvement of the current status.				
<b>Management Response:</b> National adoption of the ITRBMP will be addressed and prepared within the national governments and the expected (level of) commitment be reported to and agreed within the TG.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Assist in adapting certain land uses in floodplains to the new water management needs	On-going until June 2011	Project Management Unit	On-going	Integration workshop and final stakeholder meeting assisted facilitated
Agree (through the TG) in the ITRBMP on quantitative objectives for mitigation measures that were identified as essential to reduce the pressures from current water and land uses.	June 2010	Project Management Unit	Incorporated in Integrated River Basin Management Plan endorsed by HoD (Dec 2010)	
Assist in securing national adoption of the future ITRBMP	On-going until June 2011	Project Management Unit	On-going	Project has assisted TG and countries by raising awareness of other regional



				activities and with the Danube Strategy
<p><b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 4:</b> Strengthen integration of other water-related sectors in the upcoming ITRBMP development: Past expert discussions and ITRBMP development was concentrating on the water quality aspects that are quite familiar to most TG members. Impression is, however, that water quantity aspects, and even more biodiversity and land use, were yet handled in the TG from some distance, i.e. their future assessment and real integration has been postponed into the second half of the project. Reality is that this period is much shorter than perhaps perceived by TG members: As of December 2009, there is only 6 months left up to the publication of the draft ITRBMP, and only 2 months before the crucial Integration Workshop will take place. There is the clear risk that a comprehensive assessment of these new issues and their integration around the upcoming Integration Workshop in April 2010, just a 1.5 days event, may not be sufficient to meet all integration needs.</p>				
<p><b>Management Response:</b> For the preparation of the Integration Workshop, Sub-regional Integration Workshops will be organized for each of the demo project and experts from water-related sectors (floods, droughts, wetlands and land use – notably agriculture) will be involved to strengthen the integration process by UNDP co-financing.</p>				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
- Involving competent experts from “new” sectors (floods, droughts, wetlands and land use – notably agriculture) in the preparation of the Integration Workshop planned for April 2010 and in the ITRBMP drafting, including of the TG 14 meeting. They should continue their involvement into the drafting process during the short period after the Integration Workshop to assure in the ITRBMP the full integration of “their” issues with the already well prepared water quality aspects.	June 2010	Project Management Unit	Completed –	Integration Workshop – April 2010. Plus continuing theme involving TG and Carpathian Convention to ensure attention on land-water management is maintained
- Sub-regional Integration Workshops will be organized (by and with UNDP co-financing) for each of the demo project to initiate discussion of stakeholders	June 2010	UNDP and Project Management Unit	Completed	

dealing with water management and other water-related sectors on different levels, to improve the linkage and co-operation.				
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\* The implementation status is tracked in the ERC.