

UNDP
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PROJECT DOCUMENT
of the Government of Hungary

Title: Preparatory Assistance to Hungary for an Integrated Disaster Preparedness and Sustainable Development Programme for the Tisza River Basin

Number: HUN/01/00x/07/99
Executing Agency: Hungarian Prime Minister's Office, Government
Commissioner Office for Tisza-Szamos
Implementing Agency: Tisza-Szamos Public Benefit Company Kht.
Proposed starting date: June 2001
Duration: : 9 month

Brief description:

This project aims at facilitating the start up of systematic consultation process toward the formulation of a concept of disaster preparedness and sustainable development of the Tisza river basin located in Hungary and the other four riparian states Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine and the FR of Yugoslavia. The project will set up the an "action nucleus" needed for start up and advancement of a full fledged programme and a future Convention related to integrated sustainable development of the basin.

Approved on behalf of the UNDP:

Lykke Andersen
Programme Managing Officer

Date:

Approved on behalf of Executing Agency:

János Gönczy
Government Commissioner

Date:

Approved for the Government

Gyula K. Szelei
Ministry of foreign Affairs

Date

1.0 Context

The project titled “**Preparatory** Assistance to Hungary for an Integrated **Disaster Preparedness** and Sustainable Development Programme for the Tisza River Basin” will help Hungary and the riparian countries to adopt and manage a sustainable development programme for job creation, natural resource management assuring in the same time the conservation of its viable and vulnerable ecosystem and minimisation of flood risks and environmental accidents.

Following a number of bilateral and multilateral consultations between the respective countries and UNDP/ERD missions to some of the countries like Romania and Hungary, it became evident the general need for, and support of an integrated and sustainable approach to the regional development and environmental problems of the Tisza river basin.

1.1. Background

The river “Tisza” is the second longest river of Hungary. Its total length is 997 km, the Hungarian section is almost 600 km long. The total catchment’s area amounts to nearly 160,000 square km. Tisa/Tisza together with its tributaries drains the largest catchment area in the Carpathian Mountains before flowing through the Eastern Pannonian Plain and joining the Danube. Five countries share the river and its catchment: Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine and Yugoslavia as follows:

Country	Tisza River Basin		Populations
	Catchment area		
	km ²	%	inhabitants
Romania	72 627.	46.2	6 652 800
Hungary	42 217.	29.4	4 233 600
Slovakia	15 248.	9.7	1 396 800
Ukraine	12 733.	8.1	1 166 400
FR of Yugoslavia	10 375.	6.6	950 400
Total:	157 200.- km2	100.-%	14 400 000

The countries and regions in the Tisa/Tisza river basin share a common recent history of communist controlled systems and the transition towards democracy and market economy in the last decade. This history has left the river basin with a mixed legacy of pollution hot spots, declining heavy industry, lack of economic development and emerging pattern of regular flooding. In addition, the region is a fertile ground for social and ethnic tensions on one hand, and well preserved traditional rural landscapes, vast complexes of natural forests and viable populations of species that are no longer present in Western Europe on the other hand.

The original river bed, more than a century ago, was characterised by extreme meandering due to the low slopes across the Hungarian plain. In order to gain good quality agricultural land and to secure the country from flood disasters, the regulation of the Tisza river was started in the 1840s in the Austro-Hungarian Empire than covering most of the catchment area. The river regulation work straightened more than 100 oxbows, thus shortening the length of the river by 400 km. The fall and thereby the flow speed of the river increased through the regulation and the river became navigable.

The original nature along the river (floodplain forests, swamps and meadows with their vast biodiversity) also decreased considerably due to transformation to agricultural land. Remnants of the original state can be found around the close to 140 cut-off meander lakes and oxbows, which still are periodically supplied with water during flood periods. These make the river one of Europe’s most unique ecosystems having an extremely high

importance in conserving rare biotopes of European and global importance with their vast biodiversity, including rare and extremely endangered species.

