

# **MACHAKHELA NATIONAL PARK TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**



## **PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR ELABORATION OF ADJARA PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION**

**UNDP-supported and GEF-financed Project:**

**Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region's  
Protected Areas**

**November 2016**

## **MACHAKHELA NATIONAL PARK TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

The strategy was elaborated by HIDRIA Ciencia, ambiente y desarrollo S.L. with support from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Georgia, and the Agency of the Protected Areas of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Georgia.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author/s and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations or UNDP.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1. BACKGROUND .....	13
2.2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN .....	13
2.3. GENERAL APPROACH .....	14
2.4. METHODOLOGY .....	16
<b>3. MACHAKHELA NATIONAL PARK AND SUPPORT ZONE .....</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1. GENERAL INFORMATION .....	17
3.2. SOCIOECONOMIC FRAMEWORK.....	19
<b>4. ASSESSMENT OF THE AREA .....</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1. MACHAKHELA NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION .....	24
4.1.1. Management System.....	24
4.1.2. Existing Management Plan .....	25
4.1.3. Zoning.....	26
4.2. ASSESSMENT OF THE ATTRACTIONS AND SERVICES OF MACHAKHELA NATIONAL PARK.....	29
4.2.1. Description and Key Features of the Area .....	29
4.2.2. Evaluation of infrastructures and services available .....	33
4.2.3. Description and evaluation of environmental education programs/volunteer programs.....	35
4.3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPPORT ZONE .....	36
4.3.1. Natural and Cultural resources in Machakhela National Park Support Zone .....	36
4.3.2. Analysis of business in the support zone: lodges/accommodation, restaurants, shops.....	42
4.4. ANALYSIS OF TOURISM DEMAND.....	49
4.4.1. Existing tourism demand .....	49
4.4.2. Trends affecting consumer behaviour .....	49
4.4.3. Potential Tourism markets .....	50
4.5. MARKETING AND PROMOTION .....	51
4.6. ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES.....	55
4.6.1. Constraints for tourism development in Machakhela National Park .....	55
4.6.2. Main Opportunities and Competitive advantages of Machakhela National Park.....	56
<b>5. SWOT AND TOWS ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>58</b>
5.1. SWOT and TOWS Analysis.....	58
<b>6. POTENTIAL TOURISM SERVICES AND FACILITIES – BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES.....</b>	<b>64</b>
6.1. DESCRIPTION OF POTENTIAL TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES TO BE DEVELOPED .....	65
6.2. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE POTENTIAL TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES .....	70
6.2.1. Qualitative assessment of tourism potential.....	70
6.2.2. Estimation of the Economic Benefits of the Potential Tourism Products and Services.....	74
<b>7. STRATEGIC PLAN.....</b>	<b>78</b>

<b>7.1. VISION, MISSION AND GOALS .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>7.2. STRATEGY .....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>8. ACTION PLAN.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>9. SUMMARY OF ACTIONS .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>10. ANNEXES.....</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>10.1. VISITOR SATISFACTION SURVEY .....</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>10.2. MAPS .....</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>10.3. EXAMPLES OF HOW TO PREPARE A THEMATIC TOUR AND AN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY FOR FAMILIES .....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>10.4. PROPOSAL FOR TRAIL DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>11. MINUTES OF MEETING – STRATEGY VALIDATION WORKSHOP.....</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>12. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>185</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1: Demographic data of Machakhela protected area support zone settlements (Machakhela community). Source: Khelvachauri Municipality.....	20
Table 2: Machakhela National Park budget. Source: MNP administration .....	25
Table 3: Recommended managing objectives and priorities for Machakhela National Park Source: Ilia State University (ILIAUNI), 2015 .....	28
Table 4: List of International Travel Fairs. Source: HIDRIA .....	52
Table 5: Potential Tourism Demand Scenarios for Machakhela National Park. Source: HIDRIA .....	75
Table 6: Summary of estimated potential benefits of proposed activities development (in Gel). Source: HIDRIA .....	76

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Guiding Principles of the Machakhela National Park Strategy and Action Plan.....	16
Figure 2: Elaboration process of the Machakhela National Park. Source: HIDRIA .....	16
Figure 3: Machakhela National Park Location Map.....	17
Figure 4: Map of Machakhela Support Zone. Source: HIDRIA.....	19
Figure 5: Percentage of agricultural land area in Machakhela National Park. Source: .....	21
Figure 6: Division of agricultural land, according to its purpose. Source: .....	21
Figure 7: Organization chart of the MNP. Source: MNP .....	24
Figure 8: Machakhela National Park Preliminary Zoning Map. Source: ILIA UNIVERSITY .....	28
Figure 9: Different views of the Machakhela Valley. Source: HIDRIA .....	30
Figure 10: Endemic trees in Machakhela National Park: On the top left <i>Quercus iberica</i> , on the bottom left <i>castanea sativa</i> and on the right <i>fagus orientalis</i> . Source: <a href="http://www.biodiversity-georgia.net">www.biodiversity-georgia.net</a> .....	31
Figure 11: Examples of relevant flora present in the Park. In the upper left <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> , in upper right <i>laurocerasus officinalis</i> , in the bottom right <i>corylus avellana</i> and in the bottom left <i>Ilex colchica</i> . Source: <a href="http://www.biodiversity-georgia.net">www.biodiversity-georgia.net</a> .....	32
Figure 12: Examples of large mammals present in Machakhela National Park .....	33
Figure 13: Administration Building of Machakhela National Park. Source: HIDRIA .....	34
Figure 14: Images of some of the activities carried out by MNP administration. Source: MNP .....	35
Figure 15: Waterfalls in the support zone of MNP. Source: DTR/MNP.....	36
Figure 16: Location of the main natural and cultural resources in the Machakhela Support Zone. Source: HIDRIA .....	38
Figure 17: Hospitality businesses in the Support Zone of Machakhela National Park. Source: HIDRIA.....	42
Figure 18: Map of the Cultural Tour in Machakhela Gorge. Source: DTR .....	53
Figure 19: Brochure of the Protected Areas in Ajara. Source: Ajara Region official website.....	53
Figure 20: Signs along Machakhela Gorge, installed by DTR. Source: HIDRIA .....	54
Figure 21: Elaboration of the conceptual development of Machakhela National Park. Source: Own elaboration .....	64
Figure 22: Tourist trails identified by the consultants during the field visit. Source: HIDRIA .....	65
Figure 23: Examples of products that can be sold as “local souvenirs” in Machakhela National Park .....	106
Figure 24: Example of a weekly local market with locally-produced honey-related products. Source: HIDRIA .....	109
Figure 25: Example of a portable structure for the celebration of the market. Source: <a href="http://crdcommunitygreenmap.ca/location-type/farmers-local-market">http://crdcommunitygreenmap.ca/location-type/farmers-local-market</a> .....	109
Figure 27: Gvara Fortress. Source: Department of Tourism and Resorts.....	111
Figure 28: Kalivake Fortress. Source: Department of Tourism and Resorts.....	111
Figure 29: Examples of leaflets for Protected Areas.Source: HIDRIA .....	127

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>APA</b>	Agency of Protected Areas
<b>CBR</b>	Camili Biosphere Reserve
<b>CNF</b>	Caucasus Nature Fund
<b>DTR</b>	Department of Tourism and Resorts
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GNTA</b>	Georgian National Tourism Administration
<b>Ha</b>	Hectare
<b>ILIAUNI</b>	Ilia State University
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature
<b>KPA</b>	Kintrishi Protected Areas
<b>MAC</b>	Machkhela Advisory Council
<b>MNP</b>	Machakhela National Park
<b>MTNP</b>	Mtiral National Park
<b>MoENRP</b>	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection
<b>NBSAP</b>	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
<b>PAs</b>	Protected Areas
<b>RAC</b>	Regional Advisory Council
<b>SPPA</b>	Support Programme of Protected Areas
<b>TJS</b>	Transboundary Joint Secretariat
<b>TTOO</b>	Tour Operators
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNWTO</b>	United Nations World Tourism Organization
<b>WWF</b>	World Wildlife Fund

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall purpose of the Machakhela Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan is to provide a set of guidelines to ensure a sustainable, yet effective, development of tourism in the protected area and its support zone, through the implementation of services and activities specifically oriented to enhance the natural and cultural values of the Machakhela territory.

This document has been elaborated within the framework of the UNDP program “*Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region’s Protected Areas*”, and goes a step further from “*Adjara Protected Areas System Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy and Plan of Action*” which established the guidelines for the “systematic, controlled and synergic development of the tourism activities in protected areas” with the aim of bringing benefits to the administration and local communities.

The Machakhela Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan evolves around five specific objectives:

1. To define and create marketable services and activities that add value to the natural and cultural resources of the MNP.
2. To create new sources of economic revenues and economic development for the local communities through revenue-recapture mechanisms.
3. To improve social and economic status of the MNP and its support zone communities.
4. To preserve and enhancing MNP natural and cultural resources.
5. To involve local communities in the development of tourism and conservation activities in the MNP.

A comprehensive research and consultation process was carried out in order to set the basis for the development of the MNP Strategy and Action Plan.

As a result of a preliminary assessment of the administrative and human resources, tourism attractions, services and values of the MNP, the following constraints and opportunities were identified as to be the more important to be considered in the Strategy and Action Plain in order to take advantage of the positive features the MNP has to offer and to minimize its limitations towards a sustainable development of tourism:

CONSTRAINTS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited experience of Park's Administration Staff.</li> <li>Difficulties to maximize visitor's experience</li> <li>Ongoing construction of a hydropower plant in the Adjaristkali river..</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rich landscape and ecological diversity with rare and endangered ecosystems.</li> <li>Abundant cultural, historical and ethnographic values linked to its transboundary character.</li> <li>Local communities' dynamism and hospitality.</li> <li>Proximity to Mtirala National Park.</li> <li>Proximity to Batumi and location along the Gorderdzi Pass.</li> <li>Promotion through the Department of Tourism and Resorts (DTR).</li> <li>Presence of numerous tour operators working the Adjara region.</li> </ul>

The preliminary assessment was completed with a detailed SWOT and TOWS analysis to identify the main strengths and vulnerabilities of tourism development in MNP, providing a set of actions to overcome the difficulties, minimize the risks and reinforce the strengths by taking advantages of the main features MNP has to offer, which can be synthesized as follows:

- » **The cultural and ethnographical richness**
- » **The impressive landscape (Gorge)**
- » **The transboundary character and historical past (Colchis, Ottoman Empire, Russian presence, etc.)**

These three important characteristics establish the **core elements** for the development of tourism products in the MNP. The main tourism products identified to have a good potential to be developed are:

- a) **Tourist trails** that connect points of interest within the protected area, allowing communication among rural communities and offer tourists a way to appreciate and enjoy the natural and cultural values. Five different trails were identified with different levels of development, four of which were explored in the field.
- b) **Tourism services and activities** linked to the proposed trails including: biking, kayaking, wildlife watching, horse riding, cooking and tasting tours, snowshoe walking, geocaching and fly fishing.
- c) **Business opportunities** to be provided by local communities and small companies to meet the needs of tourists visiting the protected area, including: catering services, accommodation and guest houses, trout farming activities, handicrafts, information and other services.

Although several actions have been taken to improve the existing trails and to develop some of the mentioned services, there is still room for improvement, mainly through the development of



infrastructures to improve visitor's experience and to increase potential benefits for local communities derived from their development.

The tourism potential of the proposed trails was evaluated according to their attractiveness and competitiveness, by performing a multicriteria analysis. As a result of the analysis the trail that showed more potential for being developed was the **trail from Mtvarangelози Mountain to Sindieti**, which was further developed and pilot-tested in the field.

The development of **tourism trails** linked to the values of the park was identified as the most important product to be developed and the one that showed more potential to generate associated economic benefits for the local communities of the MNP.

The **economic benefits** of the development of the proposed products ranges from 44.732 Gel under the worst case scenario and to 58,232 Gel under the best case scenario, based on estimated growth in tourists visiting the area.

Considering the results of the preliminary assessment of the park and the proposed products and vision projected for the MNP, the **Tourism Strategy and Action Plan** pursues the achievement of the following six **GOALS**:



A total of five **STRATEGIC LINES** were defined comprising, each of them comprising a series of activities to be developed in order to achieve those GOALS. The following chart summarizes the *Machakhela National Park Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020* proposed to implement the strategy and to achieve the expected outcomes.

<b>Strategic Line 1: Management and Governance</b>	
<b>OBJ. 1.1. The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) is a mechanism to coordinate tourism development in Ajara Protected Areas by 2017.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
1.1.1	Assist and actively participate in the development of multi-stakeholder platform at regional level – Regional Advisory Council.
1.1.2	Establish collaboration alliances with potential partners.
<b>OBJ. 1.2. A participatory mechanism to increase governance at PA level it is established by 2017.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
1.2.1	Establish a Machakhela NP Advisory Council.
<b>OBJ. 1.3. Links with Camili Biosphere Reserve are established to create a Transboundary Protected Area by 2019.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
1.3.1	Establish a platform for regular transboundary communication and knowledge sharing (actions, problems and opportunities).
1.3.2	Foster coordinated action among PA's administrations to contribute to the conservation goals of the entire transboundary ecosystem.
1.3.3	Jointly coordinate and implement actions to support and promote gathering activities and marketing actions (festivals, local markets, etc.).
<b>OBJ. 1.4. By 2020, tourism is a source of generating income for MNP.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
1.4.1	Design and implement a mechanism for generating revenues from tourism (Tourism User Fees)
<b>OBJ. 1.5: A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural and local communities is defined and implemented by end of 2018.</b>	
1.5.1	Elaborate and implement a Visitor Impact Monitoring System.
1.5.2	Elaborate a survey among local community members regarding tourism.
1.5.3	Elaborate and conduct visitor satisfaction survey

<b>Strategic Line 2: Strategic Line 2: Capacity Building</b>	
<b>OBJ. 2.1. Build capacity and skills of PA's staff in sustainable tourism, environmental issues and business planning.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
2.1.1	<b>Design and implement a training programme for PA's staff.</b>
2.1.2	<b>Organize study tours for rangers/PA's staff.</b>
<b>OBJ. 2.2. Increase local communities' knowledge about PA's environmental values and tourism related issues.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
2.2.1	Design and implement a training program for local communities.
2.2.2	Organize study tours for community members.

### Strategic Line 3: Local Communities Development

**OBJ. 3.1. Tourism service providers associated to Machakehla NP comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2020.**

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
3.1.1	Assess quality service level of local providers of accommodation and catering facilities.

**OBJ. 3.2. At least, five new local businesses are developed and running by year 2020.**

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
3.2.1	Assess and support new potential business in the communities of the support zone.

**OBJ. 3.3. Cultural and traditional assets are investigated, enhanced and promoted by the Park administration by 2019.**

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
3.3.1	Organize trainings and workshop to enhance the skills of artisans in packaging, and business skills.
3.3.2	Create a local market to promote locally-produced products.
3.3.3	Conduct scientific research to identify main cultural assets in MNP and its support zone.

### Strategic Line 4: Infrastructure Development

**OBJ. 4.1. By 2019, visitors have access to information and interpretation about the Park in a Visitor Centre.**

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
4.1.1	Elaborate a project to rehabilitate and adapt the administration building to a visitor centre.
4.1.2	Design and install road directional signs.

**OBJ. 4.2. New cost-effective tourism activities and services, in which local communities are involved, are developed by 2019**

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
4.2.1	Construct new trails that allow the development of recreational activities.
4.2.2	Design and implement thematic tours in Machakhela National Park.
4.2.3	Develop complementary water-based activities.
4.2.4	Develop and implement wildlife tours.

**OBJ. 4.3. By 2020, at least two markeatable products/activities that enhance local traditions and cultural values are available.**

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
4.3.1	Design and implement gastronomy related activities: cooking and tasting events.
4.3.2	Promote and support the celebration of local folk festivals that gather communities and share local arts and culture.

**OBJ. 4.4. A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Ajara Protected Areas is developed and successfully functioning by 2019.**

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
4.4.1	Develop a route that joins Machakhela National Park and Mtirala National Park.

**OBJ. 4.5. By 2020, a comprehensive environmental educational programme aimed at locals and visitors is functioning.**

4.5.1	Design and implement an environmental education and interpretation program for local and visitors.
4.5.2	Design and implement a volunteer program in coordination with universities and regional education centres.

### Strategic Line 5: Marketing and Promotion

**OBJ. 5.1. Machakhela National Park will be known at national and international level by 2020.**

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
5.1.1	Elaborate an annual Operational Marketing Plan.
5.1.2	Participate in the creation of the Ajara Protected areas membership card.
5.1.3	Organize a calendar of events to increase visibility of the National Park.
5.1.4	Design and produce new promotional material that includes new products, routes.
5.1.5	Organize fam-trips with local and national tour operators to promote new activities developed.
5.1.6	Organize fam-trips with hotels.

**OBJ. 5.2. Information related to Machakhela National Park is easy accessible through new technologies.**

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
5.2.1	Create a visitor friendly tourism website for Machakhela National Park optimized for search engines.
5.2.2	Create downloadable multimedia trails and include detailed information on Ajara Protected Areas in the Gobatumi app.
5.2.3	Define and implement a social media strategy using different channels.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. BACKGROUND

Georgian protected areas play a key role in biodiversity conservation and also offer an excellent recreational opportunity for visitors to enjoy Georgia's diverse nature. The promotion of ecotourism and other forms of sustainable tourism are seen as a tool for increasing the financial sustainability of the Georgian Protected Areas system, and has become a priority for the Agency of Protected Areas (APA).

Over the last years, APA and the Ministry of Environmental Protection, in a coordinated manner with International Donors, have made important efforts in order to develop tourism infrastructures and services in and around Protected Areas (PA's) to attract visitors. However, tourism as a major management issue for protected areas, it has to be carefully planned to ensure its long-term sustainability.

Under the UNDP program *"Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region's Protected Areas"*, the project elaboration of *"Ajara Protected Areas System Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy and Plan of Action"* seeks to provide a pragmatic strategy and plan for increasing the sustainable revenues that can be derived from tourism without negatively affecting the conservation objectives of the Protected Areas in the Ajara Region.

The *"Strategy for Tourism Development in Protected Areas in Georgia"* elaborated in 2015, contributed to establish the guidelines for the *"systematic, controlled and synergic development of the tourism activities in protected areas"* with the aim of bringing benefits to the administration and local communities. This is the framework in which the *"Machakhela Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan"* has been developed.

The recently established Machakhela National Park, along with Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas, is a priority conservation area to preserve the Colchic mountain ecosystems. With the creation of Machakhela National Park and the potential creation of a transboundary protected area with Camili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey the area has a great potential for tourism development.

### 2.2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The **overall purpose** of the *Machakhela National Park Strategy and Action Plan* is to provide the guidelines for the proper development of sustainable tourism within the boundaries of the protected area and the support zone.

The **general objective** of the *Strategy and Action Plan* is:

- » To sustainable develop tourism in Machakhela National Park through the promotion of a wide range of services and activities that contribute to enhance the natural and cultural values of the area. These activities should be sustained by the construction of low-impact and sustainable infrastructures that adapt to environment.

The **specific objectives** of this *Strategy* are:

- » To define and create marketable services and activities in the Park for defined market segments that promote the natural and cultural values.
- » To create economic revenues that can be derived from the tourism activity by defining and implementing a sustainable system of revenue-capture mechanisms.
- » To improve, through tourism activity, the social and economic situation of the communities living around Machakhela National Park.
- » To preserve and enhance Machakhela National Park natural and cultural resources.
- » To involve the communities in the tourism development and conservation of the Park.

### 2.3. GENERAL APPROACH

The approach of this *Strategy and Action Plan* is follows the principles of sustainable tourism

The **guiding principles** of the *Strategy* are:

- » **CO-ORDINATION:** Increasing the levels of co-ordination and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders to achieve an integrated destination approach. The participation of Machakhela National Park in the Regional Advisory Council is a recommended action to increase co-ordination with partners.
- » **PARTICIPATION:** Participation and active involvement of local communities and tourism private sector is crucial for the integrated management of tourism and biodiversity. The inclusion of local communities in PA's decision-making is key for ensuring integrity and conservation of PA's, and also the integration of tourism private sector, for the definition of market-driven tourism products that can be attractive to tourists. In addition, it has to be ensured that an adequate percentage of women are represented in the participatory structures. The gender perspective, supporting women empowerment by creating business opportunities for them and contributing to build their capacities, will be also a crosscutting issue in tourism development in the area.

- » **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY:** Through tourism development, it is expected to increase the financial resources of the PA's, so they would be less dependent of external funds. Cost-effective options will be recommended to ensure a sustainable economic income that can be allocated to conservation and management efforts of the PA's.
- » **CONSERVATION:** Achieving sustainable tourism requires constant monitoring to ensure that environmental impacts such as waste pollution or environment degradation are minimized. In addition, environment education and interpretation will be also a way to increase awareness and better communicate the importance and values of the PA's.
- » **VISITOR SATISFACTION:** Sustainable tourism aims at ensuring a high level of tourist satisfaction and a meaningful experience, providing quality tourism services, raising awareness about environment and conservation issues and promoting sustainable practices.

In addition, there are two principles especially aimed for Machakhela National Park:

- » **NETWORKING:** Establish a strong partnership with Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas will be a major aim, together with taking the initial steps towards a transboundary agreement with Camili Biosphere Reserve (Turkey).
- » **AUTHENTICITY:** Machakhela National Park hosts significant cultural and ethnographical resources that should be preserved and promoted. The creation of tourism products that enhance the traditions and customs maintained by the local villages would contribute significantly to enrich visitors experience.

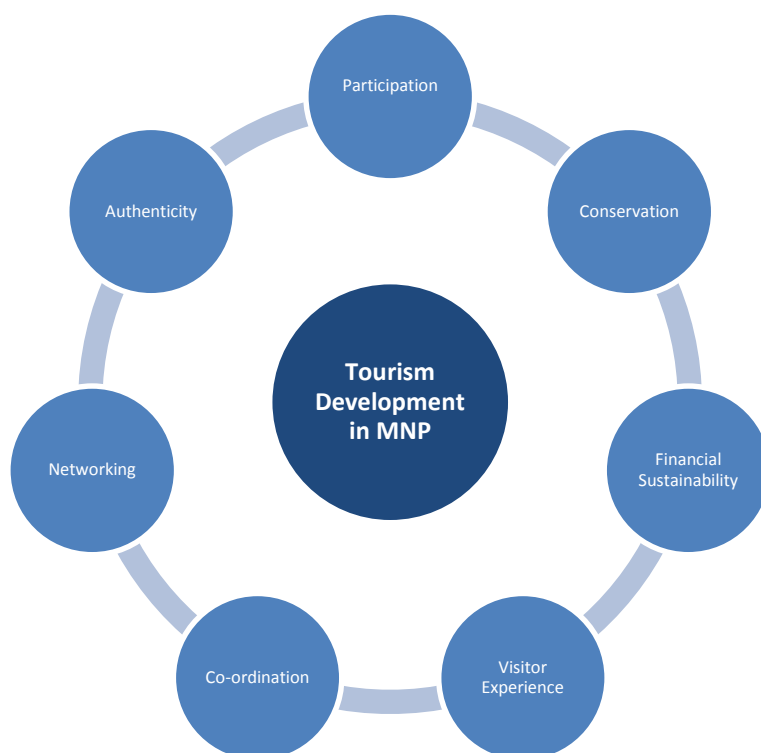


Figure 1: Guiding Principles of the Machakhela National Park Strategy and Action Plan.

## 2.4. METHODOLOGY

The Machakhela National Park Strategy and Action Plan the Park area has been developed based on extensive research and consultation. Fieldwork was conducted between 7<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> April to carefully assess existing and potential tourism products and services. Structured interviews were held with key stakeholders such as Machakhela National Park administration staff, local tourism service providers, regional tourism administration, national experts, etc.

Consultation on the draft Strategy was held on September 28<sup>th</sup> for stakeholder revision and validation, comments were incorporated to the Strategy for the elaboration of the final version of the Machakhela National Park Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020.



Figure 2: Elaboration process of the Machakhela National Park. Source: HIDRIA



### 3. MACHAKHELA NATIONAL PARK AND SUPPORT ZONE

#### 3.1. GENERAL INFORMATION

With a total area of 7,359.44 hectares Machakhela National Park is located 25 kilometres away from the city of Batumi, in the gorge of the Machakhela River. The area was first established as a National Park in May, 2012, but was officially declared by law in May 2015, becoming part of the system of protected areas of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.

Machakhela National Park is located within the administrative boundaries of the municipalities of Keda and Khelvachauri. The area of the National Park borders on the south with the Camili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey, thus creating an excellent opportunity for transboundary cooperation towards a better protection and integrated management of the involved territories. The need for transboundary conservation was indeed recognized as a priority by different experts from the Caucasus region stated by international organizations such as UNDP (Z. Manvelidze, 2012) and IUCN (IUCN, 2013).

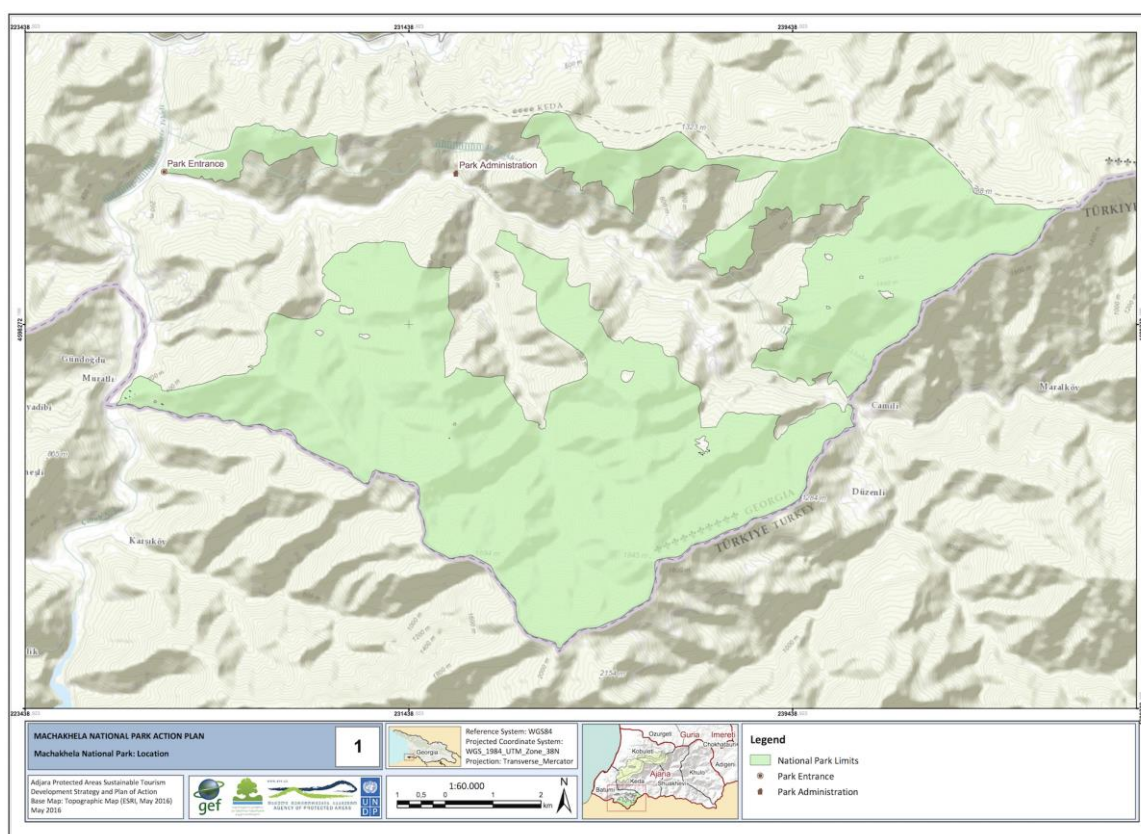


Figure 3: Machakhela National Park Location Map.