In the recent years, the Tisza river basin has come to the forefront of international attention due to a sequence of major flood events during the past and current year and environmental disasters with the Baia Mare cyanide spill of February-March 2000 leading the headlines.

Following the spill, the European Commission with the participation of the riparian countries established the “Baia Mare Task Force” in order to assess the reasons for the disaster and to recommend possible future actions. Among others, the Task Force found that the response to the cyanide spill was a positive example of cooperation among the countries. A regional integrated programme for the sustainable development of the river basin was called for to create jobs and future prosperity of those living in the river basin, to protect and preserve the environment and to minimize the risk of future similar accidents. At the same time, the water and environmental authorities of the five countries strengthened their cooperation by signing a Memorandum of Understanding. Several other initiatives have been taken contributing to the objectives stated above. The traditional bi-lateral transboundary water committees set up an Expert Committee to prepare a work plan dealing with pollution hot spots.

Following the all time high flood of March 2001 occurred in the Upper Tisza region affecting mainly Ukraine, Hungary and Romania, the cooperation started during earlier floods was also intensified. A “Proposal for Development of an Environmental Programme for the Tisza River Basin” discussed and gained general support at expert level in the March 8-9 workshop held in Budapest. The water ministers of the five riparian countries did sign a Declaration in Budapest on May 25th committing themselves for concrete steps towards joint flood prevention and management including initiation of projects with national and international financing. The Council of Europe proposed to actively participate in the drafting of a Tisza River Basin Ecological Convention committing itself to provide serious funding after such convention is signed. The UNDP Emergency Response Division did also allocate for each of the above countries USD 50 000.

From its reserves, the Hungarian Government did channel important funds amounting to close to USD 80 million for rehabilitation and reconstruction, covering infrastructure, lost property and agricultural production. It did also take active role in enhancing regional cooperation for flood and disaster evaluation, monitoring and prevention. In parallel to this, Hungary is fully aware of the importance of saving the existing rich, but endangered riparian ecosystem. For its complex sustainable management a project concept titled “Integrated Rehabilitation and Management of the Tisza Oxbows” was formulated to be submitted for GEF financing. As all countries acknowledge the need for an integrated river basin approach of development and the importance of the intensive cooperation towards sustainable development of the basin, Hungary offered to use the USD 50 000 provided by UNDP/ERD to further improve the riparian cooperation mainly in the direction of joint, integrated and sustainable river basin management.

A number of donors and international organizations have also expressed interest in solving the environmental, social and development problems along the Tisza. Three of the five countries in the river basin are in the process of accession to the European Union, which is presenting a major opportunity and driving force for changing the development patterns in the region. The bordering regions of the neighbouring countries will also benefit from EU cross-border cooperation programmes in the future. The Global Environment Facility has recently opened the Operational Programme for Integrated Ecosystem Management Projects, providing a comprehensive framework to manage natural systems across sectors, and political or administrative boundaries in the context of sustainable development.

1.2. Development Objectives

The development objective of the present project is to support preparatory efforts for a Integrated Sustainable Development Programme of the Tisza River Basin, a related Convention envisaged and to assist the Hungarian to participate in an enhanced regional cooperation.

The above development objective depends on, and was defined knowing the main objectives of such a future Sustainable Development Programme and a related international Convention:

- Securing prosperity for the people living in the river basin,
- Flood protection (strategies),
- Sustainable use of natural resources,
- Minimization of environmental risks,
- Preservation of natural and cultural values,
- Development of a participatory framework for cooperation between the riparian countries, sectors, communities and stakeholders in the river basin.