Along with the Camili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey, and the protected areas of Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Nature Reserve, belonging to the region of Adjara, Machakhela National Park is part

of an ecological corridor established to preserve the ecosystem of the Colchic Forest. The Colchic forest is a type of mixed temperate forest ecosystem characterized by the abundance of relict species of the Tertiary period, remaining from ancient times when there was no glaciation in the Western Caucasus and forest degradation was not influenced by climate. However, human-induced activities, particularly over-logging, historically impacted native forests in this region, causing the loss of forest structure, productivity and biodiversity. Therefore, the Colchic forest is currently considered an endangered ecosystem that should be protected and restored.

According to recent surveys (ILIAUNI Report, 2015), approximately 70% of the vegetation cover of Machakhela National Park is dominated by Colchic forest communities, which include an understory of evergreen shrubs with various endemic species such as Urgern's Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ungerni*), and other common species like Cherry laurel (*Laurocerasus officinali*) or Caucasus box (*Buxus colchica*), most of them considered to be Tertiary relictics, in a European context. Humid lowland forests are mostly dominated by beech (*Fagus orientalis*) and chestnut (*Castanea sativa*). In the most degraded parts, original forests were replaced by secondary vegetation communities including common species like alder (*Alnus glutinosa*).

Colchic forests provide an important habitat for large mammals, including brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) and other important species found in the lowland forests such as golden jackal (*Canis aureus*), European lynx (*Lynx lynx*), European roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), and wolf (*Canis lupus*).

The areas where mature Colchic forest is well preserved are notable for that pristine wilderness and scenic beauty, which is an important incentive for visitors to come to the park. Developing tourism activities in a way that is compatible with conservation is therefore crucial and one of the priorities for the APA and the MEP.

In addition to its natural values, the park area and its surroundings boasts an abundance of cultural and historical heritage including the medieval Tskhemlari bridge, and many other arch bridges, the Gvara Fortress (6th-7th century AD), different churches and monasteries, and other ethnographic attractions such as an old wine press. Popular festivals and celebrations are also part of the cultural richness of Machakhela region that are worth mentioning, such as the popular Machackhloba Festival held in the second half of September.

Eight inhabited villages are in the area of influence of the Machakhela National Park with 3,048 inhabitants. The vast majority of local families keep their own farm and live from agriculture and development of local products, which opens a possibility for the development of agro-tourism and rural tourism activities that enable visitors to experience the culture and traditions of local communities while generating additional sources of income for the local population.

## 3.2. SOCIOECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

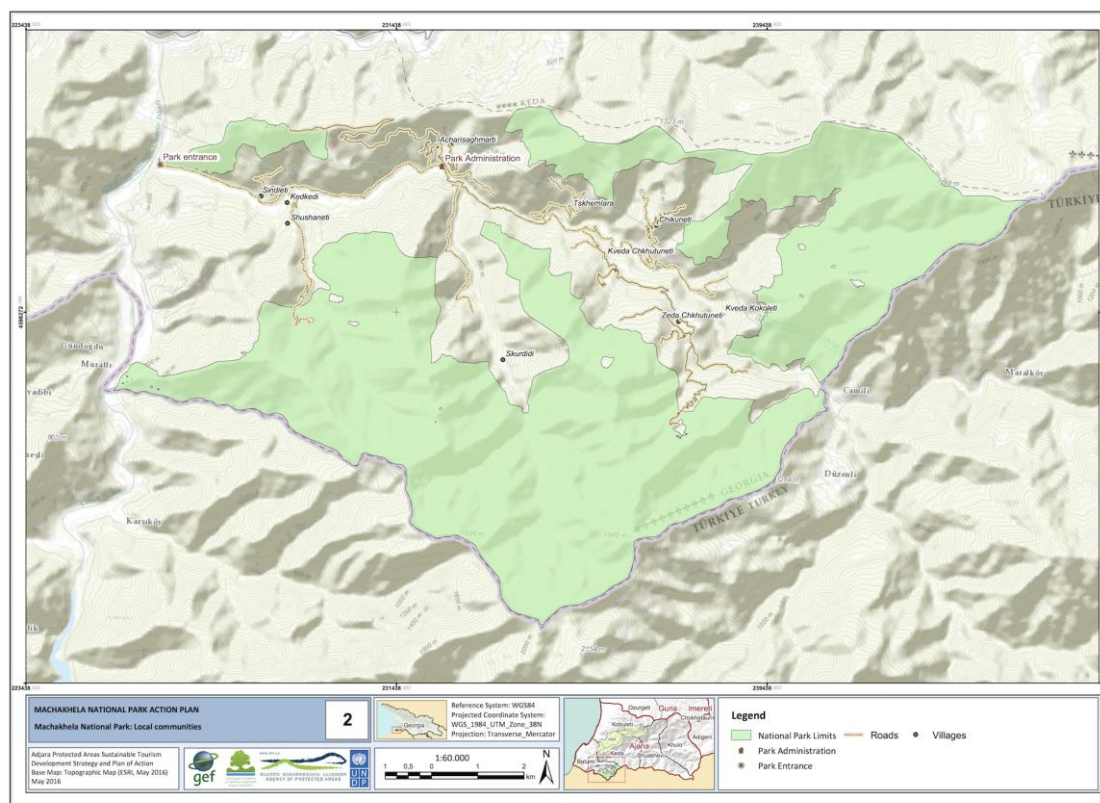


Figure 4: Map of Machakhela Support Zone. Source: HIDRIA

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Machakhela National Park surrounding area contains 8 permanently inhabited villages, with a total population of around 3.048. The average density of population is 324 (+/-202) with minimum 112 at Skurdidi and maximum 853 at Kedkedi/Sindieti.

VILLAGE	HOUSEHOLDS		PERMANENT RESIDENTS					FACTUAL NUMBER OF POPULATION		
	TOTAL	Including: temporarily absent	TOTAL	Women	Men	Temporarily absent		TOTAL	Women	Men
						Women	Men			
Lower Kokoleti	42	4	150	70	80	9	12	129	61	68
Skurdidi	27	0	112	48	64	0	0	112	48	64
Chikuneti	107	4	441	199	242	11	13	417	188	229
Upper Chkhutuneti	106	13	410	215	195	34	31	345	181	164

<b>Lower Chkhutuneti</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>287</b>	140	147	18	18	<b>251</b>	122	129
<b>Kedkedi/Sindieti</b>	<b>178</b>	25	<b>853</b>	419	434	49	51	<b>753</b>	370	383
<b>Ajaris Agmarti</b>	<b>122</b>	10	<b>573</b>	227	346	20	30	<b>523</b>	207	316
<b>Tskhemlara</b>	<b>52</b>	8	<b>222</b>	97	125	13	17	<b>192</b>	84	108
<b>TOTAL MACHAKHELA COMMUNITY</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>3,048</b>	<b>1,415</b>	<b>1,633</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>2,722</b>	<b>1,261</b>	<b>1,461</b>

Table 1: Demographic data of Machakhela protected area support zone settlements (Machakhela community). Source: Khelvachauri Municipality

The average size of family in Machakhela valley is above the average indicator in Georgia, which is 3-4 members per family. The majority of local residents are within 18-65 age group.

Due to the proximity of Ajara Autonomous Republic to Turkey, there are frequent cases of migration of job seekers to Turkey and other countries. There are many families the member goes for a permanent job abroad, to work on a seasonal basis (working in nuts plantations in Turkey), most of them are men. There is high level of migration in Skurdidi commune due to the result of the social problem, unemployment and lack of road communication. The revenues generated overseas play significant role for the families, members of which travel overseas for seasonal jobs.

Most of population in the support zone of Machakhela is engaged in the agricultural activity - land cultivation and livestock breeding. It must be also noted that the population generates lowest incomes from sales of produced agricultural goods.

A great percentage of the population is employed in the public sector and a major portion of their revenues comprise of salaries received from the above sector. Revenues from the private sector and pensions are on the second place; these revenues are distributed almost evenly.

## ECONOMIC DATA

According to the study carried out by Ilia University in the area, the most important economic activities in the support zone of the Machakhela National Park are:

### » Agriculture and livestock farming

In 2014, the total area of farms in MNP surrounded area equalled to 280,72 ha., out of which 256,09 ha. was agricultural land area (including arable land – 230,49 ha, natural mow land– 11,58 ha, natural pastures – 8,69 ha., perennial crops – 5,33 ha.), as for non-agricultural land area – it totalled 24,63 ha.

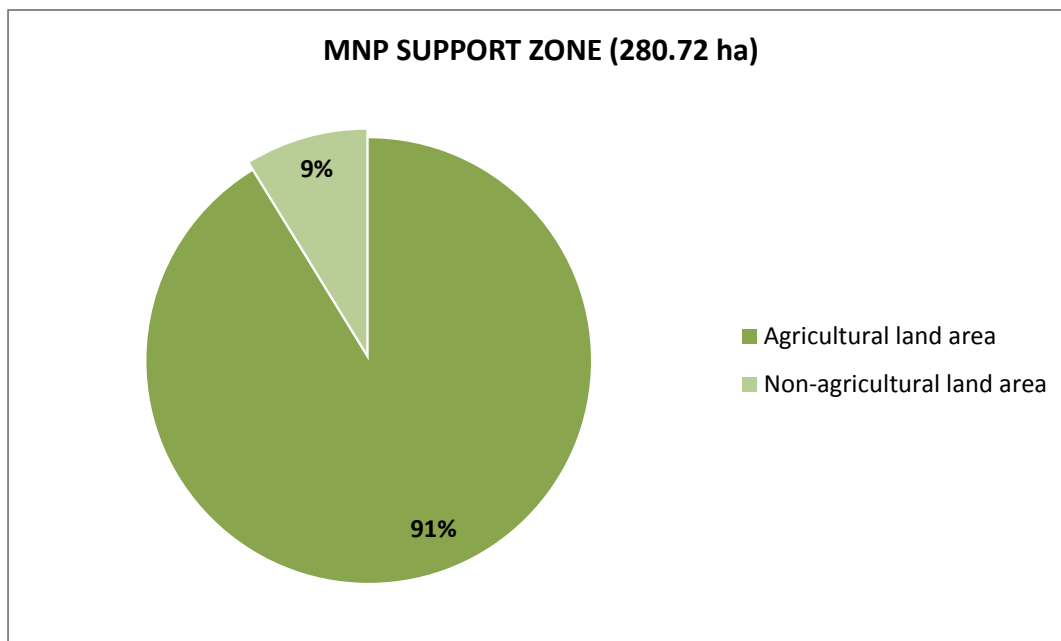


Figure 5: Percentage of agricultural land area in Machakhela National Park. Source:

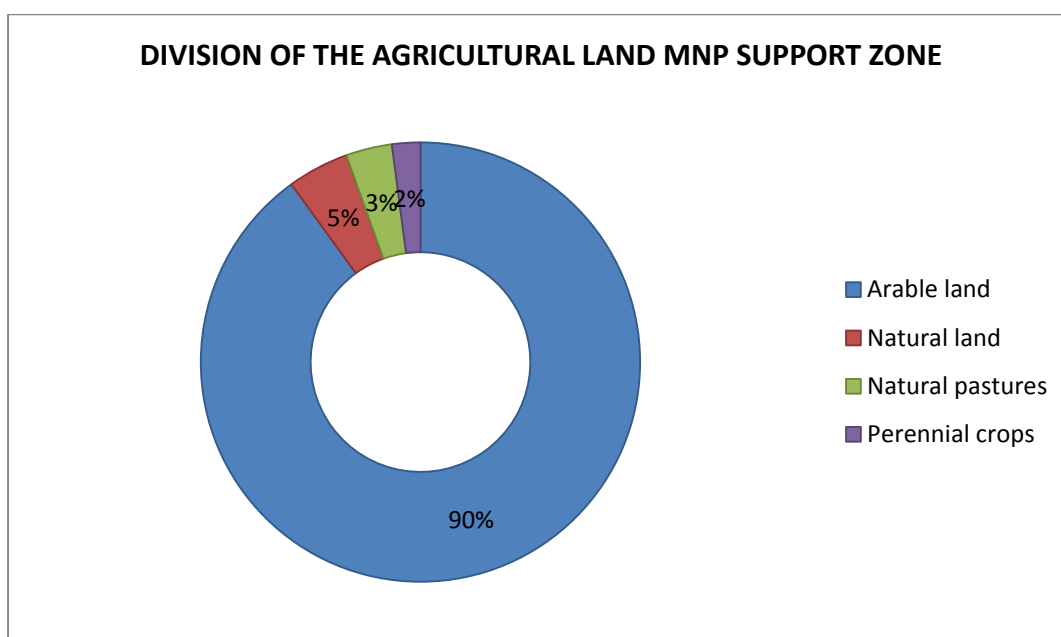


Figure 6: Division of agricultural land, according to its purpose. Source:

Main fields of agriculture are the horticulture, bee-keeping and livestock breeding. The commune also grows hazelnut trees, walnut, chestnut tangerine, peer, apple, cherry, wild plum, peach, plum, raspberries, fig, etc.

- a) *Horticulture*: Since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century corn has become the mono-crop, and it is the main bread-grain. Largely this is rearing of corn on terraced mountain slopes, more on southern than northern slopes. The corn crop covers large areas and as a result of cutting of the tea

plantations. Each household produces at least 500 kg to 1 ton. The major crops from the late past century up today are also potato and bean.

For the last 15 years, under the market economy conditions, the fundamental change of the agricultural production caused decrease in the production of leading crops of the last century (tea, tobacco production) and population moved back to the traditional economic activities (production of corn, bean and potatoes, intensive cultivation of hazelnut and bee-keeping).

- b) *Winegrowing*: Limestone cellars, winepress of different size, the oldest species of vine found in the Machakhela valley shows development of vine-growing and wine-making in Machakhela gorge. Before the 30's of last century here was spread "maglari" type of vine which grow on tree. But after second half of 30's cultivation of lower type of vine "dablari" has begun. In the valley was mainly developed the following types of vine: *Kolosha, Dudgho, tskhenidzuzu, Chkhaveri, Misketi, bostnuri, Sakmieli, Kvabturi, Chitakurdzena, Kharitvala, Livanuri, Klarjuli, Shavshuri*.

Nowadays, there are few families for whom vine-growing is the main source of income. Some of the produce also different types of (wine, vodka) alcoholic drinks and sell it out on local market.

- c) *Bee-keeping*: In agricultural life of villages of Machakhela National Park, beekeeping occupies important part. There are 3 types of beekeeping developed in Machakhela gorge – forest beekeeping (rock bee, tree bee), partially domesticated (hives on the trees) and domestic (artificially planed hive). The apiaries are located in winter largely in the villages and areas along the river and spread in summer throughout the open areas on mountain slopes.
- d) *Livestock farming*: Machakhela gorge was used for breeding sheep and goats, for both milk and meat. Nowadays, the sheep is no longer kept and the number of goats has significantly reduced. The cattle are mainly kept in the fenced areas. 5-10% of cattle graze in the forest. Pig breeding development has started in the last few years.
- e) Another activity in Machakhela was *timber harvesting* that was destructive for landscape. The samples of wood carving and construction works are still preserved at dwelling houses and mosques.

» **Fishing**

Fishing was also one of the main activities and source of income for local population. There are trout farms along the river, where American rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) is farmed. However, trout farming is under threat from due to the development of hydropower plant system in the MNP watershed and Acharistskali Valley.

» **Tourism activities**

Machakhela with its nature and culture attracts visitors. Few families opened their doors to tourists offering simple accommodation facilities to visitors. Tourism activities are additional/supplementary income for local population that includes **hotel, guesthouse and restaurant business**, the latter commonly combined with rearing trout and household agriculture. Guesthouses are located in Zeda Chkhutuneti, Tskhemlara and Chikuneti.

The restaurants are usually organized along the river banks. This business may be more developed by establishing smaller open-air restaurants and cafes.

## **BASIC INFRASTRUCTURES**

The analysis carried out by Black Sea Eco Academy on the local communities shows that water infrastructure in most communities is in a poor condition and there is practically no sewage system.

There is limited internet coverage and phone connection is also complicated in some of the communities.

Most of population still uses timber as the only mean for heating.



## 4. ASSESSMENT OF THE AREA

### 4.1. MACHAKHELA NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

#### 4.1.1. Management System

#### ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Machakhela NP administration is located in village of Ajarisagmarti (Khelvachauri municipality), in the beginning of NP entrance, at Machakhela river edge. Location is suitable and makes it easy to have regular contacts with local communities in the surrounding area.

Total number of employees in Machakhela PA is 21; including: 3 management, environmental specialist, visitor service specialist, secretary, accountant and 14 Ranger staff. See below the organization chart.

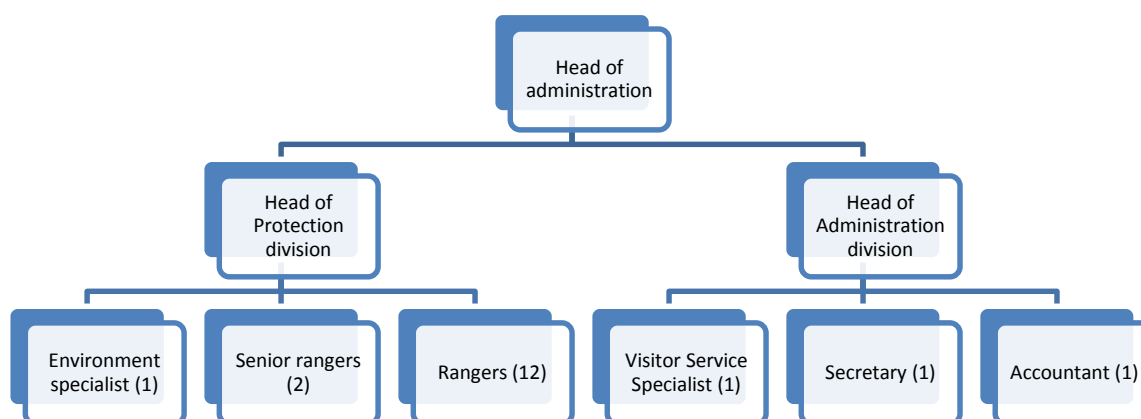


Figure 7: Organization chart of the MNP. Source: MNP

#### BUDGET

Adjara Protected Areas budget depend on three main sources: state budget, international organizations and tourism related sources.

Machakhela NP does not receive funds from third parties, such as Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF) or tourism-related sources yet, as tourism activities have not been developed yet.

The total budget for Machakhela NP for **2014** was **76.700 Gel**, 64.200 Gel from state budget, plus 12,500 Gel received from APA's revenue. This budget has increased in 2015 to 104.000 Gel.



SOURCES OF INCOME	2014
State Budget	64.200
APA	12.500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>76.700 Gel</b>

Table 2: Machakhela National Park budget. Source: MNP administration

#### 4.1.2. Existing Management Plan

As recently established park, Machakhela NP administration/APA is still working on the demarcation and zoning. Iliia University is working on the definitive zoning; a preliminary proposal was presented to major stakeholders in March. This zoning is showed in section 4.13. *Zoning*.

The management plan is not elaborated yet. In the framework of the UNDP program “*Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region’s Protected Areas*” and expert has been hired to support Machakhela National Park administration and APA to implement the process for the development of a detailed six-year management plan. It is expected that the management plan will be ready by the end of 2016-beginning of 2017.

In this process, it is also expected that the establishment of governance structures are advised and supported in order to develop an inclusive and sustainable management mechanism for the National Park.

During the elaboration of the Strategy, August 2016, the *Machakhela and Mtirala Friends Association* (based on the example of Kintrishi) was established. Since September the association has been developing projects such as: Young Rangers and Community Rangers’ projects. The association has director, project coordinator, administrator and three volunteers.

The main **mission of the Friends Association** is:

- Enhance Mtirala and Machakhela administrations and support efficiency of their activities.
- Promote Mtirala and Machakhela PA’s in society.
- Enhance involvement of local community and other stakeholders in planning and management process.
- Support solution of social-economic problems of support zone villages in and around PA’s.
- Support the development of surrounded regions of Machakhela and Mtirala
- Monitor state and donor funds allocated on the development of PAs and the region and implementation.
- Provide financial sustainability for the development of protected areas and region.
- Support collaboration between local municipalities, central government and local communities in Machakhela and Mtirala support zones.
- Support de-centralization of management and governance of PAs in Georgia.

The Park's Action Plan for 2015 included: special trainings for rangers, investigation and definition of patrol routes, assessment of eco-systems, organization of introduction courses, meetings with village schools and implementation of special thematic programs for junior rangers, and organization of Green Calendar Events.

#### 4.1.3. Zoning

The definitive zoning for the Machakhela National Park is still pending approval. However, in order to provide a basis for the development of a Management Plan for the protected area, the APA with the support of experts from Ilia State University (ILIAUNI), carried out a comprehensive assessment of the status of natural habitats and species present in the area defined by the Machakhela watershed. As a result, a **preliminary zoning** was defined based on four indicators: (a) landscape stability, (b) abundance of relictic and threatened species, (c) abundance of large mammals, and (d) forest quality.

The proposed zoning includes the following zones, according to the Law on Protected Areas (LPA) (Order #96, 28/01/2008):

- **Strict protection Zone (Zone A):** established to preserve virgin nature, conduct non-manipulative scientific research and educational activities.
- **Regulated Protection Zone (Zone B):** established to protect, take care of and restore the living environment, as well as conducting manipulative scientific research and tourism and educational activities.
- **Traditional Use Zone (Zone C):** established to conduct economic activities related to the environment protection and traditional use of renewable natural resources.
- **Visitor's Zone (Zone D):** established to conduct environmental recreational and educational activities, including hiking trails, scenic viewpoints, picnic areas, camping sites and accommodation facilities.

The zones above are mainly destined to protect natural ecosystems and their biodiversity while allowing the development of certain activities that are compatible with the objectives of the protected area. In addition, a support (buffer) zone was proposed to guarantee an adequate management of the park while allowing local communities to continue developing traditional uses. The **support zone (Zone E)** is as well suitable for the development of touristic, recreational and educational activities based on a sustainable use of natural resources. The development of such activities could contribute to generate new sources of income to sustain local livelihoods and to invest in conservation and habitat restoration in the protected area.

The support zone may also qualify as **"area of quality importance"** according to forest use regulation of Georgia (Government Resolution No. 242 of 20 August, 2010), as it is mentioned in the study of ILIAUNI. Areas of quality importance are areas of diverse functionality located outside of the boundaries of protected areas, therefore they are not affected by the same use restrictions,

but they are certain rules and limitations that can be observed in order to manage these areas sustainably. The managing objectives of this type of zone should promote and prioritize environmentally friendly activities, creating links between the National Park and the surrounding area. Protecting singular species that spread beyond the park limits is also important, as well as encouraging maintenance of landscape mosaics and wildlife corridors, minimizing habitat fragmentation, in collaboration with the local communities present in the area.

As inferred from the above information, recreational and tourism activities may be developed in most of the Protected Area, as long as they are managed to ensure protection of natural resources and important values of the Park. However, the team from ILIAUNI suggested specific objectives and priorities to be considered for each of the proposed zones, as detailed below.

ZONING	RECOMMENDED MANAGING OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES
<b>Strict Protection Zone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To give total priority to conservation of species, habitats ecosystems, landforms and landscapes.</li> <li>• Allowing only limited, non-destructive management.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulated Protection Zone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To manage the area for conservation, maintenance of natural landscape values.</li> <li>• Allowing natural processes to occur with minimal management intervention and without infrastructure development.</li> <li>• Allowing survey, research and monitoring and regulated low level, low impact recreation with few facilities.</li> <li>• Allowing locals to cut secondary alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>) stands for firewood in order to help beech (<i>Fagus orientalis</i>) reclaim its former range that has relatively recently been colonized by alder due to human destruction of old-growth beech stands.</li> </ul>
<b>Traditional Use Zone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowing traditional activities by promoting and assisting non-destructive, sustainable practices that will not harm the protected area.</li> <li>• Protect cultures and sustainable traditional practices of people whose foraging territory intersects the MNP.</li> <li>• Encourage the maintenance of traditional practices that support the objectives of the MNP.</li> <li>• Allow locals to cut secondary alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>) stands for firewood in order to help beech (<i>Fagus orientalis</i>) reclaim its former range that has relatively recently been colonized by alder due to human destruction of old-growth beech stands.</li> </ul>
<b>Visitor's Zone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing accessible and less vulnerable areas enabling large numbers of visitors to use and enjoy the area within acceptable limits.</li> <li>• Offer organized recreation with appropriate visitor services, interpretation and education facilities and regulated commercial activity.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing the MNP management infrastructure in this zone.</li> </ul>
<b>Support Zone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Putting an emphasis on encouraging sustainable and environmentally friendly development activities, which create links between the MNP and its surrounding area.</li> <li>Protecting ranges of species, habitats and ecosystems that spread beyond the MNP boundary.</li> <li>Encouraging maintenance of landscape links and wildlife corridors, minimize habitat fragmentation and maintain source populations outside the MNP.</li> </ul>

Table 3: Recommended managing objectives and priorities for Machakhela National Park Source: Ilia State University (ILIAUNI), 2015

The map below shows the preliminary proposed zoning for the Machakhela National Park.

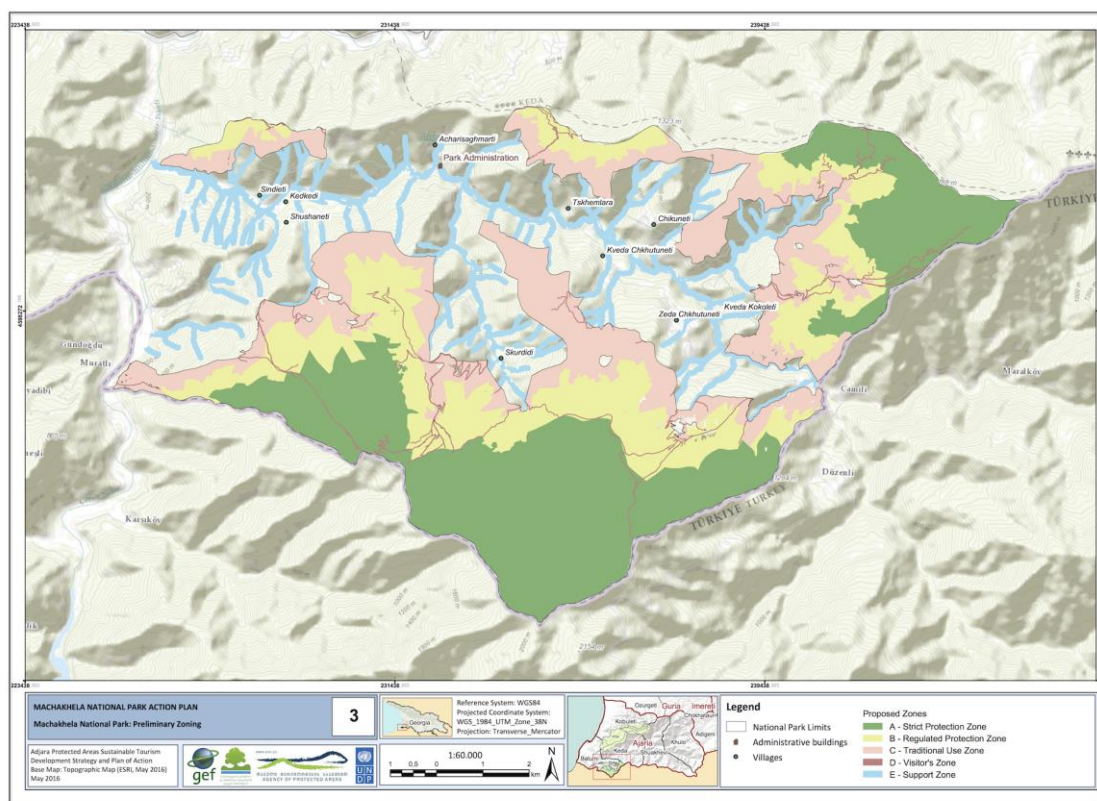


Figure 8: Machakhela National Park Preliminary Zoning Map. Source: ILIA UNIVERSITY

## **4.2. ASSESSMENT OF THE ATTRACTIONS AND SERVICES OF MACHAKHELA NATIONAL PARK**

For the formulation of the tourism strategy, the initial step consists in the compilation of the natural (identification of flora and fauna species, geographical assets, etc.) and cultural features as well as information about current infrastructure available to determine the best areas for the tourism activity and development.