1.3. Scope

Many, in general not fully coordinated initiatives have been started and/or are going on in the basin. Some of the most important are:

- EU Phare/TACIS program “International Cooperation in the Danube River Basin Management”(1998-2000) having a subprogram for the Tisza river;
- At the quadrilateral workshop of June 1-3, 1999 held in Debrecen, Hungary, consensus was reached on the preparation of a joint Upper Tisza River Basin development programme in line with the EU Water Framework Directive
- Declaration of the environmental ministers of Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine dated April 2, 2000 to cooperate among others on integrated environmental, water use and wetland restoration activities, including provision of international financing;
- The “Regional Environmental Initiative of the Hungarian Government tabled in June 19, 2000 in Szentendre, Hungary; or the recent
- May 25, 2001 Budapest Declaration of the water ministers, this time already with the participation of FR of Yugoslavia, calling for concrete steps toward coordinated flood control policy, emergency planning and improvement through joint programmes with own and/or international financing.

The Programme envisaged, for which this preparatory project is intended to contribute, should encompass the entire geographical area of the Tisa/Tisza River Basin including the natural resources and ecosystems, the entire economy and social groups.

The relevant institutions and organizations in the five countries already have information and focal point in charge with the initiatives started. The UNDP, through this project, with the Hungarian experts and authorities, and proper involvement of all the other riparian counties, will assist in the start up of an operational cooperation. For this, the most appropriate method is the participatory approach, through which various national interests will be understood by all and harmonised in the best interest of the basin. All relevant beneficiaries and stakeholders will be invited to provide their input, based on common understanding of the situation, problems and options for the future. In line with this approach, the following core elements of the Programme are envisaged:

Consultation process through workshops and meetings involving national and local authorities as well as NGOs and business sector to determine the needs, the scope of the programme and to consult on the actions proposed within the Programme. NGOs and local communities will receive support to actively participate in this process.

Capacity building for Hungarian local and regional authorities for management of sustainable development programmes, **disaster management** and good local governance, including public access to information and public participation.

Mapping and assessment of national/regional development plans, spatial plans and initiatives in order to create a transparent basis for consultations, joint needs assessment, planning and decision making. Information of the public about the state of the river basin using a combination of computer based and traditional methods will aim to get wide social support.

Setting up a Pilot Coordination Unit (PCU) as an “action nucleus” will be designed based on common needs and priorities of the riparian countries. for the organisation of preparatory consultations, project preparation and eventually for implementing of projects..

1.4 End of Project situation

It is expected that in parallel to various sectoral cooperation initiatives started, an integrated multi-stakeholder regional cooperation process will also be started, which later will be able to take over the leading role towards the realisation of all encompassing, integrated sustainable development programmes.

At the end of the project, the countries, regions, local communities, businesses and NGOs in the region should have a clearer vision about their future development and the needed activities and investments. With such vision they will be able to invest their own resources more wisely and attract additional international funding and investment from public (EU, GEF, IFIs) and private sources .

1.5 Project strategy

Using the existing network of experts and civil servants of the riparian countries, this nationally executed project will initiate and finance project activities. The Implementing Agency, with the strong support of the UNDP will be developed into a regional PCU type of “action nucleus” by strengthening it. with representatives from riparian countries Focus will be given to the organisation of national and regional workshops to discuss needs, priorities and common solutions. In parallel, at local and national level the improvement (strengthening) of the know how about river basin management and sustainable development will start Importance will be given to participatory methods and techniques with the involvement of all possible stakeholders and target groups. During 2001/2002 detailed preparatory work would be conducted. A project document with broader scope and for eventual international donor financing will be prepared aimed at the drafting of international cooperation programmes and/or legal instruments..

Proper networks and mechanisms are necessary for sharing of experiences and know –how between riparian counties having different sets of priorities or having different level of available resources, technical and operational capabilities.

As more concrete steps, it may be listed:

- Identification of project relevant national and international parties.
- Develop the basic information network between national and international parties.
- Discussion of development ideas by relevant stakeholders.
- Prepare requirements for the Integrated Tisza River Basin Regional Sustainable Development Programme in co-operation with national and international parties and experts.
- To organise a planning workshop in summer 2001 where a more detailed scope of the Programme would be developed and the applications for possible initial donor grants would be finalized

1.6 The relevant strategic objectives of governments

The foremost strategic objective of the Hungarian Government is the full accession of the country into the European Union. This requires the further modernisation of its economy, among others, by introducing environment friendly consumption, production and sustainable agriculture. Major goal is to prepare the various stakeholders to apply, receive and to fully absorb EU assistance.