### **4.2.1. Description and Key Features of the Area**

The territory of Machakhela National Park of and its support zone is located on the Minor Caucasian mountain ridge of Shavsheti and its off spurs. The distance from the territory to the Black Sea coast is around 15 km. National Park of Machakhela and its support zone includes the basin of the Machakhela River (the right influent of the Chorokhi River) and is characterized by a unique variety of relict and endemic plants.

An overview of the main features, physical and biotic, of Machakhela National Park is provided in the following paragraphs.

#### **PHYSICAL FEATURES**

Machakhela National Park is located in two climatic zones: humid climate with mild warm snowless winter and long summer (the low basin of the Machakhela River) and humid climate, moderately cold winter and long warm summer (the upper basin of the river). The average annual temperature is 12.80°C. The average temperature of the coldest month of the year, January is 3.40°C. Annual mean rainfall is 1,500 mm.

Tuffogenic rocks of andesitic composition of the tertiary period are spread on the territory of the National Park of Machakhela and its support zone, as on most territory of Adjara. The relief is strongly partitioned by mountains, foothills and deep gorges.

On the territory of the National Park, the Machakhela River flows (area of the hydrographic water basin 368 km<sup>2</sup>) with biggest tributaries being the Kokoleti River and the Skurdidi River. Rivers create plural rapids and waterfalls. On the territory there are lots of mineral and fresh-water springs.

Location of the National Park and its support zone determines its characteristics. Broad-leaved forests at 600 metre above sea level are spread along red earth soils that are quite rare for moderate latitudes. With increasing the absolute height red earth soils are changed by yellow–brown forest and brown-forest soils, where there are mainly beech grove and beech-chestnut grove, in small quantities fir-tree and silver-tree forests with inclusion of beech trees.





Figure 9: Different views of the Machakhela Valley. Source: HIDRIA

## BIOTIC FEATURES

### » FLORA

The Park is covered by forests, 75 % of which are virgin forests. Most of the territory of the gorge is occupied by the Colchic type mixed forests with domination of beech, chestnut, oak, or spruce, etc. Some Oak trees – *Quercus iberica*, *Quercus hartwissiana*, are not observed in the sub-region of Mtirala-Kintrishi. Machakhela gorge is also characterized with the low hypsometric spreading of fir-tree (about 150-200 m from sea level), which is not characteristic for other sub-regions of Adjara.



Figure 10: Endemic trees in Machakhela National Park: On the top left *Quercus iberica*, on the bottom left *castanea sativa* and on the right *fagus orientalis*. Source: [www.biodiversity-georgia.net](http://www.biodiversity-georgia.net).

The National Park of Machakhela is distinguished for its relict and endemic biodiversity. Some of the endemic trees and shrubs on the territory, included in the Georgian Red List of Protected species are: Medvedev's birch (*Betula medvedevi*), box (*Buxus colchica*), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*); Pontic oak (*Quercus pontica*); and, a very narrow-ranged Ungern's rhododendron (*Rhododendron ungeri*)<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Data from the ILIA University Report: "Machakhela National Park Resource Inventory Baseline Studies and Mapping" elaborated in the UNDP Programme "Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region's Protected Areas





Figure 11: Examples of relevant flora present in the Park. In the upper left *Rhododendron ponticum*, in upper right *laurocerasus officinalis*, in the bottom right *corylus avellana* and in the bottom left *Ilex colxica*. Source: [www.biodiversity-georgia.net](http://www.biodiversity-georgia.net).

## » FAUNA

The fauna present in the Park is the typical for the Caucasian forests, with some species endemic to the Western Lesser Caucasus, such as Caucasian salamander (*Mertensiella caucasica*) which is listed as vulnerable in both National List and IUCN Red List, red-bellied lizard (*Darevskia parvula*), Artvin lizard (*Darevskia derjugini*).

In addition, the area still hosts important sites of several large mammal species that include Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*), European Lynx (*Lynx lynx*), Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*), European Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), or Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*), etc.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Data from the ILIA University Report: “Machakhela National Park Resource Inventory Baseline Studies and Mapping” elaborated in the UNDP Programme “Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region’s Protected Areas





Figure 12: Examples of large mammals present in Machakhela National Park

#### 4.2.2. Evaluation of infrastructures and services available

##### ACCESIBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

The main access to Machakhela National Park is from Batumi, which is 21 km far from the entrance to the Park.

Access roads to the villages are not paved and in bad weather transportation becomes complicated.

The public transport is operational all year round; the transportation options include:

- Mini Buses "Batumi-Zeda Chkhutuneti" leaves from "Boni" bazaar every day at 16:00, 19:00. Price - 2 GEL. "Batumi-Chikuneti" - leaves from Tbilisi square at 11:00, 14:00, and 17:00. Price - 2 GEL. (Source: official tourism portal of Batumi: [www.gobatumi.com](http://www.gobatumi.com) )
- Bus: There are daily (several times p/d) minibuses from Batumi to Zeda (Upper) Chkhutuneti, Chikuneti, Kedkedi, Avzhanda villages
- Taxi are available around Batumi (Batumi Taxi company. Tel: +995 558 784545). However, service fee is quite high (200 Gel per transfer).

## VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE

The administration building, located in Ajarisagmarti village was recently given to the park administration based on sign agreement with the local municipality. The administration owns second floor of the building, however; third floor (mansard) with big exhibition hall is planned to be built. The plan already exists and it is expected the new planned building will be operative soon.

The location of the building in the support zone of the park is convenient. It should play an important role in terms of providing information to potential visitor and also in order to register them. The basement of the building does not belong to the park administration, however it is recommended to have visitor centre, information desk and interpretation about the park in the entrance of the building or the territory. In addition, the administration building can also have a space available for locally-produced products.



Figure 13: Administration Building of Machakhela National Park. Source: HIDRIA

#### 4.2.3. Description and evaluation of environmental education programs/volunteer programs

Machakhela National Park counts on an Environmental Education Program for children and young adults with the objective of raising their environmental awareness – Green Calendar Events.

The **Environmental Education Program** includes:

- **Outdoor seminars in the Park territory.** The objective of these visits is to bring the Park closer to the young people, so they get to know the Colchic Forest associated biodiversity. In these actions, participants learn through direct observation the name of plants, their vulnerability status, etc. In addition, there is a special interest about historical and cultural sightseeing. National Park organizes an eco-trail for Chkhutuneti school children in order to conduct “open air” study course in Biodiversity of Machakhela.

In 2015, 100 young participated in these Eco-tours and in the first semester of 2016, were 70 the participants.

- **Celebration of environmental-related international days.** Among the days they celebrate are: International Day of Biodiversity, World Environment Day, World Animal Day, International Day of Mountains. During these celebrations seminars on related topics are organized for students. On 5<sup>th</sup> June 2016 (World Environment Day) the seminar was about waste management and control, and a cleaning activity was organized.



Figure 14: Images of some of the activities carried out by MNP administration. Source: MNP

From next year, the Park’s administration plans to develop special thematic program for junior rangers and add more activities to the Green Calendar Events.

Machakhela National Park does not offer any **volunteer programme** in the Park. The volunteer programs in protected areas are also a good opportunity to raise environmental awareness among youth and it also benefits protected areas.



### 4.3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPPORT ZONE

#### 4.3.1. Natural and Cultural resources in Machakhela National Park Support Zone

Support zone is an important zone in the basin of the Machakhela River (the right influent of the Chorokhi River) that could be treated as a transition/sustainable development zone. The Machakhela support zone settlements comprises eight inhabited villages that belong to Machakhela community. Except for being outside the MNP, this zone has forested areas alongside perennial streams, very rich in relictual wildlife elements or deforested areas, which could be used for recreation and restoration of relictual refuges.

Main natural attractions in the support zone of MNP comprise beautiful waterfalls, and the impressive landscape.



*Figure 15: Waterfalls in the support zone of MNP. Source: DTR/MNP*

Ajara, as the whole Georgia, is full of historical facts and events. The most important period for the region is liberation from the Ottomans in 1878-1879 after Russian-Turkish War. The Ottomans ruled over this area since 1547 and the influence of Ottoman Empire in Ajara region can be seen today, part of local population in Upper Ajara is Muslim and prays in the mosque, and there were around 200 mosques in Ajara in 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The liberation from the Ottomans in 1878-79 after the Russian Turkish war implied that Ajara became part of Russia, while Batumi still belonged to Turkey. This period was very crucial for Ajara,

migration and demography were important issues, and it is known as *Muhajiri*, meaning migration (1878-1882). A lot of Muhajirs were migrated from Machakhela region. The most of them still live in village Hairie at Bursa Vilaieti Inegoli region (Turkey). Districts of the village Hairie still have Georgian village names such as Khinkileti, Kirkiteti, Vake and others.

After Mujajiri, the most dramatic period for Machakhela was Sovietization in 1921 when Machakhela was divided in two parts. One of them – Upper Machakhela with its six villages (Khertvisi, Akria, Mindieti, Kvabitavi, Zedvake and Ephrati) became part of Turkey. Second part – lower Machakhela with eleven villages remained as part of Georgia and belongs to Acharisagmarti community.


Today Machakhela, although divided in two parts, still maintain common roots, there are family connections in both parts and, since 2006, a popular folk festival “Machakhloba” that unites both parts, is celebrated. The event is visited by different municipalities of the region. Among invited guests are Turkish people from Machakhela Gorge (former territory of Georgia). This celebration is part two of the area's culture and history and character of the nation.

The name of Machakhela is also famous for its “Machakhela” guns and Muskets. There were few places where guns were made in Georgia. Machakhela (Upper Chkhutuneti and Upper Machakhela) was one of them. The tradition of gun making was given from generation to generation. End of 18<sup>th</sup> Century, high quality of guns and muskets were made and transported to other parts of Georgia (Guria, Akhaltsikhe, Kars) and abroad under the name of “Machakhela”. One of the good examples of it is preserved at the museum of history and ethnography of Kutaisi.

Other cultural traditions in this area are the Gandagana (characteristic Ajarian folk dance) and polyphonic songs, culinary traditions such as the Borano, Malakhto (bean), Ajarian cheese, etc.




There are various historical-cultural heritage sites in the Machakhela gorge and surrounding area that reflect its rich history. Specially, the medieval period was characterized by intensive constructional development and many bridges, churches are fortresses were built.

Arch bridges are unique to its architecture and building techniques (XI-XIII). There are several such bridges in Lower Machakhela. They are: Tskhemlari (the biggest), Chkheri, Chomakhisuri, on Machakhela riv. and Kokoleti (right branch of the river).



BRIDGES		
NAME OF PLACE / LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	PICTURE
<b>CHKHERI STONE BRIDGE</b> Zeda Chkutuneti***	<p>Chkheri Bridge in Zeda Chkutuneti village (Kakhieti) is located over Chkheristskali river that joins Machakhela river from the left side. The bridge is relatively high - 6.3 meters due to the altitude of rocky shores. The width of the bridge is 4,2 metres.</p>	 <p>Source: <a href="https://georgiaabout.com/2013/08/22/medieval-stone-bridges-of-ajara/">https://georgiaabout.com/2013/08/22/medieval-stone-bridges-of-ajara/</a></p>

<sup>3</sup> Notes: \*located on the territory of MNP; \*\* located in support zone of MNP.




<p><b>TSKHEMLARA BRIDGE (THE BIGGEST)</b> Tskhemlara**</p>	<p>Tskhemlara bridge is located over Machakhela river, in 7-8 km distance from village Ajaristskali (located on Batumi-Khulo central road). The bridge was used by locals until the end of XX century when new bridge was constructed. The length of the bridge is 10 meters with an altitude of 5,3 metre. In 2008 Tskhemlara bridge restoration work was carried out.</p>	
<p><b>CHOMAKHISURI</b> Kokoleti**</p>	<p>The bridge is located over Kokoleti water (right branch of Machakhela river). An altitude of the bridge is 5,15 metres.</p>	
<p><b>HANGING BRIDGE PEDESTRIAN (OLD) BRIDGE</b> Acharisagmarti**</p>		

Gvara fortress is one impressive monument of early feudal era, located at junction of Machakhela and Chorokhi river. Another example of fortress is located in lower Chkhutuneti, at Machakhela river.


FORTRESSES		
NAME OF PLACE / LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	PICTURE
<b>KALIVAKE / KALIBONI FORTRESS</b> Lower Chkhutuneti**	Chkhutuneti fortress (from feudal era) is located on the hill at junction of Machakhelastskali and Davitetsgele. The fortress has military strategic and economic importance rule observing the road connecting the coastline with Shavshet, Artanuj and other southern districts of Georgia. Chkhutuneti fortress area is 200 sq. metres. Defence wall is damaged. Only northern part of the wall with 8 metre length and 2 metre high is preserved. Around the fortress there is tunnel which connects fortress to the river. Also wine cellar with <i>qvevries</i> dated back from XI – XIII cc.	 <p>Source: <a href="http://gobatumi.com/en/what-to-do/tours-and-routes/shuakhevi-tourist-route/268">http://gobatumi.com/en/what-to-do/tours-and-routes/shuakhevi-tourist-route/268</a></p>
<b>GVARA FORTRESS</b> Machakhlispiri**	Gvaras fortress is one impressive monument of early feudal era, located at junction of Machakhela and Chorokhi riv, on the hill. Most part of the fortress is damaged. Based on investigation of the site, the fortress was built in VI-VII and due to the strategic location the fortress played main rope to control the roads in Chorokhi and Machakhela gorges that was leaded between Sea cost and Tao-Klarjeti and Artanuji.	 <p>Source: <a href="http://gobatumi.com/en/what-to-do/tours-and-routes/shuakhevi-tourist-route/268">http://gobatumi.com/en/what-to-do/tours-and-routes/shuakhevi-tourist-route/268</a></p>
<b>RUINS OF SINDIETI FORTRESS</b>	Sindiety, in 1 km distance from Gvara Fortress*	PICTURE NOT AVAILABLE

Closer to our century, there are several remains from World War II and the Cold War. The presence of the Russian has left several remains in the area.



HISTORICAL BUILDINGS		
NAME OF PLACE / LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	PICTURE
<b>WORLD WAR II-ERA CANNON</b> Acharisagmarti**	The bunker at Skurdidi bridge. Machakhela Valley has a military past, as a border area there are several remains of the Russian occupancy.	

The ethnographical richness of the area has been gathered in one museum located in Zeda Chkhutuneti that displays several artefacts used in the past, recreating the traditions of the villages. The museum is housed in a former Mosque and in the second floor the original decoration can be visited

MUSEUMS		
NAME OF PLACE / LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	PICTURE
<b>MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY OF MACHAKHELA</b> Upper Chkhutuneti village**	Was opened in 1984 by initiative of Zurab Nagverdze from Upper Chkhutuneti who led the museum since its inception until his death (1995). Since 1995 the museum is leaded by his son Malkhaz Nagervadze. The museum is housed in a former mosque. This is 3- story building. The first floor is built with stone, the second and third floor - of wood. The building, with its ornaments, is architectural monument. Since 2007 the museum belongs to Khelvachauri municipality and is named as Machakhela's museum.	

Finally, the monuments of material culture - limestone cellars, mills, winepress of different size curved in mountains or built next to mountains, pitchers of different size, the oldest species of vine found in the Machakhela valley shows high level of development of vine-growing and wine-making in Machakhela gorge.

In the following table are listed some of these remains of the material culture:

MONUMENTS OF MATERIAL CULTURE (TRADITIONAL USES)		
TYPE	VILLAGE	LOCATION
WINE CELLAR	Upper Chkhutuneti**	Ali dzneldze'
WINE PRESS	Upper Chkhutuneti**	Located in Mere (a small settlement)
WINE CELLAR	Chikuneti**	Niaz Khinkiladze's yard
WINE PRESS	Upper Chkhutuneti**	Located in Revaz and Suliko Khakhidze' yard.
WATER MILL	Upper Chkhutuneti**	Tskhemlara
WINE CELLAR	Tskhemlari**	Zurab (Result) salvaridze's yard
GRAIN DRY FURNO	Kokoleti**	Dursan Kokoladze's yard

#### 4.3.2. Analysis of business in the support zone: lodges/accommodation, restaurants, shops

There are 14 tourism-related businesses around Machakhela National Park that offer their services to locals and visitors:

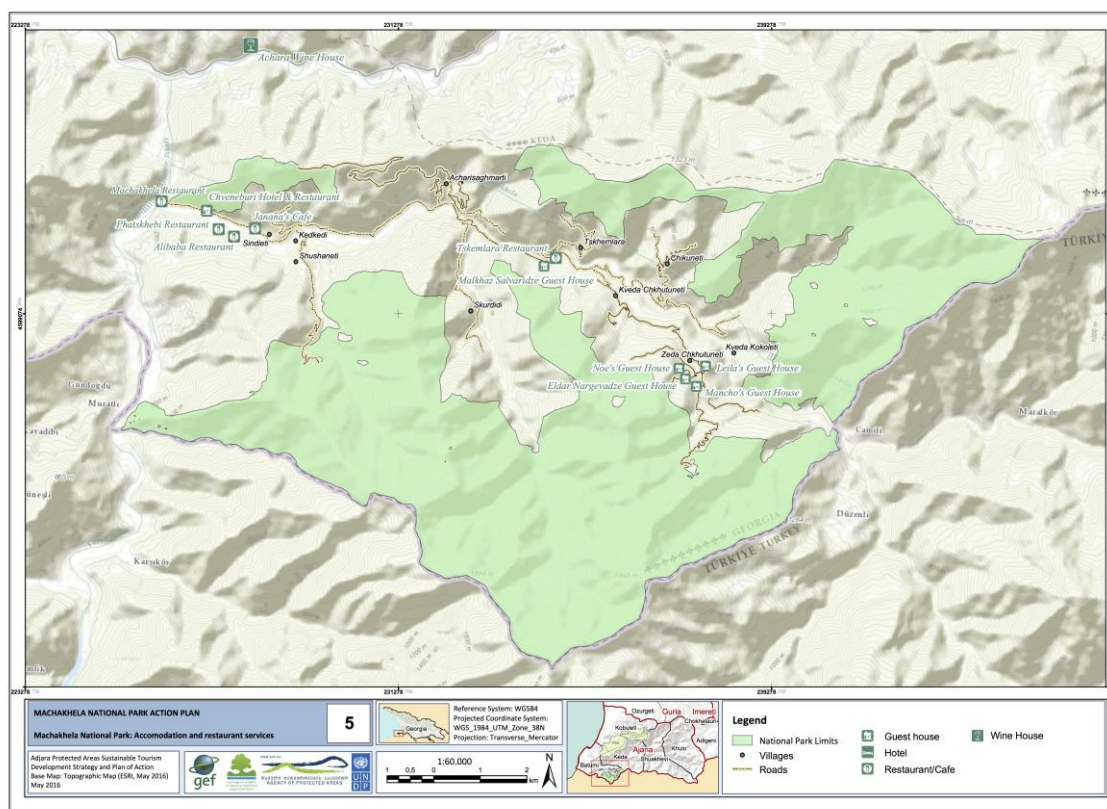


Figure 17: Hospitality businesses in the Support Zone of Machakhela National Park. Source: HIDRIA

## ACCOMMODATION

The current accommodation offer in the support zone of Machakhela National Park is limited but it already covers different options. Over the last years most of accommodation developments have occurred, creating the existing accommodation capacity in the area. Several community-based options (guesthouses) are currently available with the support of the Department of Tourism and Resorts (DTR).

Quality is an important element for a successful sustainable tourism development in the area. Regardless of the type of accommodation, minimum quality requirements should be met, mostly regarding cleaning and hygienic conditions. Most of the efforts to ensure minimum standards should be focused on the guesthouses, where specific training is needed not only regarding basic conditions but also related to customer service.

The map with the location of the accommodation providers can be consulted also in **Annex 2-Maps**.


The main accommodation provider is Hotel Chveneburi, recently opened, this hotel offers a mid-range accommodation option in the village of **Sindieti**.


CHVENEURI HOTEL AND RESTAURANT	
<b>Location:</b> Sindieti Village	
<b>Description:</b> Opened in August 2015. It has 15 rooms with bathroom. Counts on conference room that can host up to 100 persons. They have also independent bungalows available. The restaurant offer arrangement for large events (up to 220 persons). Internet available.	
<b>Contact:</b> Phone: 00995 593 422525 Website: <a href="http://www.chveneburi.ge/">http://www.chveneburi.ge/</a>	

In **Zeda Chkhutuneti** there are several **guesthouses** available. These guesthouses have been developed with the support of the DTR. They offer basic services; the quality is low but training provided by DTR is on-going to improve their customer service level.

Language skills are also a barrier, since most of the guesthouse owners can only communicate in Georgian and they receive visitors from different parts of the world.



LEILA'S GUESTHOUSE	
<b>Location:</b> Zeda Chkhutuneti	
<b>Description:</b> Two rooms available. Shared toilet. Local food is also offered. Internet available.	
<b>Contact:</b> Leila Kakhidze Tel: 995 555 453678	

GUESTHOUSE "MANCHO"	
<b>Location:</b> Zeda Chkhutuneti	
<b>Description:</b> Three rooms available (four beds in total) and one bathroom. They started in 2016 and have received already some foreign visitor (mostly from Germany). They also offer meals.	
<b>Contact:</b> Kobuladze Manana Tel. 595 99 36 72 / 558 13 81 13	

NOE GUESTHOUSE	
<b>Location:</b> Zeda Chkhutuneti	
<b>Description:</b> Three rooms available with one bathroom available. They can accommodate up to 15 people. Internet is available.	
<b>Contact:</b> Noe (Nuri) Nagervadze Tel. 995 593 11 38 51	


ELDAR NARVEGADZE	
<b>Location:</b> Zeda Chkhutuneti	<p>PICTURE NOT AVAILABLE</p>
<b>Description:</b> The guesthouse is located 700 m away from the motorway, 40 km away from Batumi. The guesthouse can accommodate 8 visitors simultaneously. Meals are also provided for them. Price is negotiable	
<b>Contact:</b> Eldar Narvedadze Tel. 995 593 66 97 77	

MALKHAZ SALVARIDZE GUESTHOUSE	
<b>Location:</b> Tskhemlara	
<b>Description:</b> This guesthouse can accommodate 8 visitors simultaneously. It is located 60 m away from the motorway, 27 km away from Batumi. The price is 60 Gel person/night, includes 3 meals a day.	
<b>Contact:</b> Malkhaz Salvaridze Tel. 995 557 60 56 72/599 85 15 70	

BEKA KOBULADZE'S GUESTHOUSE	
<b>Location:</b> Zeda Chkhutuneti	<p>PICTURE NOT AVAILABLE</p>
<b>Description:</b> This guesthouse is located 10 m away from the motorway, 39 km away from Batumi. It can accommodate 6 visitors simultaneously. Prices: 1 person per night – GEL 35 including 3 meals a day.	
<b>Contact:</b> Beka Kobuladze Tel. 995 555 67 13 67	


VAZHA KAKHIDZE’S GUESTHOUSE	
<b>Location:</b> Zeda Chkhutuneti	<p style="text-align: center;">PICTURE NOT AVAILABLE</p>
<b>Description:</b> This guesthouse is located 10 m away from the motorway, 39 km away from Batumi. It can accommodate 6 visitors simultaneously. Prices: 1 person per night – GEL 35 including 3 meals a day.	
<b>Contact:</b> Vazha Kakhidze Tel. 995 555 17 66 90	


Other accommodation option is **camping**, there is a private owner in Sindieti working to develop camping site:

“COMPOSERS HUTS” (Phastskhebi)	
<b>Location:</b> Sindieti Village	
<b>Description:</b> This is a picnic area that also offers camping space and catering. The place is under-construction and is expected that starts to operate in summer 2016.	
<b>Contact:</b> Aleksandre Kondaridze Tel: +995 790 31 20 81	


## RESTAURANTS


Four restaurants are available in the support zone of the Park, however all of them are located in the main road. In addition, close to the Machakhela National Park boundaries the Wine House is located, the presence of the wine house is an important asset that the Park should promote through the creation of combined activities. The exact location of the restaurants can be consulted in **Annex 2-Maps**.


MACHAKHELA RESTAURANT	
<b>Location:</b> Kirnati road	
<b>Description:</b> It is located 2km far from the administration office The restaurant only offers their services during summer season.	
<b>Contact:</b> David Dzneldze Tel: +995 555 51 90 36	

TSKHEMLARA RESTAURANT	
<b>Location:</b> Tskhemlara Village	
<b>Description:</b> Located nearby Tskhemlara arched bridges. The restaurant opens in summer season.	
<b>Contact:</b> Tel. 00995 574 30 27 27	



JANANA'S CAFE	
<b>Location:</b> Sindieti Village	
<b>Description:</b> New catering place is being developed in Sindieti Village.	
<b>Contact:</b> NOT AVAILABLE	

ALIBABA FISH RESTAURANT	
<b>Location:</b> Sindieti Village	
<b>Description:</b> Fish restaurant. Located close to the river. Counts on a Fish farm. Opens only during season.	
<b>Contact:</b> Tel: +995 555 51 90 36	

AJARIAN WINE HOUSE	
<b>Location:</b> Ajarastskhali	
<b>Description:</b> Opened in 2011, it is a wine factory where “Chkhaveri” wine is produced. Guests are welcomed to the wine house to taste wines produced and also to participate in winemaking. They also offer Ajarian cuisine and folklore.  <i>Note: The Ajarian Wine House does not belong to the support zone of Machakhela Protected Area. However, it is an interesting provider to collaborate with MNP and therefore it has been included</i>	
<b>Contact:</b> Tel: +995 577 21 4002	

An important gap identified is the lack of a shop for locally-produced items. The area is rich in traditions and there are some artisans producing some potential “souvenirs” such as the traditional Machakhela gun or even gastronomic products.



## **4.4. ANALYSIS OF TOURISM DEMAND**

### **4.4.1. Existing tourism demand**

There is no visitors' registration of yet. The Park is not keeping records of visitors. Un-official figures from last season (2015) talk about 3.600 visitors from which 3.000 were Georgians and 600 foreigners. For the first semester of 2016 around 2.000 visitors have been counted, however this figure is the result of direct observation from administration staff, not from official registration. No further data as the demographic profile on visitor numbers can be provided.

The DTR sells some routes that bring people to the area, however these numbers are not registered by the Park.

According to existing figures, the domestic market is the most relevant market in the area. This can be directly related with the fact that the National Park has been recently established and there are not tourism activities available yet. No further data can be provided, since there are limited travel agencies operating in the area and the visitor registration, so far, has been very limited.

Visitor's registration should become a priority for the Park administration; visitor's data is a relevant source of information for developing products that match and are adequate to the existing demand. Identify visitors' needs, expectations, interests and motivation is important to better meet these demands.

Efforts should be made in order to efficiently collect the number of visitors, their main motivation to visit the area, their expectations and also their level of satisfaction after their visit.

### **4.4.2. Trends affecting consumer behaviour**

According to UNWTO, in 2004 ecotourism was growing three times faster than the global tourism industry as a whole. This trend has continued over the last years confirming a relevant consumer attraction, and this market share will grow over next years.

Most of the tourism target groups have a greater environmental awareness, this trend is also affected by: a) the need for personal health and wellbeing; b) tourists are interested to learn more about the natural and cultural heritage of the destinations they visit seeking for live-enriching experiences; c) a higher level of education is associated with an increased level of educational (outdoor) activities.

The growth of interest in sustainable tourism and ecotourism reflects a rising tide of social concern about the quality of the natural environment and the effect of tourism. Nature-based tourism and ecotourism are recognized as being particularly conducive to enriching and enhancing the standing of tourism, provided they respect the natural heritage and local populations and are in keeping with the carrying capacity of the sites.

#### 4.4.3. Potential Tourism markets

Ecotourists are divided according to the following market segmentation typologies from a **behavioural perspective**:

1. **Hard ecotourists or dedicated ecotourists**, which are travellers with strong environmental attitudes who prefer to travel in small groups. They are physically active and enjoy challenging activities. They make their own travel arrangements in order to make it a real life experience.
2. **Soft ecotourists** are those travellers who like ecotourism and traditional holidays. They prefer to travel in larger groups and require some level of comfort.

Other authors also identify a third group:

3. **Casual nature tourists**, those that come into close contact with nature only incidentally while in a holiday trip.

These two last groups might be the group into a higher percentage of Ajara PA's visitors fall.

According to their **origin**:

1. **DOMESTIC MARKET**, as we have already presented the domestic market is and will be the predominant market in the future. Very little is known about the local Georgian national market for domestic travel, except that they tend not to be so active, not to travel in large groups beyond friends and relatives and to spend less on local accommodations and other services.

We differentiate two main segments within the domestic market:

- a. **Weekenders- day-trippers**, are mostly families that visit the PA with recreational purposes, they go for picnic and soft activities. They usually travel with children, so activities should be designed also for them. The majority will stay with local families and friends.
  - b. **Long weekend and multi-day visitors** (from Tbilisi and other Georgian cities). This group demands higher standard visitor facilities. Interested in natural and historical attractions.
2. **INTERNATIONAL MARKET**, most important markets are the **neighbouring countries**: Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia. A relative high number of Armenians spend summer holidays with a family in Ajara (around 80.000 – 100.000), this market is especially interested in nature and would appreciate to visit the project PA's. Require good access, safety and high standards of visitor facilities and services.

Apart from these traditional markets, the international market has potential to be further targeted:

- The **European market** is also an important market for ecotourists, especially Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, which are the strongest nature and eco-tourism markets. These markets are motivated by high-quality experience to lesser-known destinations.

#### 4.5. MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Currently, Machakhela National Park has not their own brand or image, and not publications (brochures, maps, guides, leaflets, etc.) area available.

Most of the communication efforts are done through their Facebook profile, from which the Park informs about wildlife viewings, environmental campaigns and other actions carried out by the Park's administration.

APA and DTR are the organizations promoting the area. An analysis of the efforts developed by these organizations is summarized below:

##### AGENCY OF PROTECTED AREAS (APA)

In the Agency's official website there is limited information available about Machakhela National Park, due to its recently establishment.

APA organizes and participates in different events in order to promote the Protected Areas as, for example, the participation in International Tourism Fairs (ITB in Berlin) or the 18<sup>th</sup> International Tourism Fair in Tbilisi.

TJS supported the participation of the Georgian Protected Areas in the ITB Berlin with the production of specific protected areas promotional material (Caucasus Protected Area: Together with Armenia and Azerbaijan. They also organized a presentation event for TTOO interested

These activities should be continued but preparation period should be organized well in advance (for instance in summer –previous year). Important tasks for the adequate preparation of APA and other interested parties in international travel fairs:

1. Select local/national tour operators offering tourism products in PA (for instance: Ecocamps, Wild Horn...), to participate in the Fair (share counter costs with them, around 10% for collaboration)
2. Book the space in the selected fair/travel event
3. Organize a presentation event.

4. Invite international tour operators to presentation session (at least 3 months in advance. TTOO data base should be obtained at Georgian embassies.
5. Prepare some specific programs and B2B agendas
6. Participate in organized sessions
7. Design and prepare promotional stand and materials (brochures, merchandising, etc.)
8. Create a data base of contacts

After the fair, it is important to gather the feedback as a potential source of information about areas for improvement, interesting markets, etc.

Among the interesting travel fairs for APA/Protected areas are:

LOCATION	NAME	WEBSITE
Berlin (Germany)	ITB	<a href="http://www.itb-berlin.de/en/">http://www.itb-berlin.de/en/</a>
Eggleton UK	Birdfair	<a href="http://www.birdfair.org.uk/">http://www.birdfair.org.uk/</a>
Hamburg (Germany)	Reisen	<a href="http://www.reisenhamburg.de/">http://www.reisenhamburg.de/</a>
Hannover (Germany)	ABf Fair for active leisure	<a href="http://www.abf-hannover.de/abf_daten_fakten_en">http://www.abf-hannover.de/abf_daten_fakten_en</a>
London (UK)	World Travel Market (Responsible Tourism Day)	<a href="http://www.wtmlondon.com/">http://www.wtmlondon.com/</a>
Munich (Germany)	F.RE.E	<a href="http://www.free-muenchen.de/">http://www.free-muenchen.de/</a>
Poznan (Poland)	Tour Salon	<a href="http://www.tour-salon.pl/en/">http://www.tour-salon.pl/en/</a>
Stuttgart (Germany)	CMT	<a href="http://www.messe-stuttgart.de/en/cmt/">http://www.messe-stuttgart.de/en/cmt/</a>
Trier (Germany)	Sport, Freizeit, Reisen	<a href="http://www.sfr-trier.de/">http://www.sfr-trier.de/</a>
Utrecht (Netherlands)	Vakantiebeurs	<a href="http://www.vakantiebeurs.nl/en/Exposant.aspx">http://www.vakantiebeurs.nl/en/Exposant.aspx</a>

Table 4: List of International Travel Fairs. Source: HIDRIA

## DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND RESORTS -

The DTR, through their travel agency, is making important marketing efforts to promote the area of Khelvachauri. Among the activities carried out by DTR is important to mention:

### **a) Route/tours development**

DTR has designed and promotes several routes in the area. As it can be seen in *figure 3* a biking route has been developed. In addition, DTR has defined some routes across Machakhela Gorge to promote the traditions and customs of the Gorge. The tour is named “*Cultural and historical tour in Ajara*”. The tour has about 4-hours duration and the participants have the opportunity to learn about some communities of the Valley such as Zeda Chkhutuneti.

The tours do not focus or mention the Machakhela National Park, however, they provide visibility to the area and help to promote it among visitors.

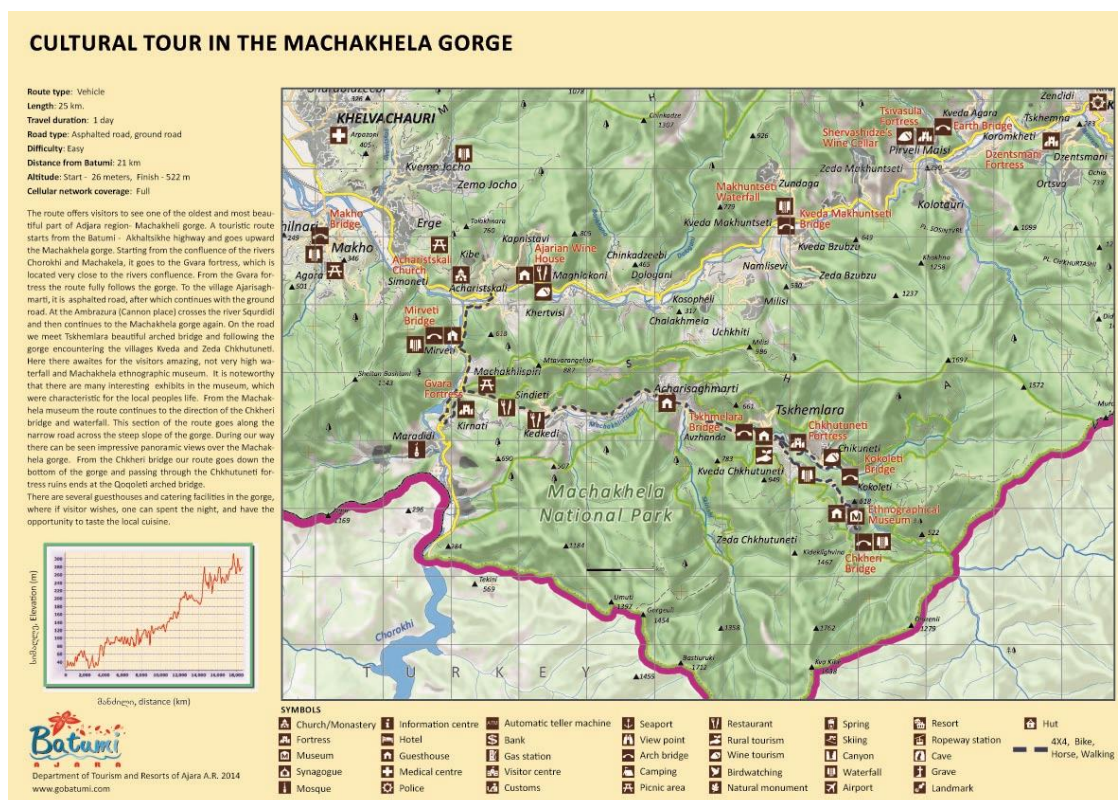


Figure 18: Map of the Cultural Tour in Machakhela Gorge. Source: DTR

## b) Brochures and website

The official tourism website of the Region, managed by the DTR, includes information and online brochures with information regarding the different protected areas of the region, and specifically the Machakhela National Park.



Figure 19: Brochure of the Protected Areas in Adjara. Source: Adjara Region official website



**c) Signage system**

The DTR has designed and installed several signs in the area to inform visitors about the location of some cultural and natural resources in the support zone.



Figure 20: Signs along Machakhela Gorge, installed by DTR. Source: HIDRIA

Although the presence of these signs contributes to promote these resources, there are no signs referring to the National Park.

## **4.6. ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **4.6.1. Constraints for tourism development in Machakhela National Park**

- **Inadequate institutional capacity to operate effectively and efficiently:**
  - Machakhela National Park administration as a newly established National Park has limited resources in terms of human and financial resources to implement not only conservational goals but also to focus on tourism development.
  - Skills of administration in hospitality and tourism areas are limited, and should be enhanced for attending adequately existing and future demand.
- **Limited experience of Park's Administration Staff**
  - As a newly created National Park there is limited experience in tourism related aspects.
- **Visitor experience**
  - The Park does not count on ecotourism activities or services yet.
  - It is a mountainous area and accessibility is difficult in many places.
  - Some areas are not suitable to be visited during winter time. Season is reduced from May until September or October.
- **Construction of hydropower plant**
  - The construction of a combination of dams and weirs, reservoirs, powerhouse, tunnels in the Adjaristskali river may affect the rivers course and its environmental quality.
  - The whole landscape may be affected by this construction, reducing the natural appealing of the area.



#### **4.6.2. Main Opportunities and Competitive advantages of Machakhela National Park**

Machakhela National Park has many opportunities to be exploited for the development of tourism in and around PA's and create diverse economic options for the adjacent communities.

- **Rich landscape with ecological diversity:**
  - Machakhela National Park hosts a rich biodiversity with unique flora and fauna and an attractive gorge and mountainous landscape. The Colchic Forest, with its endemic and relict species, is an attraction by itself.
  - The Gorge formed by the valley and the mountains draws and attractive landscape.
- **Cultural, historical and ethnographic values**
  - Machakhela is an area with particular characteristics in terms of ethnography and history. These values should be enhanced and promoted.
  - The area is also rich in traditions, cultural values, as well as in gastronomy and wine, and these aspects should enhance the tourism activity in the area.
- **Local communities' dynamism and hospitality:**
  - Local communities are willing to engage in tourism related activities. In Zeda Chkhutuneti there are already some guest houses available thanks to the support of the DTR. Other communities are also willing to get engaged in tourism.
  - Local communities in Ajara are warmth and hospitable.
- **Proximity to Mtirala National Park:**
  - Machakhela National Park is relatively close to Mtirala National Park boundaries (on the Keda's side), this is an opportunity to develop a trail to join Mtirala and promoted a combined tour through the three Protected Areas
- **Proximity to Batumi and location along Goderdzi Pass:**
  - Batumi, as a coastal destination, receive thousands of visitors every year. Attract a percentage of the visitors to the coastal areas can increase significantly the number of visitors of PA's, as well as it may contribute to increase the length of stay of those tourists visiting the area.
  - Machakhela NP is on the road from Akhaltsikhe road to Batumi (Goderdzi Pass), which also facilitates access form the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti. This road is open all year round, although in wintertime should be checked.

- **Promotion by DTR:**

- The DTR through the recently created non-commercial legal entity Tourism Product Development Agency promotes a “*Cultural and historical tour in Ajara*” that consist in a visit to Machakhela Gorge including the visit to Zeda Chkhutuneti village, the ethnographic museum, etc.)

- **Tour Operators:**

- There is an important number of TTOOs operating in Ajara, although they are not specialized in nature tourism, they have important international contacts and experience dealing with visitors. TTOOs should be involved in PA’s management in order to contribute to the definition of market-oriented products and experiences.

## 5. SWOT AND TOWS ANALYSIS

### 5.1. SWOT and TOWS Analysis

The SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) determines the external and internal situation of tourism development in Machakhela National Park. The TOWS is a complimentary tool that helps generating strategic options, taking advantage of the opportunities, minimizing the impact of weaknesses and reducing the threats.

	STRENGTHS	PLAY STRENGTHS
<b>MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good cooperation with other Adjara PA's administrations.</li> <li>• Government support to MNP development.</li> <li>• Interest of international funds to contribute to the PA development.</li> <li>• Promoted as travel destination by DTR travel agency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively participate in participatory structures such as the Regional Advisory Council.</li> <li>• Identify priority actions to be invested in.</li> <li>• Design and elaborate attract projects to apply for funds available.</li> <li>• Establish cooperation agreements with DTR to include MNP in their promotional material.</li> </ul>
<b>MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open all year round.</li> <li>• Close to Batumi.</li> <li>• Close to main roads: Batumi-Sarpi (Turkish border) and Khelvachauri-Keda-Borjomi (Goderdzi Pass)</li> <li>• Public transport to villages in Machakhela Gorge available.</li> <li>• Internet accessibility in most places.</li> <li>• Transboundary PA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop winter activities to extend the tourism season.</li> <li>• Design promotional activities to attract Batumi visitors. Also agreements with tourism operators.</li> <li>• Improve signage system in main roads to increase visibility.</li> <li>• Special transportation system should be organized to bring people to the MNP, especially in high-season.</li> <li>• Promote internet sharing contents, create downloadable contents, etc.</li> <li>• Establish cooperation agreements with Camili Biosphere Reserve (Turkey). Promote this transboundary character.</li> </ul>

<b>LOCAL COMMUNITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrepreneurship of local communities, accommodation and catering places already developed.</li> <li>• Hospitable communities.</li> <li>• Interesting locally made products (honey, cheese, jams, etc.)</li> <li>• Locally-made handicrafts available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the creation of local enterprises and build their skills in customer service and business planning.</li> <li>• Involve the community in tourism-related activities.</li> <li>• Promote these products by creating a local market or use locally produced items as Park's souvenirs.</li> <li>• Create locally-made souvenirs.</li> </ul>
<b>CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinctive history of the Gorge.</li> <li>• Cultural sites (stone-arch bridges, old settlements, museum, military heritage, etc.)</li> <li>• Attractiveness and scenic beauty of Machakhela Gorge.</li> <li>• Interesting fauna (brown bear, chamois, etc.)</li> <li>• Local traditions and festivals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and promote historical facts of the Gorge.</li> <li>• Develop routes focused on the cultural past of the area. Develop interpretive panels/information boards.</li> <li>• Develop routes that promote these values.</li> <li>• Organize tourism activities related to wildlife viewing.</li> <li>• Promote these festivals to attract people to the area.</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide range of accommodation services available in the support zone.</li> <li>• Presence of wine yards in the support zone.</li> <li>• Existing biking route to Mirveti developed by DTR.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the quality of existing accommodation services and promote</li> <li>• Create tourism products around wine and other gastronomic resources.</li> <li>• Increase the km of biking routes available by developing biking routes crossing the MNP.</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURES AND FACILITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of attractive tourism facilities in the support zone (ethnographic museum).</li> <li>• Availability of catering places around PA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop routes that combine natural resources with existing tourism infrastructures.</li> <li>• Establish cooperation agreements with existing tourism-related providers to promote the National Park.</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM DEMAND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friends of Ajara PA Card.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the card among local providers in the area.</li> </ul>

	WEAKNESSES	REDUCE WEAKNESSES
<b>MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of cooperation with DTR and GNTA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in the Regional Advisory Council.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Management Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaborate a Management Plan<sup>4</sup>.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited staff for proper tourism development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design comprehensive training for NP administration staff in issues related to hospitality, sustainable tourism, etc.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of skills of staff in hospitality and tourism related issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a participatory structure to encourage participation of local communities, private business in Park's decision making (Friends of Machakhela National Park)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inexistence of governance structures to involve local community in decision-making process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate and support the creation of local Advisory Council, in which communities and private sector are involved.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of statistics available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a system of collecting visitor related statistics.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No mechanisms to raise revenues from tourism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop sustainable tourism services and activities that allow the NP to raise revenues.</li> </ul>
<b>MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor regular public transportation to PA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish agreements with transportation providers to increase service during high-season.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of road signs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a sign system, in conjunction with DTR and Ajara Protected Areas,</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No parking places available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify appropriate areas for parking for visitors.</li> </ul>
<b>LOCAL COMMUNITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level migration towards big cities (Batumi, Tbilisi). Depopulation in some communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the development of microbusiness in the local communities, that provide employment opportunities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of hospitality skills, and knowledge of foreign languages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a training programme for local communities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of product packaging by locals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design a training to build the skills of artisans.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty level, socio-economic condition of local population.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create new economic opportunities for locals, by supporting entrepreneurs and employment.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> The elaboration of the Management Plan is planned for the coming months, funded by UNDP.

<b>CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural and natural resources are not adequately promoted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a scientific research on historical facts around Machakhela Gorge in order to promote them.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of historical knowledge of cultural assets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elaborate historical research and promotion of existing cultural resources.</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of tourism products/services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop sustainable activities to promote the natural and cultural resources.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trails are not investigated or marked.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design a system of trails in the visitor's zone that allow tourists to enjoy and discover the NP.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No linkages with local service providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a participatory structure at PA level to involve local communities (including tourism providers).</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURES AND FACILITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administration building not well-equipped.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administration Building should be refurbished to accommodate staff and also prepared to receive visitors.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No Visitor Centre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing administration building should be improved to host a Visitor Centre that welcomes visitors.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of tourism infrastructures within Park boundaries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design, plan and develop appropriate and sustainable tourism infrastructures.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No signages along the road.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design, develop and locate a signage system for the MNP.</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM DEMAND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of tourist information, less known as National Park.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define a Marketing and Promotion Strategy for the Park.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of English speaking guides.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize foreign language training courses for local community members and guides.</li> </ul>

	OPPORTUNITIES	ENHANCE THE OPPORTUNITIES
<b>MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goderdzi Pass</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locate signs in strategic places to increase visibility of MNP.</li> </ul>
<b>LOCAL COMMUNITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest of local people towards PA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote and support tourism-related opportunities for local communities.</li> </ul>
<b>CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linkage to the Silk Road.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research about the Silk Route and participate in the international network of the Silk Road</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooperation agreement with Camili Biosphere Reserve.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define a campaign to attract potential Turkish tourists.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest in wine-related products.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop tourism products around wine and gastronomy activities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ecotourism and nature-based tourism is a growing segment worldwide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a range of tourism products oriented to specific ecotourism market.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing interest of tourist in environmental and sustainability issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure conservation and biodiversity values of the area. Maintain high-quality level of nature-based products.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turkish market.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop marketing campaign for the Turkish market.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest of TTOO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize fam-trips for TTOO to present new products/trails developed.</li> </ul>

	THREATS	NULLIFY THREATS
<b>MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential conflict between Park and communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve community member in the tourism activity around the Park.</li> </ul>
<b>LOCAL COMMUNITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of local traditions and customs by influence of visitors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote traditional activities and festivals, as well as handicrafts.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict between communities and Park authorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a platform to enable participation of local communities in the National Park decision making.</li> </ul>
<b>CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degradation of natural spaces and biodiversity by high levels of visitation/use by local communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly monitor the area and elaborate adopt preventive measures to avoid landscape degradation and biodiversity loss.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hydropower development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enforce the elaboration of a mitigation plan and lobby for a paralization of this development.</li> </ul>



<b>CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain PA's ecosystem integrity. Design adaptation plan.</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM DEMAND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International political instability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a marketing campaign to promote the country and its peaceful environment.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift in visitor preferences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect visitor data and preferences. Adapt tourism products to changes in behavior and preferences.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic crisis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer high-quality experience</li> </ul>

## 6. POTENTIAL TOURISM SERVICES AND FACILITIES – BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

The assessment of the tourism resources and services carried out and the identified strengths and opportunities for Machakhela National Park serve as the basis to identify how these resources have to be promoted in order to maximize their potential in a sustainable way. That is, identifying the most feasible activities to be developed and the tourism markets to be aimed to.

The special features of Machakhela National Park that distinguishes Machakhela from the other areas, and provide the **competitive advantage** are:

- » The cultural and ethnographical richness
- » Impressive landscape (Gorge)
- » The transboundary character and historical past (Colchis, Ottoman Empire, Russian presence, etc.)

These aspects should be the core elements of their product development, and this should also be defined in a way that tourists enjoy the unique natural and cultural resources.

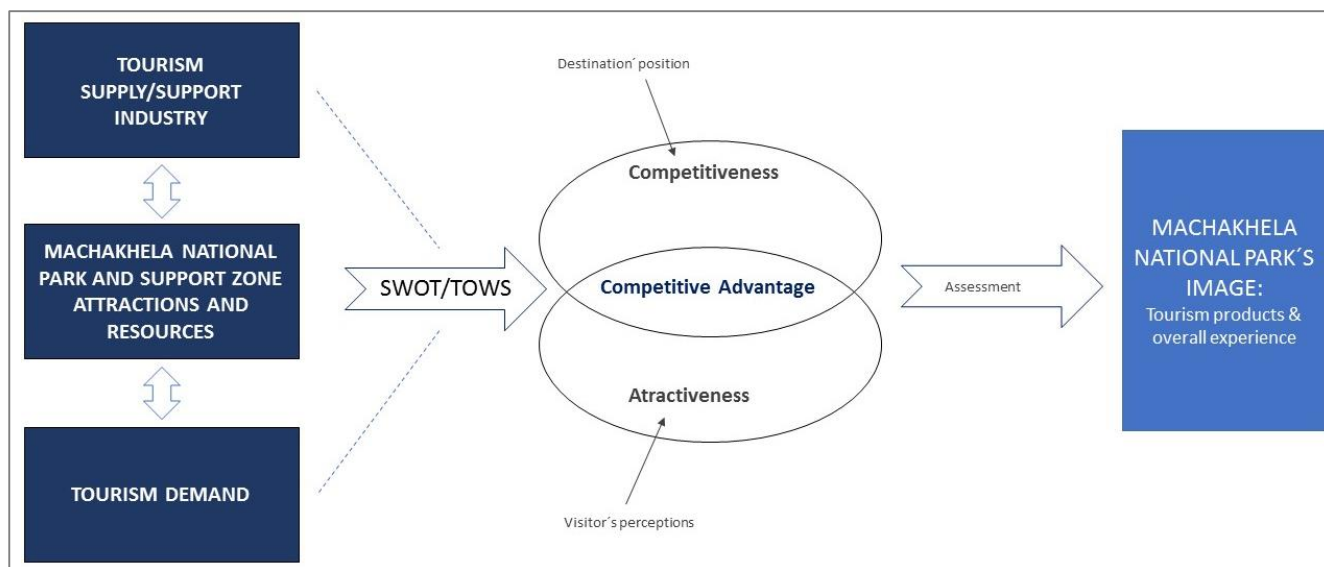


Figure 21: Elaboration of the conceptual development of Machakhela National Park. Source: Own elaboration

In the following sections, the most feasible tourism activities and services will be identified and carefully, qualitative and quantitative, assessed.

## 6.1. DESCRIPTION OF POTENTIAL TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES TO BE DEVELOPED

During the field visits carried out to the Machakhela National Park, the consultant team identified new infrastructures and tourism services and facilities with potential to be developed under the action plan. These new infrastructures and services are classified as follows:

- a) **Tourist trails:** narrow linear routes primarily intended for recreational travel by walking, backpacking running, cycling, horse riding, skiing or snowshoe walking. Tourist trails connect points of interest within the protected area, allowing communication among rural communities living in the park and offering tourists a way to appreciate and enjoy the natural and cultural values associated with the route.

Four tourist trails have been identified during the field visit. These trails have a great potential to be developed and several activities can be developed in these trails, according to educational, cultural or recreational purposes.

Some of these trails can even be connected to each other, contributing to further connect the territory and explore the area. For instance, for Mtaravangelozhi to Zeda Kokoleti.

In addition to these trails, a trail that would connect Machakhela National Park and Mtirala National Park is proposed. The objective is to develop a combined route that would also connect Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas.

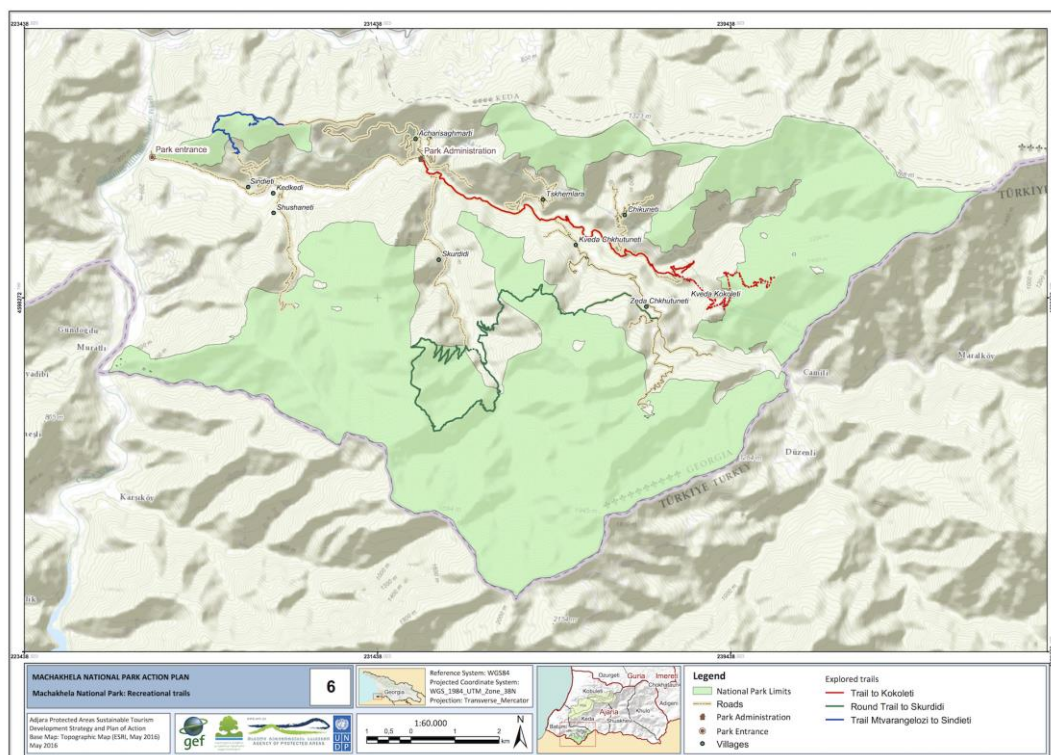


Figure 22: Tourist trails identified by the consultants during the field visit. Source: HIDRIA

These trails should be constructed and facilities such as signs, huts, recreational areas, etc. should be placed in order to create a quality experience for visitors. Details on the trails are provided in the action plan.