The governments want to design and start implementing such sustainable development programmes which will assure the conservation of the viable and vulnerable ecosystem of Tisa/Tisza basin. To stop negative influences on the Tisza basin region, alternative land uses and economic income opportunities have to be developed. The mid-term “Hungarian Development Plan”, the so called “Szécsényi Plan” for example, provides the opportunity to fund certain development activities already connected to the Tisza river basin such as eco-tourism and various infrastructure projects.

A “Tisza Valley Environment Use Plan”. Is also under preparation by the Government of Hungary. The Hungarian Academy of Science is in the process of formulating a “Tisza Research Strategy” in order to systematise and co-ordinate ongoing and/or planned research efforts and programmes.

The other riparian counties, depending on their own timetable and preparedness have similar strategic objectives, all in close coordination with the general European and Atlantic integration framework.

1.7 Target beneficiaries

The main beneficiary is the population living in the riparian countries presently suffering from one of the highest rate of unemployment in their respective countries. The same population is suffering also from the more and more frequent floods and environmental pollution caused by the un-sustainable management of the natural resources of the basin.

All regional and local authorities having responsibility for the economic and social well being of the population including the budgetary institutions spending presently considerable resources for and of pipe remedial solutions caused by those events will also benefit.

Other major positive result expected is the increased stability of the region with special attention paid to the future problems to be expected arising from sharing of scarce water resources between the countries.

Last but not least the global environment will benefit on the long run by adding to the efforts of the global community to decrease the contributions to the climatic changes.

1.7 Global significance

River ecosystems are endangered worldwide. The Tisza river with its oxbows has still a wealth of biodiversity, including rare and endangered habitats and species. The system is of highest importance for a large number of migratory bird species as a fly-over site and staging post. Reducing the rate of biodiversity loss and conserving existing biodiversity as a basis of sustainable development remain major global challenges.

Experiences gained in the process of project implementation could be utilised and methods/approaches could be cost-effectively replicated elsewhere in the world.

The research component of the full-fledged GEF project might produce research results of global importance.

1.8 Justification of UNDP assistance.

While Hungary is producing strong growth tendencies, the wealth and income effects of this growth are unequally divided over its population and its territory.. This polarisation is further accentuated in the Eastern part of the country, where the natural and environmental disasters are more frequent than elsewhere, and affecting the poorest segment of the population, including the Roma settlements..

While critical issues like flood and environmental damages may be reduced with appropriate national and international resources, on the long run these measures do not solve the problems at their source and they continue to re-occur causing renewed damages and costs to the people and the economy.

By applying the sustainable development principles for the development of the whole river-basin the region may create such economical, social and environmental conditions that the people living in the area will get out the present poverty, uncertainty and will live in modest, but decent living conditions and standards. The UNDP was approached by Hungary and some other riparian counties to take a leading role and be a catalyser in the cooperation efforts initiated. With its experience in sustainable development, poverty and environmental issues and with the funding available UNDP is perfectly qualified to fulfil these expectations.

C. IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES, OUTPUTS, AND ACTIVITIES

Development Objective

The development objective of the present project is to support preparatory efforts for a Integrated Sustainable Development Programme of the Tisza River Basin, a related Convention envisaged and to assist the Hungarian to participate in an enhanced regional cooperation.

Immediate objective 1

To set up pilot coordination unit (PCU), carry out its institution building support by appropriate transfer of experience and training . Training activities should cover staff of local level institutions as well

Output 1.1

Experts of PCU trained on river basin management, sustainable development and disaster prevention methods and practices in the leading foreign authorities or institutions

Activities

<i>No.</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Responsible</i>
1.1.1.	Establish pilot coordination unit (PCU) based on recommendation of riparian countries	IA/NFPs
1.1.2	Preparation of training curriculum, venue and travel to destination	
1.1.3	Training of PCU staff at relevant development authorities and institutions	IA/PCU
1.1.4	Preparation of term of reference for database in agreement with all countries	
1.1.5	Created TiszaRiver Basin database on sectoral programs and initiatives	IA/PCU

Output 1.2

Initiate and carry out consultations and workshops at national level to formulate priorities and a concept on sustainable development cooperation with special attention given to integrated river basin management.