Furthermore, the tourism development in Machakhela National Park has to take into account the potential collaboration and future development of a transboundary agreement with Camili Biosphere Reserve to create a greater offer of products.

- b) *Tourism services and activities:*** most of the activities identified are related to the development of mentioned trails, as hiking, biking and horse riding are the main activities to be developed in the Park. To complement these activities, others can also be offered such as kayaking, snowshoe walking or even fly-fishing.

Furthermore; the trails should be enhanced by developing thematic tours that promote the natural and cultural values of the area (*see Action 4.2.2 for more details*). These thematic routes should be guided (creating additional employment opportunities and sources of economic income). The development of these thematic tours will help to vertebrate the territory and create a complete offer of touristic routes.,

Finally, to complement the tourism offer in the Park, several business opportunities have been identified:

- c) *Business opportunities:*** services that can be provided by local communities and small companies to meet the needs of tourists visiting the protected area (accommodation, catering, information, etc.). These include as well services that provide new interests and products that enrich visitors' experience and, at the same time provide new sources of income for local communities and the administration (local products market, guided tours, transportation, etc.).

Among the identified business opportunities are:

- i. *Catering places:*** As it has been identified during the assessment phase, there are several catering facilities, mostly located in the area close to entrance to the Park. However, there is potential to develop some other catering places in communities such as Zeda Chkhutuneti, Skurdidi
- ii. *Guesthouses:*** Most of the guesthouse are located in Zeda Chkhutuneti, as it is the most developed in terms of tourism. The development of routes that improve connection with other communities and the new proposed trails can help other areas to increase the level of visitation, and therefore additional accommodation services will be needed.
- iii. *Trout farming:*** Some trouts are endemic in the rivers of the area. Trouts are very appreciated in the local economy. The development of some sustainable trout farms to supply guesthouses and other restaurants can be a profitable business for some locals. This farms

should be small scale trout farms and should ensure the maintenance of the existing ecosystem.

- iv. **Handicraft business:** Several artisans have been identified in the area, these artisans can produce some interesting souvenir to be sold under the brand of the National Park. The new proposed Visitor Centre could be the place to locate a souvenir shop as it is the central place that all visitors should visit sell these souvenirs.

Additionally, the area is known for interesting products such as the honey (to be declared geographical protected). These products should be marketed for tourists, if possible is recommended under the National Park brand, this could also help to promote some honey producer.

- v. **Other business associated to new activities:** The main activities to be developed are hiking, biking, horse riding or even kayaking. The presence of interested entrepreneurs who want to provide related services can be a starting point for successful business: rental of horses, bikes, services for bikers, etc.

In the following table are summarized the trails and associated activities that can be developed in Machakhela National Park:

VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE – TRAIL DEVELOPMENT			
Name	Description/purpose	Location	Development needs
<b>Route to Kokoleti</b>	Trail for hiking, biking and horse riding. Although due to the length of the route biking or horse riding is recommended. Trail to discover the ethnographical traditions of the valley. It has nice views over the Turkish side of the Valley	Annex 2 See map 7	Limited works have been identified for this route (clearing of vegetation, signage, etc.) The route also needs for tourism facilities such as a camping and picnic place. An additional trail that joins Sindieti (Mtaravangelozi) with Kokoleti should be investigated and developed in the future to further structure the area.
<b>Route to Skurdid</b>	Trail for hiking, biking and horse riding (partially). Circular trail to enjoy the mountainous landscape and discover the history of Machakhela related to the presence of the Russian.	Annex 2 See map 8	This route needs several works in order to be prepared to receive tourists: trail marking, steps, railing. Several infrastructures and facilities are also needed: a hut for visitors, picnic place, etc.
<b>Route to Sindieti</b>	Hiking trail to discover the Colchic Forest. The main features are the Colchic Forest and the view over the Valley.	Annex 2 See map 9	The need to develop this route is provided in the document “. Pilot Route for Machakhela National Park” which was elaborated in the framework of this project.
<b>Route to Gvildaqviqina</b>	Trail that departs from Zeda Chkhutuneti to reach the peak Gvildaqviqina. There is interesting biodiversity associated to this trail. This trail still needs to be assessed.	-	Trail has to be investigated. Based on findings, trail should be marked and promoted.
<b>Route to Mtirala National Park</b>	This route aims at joining both National Parks, Machakhela and Mtirala (an additional trail to connect Mtirala and Kintrishi would be also developed) with the aim of creating the “Colchic Forest Route” that will connect the 3 protected areas associated to the Colchic Forest in Ajara.	Annex 2 See map 10	Two potential trails to join Machakhela and Mtirala have been identified. Several works are needed in order to develop the trail. Also infrastructures and facilities have to be placed along the route to be developed for visitors.



ACTIVITIES/SERVICES			
<b>Hiking</b>	Several hiking routes can be developed in the Park. The hiking routes allow visitors to discover the natural and cultural values of the Park	Suitable for all trails	Trail development. Installation of facilities (signs, boards, picnic areas).
<b>Biking</b>	Biking is suitable in some parts of the Park. Biking is a growing trend in protected areas	Route to Skurdidi Route to Kokoleti	Trail development and marking Commercial services (bike rental, maintenance services (spares))
<b>Kayaking</b>	Machakhela rivers are suitable for developing kayaking activities. There is already a Russian company offering rafting and kayaking activities in the Park area,	Outside the boundaries of the Park. See map	Habilitate access and areas. Kayaks and special equipment. Establish agreement with kayaking operators to promote the National Park.
<b>Wildlife watching/tours</b>	In Machakhela National Park there are interesting species of fauna around which some educational activities can be organized.	Route to Skurdidi	Training experts. Construction of hideouts.
<b>Horse riding</b>	Recreational horse riding in designating areas can be an additional activity to be developed in the Park. There are horses available in the area.	Route to Skurdidi Route to Kokoleti	Local should have horses available for recreational activities. Equipment is needed.
<b>Cooking/tasting activities</b>	Traditional cooking and the organization of tasting activities can help visitors to learn some of the local traditions and about local products.	Skurdidi/Zeda Chkhutuneti (local communities)	Train locals to provide the service. Identify a suitable place/house to organize the activities.
<b>Snowshoe walking</b>	Snowshoe walking has some potential during winter. It is interesting to extend the season.	Route to Skurdidi	Mark the trails. Special marking is needed as the marks are to be seen with snow.
<b>Geocaching</b>	Geocaching is a popular activity worldwide and it does not need much investment.	Suitable for all trails	To geoposition and hide different geocaches. Publish is in the official websites.
<b>Fly fishing</b>	Machakhela gorge has several rivers in which fishing is possible. Some areas can be identified for sport fishing (catch and release). This is not considered a priority activity.	River areas to be selected	Identify specific areas for fly-fishing.

## 6.2. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE POTENTIAL TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

### 6.2.1. Qualitative assessment of tourism potential

In order to identify the new services and facilities that are more likely to contribute to sustainable tourism development in the protected area, an assessment of their tourist potential was carried out. The used **qualitative assessment** method is based on seven criteria for attractiveness and seven criteria for competitiveness. The proposed criteria take into account the natural, cultural and socioeconomic attributes of the suggested services and facilities.

The following chart summarizes the criteria that were used in the analysis:

#### (a) Attractiveness criteria:

Name of criteria	Description
<b>1. Natural value</b>	<i>Level of conservation and value of natural resources and the environment where the trail is located, and its contribution to maintain and/or preserve those values.</i>
<b>2. Cultural and historical value</b>	<i>Presence of single or unique features that characterize the trail and distinguish it from other similar trails (scenic points, singular species of flora and/or fauna, rare ecosystems, historical sites, water resources, etc.).</i>
<b>3. Scenic value</b>	<i>Presence of significant and recognizable landscapes. Visual beauty of the areas that includes mountains, lakes, coasts, mountains</i>
<b>4. Educational value</b>	<i>Interpretative potential of the trail based on the presence of singular resources (scenic, natural and/or cultural) that are easy to access and to explain to the visitor.</i>
<b>5. Uniqueness</b>	<i>Presence of interesting cultural, historical or archaeological artifacts associated with the route, including pre-existing ancient trails.</i>
<b>6. Carrying capacity</b>	<i>Capacity of the trail to support a significant number of visitors, due to its dimensions and capacity for noise absorption and screening</i>
<b>7. Trail service by roads, tracks, parking areas and other facilities</b>	<i>Current availability (or possible installations) of infrastructures that allow and encourage visitors to access and use the trail.</i>

**(a) Competitiveness criteria:**

Name of criteria	Description
<b>1. Enhancement of PA core values</b>	<i>Contribution to increase awareness and to promote the image of the protected area highlighting its core values and defining characteristics.</i>
<b>2. Local business opportunities</b>	<i>Capacity to generate opportunities for local communities to develop business around the trail development and use (from catering services to accommodation and other complementary services for tourists and trail maintenance).</i>
<b>3. Multi-functionality</b>	<i>Capacity and suitability of the trail to support multiple activities (hiking, biking, horse riding).</i>
<b>4. Compatibility with environmental protection and conservation</b>	<i>Compatibility of trail development and use with conservation of endangered species and natural values of the park (it does not threaten conservation of native trees or species or increase fragmentation of natural habitats significantly).</i>
<b>5. Employment opportunities</b>	<i>Capacity to create new employment opportunities and investments in human resources to maintain the trail and to provide additional tourism services linked to the trail.</i>
<b>6. Simplicity to condition and maintain</b>	<i>Low resources requirements for trail preparation (ground works and infrastructures) and maintenance to guarantee a proper use of the trail by tourists.</i>
<b>7. Seasonality</b>	<i>Potential use of the trail throughout the year due to favorable climatic conditions along the route.</i>

Each of the above criteria was assessed using a numeric range corresponding to the level of compliance with each criterion. Scores for attractiveness and competitiveness are combined in order to obtain a total score that reflects the tourism potential of the trail.

The following value ranges will apply to the proposed criteria:

CRITERIA	BAD	REGULAR	GOOD
<i>Natural value</i>	1-4	5-8	9-12
<i>Cultural and historical value</i>	1-4	5-8	9-12
<i>Scenic value</i>	1-2	3-4	5-6
<i>Educational value</i>	1-2	3-4	5-6
<i>Uniqueness</i>	1	2	3
<i>Carrying capacity</i>	1	2	3
<i>Trail services / facilities</i>	1	2	3
<b>Total attractiveness</b>			1-45
<i>Enhancement of PA core values</i>	1-4	5-8	9-12
<i>Local business opportunities</i>	1-3	4-6	7-9
<i>Environmental protection</i>	1-3	4-6	7-9
<i>Multi-functionality</i>	1-2	3-4	5-6
<i>Security</i>	1	2	3
<i>Simplicity to condition /maintain</i>	1	2	3
<i>Seasonality</i>	1	2	3
<b>Total competitiveness</b>			1-45

Total scores obtained with this assessment were used as a basis to compare the different alternatives and to set a priority for the development of the one that has a greater potential to contribute to achieving the objectives established for the protected area of the Machakhela Natural Park.

The route to Gvildaqviqvinia has not been evaluated as it has not been assessed. The route to Mtirala has not been evaluated as this route has a great potential due to the unique opportunity that offers in creating a combined route for the three Ajara PA's.

The matrix below summarizes the results of the assessment for each services and facility (trail) according to the method described above:

**EVALUATION MATRIX**

EVALUATION CRITERIA		1. ROUTE TO SINDIETI				2. ROUTE TO SKURDIDI				3. ROUTE TO KOKOLETI			
ATTRACTIVENESS	Natural values (1-12)	10	10	10	9	7	9	9	8	6	6	6	6
	Cultural and historical values (1-12)	8	9	8	8	9	10	9	9	7	11	11	10
	Scenic value (1-6)	6	6	6	6	3	4	5	4	2	4	5	4
	Educational value (1-6)	6	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	3
	Uniqueness (1-3)	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1
	Carrying capacity (1-3)	1	1	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3
	Additional services (1-3)	3	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1
COMPETITIVENESS	Enhancement of PA core values (1-12)	10	9	9	8	6	8	7	8	5	5	5	6
	Local Business Opportunities (1-9)	8	6	7	6	7	6	7	6	6	7	6	6
	Environmental protection (1-9)	4	7	5	6	5	7	7	7	6	7	6	8
	Multi-functionality (1-6)	4	3	3	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	Security (1-3)	2	3	3	3	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	3
	Simplicity to condition / maintain (1-3)	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
	Seasonality (1-3)	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	3	3
TOTAL SCORE	TOTAL INDIVIDUAL SCORE	70	69	69	63	56	64	64	62	53	62	62	61
	TOTAL COMBINED SCORE	67,8				61,5				59,5			

### 6.2.2. Estimation of the Economic Benefits of the Potential Tourism Products and Services

Most of the designed activities can have direct or indirect economic benefits for the Park and also for the support zone.

One of the most important visitor development infrastructures that the National Park should undertake is **trail development**. The complete design of trail include works (clearing of vegetation, safety works, etc.), installation of facilities (signs, boards and other recreational infrastructures), which means a high level of investment. However, trails provide access to the most important features of a protected area and are essential to facilitate visitors to explore the area. The preparation of trails is the initial step to develop recreational activities such as hiking, biking or horse riding.

These activities should be the core activities of the Park, as are closely related to its attractions, and will be the base of the experience that visitors will have in the Park.

For **horse riding/biking activities** fees can be charged. For **hiking activities**, the fees can be collected if guiding services are offered. If the trail is self-guided a small fee for brochure can also be charged. Guiding services are very recommended as provide a valuable experience to visitors, they will learn more about the local communities, the traditional way of life; and also is an opportunity for creating employment among local communities.

In addition, if the activities developed are interesting and attractive visitors will stay longer creating economic income for hospitality providers (accommodation and restaurants). The longer visitors stay in the area the higher the expenditure will be, as there are more opportunities to spend the money (souvenirs, traditional products, etc.).

The development of other proposed activities is also expected to create economic income as visitors will need to rent equipment (**kayaking, camping, snowshoe walking**), or even book, against a fee, the requested activity (**cooking activities or wildlife viewing**).

It is recommended that a third party (private investor) develops the kayaking activity. There is already one Russian company<sup>5</sup> offering tours along Machakhlistkali river. Since the river areas are out of the boundaries of the MNP, it is important to establish alliances with private operators and that operate and manage this activity to work together. The collaboration with the MNP is expected so it would be a win-win situation in which the Park promotes the area, the investor benefits from this promotion and at the same time the availability of different activities in the area can have a positive effect in the length of the visitor's stay.

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://getur.ru/en/index-page.html>



In order to make estimations on the economic benefits of the potential tourism products and services, first, we have identified 3 possible scenarios based on existing tourism demand in the Park and the evolution in visitor figures in other Adjara Protected Areas to estimate the potential market for the proposed activities.

In the following table, the possible scenarios of the evolution of the tourism demand for Machakhela National Park are presented:

	AT REGIONAL/NATIONAL LEVEL	AT PARK LEVEL	RESULTS
<b>Scenario 1: Best-case scenario.</b>	Ministry of Tourism, DTR and APA continue with the efforts of promoting tourism abroad and improving tourism offer.	New infrastructures are well developed and are attractive. Local communities are fully engaged. New businesses are created around the National Park.	Under this scenario the <b>estimated growth</b> of tourists is around <b>16%</b>
<b>Scenario 2: Business as usual</b>	Budget for tourism promotion is limited and the promotional activities are limited.	The infrastructures are not developed to the required speed. Tourism offer is limited.	Under this scenario the <b>estimated growth</b> of tourists is around <b>10%</b>
<b>Scenario 3: Worst-case scenario</b>	There are no co-ordinated efforts in promoting tourism and protected areas at national and international level.	Some development occurs, but at low speed. Quality expectations are not met. National Park does not receive enough support. Stakeholders are not engaged.	Under this scenario the <b>estimated growth</b> of tourists is around <b>6%</b>

Table 5: Potential Tourism Demand Scenarios for Machakhela National Park. Source: HIDRIA

The percentage of growth has been estimated based on the evolution of the visitor figures of the Georgian protected areas and also the visitation numbers of Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas.

Secondly, once the scenarios have been defined, we have estimated the potential market for each one of the proposed activities, according to the established scenarios. In the following table a summary of the potential economic benefits (direct and indirect) are presented. For the direct benefits, the potential market of visitor has been calculated for the different scenarios, based on existing data of tourism demand for Machakhela National Park for 2015.

The **assumptions** considered in this calculations are:

- Estimated tourism demand for 2015 based in un-official data accounted 3.600 visitors, a 10% error margin has also been added (potential visitors not counted), making a total estimated demand of **4.000 visitors**.
- It has been assumed that guiding services would be available for hiking activities. However, it has been also assumed that only a small percentage of people (20%) would require these services.
- It has been estimated a percentage for the total visitors that would get engaged in the different activities, as it is likely that people interested in biking would not book the cooking activities.
- Prices of the different activities are based on an average rate identified in other Parks in the country. For those activities that are not offered in other Parks, the price has been calculated on potential cost.

ACTIVITIES/PRICE (Gel)	ESTIMATED SHARE OF MARKET DEMAND	DIRECT BENEFITS			INDIRECT BENEFITS
		Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	
Hiking – 15 Gel (for groups from 3 people)	20%	13.920	13.200	12.720	Employment opportunities (guiding) Purchase of brochures. Expenditure in local accommodation and restaurants.
Biking – 35 Gel	15%	24.360	23.100	22.260	New business opportunities (bike maintenance, spares, etc.) Expenditure in local accommodation and restaurants.
Horse riding – 50 Gel	6%	13.920	13.200	4.240	Expenditure in local accommodation and restaurants.
Cooking activities – 20 Gel	2%	1.856	1.760	1.696	Employment opportunities for locals Local consumption.
Snowshoe walking – 15 Gel	4%	1.650	1.275	900	Expenditure in local accommodation and restaurants.
Camping – 15 Gel	12%	8.352	7.920	7.632	Expenditure in food/restaurants and other activities offered by the Park
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>54.056</b>	<b>51.260</b>	<b>40.916</b>	

Table 6: Summary of estimated potential benefits of proposed activities development (in Gel). Source: HIDRIA

As it can be seen in the table, the potential economic benefit of activities is high, although the figures have been calculated with a small market. It is expected that, taken into account the high visitation numbers in the Region, the good connection system in the country the level of visitation can be higher than showed in the table.

However, efforts should be focused in offering high quality services, from which visitors can learn about the history, the natural and cultural values of the Park, planning carefully the investments to be made.

## 7. STRATEGIC PLAN

### 7.1. VISION, MISSION AND GOALS

This strategy sets forth a vision, mission and goals for Machakhela National Park, laying out the strategic areas of focus for the next five years.

The **VISION** of the Machakhela National Park is: *“By 2020, Machakhela National Park will be a national and internationally known Protected Area that provides unique experiences that combine a pristine nature and rooted ethnographic values; and the local communities are involved in its conservation and benefits from tourism development”*

The **MISSION** of Machakhela National Park is to contribute to *“protect the biodiversity and uniqueness of the landscape, the ecological safety of the area and to develop the touristic and recreational potential of the area”*. According to this statement the protection and conservation of the Colchic Forest and dissemination of its natural values by promoting sustainable tourism activities through which visitors can learn about it will be priority actions in the framework of the tourism development.

Based on the established vision, the **GOALS** of the *Machakhela National Park Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan* are:



## 7.2. STRATEGY

This medium-term strategy, aimed for the period 2016-2020, establishes five Strategic Lines with clear, measurable, specific, relevant and achievable objectives to meet the overall goals and to contribute to the vision of the Machakhela National Park.

### Strategic Line 1: Management and Governance

- **OBJ. 1.1.** The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) is a mechanism to coordinate tourism development in Adjara Protected Areas by 2017.
- **OBJ. 1.2.** A participatory mechanism to increase governance at PA level it is established by 2017.
- **OBJ. 1.3.** Links with Camili Biosphere Reserve are established to create a Transboundary Protected Area by 2019.
- **OBJ. 1.4.** By 2020, tourism is a source of generating income for MNP.
- **OBJ. 1.5.** A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural and local communities is defined and implemented by end of 2018.

### Strategic Line 2: Capacity Building

- **OBJ. 2.1.** Build capacities and skills of PA's staff in sustainable tourism, environmental issues and business planning.
- **OBJ. 2.2.** Increase local communities' knowledge about PA's environmental values and tourism related issues.

### Strategic Line 3: Local Communities Development

- **OBJ. 3.1.** Tourism service providers associated to Machakhela NP comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2020.
- **OBJ. 3.2.** At least, five new local businesses are developed and running by year 2020.
- **OBJ. 3.3.** Cultural and traditional assets are investigated, enhanced and promoted by the Park administration by 2019.

### Strategic Line 4: Infrastructure Development

- **OBJ. 4.1.** By 2019, visitors have access to information and interpretation about the Park in a Visitor Centre.
- **OBJ. 4.2.** New cost-effective tourism activities and services, in which local communities are involved, are developed by 2019.
- **OBJ. 4.3.** By 2020, at least two marketable products/activities that enhance local traditions and cultural values are available.
- **OBJ. 4.4.** A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Adjara Protected Areas is developed and successfully functioning by 2019.
- **OBJ. 4.5.** By 2020, a comprehensive environmental educational programme aimed at locals and visitors is functioning.

### Strategic Line 5: Marketing and Promotion

- **OBJ. 5.1.** Machakhela National Park will be known at national and international level by 2020.
- **OBJ. 5.2.** Information related to Machakhela National Park is easily accessible through new technologies.

## 8. ACTION PLAN

### STRATEGIC LINE 1: MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Effective management and governance will be the engine of tourism development in Machakhela National Park, it is therefore crucial to establish an adequate structure for the successful implementation of the *Strategy* and the achievement of the set goals.

Governance refers to who makes the decisions and how they are made. A key issue for governance includes ensuring participation of all stakeholders in decisions that affect them. Also, the development of sustainable tourism requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure wide participation and consensus building.

Achieving sustainable tourism, in addition, requires a careful monitoring of potential impacts that the tourism activity might cause, not only in the natural environment but also on local communities. Moreover, a high level of tourism satisfaction and ensure that tourists have a meaningful experience while learn about biodiversity and conservation principle are also essential tasks when developing sustainable tourism in protected areas.

Finally, transboundary links with the Camili Biosphere Reserve (Turkey) should be established in order to better ensure the conservation of the Colchic Forest. This transboundary agreement would be also beneficial for tourism purposes.

**OBJECTIVE 1.1: The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) is a mechanism to coordinate tourism development in Ajara Protected Areas by 2017**

Action	Assist and actively participate in the development of multistakeholder platform at regional level – Regional Advisory Council	1.1.1
<b>Justification</b> Machakhela National Park together with Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas form a chain of protected areas to conserve the unique Colchic Forests. Protected areas that offer a great opportunity to develop recreational activities for visitors to enjoy this particular nature. In order to better coordinate the tourism development efforts a Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan has been defined. This Strategy aims at coordinating efforts for the sustainable development of tourism in the area. In the framework of the strategy, a multistakeholder platform, in which the main stakeholders are involved, has been recommended.		
<b>Description</b> There is a Regional Advisory Council (recently established) at the Department of Tourism and Resorts of Ajara that can play a key role in cooperation between PA administrations and DTR. The RAC unites representatives of private sector and municipalities and facilitates public and private dialogue on the tourism issues.		



<p>This existing structure should work as platform to discuss tourism related issues at regional level, and to agree in common actions to be developed in the different Protected Areas with the support of the DTR. Machakhela National Park administration staff should be actively involved in this structure and participate in the decision-making process.</p> <p>The representative/s of the Park would have following responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Report and inform stakeholders at National Park level about decisions taken.</li> <li>- Include the agreed actions in the annual plans and implement them.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate and actively participate in the organization of RAC meetings</li> <li>• Administrative work (collaboration in the agenda, minutes of meeting, etc.).</li> <li>• Define and agree on common actions that should be considered in the Ajara PA's management plans. The actions to be implemented should include a responsible and the needed budget.</li> <li>• Elaborate Minutes of meetings and report on activities developed</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	The DTR together with Ajara Protected Areas and other stakeholders collaborate and define common actions to develop tourism in the protected areas.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Ajara Environmental Department Municipalities of Ajara Ajara PA's administrations/APA Tourism Private Sector (TTOO/TA, hotels, restaurants, etc.) Local Communities NGOs		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Department Tourism and Resorts of Ajara AR		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least two meetings are held annually.</li> <li>✓ An annual plan for common actions is elaborated containing at least two common actions per year.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2016-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	300 Gel/year (meetings)		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Establish collaboration alliances with potential partners</b>	<b>1.1.2</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Tourism industry is complex and contains different fields of economy such as transport, food industry, hospitality etc. The establishment of strategic alliances of cooperation agreements can facilitate the achievement of set goals.</p> <p>As a new established National Park, Machakhela administration should arrange strong linkages with stakeholders/representatives both public and private sector. Beside nature conservation, the main objectives of the Park is to support local community, their initiatives and involvement in small businesses.</p>		

<p>In addition to the cooperation in the management and governance of the National Park, bilateral alliances with partners should be established in order to achieve strategic goals or for specific objectives.</p> <p>Especially relevant partners are: Ajara Department of Tourism and Resorts, Shota Rustaveli University, tourism suppliers, transportation providers, travel agencies that offer adventure tourism or responsible tourism activities.</p>			
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>One of the main stakeholder of the park is DTR which promotes Machakhela as a destination place for visitors. Although the Regional Advisory Committee will provide a framework for cooperation with DTR, it is important to develop specific agreements for the development of Machakhela National Park. Relevant aspects are: the small business development program for local suppliers/ implementation of training activities, etc.</p> <p>Batumi hotels and other hospitality providers in the municipality of Khelvachauri are relevant partners in order to promote the National Park. Cooperation agreements should be established with tourism providers to be established as information points of the Park (with Chvreneburi Hotel, Wine House, Getur, etc.).</p> <p>Transportation companies play also an important role for bringing visitors to the area, and providing basic information.</p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify potential partners and arrange cooperation agreements</li> <li>• Organize workshops for better cooperation and understanding with identified partners</li> <li>• Follow-up on established agreements and monitor results.</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Better cooperation mechanisms among stakeholders.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Department Tourism and Resorts of Ajara AR Municipalities of Ajara Shota Rustaveli University Tourism Private Sector (TTOO/TA, hotels, restaurants, transport, etc.) Local Communities NGOs		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2019, at least three alliances with potential partners should be signed.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	450 Gel/year		

**OBJECTIVE 1.2: A participatory mechanism at PA level to increase governance in the Park is established by 2017.**

Action	Establish a Machakhela NP Advisory Council	1.2.1
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>The participation of local communities and other stakeholders in the planning, managing, and monitoring of protected areas is key to enhance its management and achieve objectives related to biodiversity conservation, livelihood subsistence and maintenance of cultural values. Equally, for the effective tourism development in the area, the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders is a key issue, and wide participation and consensus building should be ensured.</p> <p>In order to implement the <i>Machakhela Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan</i>, strong cooperation with stakeholders' regional government, Khelvachauri municipality and, especially, the private sector, and local communities is needed.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>To ensure good level of governance in Machakhela National Park is necessary to establish a multi-stakeholder governance structure. The recommended action is to create the Machakhela Advisory Council (MAC). This MAC should be a common platform in which all relevant stakeholders (regional and local authorities, local communities, representatives of private sector, etc.) participate and are involved in the National Park development. A similar structure has been created in Kintrishi Protected Areas in the framework of the KfW funded SPPA project.</p> <p>This MAC would have a relevant role in supporting the development of the local communities of the Machakhela National Park support zone. It is the responsibility of MNP and the stakeholders to define the Terms of Reference that should be the framework for its development.</p> <p>Regular meetings with representatives of the Kintrishi Regional Council could be organized to learn from their best practices. However, the final model should be adapted to the reality of Machakhela National Park.</p> <p>The Terms of Reference should be developed and it should include: minimum number of members, who can become a member, number of meetings to be held annually, structure, etc.</p> <p><i>*The final decision on establishment and functioning of the "Machakhela National Park Advisory Council" will be assessed in 2016 during the elaboration of the Machakhela National Park Management Plan.</i></p>		
<p><b>Activities included:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify relevant stakeholders to be involved in the Advisory Council</li> <li>• Organize an informative meeting</li> <li>• Invite stakeholders to join the Regional Advisory Council</li> <li>• Define the regulations (terms of reference) of the Regional Advisory Council (membership, roles, responsibilities, meetings, etc.)</li> </ul>		
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Major stakeholders are involved in the Machakhela National Park decision-making process.	
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	<p>Department Tourism and Resorts of Ajara AR</p> <p>Ajara Environmental Department</p> <p>Khelvachauri Municipality</p> <p>APA</p> <p>Tourism Private Sector (hotels, restaurants, etc.)</p>	

	Local Communities: Sindieti, Chkhutuneti, Kokoleti, etc. NGOs		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ By 2017 the Terms of Reference for the regulation of the Machakhela NP Advisory Council are approved.</li> <li>✓ At least two meetings are held annually.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2016-2017 (Creation of MAC)	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	2.500 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 1.3: Links with Camili Biosphere Reserve are established to create a Transboundary Protected Area by 2019**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Establish a platform for regular transboundary communication and knowledge sharing (actions, problems and opportunities)</b>	<b>1.3.1</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Communication is essential for effective transboundary conservation, not just among the staff from the protected areas involved, but among all social actors and local communities with a common interest: to preserve the natural value of the PAs ecosystems and to create synergies that can derive potential benefits for sustainable economic development.</p> <p>Having a common platform that facilitates all managers and stakeholders to share information allows us to channel existing informal arrangements of cooperation towards effective action. Inappropriate information sharing and insufficient communication between the leaders of the transboundary PAs and relevant stakeholders might result in an unsupportive response and the diversion of the management objectives to particular interests rather than common goals.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>This action consists in the creation of a new platform –or transboundary locally-grown forum- that integrates involved agents, managers, experts and authorities to share knowledge and information, interact with each other, discuss and meet to make decision and take jointly action to better management of transboundary protected areas with common values and interests.</p> <p>This platform may be supported by the development of a digital easily accessed tool that helps keeping all information and data organized and accessible for all actors involved.</p> <p>This digital platform may include: a wiki forum, a document repository, a geographic data viewer, an event calendar and a system for user access subject to registration.</p> <p>Each of the PAs involved should appoint qualified person that will be responsible for managing and updating the contents in the platform. At least one of the professionals should have the ability to solve technical problems related with the functioning of the platform and a transboundary coordinator that can change periodically to ensure all actions are coordinated and harmonized effectively and translated into action.</p>		
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <p>The following activities and instruments may be put into practice in order to improve communication at all levels:</p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a common platform and sharing information protocol that is available for the PAs administration and staff and opens a regular and stable channel for communication.</li> <li>• Organize periodic meetings for the PAs administration and staff. The meetings will take place, at least, one a year and each year in one of the partner countries. All meetings will have an agenda that will be previously discussed and programmed using the communication platform developed.</li> <li>• Share Information that may be useful for conservation and management of the PAs ecosystems and natural resources, such as scientific articles, technical reports and conservation activities.</li> <li>• Notify every action that can potentially affect the other PAs in the transboundary corridor, and discuss with the administration and staff of the other transboundary areas prior to make a decision on actions that can affect adjacent PAs.</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Creation of a transboundary communication platform		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA Adjara Protected Areas administration (Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas) Camili Biosphere Reserve Administration Adjara Environmental Department Universities from Georgia and Turkey		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Machakhela National Park Administration		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A common platform for communication has been created, implemented and running by end of 2017.</li> <li>✓ At least one annual transboundary meeting was organized by mid-2018.</li> <li>✓ A significant set of information that is relevant and up to date about conservation of the PAs and other aspects relative to PA values and conservation status and management is available for consultation in the platform by end of 2017.</li> <li>✓ A geographic viewer and repository of the PAs is available and operating by end of 2018.</li> <li>✓ All actions and decisions affecting adjacent areas have been shared, discussed and notified to interested actors, parties and other PA administrations.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2018	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	15.000 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Foster coordinated action among PA's administrations to contribute to the conservation goals of the entire transboundary ecosystem.</b>	<b>1.3.2</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Local capacity for implementing environmental and conservation policies and actions is often limited, transboundary cooperation allows PAs to achieve their interests by working together instead of acting independently. The main geomorphological feature of this transboundary ecological corridor, integrated by the Adjara protected areas and the Camili Biosphere Reserve, is the lesser Caucasus mountain chain marked by the existence of valley with a temperate and humid climate, receiving the influence of the air from the Black Sea, and which act as a biodiversity reservoir for tertiary relict species that survived the impact of the glaciation that affected the northern Caucasus region. Thus, both countries involved share the ecosystems that need a unified approach to conservation planning and management in order to conserve biological diversity.</p> <p>Moreover, an adequate coverage of PAs in the region is considered necessary for long-term protection of populations of large mammals which require cooperation of all PAs involved to set up large-scale protected corridors that enable ecosystem-based management.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>This action consists in improving collaboration for effective management and conservation of the ecological corridor formed by Adjara's Protected Areas and the Camili Biosphere Reserve, by adopting a transboundary collaborative approach to environmental management and conservation of the PAs involved.</p>		
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signing a transboundary Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and a joint action plan for coordinated conservation across borders.</li> <li>• Identifying effects of human activities across the ecosystem that can affect conservation and how these link to the communities present in the areas.</li> <li>• Incorporate local communities' participation and interest on land management, governance and conservation activities.</li> <li>• Collaborate in sharing data, standardizing assessment and monitoring methodologies. Ex: development of a global monitoring system for the Colchic forest, with collaboration of research departments of universities and experts, based on common criteria and indicators (relict species vegetation cover, connectivity, status of populations of endemic species, etc.).</li> <li>• Address maintenance and conservation actions focused on shared wildlife populations.</li> <li>• Develop joint fundraising initiatives and coordinated implementation of actions through a commonly established trust fund for the benefit of the whole transboundary conservation area.</li> <li>• Establish a type of transboundary coordination leadership, that may work across sectors, disciplines, jurisdictions and cultures to forge alliances with people holding diverse interests and viewpoints.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	<p>PA managers and administrations integrating the lesser Caucasus ecological corridor are working together and actively collaborating to improve management of the PAs and their ecosystems.</p> <p>The actions undertaken in collaboration with other transboundary areas are effectively addressed to improve conservation and protection of valuable ecosystems and to benefit local communities across borders.</p>	
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA	



	Adjara Protected Areas administration (Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas) Camili Biosphere Reserve Administration Municipalities of Georgia and Turkey included in the boundaries of the transboundary protected area Adjara Environmental Department Universities from Georgia and Turkey		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Machakhela National Park Administration		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The PAs involved in the transboundary corridor communicate often and coordinate actions in some areas, especially planning by 2018.</li> <li>✓ The PAs work together on, at least, five activities, holding regular meetings and notify each other in case of emergencies by 2019.</li> <li>✓ From 2017 on, PAs coordinate their planning, often treating the area as a single ecological unit.</li> <li>✓ A monitoring system to track conservation status of Colchic ecosystem and their important species and values, that is common and accessible by all has been developed and is generating new data and information, by 2020.</li> <li>✓ At least two joint proposals for funding have been jointly submitted to international organizations by 2020.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	22.000 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Jointly coordinate and implement actions to support and promote gathering activities and marketing actions (festivals, local markets, etc.).</b>	<b>1.3.3</b>
<b>Justification</b> Transboundary conservation areas that integrate nature conservation and sustainable development can strengthen bilateral cooperation for conservation of PAs while simultaneously providing benefits to the local population. Transboundary conservation areas can therefore, ease border crossing by removing barriers for expansion and movement of wildlife and improving tourists access to the whole area. The organization of events that involve local communities represent a venue for people to learn about each other's culture, history, language, build friendships, and raise enthusiasm for further connections and cooperation.		
<b>Description</b> This action proposes the coordination and organization of gathering activities and events that promote cultural exchange among local communities in the transboundary protected area. Such events and activities may be linked to the history, traditions, music, gastronomy and other cultural aspects of life in these communities generating spaces for common understanding and awareness of the importance to preserve the protected areas natural and cultural values and offering tourists an alternative way to enrich their experience by crossing the borders.		

<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizational meetings to gather information on common interests, culture, traditions and other aspects of communities that are worth exploring as possible themes to organize events and activities around them.</li> <li>Develop a common transboundary logo that can be used in promotional materials that is related to common cultural aspects or icons of the cultural and natural values of the protected areas.</li> <li>Schedule various events at different times of the year, held in each of the countries based in different themes (food markets, music festivals, craft fairs and workshops, etc.).</li> <li>Cooperate in organizing environmental education programs, organic agriculture workshops, youth exchanges and volunteer camps for the younger people of both countries to involve in conservation activities.</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-cultural management of activities and common identity building among communities in the transboundary PAs.</li> <li>Enhanced protection of the common historical and cultural heritage.</li> <li>Better understanding of the neighbor's culture and traditions.</li> <li>Increased marketing strength of the whole protected region or corridor.</li> <li>Improved relations between the two countries.</li> </ul>		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA Adjara Protected Areas administration (Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas) Camili Biosphere Reserve Administration Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Adjara Department Tourism and Resorts of Adjara AR NGOs		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Machakhela National Park Administration and Camili Biosphere Reserve Administration		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least one meeting a year was organized starting 2018, to compile information about local communities' traditions and cultural aspects that can be explored as motivations to organize cultural events.</li> <li>✓ A logo has been developed representing the transboundary protected area, that reflects both cultures and is presented to the communities, by 2019.</li> <li>✓ At least one event a year in each of the countries was held with success and adequately promoted to ensure participation, starting 2018.</li> <li>✓ At least one education program or youth workshop/volunteer program per country has been organized with a minimum of 10 participants from each country, by 2020.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	20.000 GEL		

**OBJECTIVE 1.4: By 2020, tourism is a source of generating income for MNP.**

Action	Design and implement a mechanism for generating revenues from tourism (Tourism User Fees)		1.4.1
<b>Justification</b> <p>The establishment of user fees is an instrument to generate revenues from tourism activities. A well-designed system of fees can contribute to generate some income to be reinvested in conservation, maintenance of infrastructures, or environmental programs.</p> <p>In order to enhance the management effectiveness and the financial sustainability of Machakhela National Park it is recommended to design sources of income that can complement the state funding from the central budget and funds from international institutions/donors.</p>			
<b>Description</b> <p>The Machakhela National Park total budget for 2014 was 76.700 GEL of which 64.200 GEL was from the state budget and 12.500 GEL were received from APA’s revenue.</p> <p>Currently, Machakhela National Park does not generate tourism revenues from tourism activities as these have not been developed yet. It is important to design attractive tourism activities and products from which the Park can generate some income.</p> <p>According to the potential activities and tourism products to be developed in Machakhela National Park the potential sources of tourism revenue are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accommodation (camping, lodges, etc.)</li><li>• Equipment rental (tents, backpacks, mountain bikes, snow shoes, etc.)</li><li>• Merchandise sales (locally produced souvenirs, brochures, local products etc.)</li><li>• Guiding services (ethnographic tours, cooking workshops, environmental tours, etc.)</li><li>• Sponsorship &amp; Donations</li></ul>			
<b>Activities included:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Select suitable sources of tourism revenues for MNP</li><li>• Define rates of selected activities/tourism products, standards to be offerend and operational documents</li><li>• Elaborate a Plan to introduce the defined mechanisms in the functioning of MNP</li><li>• Present the Plan to relevant stakeholders to be agreed.</li><li>• Promote all activities through Parks website/DTR website.</li></ul>			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Machakhela National Park receives income from tourism related activities.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	Machakhela Advisory Committee members, Georgian fly fishing Club, Adventure tourism companies		
COORDINATOR	MNP		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ By 2017, at least two meetings are held to discuss about Tourism User Fees</li><li>✓ The Plan to introduce the Tourism User Fees is approved and implemented in 2018</li></ul>		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2018	PRIORITY	HIGH X MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	1.800 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 1.5: A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural and local communities is defined and implemented by end of 2018.**

Action	Elaborate and implement a Visitor Impact Monitoring System	1.5.1
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Monitoring is one of the most important elements to the success of tourism development in PAs. The consequences of visitor use for natural resources is a concern in parks and protected areas. Therefore, the knowledge of visitor impacts (at social, economic and environmental level) is basic for the sustainability of tourism in the Machakhela National Park. Furthermore, monitoring visitor's use is essential to keep management informed to take measures, if needed, to address identified issues.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>In order to monitor tourism development and its impacts, it is necessary to identify a set of indicators that will allow the analysis of the tourism situation. The indicators will detect changes that occur and will facilitate decision-making by the PA's staff. The indicators should include data related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Visitor satisfaction (with tourism activities, environmental issues, etc.)</li> <li>– Local community satisfaction</li> <li>– Evolution of visitor's numbers</li> <li>– Evolution of economic revenues (monthly and annual) from tourism activities and fees</li> <li>– Income received by concessions</li> <li>– Number of incidents</li> <li>– Volume of waste produced</li> <li>– % tourists using public/private transportation</li> <li>– % of habitats being affected by tourism infrastructure and facilities</li> <li>– Number of people from local communities actively involved in tourism</li> </ul> <p>The benefits of establishing a good set of indicators include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lowering risks and costs</li> <li>– Identification of emerging issues – allowing preventive actions</li> <li>– Identification of impacts – allowing corrective actions when needed.</li> <li>– Performance measurement of the implementation of the Strategy and its objectives</li> <li>– Greater accountability, providing credible information for wise decision-making.</li> </ul> <p>Several stakeholders/organizations should be involved in the collection of data. This data should be recorded annually and presented to all stakeholders. The results should be carefully analysed in order to determine appropriate management options (corrective measures, etc.).</p> <p>PA's administration staff should work on the definition of the indicators and the elaboration of the baseline analysis. Data from reports elaborated by Ilia University (<i>Machakhela National Park Resource Inventory Studies and Mapping</i>), and Black Sea EcoAcademy report on the local communities in Machakhela Valley (<i>Provision of Services for Community Profiling and Participatory Development Planning of Settlements Within the Support Zone Areas of Forest Protected Areas in Adjara Region</i>) can be used as baseline data.</p> <p>Rangers should play an active role in the measurement of indicators. Local communities should also be involved, especially those inside the PA's. Specific training to conduct the monitoring should be developed in order to ensure that this monitoring is conducted according to clear guidelines.</p>		

<p>This action should be done by the end of the Strategy, as it is not expected that tourism increases in a great percentage until some infrastructures and activities are developed. Afterwards the monitoring should be systematic and periodic. It is recommended that at least the monitoring is conducted every two years. This period should be reduced if the number of visitors increases substantially.</p> <p>Some of the aspects to be monitored and to be completed with the communities' survey and the visitor satisfaction survey (to be explained in <i>actions 1.5.3/ 1.5.4</i>)</p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a set of indicators to be measured.</li> <li>• Elaborate a baseline report.</li> <li>• Conduct the Visitor Impact Monitoring.</li> <li>• Elaborate a report analysing the results achieved and present it to relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>• Define (if needed) corrective measures to be introduced.</li> <li>• Evaluate the monitoring programme</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Conservation efforts of the Park are ensured by monitoring visitor effects on the territory.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA MNP Staff (rangers, visitor's specialist, etc.)		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ In 2019, the indicators to be measure and the baseline have been defined.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018 (elaboration of baseline and indicators) 2020 (conduct the visitor impact monitoring)	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	7.000 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Elaborate a survey among local community members regarding tourism</b>	<b>1.5.2</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>The growth of tourism in new destinations can impact positive and negatively on local communities that are experiencing this growth. It is important to monitor not only the environmental cost that tourism development may have on Machakhela Protected Area but also the social impact on the communities located in the support zone of the Park in order to avoid potential adverse effects and ensure their well-being.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Machakhela National Park, as a recently established National Park, does not count on visitor registration yet, however the area is receiving visitors for some years now. Even the DTR is promoting some tours to the communities as Zeda Chkhutuneti, where some tourism development in currently on-going.</p> <p>Tourism development is expected to bring social and economic benefits to the local communities located in the support zone of the Park. Tourism, however, may have also some negative impacts, that is necessary to prevent. Among these potential socio-cultural negative impacts that can derived from</p>		

tourism are the change or loss of identity and values. Machakhela Valley is appreciated by its ethnographical and traditional values, and the people from the communities are the responsible of keeping and maintaining traditions alive. Furthermore, to ensure that sustainable development of tourism in Machakhela National Park, the local communities have to support and promote this tourism development.

Although Machakhela is still emerging as a destination, it is important to monitor potential impacts on local communities and to evaluate their level of satisfaction with existing visitation patterns.

Alternatively, due to the small size of the communities, meetings can be organized to discuss and hear their views. However, this option is not recommended as level of participation in open forums may differ from reality.

Survey should include a perception analysis on the establishment of Machakhela National Park. According to the report elaborate by Black-Sea Eco Academy some of the communities are against the existence of the National Park.

**Activities included**

- Design a survey for local communities
- Conduct the survey
- Analyse the results
- Identify corrective measures if needed

<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Local communities are aware of positive effects on tourism and support tourism development in the area.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR Local communities Khelvachauri Municipality		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2020, a survey to identify potential issues regarding tourism development in the communities has been designed and implemented.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	1.100 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Elaborate and conduct visitor satisfaction survey</b>	<b>1.5.3</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>In order to offer quality products and a positive experience to visitors it is important to understand and identify the profile of the visitors, their motivations and perceptions of the services offered by the Park and surrounding communities.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>In addition to the local communities' survey, it is important to conduct satisfaction surveys with visitors. These surveys are essential to know the profile of visitor and their perceptions regarding:</p>		



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the quality of visitor facilities,</li> <li>- the quality of access</li> <li>- the quality of the products offered,</li> <li>- overall quality of the visit.</li> </ul> <p>The results of the survey are essential to identify:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tourist profile. This information can help the Park to better address the needs of visitors, and adjust the products to be offered.</li> <li>2. Weak aspects of the tourism offer and make decisions in order to improve them;</li> <li>3. Promotional/commercialization gaps</li> </ol> <p>APA has already a template for the visitor satisfaction survey. This template should be adjusted to the reality of Machakhela National Park.</p> <p>In <b>Annex 1</b>, an example of the survey is provided. This survey should be modified according to the needs of the park.</p>			
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the visitors' satisfaction survey (APA has already one)</li> <li>• Conduct the survey</li> <li>• Analyse the results (monthly) and elaborate and semestral report.</li> <li>• Identify the weaknesses and threat reflected from the survey</li> <li>• Identify and implement corrective measures</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	APA and National Park administration have proper visitor data in relation to product demand level.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR APA		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017, a survey to measure visitor satisfaction and collect visitor data in MNP is designed and it is available for tourists.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	1.100 Gel		

## STRATEGIC LINE 2: CAPACITY BUILDING

Strengthening the capacity of the Protected Areas' staff and local communities on themes related to the protected areas can have a positive impact in behaviour changing. It is important to provide community members a solid environmental knowledge on the natural values of the PAs, so it can be ensured that they get committed to their conservation.

The main objective is to establish public awareness strategies and programmes on the importance of the protected areas, in terms of their role in biodiversity conservation and the sustainable socioeconomic development for the community.

In addition, capacity should be built in tourism relates issues (hospitality, languages, etc.). Tourism is a service industry, and the quality of the visitor experience is largely determined by the quality of service and personal interaction experienced at destination, therefore the development of quality interactions with National Park's staff and local services providers is an important element of the tourism destination.

Partnerships should be established with local NGO's, academic institutions and private sector to provide their knowledge and skills by implementing training and educational programmes for the national park staff and local communities, for instance: ELKANA, Shota Rustaveli University in Batumi, Hotels and Restaurants Association, Georgian Mountain Guide Association, SaBuKo, MercyCorp etc.

### OBJECTIVE 2.1. Build capacities and skills of PA's staff in sustainable tourism, environmental issues and business planning

Action	Design and implement a training programme for PA's staff.	2.1.1
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>To contribute to the effective sustainable tourism management in the project PA's, it is important to strengthen PA's staff in tourism related issues. Capable, competent and skilled staff is key to the successful delivery of results. Tourism activities and related businesses are new issues in Machakhela National Park and it requires more involvement and commitment of their staff.</p> <p>Protected Areas require well-trained, equipped and motivated rangers to provide security to visitors, confront existing threats such as inappropriate use behaviour, illegal hunting, etc. These challenges demand trained rangers in skills on topics related to resource management, safety and rescue procedures, law enforcement, building and maintaining protected area infrastructures, tourism and hospitality, etc.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>To establish structured capacity building program within the protected area system, and professional evaluation tools for APA staff, the administration is developing <b>training modules</b> with close cooperation with SPPA project experts. Modules are based on assessment of training needs (2013) and Capacity</p>		

Building Plan for PoWPA implementation in Eastern Europe<sup>6</sup> by ProPark Foundation<sup>7</sup>. **One of the main objectives of the plan was establishment of systematic program of capacity development and professional development for all protected area personnel, linked to national occupational standards.**

APA with SPPA decided to build trainings modules on rangers' needs, starting on common baseline for all ranger staff, as they are core staff of PAs of Georgia. Tourism and recreation are not in their prime responsibilities, however some activities such as guiding tourists and giving instructions to visitors are within their duties and this is considered in training topics. Some modules will consider introductory courses for new recruits on main specialist topics relevant to their position. These courses will build a basic foundation of skills and knowledge among specialist staff and are likely to include: Biodiversity conservation; tourism and recreation and Community development.

Elaborated modules will be implemented (used) individually for each PA, based on concrete needs of each PA's personnel. It is also planned to encourage and advise universities of Georgia to develop high-level modules and courses on PA topics, which can be open to PA staff.

PA occupations can be standardizing by the working group that will be established under the MoEdu (the institution that officially registers occupations) according to existing procedures and by the involvement of The National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement.

Training modules are being elaborated within SPPA project and will be launched in 2017.

Apart of mentioned above, assessment of training needs in tourism & hospitality made by project staff revealed the most needed topics.

	PA Director	PA administration staff
Ecotourism principles and nature-based tourism	X	X
Hospitality and customer care/service		X
Environmental Interpretation		X
Interpretation and communication / guiding	X	X
PR and Marketing	X	X
Communication technology and information	X	X
Conflict management	X	X
Languages (English)		X
Project writing	X	
Business planning	X	

<sup>6</sup> Eastern Europe, defined as the scope of this project is comprises the following 24 countries: Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Georgia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine (priority countries), Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Lithuania, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland and Turkey (secondary countries).

<sup>7</sup> ProPark Foundation facilitated the preparation of through national working group in Georgia. The project "Capacity Building Plans for Efficient Protected Area Management in Eastern Europe" has been implemented with the support of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) in 2013-2016.

It is highly recommended that visitor specialists at PA administrations get training in tourism and marketing, especially for online marketing, tour product development and packaging.

Rangers working in Machakhela National Park are not asked for specific skills to occupy their position, a learning programme should be designed and implemented for rangers to better define their role and their responsibilities. Some of the topics that should be covered by the training programme aimed for rangers are:

- Working with local communities. Local communities living in PA's have direct influence in the conservation of PA's. Relation between local communities and rangers should be friendly.
- Infrastructure and trails
- Interpretation and environmental education
- General Hospitality and tourism
- Protection and enforcement
- Emergency response (safety procedures)
- Foreign languages
- Monitoring (environmental monitoring, patrolling methods, etc.)
- Guiding

All mentioned above are considered in structured capacity building program within the protected area system, (APA/SPPA project).

**Activities included**

- Define training curricula for the PA's members.
- Identify potential trainers/experts in the Region.
- Establish an annual training calendar.
- Implement training modules.

<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	MNP administration staff is fully trained in relevant issues		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	MNP staff APA		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	APA		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ Two training courses are organized annually for MNP administration staff.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH X MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	12.000 Gel/year		

Action	Organize study tours for rangers/PA’s staff	2.1.2
<b>Justification</b> Based on experiences study visits and field works to developed PAs are more efficient then theoretical courses. Study tours to advanced PAs of Georgia such as Lagodekhi and Borjomi-Kharagauli as well as to Turkey (Camili Biosphere Reserve) and other international protected areas would create new ideas and strong linkages. The exchange of experiences and practical work on the field can contribute efficiently to the adoption of best practices.		
<b>Description</b> In order to implement the Machakhela Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan, Machakhela administration personal especially core staff (ranges, management) need trainings in hospitality and tourism. The main idea is to get familiar with operational system of PA administration including tourism product development and networking, as well as interpretation skills, marketing and sales.  This study tour can give insights to participating rangers about best tourism practices that can be applied to their daily work.  It is recommended that during the implementation of the Action Plan at least two study tours are organized at national level and one at international level.  For instance, recently Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park has recently introduced snowshoe walking as one of the activities offered by the Park. By visiting the Park rangers can learn how to conduct this activity in Machakhela National Park, the difficulties Borjomi found to offer this activity, lessons learnt, etc. Also important would be to visit some examples of transboundary biosphere reserves, to see how they function and also a study tour to Camilli Biosphere Reserve in Turkey.		
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Select the most convenient PA in Georgia for study visit</li><li>• Select the most convenient PA abroad (Latvia, Germany, Austria, Turkey or Spain) for tour.</li><li>• Implement the tour and report</li></ul>		
EXPECTED RESULTS	Practical skills of rangers in tourism related activities and hospitality are enhanced.	
AGENTS INVOLVED	MNP and APA	
COORDINATOR	APA	
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ At least two study tours at national level are organized for MNP administration staff during the period</li><li>✓ At least on study tours at international level is organized for MNP administration staff during the period.</li></ul>	
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2019	<div>PRIORITY<div>HIGH <input type="checkbox"/></div><div>MEDIUM X</div><div>LOW <input type="checkbox"/></div></div>
BUDGET	18.000 Gel	

**OBJECTIVE 2.2. Increase local communities' knowledge about PA's environmental values and tourism related issues.**

Action	Design and implement a training program for local communities.	2.2.1
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Local communities around Machakhela National Park play a key role in the Parks tourism development in the Park. The training program should include a wide range of aspects, from environmental education (importance of biodiversity conservation, waste management...), hospitality aspects (customer service, and basic business management.</p> <p>By understanding the processes and benefits of sustainable use of natural resources, communities have become more involved in local resource management activities. Furthermore, tourism and management aspects are essential to support entrepreneurship. The formulation of business plans should be a key issue in the provision of this support.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Local communities living around Machakhela National Park are willing to engage in tourism-related activities, however these initiatives should be assessed in order to support them in the creation of services that are linked to real market demand, and to ensure that the business are profitable. To develop viable local business, it is important to understand the type of tourist visiting Ajara PA's and their needs.</p> <p>Several trainings (aimed for the 8 villages of the support zone) should be implemented to enhance the capacities of local communities is issues related to tourism, environment and business. Prior to the development and implementation of the trainings, priorities should be defined in conjunction with those interested. The identification of training needs can be assessed by PA's staff. Training content should be adequate to the needs of the local communities.</p> <p>According to the study carried out by Black Sea Eco-Academy local communities there is a lack of understanding, among local population on the natural and cultural values of the Machakhela Gorge. Additional efforts should be made in this respect to involve the communities in the conservation of the Park.</p> <p>Other training need detected was related to business administration, <i>"population does not maintain basic analysis of costs and benefits, does not take into account marketing trends, existing prices are often inadequate to the services and products"</i>.</p> <p>The proposed training modules include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tourism and hospitality</li> <li>- Environmental values of Ajara PAs</li> <li>- Ecotourism concepts</li> <li>- Marketing and promotion</li> <li>- Quality criteria in products and services</li> <li>- Business planning (for small scale enterprises)</li> <li>- Basic accounting</li> </ul> <p>In addition, these micro-enterprises should be trained in basic accounting, to register income and expenses and help them to understand how to perform monthly accounts.</p>		



<p>Finally, for all those engaged, especially in accommodation business should be able to gather and submit visitor statistics from their guests to increase the knowledge of competent authorities on the profile of visitor and keep track of changes. Visitors' surveys should be placed at guesthouses to monitor also the level of satisfaction from visitors.</p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize a meeting with local communities to identify training needs.</li> <li>• Identify potential trainers/experts (NGO's) in the Region.</li> <li>• Establish an annual training calendar.</li> <li>• Implement training modules.</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Local community members build their skills and capacities topics related to tourism, environment, business planning, etc.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	NGO Khelvachauri Municipality Local communities DTR Shota Rustaveli University		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ A least two training courses are organized annually for local communities' members.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2016-2018	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	12.000 Gel/year		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Organize study tours for community members</b>	<b>2.2.2</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Based on experiences study visits and field works to developed PAs are more efficient then theoretical courses. Study tours to advanced PAs of Georgia such as Lagodekhi and Borjomi-Kharagauli as well as to other international protected areas would <b>support</b> the capacity building of community members engaged in tourism (Turkey – Camili Biosphere Reserve, etc). Community members are the main stakeholders of Machakhela National Park. One of the main objectives of PAs is to <b>support</b> the initiatives of local population and their involvement in small businesses.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Guesthouse owners, producers and other tourism service suppliers are lack of quality service skills. They are motivated to develop small businesses and work in tourism market through MNP. Study visits will help communities in following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To increase their capacity, trust and initiatives to develop small projects,</li> <li>- To increase awareness about the benefits of protected areas</li> <li>- To work with other stakeholders,</li> <li>- To establish quality services and networking.</li> <li>- To support traditional product processors in labelling and marketing.</li> </ul>		

At least two study tours should be conducted throughout the period with those community members engaged in tourism.			
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish networks between local community members of two or three PA's of Georgia.</li> <li>• Organize study tours abroad.</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Practical skills of community members engaged in tourism related business are enhanced.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	NGO MNP Local communities		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	APA		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ At least, two study tours at national level are organized for local community members engaged in tourism business during the period ✓ At least, two study tours at international level are organized for local community members engaged in tourism business during the period		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2019	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	18.000 Gel		

### STRATEGIC LINE 3: LOCAL COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT

One of the main aims of tourism in protected areas is to enhancing the quality of life of the resident communities. More specifically, UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as “*tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be filled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life supporting systems*” (UNWTO, 1999) Therefore, preference should be given to the interests of local residents and it should be ensured that they receive benefits from the increasing visitation level to the Park.