Activities

<i>No.</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Responsible</i>
1.2.1	Start-up international workshop on cooperation and steps to be followed	Implementing Agency (IA)
1.2.2	Organisation of national workshops for inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder cooperation	National Focal Points (NFP)
1.2.3.	Concluding and summing-up workshop of stakeholders from five riparian country	IA
1.2.4	Draft joint concept and recommendations on sustainable development programme	IA/Consultant

Immediate objective 2

Full mapping of national and regional policies, strategies and programmes carried out including ongoing projects and investments. Public and media is provided appropriate information on the status of the Tisza river basin.

Output 2.1

Complete report is prepared on objective 2 and published in national languages.

Activities:

<i>No.</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Responsible</i>
1.2.1	Coordinate with riparian countries on extent of mapping required, establish need for consultancy	IA-PCU
1.2.2	Prepare TOR for consultancies	IA-PCU
1.2.3	Carry out country missions and prepare drft report	IA-PCU
1.2.4	Discuss draft Mapping Report with county experts	IA-PCU
1.2.5	Prepare final Mapping report	IA-PCU
1.2.6	Translate and disseminate findings	IA-PCU

D. INPUTS

Still To be worked on it

UNDP input

10 Personnel

17.01 National Consultants USD 10,000

This budget line will be used to carry out the Tisza river basin mapping activities described earlier. I will also support the Implementing Agency in the practical implementation of the project activities and in the day-to day management of the project.

20 Sub-contracts

21.01 USD 10,000

This budget line will be used for activities needed in the mapping work, publication of mapping report and information/dissemination activities.

30 Training

31.01 Fellowships USD 5 000

A short fellowships/training abroad for three PCU staff in the field of river basin management, on-the-job training, and related development workshops. Full details to be established following the regional start-up workshop, which will draw detailed project work plan as well

31.02 Workshops USD 20,000

This budget line will be used for organizing workshops described earlier at the activity tables. Detailed cost sharing between participating riparian countries will be finalised at the start-up workshop.

50 Miscellaneous USD 5,000

This budget line will be used for sundries and audit.

TOTAL: USD 50,000

Government of Hungary input

The government will participate mainly in the form of in-kind contribution supplied through the Government Commissioner's Office (GCO). Besides the project management support, the GCO will provide premises and logistics for the project activities.

1.9 Implementation arrangements

The project will be executed by the Government Commissioner's Office attached to the Prime Minister's Office of Hungary and will be implemented by the Tisza-Szamos Trust Fund Kht. (Public Benefit Company)

A project Steering Committee will include representatives of all concerned ministries, local government bodies and major NGOs.

A national project coordinator (NPC) responsible for the day-to-day co-ordination of the project activities, including exploration and recruitment of national and international consultants and experts will be nominated by the National Project Director belonging to the Executing Agency.. The NPC will also prepare the necessary reports as required by UNDP and the Steering Committee.

The Tisza-Szamos Public Benefit Company, a non-profit organisation working under the supervision of the Tisza-Szamos Government Commissioner, was established by the Prime Minister Office of the Hungarian Government with the following aims:

- to help ecosystem rehabilitation in the River Tisza;
- to survey potential accidental risk spots in the entire river basin to remediate them;
- to hold negotiations with different organisations in the five countries of the river basin to promote co-operation to avoid further accident
- to give social and financial support to the fishermen families along the River Tisza in Hungary.

It is perfectly suited to carry out inter-ministerial coordination, decision making and to implement projects

2.0 Timetable

As indicated by the Annex