Protected areas can provide development opportunities for the communities. The employment in the tourist and service-related industries should be ensured by supporting traditional economic activities, promoting the purchase of local products, and supporting the promotion of new forms of employment (guides, etc.).

The local communities around Machakhela National Park have limited economic options and the development of tourism services present an opportunity to create additional economic income that would lead to an enhancement of their quality of life.

In this framework, other activities that should be included are related to initiatives to check and improve the quality of provided services, as the quality of the tourism experience is key to attract visitors. Machakhela National Park administration staff shall carry out a programme, in conjunction with DTR, to improve the quality of tourism services.

#### **OBJECTIVE 3.1. Tourism service providers associated to Machakhela NP comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2020.**

Action	Assess quality service level of local providers of accommodation and catering facilities.	3.1.1
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Quality of accommodation, catering, guide and transportation services is a vital for any destination as consumers are more experienced today and have high expectations regarding their travel.</p> <p>The quality of services offered in and around Ajara PA’s needs improvment. Minimum professional skills and some standards are required to meet market demands.</p> <p>There is indeed a guesthouse classification quality standard in Georgia elaborated by ELKANA (Biological Farming Association) in 2008. These standards are established according to EuroGites – European Federation of Farm and Rural Tourism ( <a href="http://www.eurogites.org">www.eurogites.org</a> ) criteria. Elkana NGO became a member of EuroGites for this reason. Standards are theoretically already known in Georgia. It seems that GNTA considered accepting Elkana classification system as national standards, but the project was put on hold because more pressing attention was given to hotel quality service standards (stars) instead of rural guesthouse standards. ELKANA's standards are <i>de facto</i> used by recently established Rural Tourism Network <a href="http://www.ruraltourism.ge">www.ruraltourism.ge</a> members (non formal network under ELKANA’s umbrella). It is non-obligatory, used mostly as a marketing tool. Anyone who wants to get quality service standard label, goes</p>		

through a standardization process (inspection based on check list). The symbol for quality label is a “sun”. There are four categories for rural guesthouses and cottages:

1. Category "standard" (basic level);
2. Category "1 sun";
3. Category "2 suns"
4. Category "3 suns".

The above information was shared with APA to check service quality of guesthouses around Borjomi-Kharagauli, Lagodekhi Protected Areas, etc. Visitor specialists from PAs attended ELKANA's training, prepared check-lists (based on standards) and inspected guesthouses. At the result, guesthouses, met standard categories were recommended and placed on APA's web page.

#### **Description**

One of the first steps to improve quality service level is the elaboration of internal standards, check lists which can be based on Elkana's/EuroGites guidelines and contain ecotourism principals (environment responsibilities). For guide service, national standards (professional standards elaborated by Ministry of Education) can be used and introduced to local service providers.

SPPA project also started working on elaboration of quality standards and eco labelling in PA's of Georgia. The creation of the certification system and awards is subject to discuss. At this stage, it is recommended to train visitor specialists who will be the main “inspectors” and provide training courses in quality management including service quality. Visitor's specialist should be trained as a “local instructor”; small reports for each guesthouse can be prepared and delivered to APA. Based on which, selected guesthouses can be placed on APA webpage and recommended to visitors.

Continuous support and monitoring should be conducted in order to ensure that quality effectively improves. This activity can be done also with the support of DTR.

The service providers should have a proper visitor's satisfaction questionnaire in order to measure satisfaction and dissatisfaction, weak points for further improvement and better recognition of the area.

In addition, the DTR is also working in establishing a certification in tourism services the programme has started to be implemented “RECOMMENDED by the Department of Tourism and Resorts”

#### **Activities included**

- Introduce ELKANA quality standards to tourism service providers (for accommodation providers, for catering business, for transportation to service providers...)
- Introduce national standards “professional guide's standards”
- Training for visitor specialists' in the quality standards and inspection procedures.
- Training for tourism service providers in the quality standards.
- Assessment to tourism service providers and elaborate recommendations of improvement.
- Collaborated with SPPA about establishment of Certification system.
- Regular Reporting.

#### **EXPECTED RESULTS**

Tourism service providers understand the importance of providing quality services and have the tools to improve their services.

#### **AGENTS INVOLVED**

DTR  
GNTA  
MNP  
SPPA/ELKANA  
TTOO

	GMGA Ministry of Education		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	APA		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ By 2019, at least 70% of the guesthouses should be checked and certified.</li> <li>✓ By 2018, at least trainings focusing on the standards and quality should be developed.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2019	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	5.500 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 3.2. At least, five new local businesses are developed and running by year 2020.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Assess and support new potential business in the communities of the support zone.</b>	<b>3.2.1</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>The socioeconomic development of the communities located around Machakhela National Park is vital for the tourism development of the Protected Area. The provision of infrastructures and services to support the tourism development of the National Park is a fundamental aspect that should be promoted by the Park's administration and other stakeholders.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Some of the communities of the support zone of Machakhela National Park are already experiencing tourism business development. For instance, in Sindieti 1 hotel and 2 campings /coffee, emerged in the last years, providing accommodation and catering services. In addition, several guesthouses are operational in Zeda Chkhutuneti promoted by DTR.</p> <p>Additional services along touristic trails should be supported as a mechanism for generating economic and employment opportunities for locals. Moreover, the support of local business would increase locals' appreciation for conservation of the Park. Local initiatives should be supported based on clear business plans. The analysis and support of some of the initiatives is one of the main objectives of the <i>Friends of Machakhela National Park</i>. "Support solution of social-economic problems of support zone villages in and around PAs, Support the development of surrounding communities of Machakhela and Mtirala ".</p> <p>Some that have potential to be developed in the area are:</p> <p><b>1) Guest houses/accommodation services</b></p> <p>Zeda Chkhutuneti is the area where the guesthouse offer is concentrated. Other areas suitable for accommodation service development are Kveda Chkhutuneti and Tskhemlara (as they area located in the main road towards Machakhela Gorge) as well as Chikuneti, as tourism grows in the area.</p> <p>To extend the network, Skurdidi and Kokoleti should be also considered. The development of new trails will contribute to structure the territory and help to increase the visitation level of other communities, and therefore, new accommodation options would be needed.</p>		

## **2) Catering places**

As identified in the assessment, most of the catering places are located in Sindieti, while other communities don't have this service available. Small places, that offer simple local food should be promoted. It can be considered in Skurdidi and Kokoleti. Both villages are located along project proposed new trails.

In addition to the catering places, a market place in the area can be arranged. The most convenient place is Ajarisagmarti village (nearby administration building, the land owner is local municipality and APA) and Sindieti, close to "Chveneburebi" hotel.

## **3) Horse rental services**

Horse riding is an activity that can be developed in the Park. Locals can offer this service to potential and interested guests. The Park should provide some support, providing the needed equipment in the Visitor Centre. For horse riding, it is recommended to select families in Ajarisagmarti where the administration building is located.

## **4) Trout farming in Skurdidi.**

Trouts are an appreciated dish in the country and the trouts of Machakhela river are well-known by its quality. Trout farming could be supported to supply existing catering places. Skurdidi could be one of the areas to develop this business.

## **5) Handicraft business**

Three artisans have been identified in Machakhela Gorge (please refer to *Action 3.3.1*). The development of local souvenirs could be of a source of additional income for those artisans. These artisans could get organized in a cooperative to develop also a training program for future generations, to preserve these traditions.

## **6) Bike repairing services**

If biking activities are adequately promoted in the Park and in the whole area, these type of services might be needed.

In addition to these business, it is important to promote the certification as guides among local population (especially young people). Guiding service is an important service to add value to the Park tourism offer.

The creation of these business should be supported mainly through the creation of the "Friends of Machakhela National Park". This NGO, once created, should use the FPA mechanisms to support some of these initiatives. This support should be not only economic but also provided the needed advice in terms of legal and administrative issues, capacity building, and finally monitor their performance, identifying potential weaknesses and areas for improvement, and recommendations on how to improve performance.

The objective of the monitoring is to avoid the failure of those enterprises and achieve an important rate of success.

Finally, it is highly recommended to support the creation of an association of tourism businesses in the area. Together the tourism business can share information, collaborate on projects, etc. and increase their performance level.

### **Activities included**

- Identify local initiatives



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of business plans</li> <li>• Create some small grants to support local business.</li> <li>• Monitor the performance of the new business and community initiatives</li> <li>• Assess the creation of a Rural Tourism Association.</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Local community members are interested in developing tourism related business and support (administrative, legal and economic) is provided.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	MNP DTR APA Khlevachauri Municipality Georgian Arts Conservation Centre (GACC) Elkana		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Friends of Machakhela National Park		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2018, at least two new businesses are created, ✓ By 2018, economic mechanisms to support local entrepreneurs are available.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	40.000 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 3.3. Cultural and traditional assets are investigated, enhanced and promoted by the Park administration by 2019.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Organize trainings and workshop to enhance the skills of artisans in packaging, and business skills</b>	<b>3.3.1</b>
<b>Justification</b> Local products are an added value to the destination. Visitors travelling to different areas are willing to try and buy products that are not available at their home places. Moreover, the locally-produced souvenirs can contribute to create economic opportunities for locals and promote local traditions. The production of souvenirs/organic product can facilitate the integration of local communities in the tourism value chain		
<b>Description</b> There are some artisans identified in the area of Machakhela. A recent publication “National Souvenirs from Khelvachauri” identifies several artisans in the municipality. This booklet was elaborated with the aim to promote their folk craft works. In the framework of this publication, the craftsmen were asked to elaborate traditional souvenirs and some of them result of interest.  Some of these artisans are living in the support area of Machakhela National Park, and they should be contacted and engaged to create handicrafts that can be marketed to visitors.  This activity can be implemented with GACC /Georgian Arts and Culture Centre (local Georgian NGO working in the field of development of Heritage crafts since 1995). GACC has been supported the		

development of creative industries supported by EU and other donors. The comprehensive study of the sector was conducted recently together<sup>8</sup>.

GACC cooperates with more than 600 individual artists and craftsmen, crafts - based studios and workshops, SMEs within Georgia and South Caucasus countries providing them with trainings and consultancy in the fields of crafts business, product development, market access, works to advocate the sector's needs on different levels.

GACC founded Georgian Heritage Crafts Association (in 2015) and “EthnoFest” which is viewed as an annual event (based in Tbilisi).

One of the best examples of this traditional craftsmanship can be found in Zeda Chkhutuneti:



Figure 23. Examples of products that can be sold as “local souvenirs” in Machakhela National Park

<sup>8</sup> The Heritage crafts in Georgia, Comprehensive Research and Development Strategy of the Sector. Georgian Arts and Culture Center. Georgia, 2012 <http://www.gaccgeorgia.org/Crafts/GACC%20Crafts%20Sector%20Study.pdf>

The artisan is Noe Nagervadze, and he is the successor of traditions of Gun “Matchakhela”, preparing a miniature of the traditional “matchakhela musquet”.

The booklet identifies other artisans with different skills such as:

- 1) Tamaz Salvaridze (Tskhemlari): She specializes in making agricultural materials such as cylindrical baskets
- 2) Ismail Gvianidze (Khertivisi). He weaves small “gideli” and “godori” and makes wood souvenirs.
- 3) Nugzar Gogitidze (Zeda Tkhilnari), He creates the traditional musical instrument “Panduri”.
- 4) Murad Uznadze (Erge). He produces things from marble and plaster: statues, frames, etc.
- 5) Vardo Devadze (Zeda Tkhilnari). She creates souvenirs of knitting threads and other handmade materials: basket for flowers, etc.
- 6) Gela Vanidze (Sarpi) He elaborates lots of handmade, knitted or embroidered materials.

It would be also desirable to organize small grants to support these initiatives (it would be needed to apply for some funds). The trainings to be organized should aim at using sustainable products, quality, packaging etc.

The development of additional market places, similar to the Honey shop in Mtirala should also be considered (*see action 3.3.2*)

In addition, farmers can also use part of their production to be sold to visitors, especially organic products such as honey, tea, nuts... In this way organic production will be encouraged. Training would be needed for them on organic production, labelling, packaging, business, etc.

The MNP should agree with artisans to select a few items to be sold as souvenirs from MNP, and the labelling should include the brand of the Park.

#### Activities included

- Research and interview artisans/farmers in the area.
- Identify and provide training in required topics to improve labelling, packaging, etc.
- Provide economic support to artisans to develop their activities.
- Create a portfolio of products suitable to be sold as souvenirs.

<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Artisan traditions of the area are recognized and promoted.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Municipalities Local communities MNP Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Adjara A.R.		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	DTR		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ By 2017, there is a database of artisans in the area available,</li> <li>✓ By 2018, at two training courses have been conducted for artisans in the area.</li> <li>✓ By 2018, MNP has available for purchase locally-produced souvenirs.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2018	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	14.200 Gel		

Action	Create a local market to promote locally-produced products.	3.3.2
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Apart from handicrafts, people living in the valley produce several items that can be attractive for visitors, national and international. Machakhela Valley is quiet known for its honey and bees and this is a potential product to be sold. Other interesting products are: plum sauces (tkemali), jams, cheese, candles from beeswax, etc.</p> <p>It would be necessary to habilitate a space for commercializing those items. The selected “craft” pieces to be sold as MNP souvenirs</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Eco and agrotourism is a way to develop and promote traditional product and biodiversity. On the other hand, local traditional product promotes the region of its origin. Based on main fields of agriculture of the region such as bee-keeping, livestock breeding, fruit and vegetable growing it is recommended to develop tourism market for following product: honey, cheese, bean, plum and fig (jam) etc.</p> <p>Big attention is paid to the unique qualities of the Georgian-Caucasian bee, apiculture and honey production. Bee and Honey Festival is held here every year, that is visited by Georgian Machakhela population as well. According to specialists, it would be possible to declare Machakhela Gorge as a Caucasus Bee zone where both sides of Machakhela will keep this unique quality of honey and bee, establish direct links, professional connections and share experiences.</p> <p>A weekly or monthly “street market” could be organized in Batumi during high season. Additionally, it can be organized in Ajarisagmarti village, nearby administration building, with simple contruction (portable), since it would be seasonal it does not need to be a permanent structure. This market can help to increase visibility of the Park and the local producers. An optional location could be close to “Chveneburebi” hotel.</p>		



The celebration of this market should be promoted in Batumi, in the hotels, etc.



Figure 24: Example of a weekly local market with locally-produced honey-related products. Source: HIDRIA



Figure 25: Example of a portable structure for the celebration of the market. Source: <http://crdcommunitygreenmap.ca/location-type/farmers-local-market>

<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a suitable area to celebrate the market (for instance Ajaris'agmarti or Batumi)</li> <li>• Sign Memorandum of Understanding with Municipality</li> <li>• Identify producers, Unique Sales Product</li> <li>• Trainings in producing and marketing</li> <li>• Organize weekly farmer markets during the season</li> <li>• Purchase the needed materials for (tables, umbrellas, etc.) to celebrate the market</li> <li>• Establish links with markets and shops</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Local products are promoted and the demand of local products increases.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR MNP Local Associations ( <a href="http://abba.ge/?page_id=26">http://abba.ge/?page_id=26</a> ) Khelvachauri Municipality		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	NGOs		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2019, a suitable place for the celebration/organization of the market is available, ✓ By 2020, regular farmer markets are organized in the area.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	30.000 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Conduct scientific research to identify main cultural assets in MNP and its support zone.</b>	<b>3.3.3</b>
<b>Justification</b> <p>The Machakhela Gorge is an area with important ethnographical and cultural values. The area hosts several cultural assets with historical importance and with diverse conservation status. These assets should be researched and preserved.</p> <p>Visitors are interested in learning about places through their cultural manifestations, the knowledge and promotion of cultural assets can be used as a tool for tourism product differentiation in Machakhela National Park.</p> <p>The research activities can include not only monuments but also, traditional practices, festivals, etc.</p>		
<b>Description</b> <p>Several fortresses, bridges and other assets are present in the area of Machakhela as witnesses of relevant historical facts that occurred in the area. The presence of Ottomans, Russians have left an imprint in the area that is still visible. Those assets should be studied and promoted.</p> <p>It is very likely that the ancient Silk Road crossed this area, this trade route that enabled not only commerce but also an exchange of culture and ideas. During 6<sup>th</sup> Century Georgia and North Caucasus played an important role in the development of this route and several ruins as Gonio Fortress reveal its importance. Other areas in Machakhela have ruins from this period that can be linked to this route and should be studied to determine their role and importance.</p>		



Suggested **priority areas** to be researched and preserved are:

### 1. GVARA FORTRESS

Gvara Fortress has also played a major role in the control of trading areas, and although it can be visited the fortress is in a bad conservation status. In addition, no information is provided about the fortress.



Figure 26: Gvara Fortress. Source: Department of Tourism and Resorts.

### 2. KALIVAKE FORTRESS

This fortress is located in Kveda Chkhutuneti and according to information provided by DTR this fortress controlled the military road passing through the Machakhela canyon.



Figure 27: Kalivake Fortress. Source: Department of Tourism and Resorts.

At least these historical fortresses should be researched and restored in order to maintain and promote the historical assets of the area. These fortresses can be linked to other similar buildings in the area.

There are other cultural assets in a similar situation.

In the past years, a project funded by the EU “Black Sea Silk Corridor” was implemented in Adjara. The project sought to re-trace the route of the western Silk Road through four countries: Armenia, Georgia, Greece and Turkey, signalling the areas to allow visitors to follow the steps of ancient traders. The project

<p>identified some of the assets and promotes it through the project website:  <a href="http://ge.blackseasilkroad.com/en/about">http://ge.blackseasilkroad.com/en/about</a></p> <p>More recent historical facts, as the Russian presence has left a military legacy that can also be promoted. Routes can be developed following their presence and can be inserted in the natural tours.</p> <p>There are other examples in Europe about promoting the military heritage as a tourism asset:  <a href="http://www.latvia.travel/en/article/military-heritage">http://www.latvia.travel/en/article/military-heritage</a></p> <p>The Shota Rustaveli University has a department of History that has conducted some research on the area, agreements should be established with the University to support some additional study (Thesis, etc.) or to support the elaboration of interpretive panels to be located closed to the identified assets.</p> <p>Other ethnographical (intangible) aspects should also be studied to ensure its preservation.</p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify main assets to be studied (database)</li> <li>• Conduct scientific research</li> <li>• Share results</li> <li>• Elaborate a Plan to conserve and promote historical assets</li> <li>• Seek for international funds to restore some of the assets.</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	<p>Greater understanding of the importance of the cultural values of the area.            Preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.</p>		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	<p>DTR            NGOs            MNP            Khelvachauri Municipality</p>		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	<p>Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports</p>		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<p>✓ By 2018, there is a database of tangible and intangible cultural resources of the area.</p> <p>✓ By 2019, an agreement is signed with Shota Rustaveli or other national university to conduct some historical research in the area and assess the conservation status of the cultural resources.</p> <p>✓ By 2020, there is a Plan to restore some of the cultural assets present in the area.</p>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X
<b>BUDGET</b>	35.000 Gel		

#### STRATEGIC LINE 4: TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Product design and infrastructure development are key elements of a destination in order to create experiences to be offered to visitors. The design of feasible and cost effective activities in the Ajara PA's is essential to attract visitors and increase their level of enjoyment. Infrastructures and facilities should be built to support the development of tourism products.

Any tourism destination needs a good product portfolio strategy to be able to develop tourism and specialise the existing supply of the destination. The portfolio should be based on the existing attractions and resources, but it should also take into account the essential infrastructures, facilities and services needed to make the development come true.

Low-impact activities, compatible with the values supported by the Park are facilitate the enjoyment of the natural environment, increase its appreciation and create some economic revenues.

Machakhela National Park it is in a very early stage of tourism development, with no infrastructural development yet. Infrastructure development is key to make easier to access the site and enjoy the attractions.

Form the conservation perspective the infrastructure development has to maintain the balance between preserving the natural and cultural values while enhance the visitors experience. The proposed tourism infrastructure has to be carefully considered having into account the surrounding environment and other aspects, such as the cost benefit analysis.

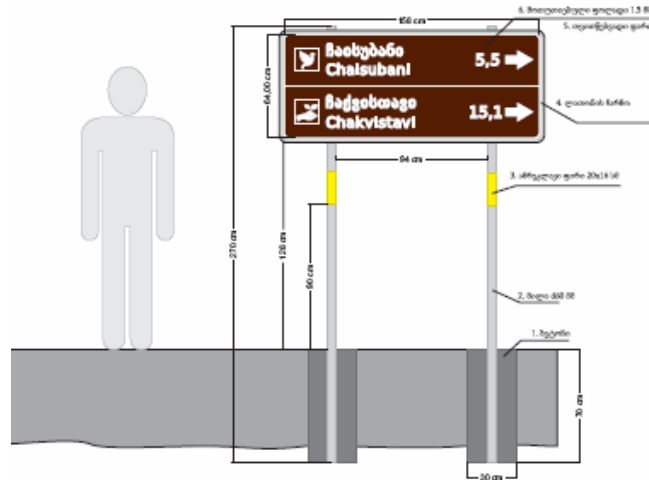
#### **OBJECTIVE 4.1. By 2019, visitors have access to information and interpretation about the Park in a Visitor Centre.**

Action	Elaborate a project to rehabilitate and adapt the administration building to a visitor centre.	4.1.1
<b>Justification</b> <p>The current administration building hosts administration staff offices. No services are available to tourists visiting the area. The offices are located in the second floor and there is no information in the outside welcoming visitors and inviting them to entering for information.</p> <p>The administration building should play a more important role, becoming an information centre and the place where interested visitors can get information about the natural and cultural values of the Park, the activities that can be done, how to get around, etc.</p> <p>The administration building should be the point of reference for visitors, in addition, this is also important to be able to register and gather relevant data about visitors such as country of origin, purpose of the trip, etc. These data are a useful tool to identify main markets and improve the services and marketing actions aimed at those markets.</p>		
<b>Description</b> <p>Although the existing administration building does not belong to APA, it is recommended that the current administration building is converted into a visitor centre. The location of the existing building is convenient and the cost of the construction a new building does not justify it.</p>		

<p>The idea is that in the same building coexist different activities: the administration premises, and the tourism office. The basement would become a meeting point of the visitors; in which they can get relevant information about the Park. A small exhibition area (interpretation area) for the promotion of the natural and cultural values should be defined. In addition, the basement should count on a local farmers/artisans products store, so visitors can also have a contact with the typical products and traditions of the local communities.</p> <p><i>Note*This action is already on-going. An executive plan has been elaborated for the construction of a Visitor Centre.</i></p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign an agreement with the Municipality to obtain permission to have full access to the building</li> <li>• Elaborate an Executive Plan</li> <li>• Design the interpretive plan of the interior.</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	A Visitor Centre is available for tourists.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Khelvachauri Municipality APA DTR		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ The Executive Project is approved by 2016.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2016-2017	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	(on going)		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Design and install road directional signs.</b>	<b>4.1.2</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>The signage system provides essential information about how to get to the destination, distance to the destination. This signage system should be aligned with the DTR signage system and also according to APA standards.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>There are no road signs indicating the direction or distance of Machakhela National Park. This is one of the priority actions that the Park should address in order to increase Machakhela National Park visibility and also make easier to visitors to reach the Park.</p> <p>The indication on how to get to Machakhela National Park should be located already in Batumi, and also on the road to Keda. At least a sign should be marking each diversion, to easily direct visitors to the administration building. And on the road to Kokoleti.</p> <p>These signs have to be located both sides (Keda Batumi and Batumi -Keda) indicating the distance to the main entrance of the National Park or the Administration Building.</p>		

The signs should follow the standards of the DTR (see figure below). The signs should be monitored regularly and repair if any damage is identified.



### Activities included

- Identify main locations to install the signs
- Design the signs
- Install the signs
- Monitoring and repair

<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Visitors can easily access to Machakhela National Park.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA Road and Rehabilitation Department Khelvachauri Municipality DTR		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017, there are road signs indicating direction to MNP in main roads (road to Kokoleti and road to Keda)		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2016-2017	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	3.200 Gel (+ 800 Gel for potential damages)		

**OBJECTIVE 4.2. New cost-effective tourism activities and services, in which local communities are involved, are developed by 2019.**

Action	Construct new trails that allow the development of recreational activities.	4.2.1
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Recreational trails help people to enjoy the outdoors and facilitate, promote and manage a range of outdoor activities including hiking, cycling, canoeing, horse-riding and even motorised sports. Trails are developed with the aim of providing a pleasant, safe and enjoyable experience to trail users and visitors to an area.</p> <p>Trails are essential to ensure that outdoor recreation activities are undertaken in harmony with the surrounding environment.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Machakhela National Park does not count on trails, and the availability of trails is essential to allow visitors to enjoy nature, therefore, trail development is vital for effectively manage the potential recreational activities to be developed in the Park.</p> <p>The trails will be for different purposes: walking, cycling, horse riding or even snowshoeing. Some of the proposed trails may be shared-use, allowing the combination of these users.</p> <p>The assessment carried out has identified 3 main routes to be developed in the Visitor Zone of the area:</p> <p><b>A) Route to Sindieti</b>  <b>B) Route to Skurdidi</b>  <b>C) Route to Kokoleti</b></p> <p>In addition, a trail that connects Sindieti to Kokoleti has to be investigated. The Park administration has recently identified a potential trail that would join the two areas. The attractiveness of this trail has not been evaluated, however there are some natural resources such as waterfalls and other attractives.</p> <p>These trails have to be conditioned in order to develop some educational and recreational activities such as hiking, biking or even horse riding. A Trail Development Plan, in which all necessary works and technical specifications are described needs to be elaborated. (The Trail Development Plan for Sindieti has already been produced. Similar plans have to be elaborated for Skurdidi and Kokoleti.</p> <p>Further details on the proposal for the development of these trails are provided in <b>Annex 2-Maps</b>.</p> <p>An additional route has been identified, however it has not been assessed:</p> <p><b>D) Route to Kldekilgvina</b></p> <p>This route has a great potential as several experts have highlighted the presence of interesting fauna (chamois) and flora. In addition, the landscape is very interesting. This route should be assessed to identify its potential and the needs in order to develop it.</p> <p>It is recommended that priority is given to the other routes, as this route can be only visited during summer period. In winter the area cannot be visited due to the snow level.</p> <p>Once developed the trails should be monitored and maintained to ensure that keep the standard.</p>		

<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaborate a Trail Development Plan (<i>the trail development plan for the Sindieti Route has already been developed</i>)</li> <li>• Implement the Plan</li> <li>• Manage and maintain the trail</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Visitors can enjoy the natural and cultural values of the MNP through a quality network of trails.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA DTR Khelvachauri Municipality Local communities		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ By the end of 2016, the route to Sindieti is suitable for visits.</li> <li>✓ By the end of 2017, the route to Skurdidi is suitable for visits.</li> <li>✓ By 2018, the route to Kldekilghvina is been assessed and the Trail Development Plan is being prepared.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2016-2019	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	92.000 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Design and implement thematic tours in Machakhela National Park</b>	<b>4.2.2</b>
<b>Justification</b> <p>In order to promote the natural and cultural values of the protected areas among visitors, recreational and educational activities should be developed.</p> <p>Some of the activities that can be developed are oriented for soft-ecotourists, or those visitors that have interest in nature but prefer less physically demanding activities, for instance, short thematic tours developed around existing trails.</p>		
<b>Description</b> <p>Currently, Machakhela National Park does not offer activities for tourists. The lack of existing infrastructures is hindering the promotion of appropriate activities.</p> <p>As it was described in section 6. Machakhela National Park has a great potential to develop a wide range of services to be offered to visitors.</p> <p>In addition to proposed trails, thematic tours can be developed according to specific interpretation themes, they can highlight environmental aspects such as the conservation of the Colchic Forest, wildlife, the impacts of climate change and other impact on nature, historical use of the land, historical aspects of the area (Russian presence, Turkish-Georgian relationship,).</p> <p>These tours shall be guided. The use of guiding is also strategical to generate income for the community, and also to reduce pressure on the natural resources. Furthermore, the use of interpretive guides can</p>		



help visitors to fully appreciate the natural and cultural heritage of the area, and be moved to empathise with the need to ensure that such heritage is preserved.

Several thematic routes (guided) should be developed linked to the proposed trails and also to other relevant areas located in the support zone of the Park. The idea is to define several routes that help to vertebrate the area, creating several routes with different purposes.

An initial proposal of the themes around which the routes can be developed are:

» **Cultural hikes:**

As already mentioned Machakhela Valley has a rich history, with important historical resources located in the area, these resources should be promoted by designing specific routes. For instance:

a) *Wine “root”*

This tour should have as main attractions the wine related resources (wine cellars, terraces where vineyards are cultivated, etc.), and could combine a visit to Chikuneti with a visit to the Ajarian Wine House or a local wine degustation.

b) *Gastronomic tour – Taste Machakhela*

An opportunity to taste best local and traditional products of the Valley. This tour should highlight the link between protected areas and sustainable agriculture, the richness of nature and the importance of preserving local varieties of seeds, plants, farming practices, and cultural habits. The tour can include visits to farms, cooking or degustation sessions. (see Action 4.3.1.)

c) *Historical/Cultural tours.*

As already seen Machakhela Valley has some historical treasures from different periods historical periods. Some route can be developed around the Russian presence, and around the transboundary character of the protected area or even the medieval era.

» **Environmental hikes**

Some thematic routes could be developed around the following topics; local experts can be hired to conduct to some of these routes

a) *Medicinal Plants – Traditional uses of plants- Guided tour on eatable wild plants*

b) *Endemic species of Machakhela National Park (an example about how to prepare the activity is provided in **Annex 3**)*

c) *Colchic Forest*

d) *Inhabitants of the forest-*

e) *Geological tours*

An additional option is to develop wildlife tours (more details are provided in action 4.1.3.)

The tours should be defined around main attractions and services identified in the area and interpretive content should be defined. It is recommended that a technical assistance (experts from the university – Ilia University, locals, etc.) supports APA and Machakhela National Park in the development of these tours.

Rangers could also provide this guided hikes, however they should receive specific training in tour guiding, interpretation, etc.

<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify potential tours to be developed</li> <li>Together with DTR assess the potential of the route</li> <li>Select the main assets to be promoted and define the script for the tour (objectives, main stops, themes, etc.)</li> <li>Promote the tours</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Cultural and environmental guided tours are available for visitors.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR Local communities Tourism providers APA		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ At least two thematic tours are developed by 2018		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2016-2018	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	22.000 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Develop complementary water-based activities</b>	<b>4.2.3</b>
<b>Justification</b> <p>There is a growing interest in water-based recreation such as sailing, kayaking, etc. Machakhela National Park has the potential to develop additional adventure and sports activities. There are several rivers in the area, some of which are suitable for water recreational activities.</p>		
<b>Description</b> <p>Machakhela National Park also offers the opportunity to develop some water-based activities such as <b>KAYAKING</b>, although most suitable areas are outside the boundaries of the protected area. The definition of a suitable trails enables the potential trail user to more easily participate in this activities.</p> <p>Water trails should be developed in appropriate water locations, ensuring that all safety issues are considered. According to experts' opinions, different trails according to different difficulty levels could be developed, see map 11 for further detail on the areas suitable for kayaking, recommended by Georgian Travel Agencies.</p> <p>The facilities that should be developed associated to the trail are mostly the access and egress facilities and if necessary some signs indicated the trail head from main road.</p> <p>The exact trail should be identified for a professional as there are several considerations to be taken into account when developing a trail such as the effects of wind, a rise in water levels, the water flow, etc,</p>		

<p>It is recommended, that this activity is promoted by a third party, that is professionals engaged in active outdoor tourism activities. As this activity can also be directly linked to other businesses such as: introductory lessons to kayaking.</p> <p>Other water-based activity that can be developed is <b>FLY-FISHING</b>. d. The fly-fishing should be regulated in specific locations, season, etc.</p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify appropriate water courses and locations</li> <li>• Plan and develop a water based trail for kayaking</li> <li>• Develop minimum infrastructures to ensure safe and pleasant passage to trail users</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Rivers and water resources are appreciated resources and provide and scenario to develop sustainable recreational activities.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA DTR Private investors Local communities Fly –fishing association Adventure Tourism companies		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2019, some water-based activities are available in the area		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2019	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X
<b>BUDGET</b>	2.500 Gel (planning)		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Develop and implement wildlife tours</b>	<b>4.2.4</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Nature-related tours that include wildlife viewing are very popular among ecotourists and offers an unforgettable experience. In addition, this kind of tours help to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity and offering opportunities for the effective conservation of endangered species and the creation of alternative sources of revenue.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Machakhela National Park host an impressive biodiversity that includes the presence of large mammals and iconic species such as the Brown Bear (<i>Ursus arctos</i>). The non-consumptive use of bears in tourism takes advantage of the growing need of people to have authentic experiences and experience wildlife. It is proposed to developed a tour focused on the experience of viewing bears in the Park.</p> <p>There are several <b>examples</b> of similar tours offered in different countries in Europe, which are highly rated by visitors and have a high demand level:</p> <p>Estonia: <a href="http://www.estonianwildlifetours.com/">http://www.estonianwildlifetours.com/</a></p>		

Sweden: <http://www.wildsweden.com/short-tours/brown-bear-watching-from-hide/>  
Finland: <https://www.explore.co.uk/holidays/brown-bear-weekend>  
Spain: <http://www.travelecoology.com/what-do-we-offer/travel-experiences/check-our-tours-en/in-the-land-of-bears-and-wolfs-en.html>

Study tours can be organised to these countries to train rangers or potential guides, in the organization of these type of tours (see Action 2.1.2). Although they are difficult to view during day time, tours can be organized. Most of brown bear watching tours does not guarantee 100% success rate.

The tour should include interpretation information about Brown bears, so visitors can learn about their habits, about the habitat, etc. The tour should be organised maintaining the highest safety level for visitors and brown bears.

In order to develop these type of tours it would be recommended to hire a professional to identify the best possible areas to observe brown bears, (is should not be located in areas not designated for visitors), identify the best location for constructing a hide out, and define a conducted interpretive program, as this activity should be guided by experts.

There are already published some guidelines for developing responsible practices in the organization of these tours<sup>9</sup> in order to minimize negative impacts from developing these type of activities.

An additional tour for Chamois watching should be research and developed in the area of Kldekilghvina.

#### Activities included

- Hire expert to research and define the best route to have a glimpse of bears or their footprints.
- Identify main needs to (hide outs, trail development, etc.)
- Train specialized guides in bear watching tours
- Organize study tours to places where similar tours are offered.
- Develop an interpretive plan for the bear watching tour
- Define a code of conduct for the brown bear tour.
- Organize a pilot tour to test the suitability of the tour
- It is recommended that this tour is organized for small groups (6-8 persons)

<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Quality wildlife tours are offered in MNP, so people appreciate the importance of protect biodiversity.
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA DTR Ministry of Environment Ilia University NGOs Local communities
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Expert validates the possibility of developing the bear watching tour by 2018.</li> <li>✓ At least one study tour is organized to see how this type of tours are organized.</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> "Non-consumptive use of Brown Bears in Tourism: Guidelines for Responsible Practices" Prepare within the framework of the LIFE DINALP BEAR Project. Ljubljana. January, 2016

<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018-2019	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	19.000 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 4.3. By 2020, at least two marketable products/activities that enhance local traditions and cultural values are available.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Design and implement gastronomy related activities: cooking and tasting events</b>	<b>4.3.1</b>
<b>Justification</b> Sustainable tourism development in protected areas should have an integrated approach in the territory, integrating elements such as the agriculture, gastronomy, traditional practices, etc.		
<b>Description</b> Gastronomy can be an important element in the creation of an authentic visitor experience in Machakhela National Park.  The area is rich in traditions that should be promoted and enhanced. The traditional rural cooking should be used as a competitive advantage and develop some services related to the local communities use local products to elaborate their dishes, keeping the gastronomic heritage and promoting the production of local and organic vegetables, fruits, cereals, etc. Promotion of local and organic products: Honey, nuts, berries, medicinal herbs, organic Jams (plum) sauces, cheese, etc. Related to these several activities can be organized: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Organization gastronomic workshops.</b> Visitors can learn from practical experience how to prepare traditional recipes such as the Ajarian Khachapuri, honey cakes, Lobio, etc. Also traditional bread, jams, etc. These workshops can be organized for families. Some examples of this type of activities can be found in different protected areas. In 2016, Europarc, in the European Day of Park celebrated various events throughout Europe under the motto “A taste of Nature” in order to promote local and seasonal products.</li> <li><b>2. Annual food festival</b> can be organized in one of the communities, and Georgian regions can be invited to present their traditional products. This type of event could help to promote the communities and increase the visibility of the area.</li> <li><b>3. Gastronomic tour.</b> Design a tour that includes the visit to the Park with lunch included in one of the existing restaurants, in which traditional dishes are offered (with local products). This tour can include visits to the farms of the local communities (it can also include beekeepers, and tasting of different varieties of Machakhela Honey)</li> </ol> Machakhela Valley was also well known by its wine making tradition. Traditional wine making in Georgia has a long tradition and the maintenance of traditional wine vessels make this tradition unique.		
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and implement a training in food security and hygiene for locals interested</li> <li>• Organize a training for trainers (how to conduct a gastronomic workshop)</li> <li>• Design a gastronomic workshop</li> <li>• Promote these activities</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct regular workshops for interested visitors</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Local products and traditional recipes are promoted		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Local Communities APA MNP Khelvachauri Municipality NGOs		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	DTR		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Community members interested in developing workshops have been identified and trained by 2019.</li> <li>✓ An annual local food festival has been organised by 2020.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	7.500 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Promote and support the celebration of local folk festivals that gather communities and share local arts and culture.</b>	<b>4.3.2</b>
<b>Justification</b> Local festivals are good examples to promote destination place(s), establish direct linkages between stakeholders/service providers, to enhance local initiatives, to collaborate with local government institutions and promote/sell traditional product/souvenirs directly from farmers.		
<b>Description</b> The most popular folk festival in MNP is “Machakhloba”. It became active since 2006. The start point of the event is the area of Gvara’s Fortress and covers whole Machakhela Gorge. Event is visited by different municipalities of the region. Turkish people from Upper Machakhela Gorge (former territory of Georgia) also attend the festival. This celebration is part two of the area's culture and history and character of the nation.		
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the design of the festival concept and contribute with some budget</li> <li>Inform local community members about event and encourage participation</li> <li>To organize meeting with municipality, event organizers</li> <li>To prepare product, souvenirs and promo materials for event</li> <li>Organize a stand for the promotion of the National Park during the event.</li> <li>Report</li> </ul>		
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Popularization of MNP, direct linkages and good collaboration between stakeholders	
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	MNP Khelvachauri Municipality NGOs Local communities	

<b>COORDINATOR</b>	DTR		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ MNP administration is fully involved in the development of local festivals by 2020		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X
<b>BUDGET</b>	5.000 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 4.4. A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Ajara Protected Areas is developed and successfully functioning by 2019.**

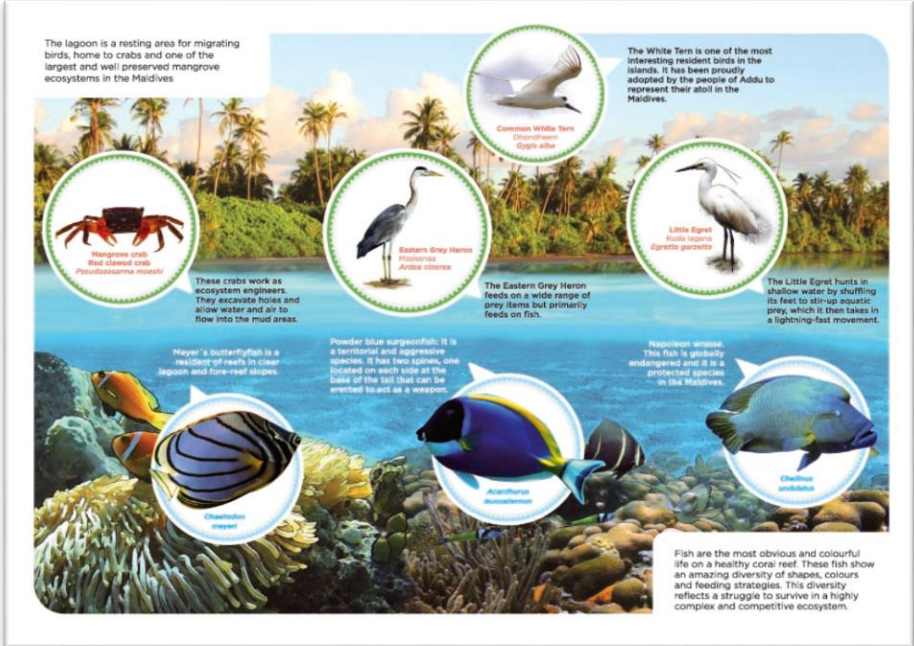
<b>Action</b>	<b>Develop a route that joins Machakhela National Park and Mtirala National Park.</b>	<b>4.4.1</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Ajara Region host three important areas that represent the Colchic Forest, with important natural and cultural resources. It is important to for PA managers to collaborate in setting a joint route to create more opportunities for visitors to choose from and increase the overall competitiveness of the region. An integrated approach (as already proposed in the Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan) across the three protected areas, would be very beneficial for each of the protected areas and also for the Region as a destination.</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Machakhela National Park is relatively close located to Mtirala National Park. A route can be developed from Machakhela to Mtirala creating the possibility for visitors to hike from one Park to the other. This route can be further extended from Mtirala to Kintrishi Protected Areas<sup>10</sup>.</p> <p>The combined Ajara Protected Areas route can be a good attraction for visitors, and work as a competitive advantage for the three protected areas at national level. It can provide a unique experience to tourists as they would be able to visit three different protected areas, with different characters and landscapes, in only one region.</p> <p>Other benefits of developing this route are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitates the inclusion in the tourism development of additional communities such as Zundaga, Aghara, etc.</li> <li>- Provides visibility to the three protected areas.</li> </ul> <p>The route to be developed can be checked in <b>Annex 2 - Maps</b>. The route would start from the Administration Building and then visitors should hike up to a height of 727 m (on the road that goes to Mtavarangeloz) and turn East to hike down until the road to Keda.</p> <p>From this point there are two possibilities to reach Mtirala:</p> <p>1) Through Aghara: this route has positive and negative aspects:</p>		

<sup>10</sup> The route from Mtirala to Kintrishi Protected Areas can be checked in the *Mtirala National Park Tourism Strategy and Action Plan*



<p>a. Negative. Safety issues: Visitors have to walk along the road to Keda for more than 10 km in order to reach Aghara.</p> <p>b. Positive: Aghara community is involved in tourism development and are developing the trail that joins their community with Mtirala National Park. The path will be available soon. They closely collaborate with Mtirala National Park administration staff.</p> <p>2) Through Zundaga: this route has positive and negative aspects</p> <p>a. Negative: Zundaga community is not aware about tourism development and they have limited linkages with both protected areas, Machakhela and Mtirala.</p> <p>b. Positive: The way to reach Zundaga is easier at avoids the walk along the road to Keda.</p> <p>The recommendation is to start using the Aghara route, as this area is more developed. However, visitors should be informed about the distance to reach Aghara and the safety issues. A satisfaction survey should be conducted with potential visitors to evaluate their opinion of this route.</p> <p>The route (including Kintrishi section should be conceptualized as whole, focusing on the importance of the Colchic Forest; and PA managers should agree on the topics to be developed along the route, the facilities to be installed along the route, etc.</p> <p>In the section that goes from Machakhela to Mtirala only signaling is needed. Some information boards, directional signs and interpretive boards should be located in strategic areas.</p> <p>It is expected that as the number of visitors increases local communities will be offering services as catering or accommodation.</p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the needs of the trails.</li> <li>Elaborate a trail development plan</li> <li>Prepare a route conceptualization for the whole route</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	A hiking route that joins Machakhela National Park and Mtirala National Park is available.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Municipalities Local communities DTR APA Mtirala National Park		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	APA		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2018, visitors can hike safely form MNP to MTNP		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2016-2018	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH X MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	9.000 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 4.5. By 2020, a comprehensive environmental educational programme aimed at locals and visitors is functioning.**

Action	Design and implement an environmental education and interpretation program for local and visitors	4.5.1
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Environmental education and interpretation are two subjects that should be linked tourism in protected areas. They are the necessary tools in order to create a wider knowledge of the natural areas and its relations, functions, etc. There is a close relationship between interpretation and tourism. Interpretation is related to providing information to visitors on the places they are currently in and encouraging them to appreciate and care for them. The Machakhela National Park contains a lot of environmental information that it is necessary to transmit in order to raise the visitors' awareness and that of the local community.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>One of the main objectives of the National Park is to raise ecological and environmental awareness about the natural and cultural values of the Park. Therefore, it is important to design a comprehensive programme aimed at different groups to educate them about the importance of environmental conservation and the values of Machakhela National Park. These programme should include different activities such as:</p> <p><b>1) Development of Interpretive Materials</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Design and print leaflets and posters that promote the values of the National Park and the importance of its conservation. Among the topics of leaflets to be developed are: main species of flora and fauna, the importance of Colchic ecosystem, etc.</i></li> <li><i>Design and print leaflets on the activities/routes that can be done in the National Park (see action 4.2.2)</i></li> <li><i>Design specific Interpretive Materials (interpretive boards) for the routes to be developed.</i></li> </ol>		
 <p>The lagoon is a resting area for migrating birds, home to crabs and one of the largest and well preserved mangrove ecosystems in the Maldives.</p> <p><b>Common White Tern</b> <i>Chirochelidon alba</i></p> <p>The White Tern is one of the most interesting resident birds in the islands. It has been proudly adopted by the people of Addu to represent their atoll in the Maldives.</p> <p><b>Little Egret</b> <i>Egretta alba</i></p> <p>The Little Egret hunts in shallow water by shuffling its feet to stir up aquatic prey, which it then takes in a lightning-fast movement.</p> <p><b>Eastern Grey Heron</b> <i>Ardea cinerea</i></p> <p>The Eastern Grey Heron feeds on a wide range of prey items but primarily feeds on fish.</p> <p><b>Mangrove crab</b> <i>Decapoda</i></p> <p>These crabs work as ecosystem engineers. They excavate holes and allow water and air to flow into the mud areas.</p> <p><b>Yellow-striped Surge wrasse</b> <i>Thalassoma</i></p> <p>Yellow-striped wrasse is a resident of reefs in clear lagoon and fore-reef slopes.</p> <p><b>Powerful blue surgeonfish</b> <i>Acanthurus</i></p> <p>Powerful blue surgeonfish is a territorial and aggressive species. It has two spines, one located on each side at the back of the tail that can be erected to act as a weapon.</p> <p><b>Parrotfish</b> <i>Scorpaenidae</i></p> <p>Parrotfish is globally endangered and it is a protected species in the Maldives.</p> <p><b>Chameleon wrasse</b> <i>Thalassoma</i></p> <p>Fish are the most obvious and colourful life on a healthy coral reef. These fish show an amazing diversity of shapes, colours and feeding strategies. This diversity reflects a struggle to survive in a highly complex and competitive ecosystem.</p>		

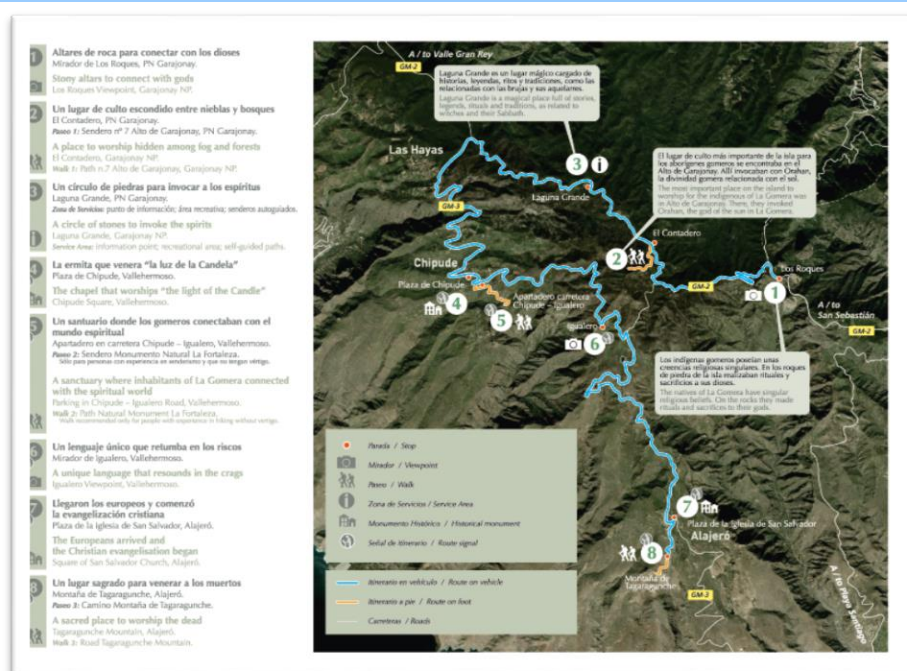


Figure 28: Examples of leaflets for Protected Areas. Source: HIDRIA

## 2) Presentations

- Presentations for schools*
- Presentation for specific groups (hotels/accommodation providers, farmers, etc.)*

These presentations should cover a wide range of topics such as red listed species in the National Park, the importance Climate Change, etc.

## 3) Celebration of Special Days (

The National Park already organizes activities related to worldwide celebrated environmental-related days, such as the World Environment day, Day of the National Parks,

These celebrations should be used to raise awareness about environmental concerns and several activities in accordance to the other Ajara Protected Areas and APA should be organized.

- 4) Organization of workshops for families/general public.** The objective of the workshops would be to promote the values of the park and bring the protected areas closer to people. Among the workshops that can be organized: projection of films, workshops for the elaboration of wax candles, elaboration of organic cosmetics (soaps), etc. An example on how to organize some of these workshops can be found in **Annex 3**

## 5) Organization of Cleaning/Recycling Campaigns

The presence of visitors will increase the pressure over the natural resources, awareness on the importance of keeping the environment clean should be raised. Regular campaigns should be organized to educate, especially young people, about how to deal with waste, the importance of maintaining the rivers clean, etc.

Activities related to how to reduce the use of plastics and the production of garbage can be organized.

### Activities included

- Define contents and materials to be used
- Develop a schedule of activities
- Implement scheduled activities and elaborate a report on results.

<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	An interpretation and Environmental Programme, aimed to different public objectives is successfully implemented.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA DTR Khelvachauri Municipality Shota Rustaveli University Environmental NGOs (SaBuKo, etc.)		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ By 2018, an environmental educational programme is designed.</li> <li>✓ By 2019, several brochures are available to promote the natural resources of the Park</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	5.500 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Design and implement a volunteer program in coordination with universities and regional education centers.</b>	<b>4.5.2</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Volunteers play an essential role in raising awareness about the values of protected areas and contribute to their protection. They also motivate others to be involved in the conservation of protected areas. If properly managed volunteers can help protected areas with their invaluable work while the volunteers gain an unforgettable practical experience and valuable knowledge about protected areas management. A well-designed volunteer programme can help to achieve the objectives and purpose of protected areas while increasing their visibility.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Machakhela National Park has a large potential for the development of a volunteering program. The development of these type of programs would allow the inclusion of interested groups or individuals in activities that can ensure better promotion of the park, increase the educational role of the Park, improve the relationship between public institutions, etc.</p> <p>The <b>objectives</b> of this programme will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To contribute to the educational role of the National Park.</li> <li>- To better promote the Park at national and international level.</li> <li>- To contribute to raise awareness of the importance of nature conservation and biodiversity.</li> <li>- To contribute to enhance visitor's experience.</li> </ul> <p>The presence of international volunteers can help the national park to welcome visitors of other nationalities, especially during high season.</p> <p>Even "tourists" can use their time as "voluntourists", these are those tourists that not only wish to visit and experience the protected area but also are willing to work in the area during their holidays. There are specialized tour operators worldwide that offer voluntourism packages (Example: <a href="http://www.biosphere-expeditions.org/">http://www.biosphere-expeditions.org/</a>)</p>		

<p>The <b>responsibilities of the volunteer</b> can be diverse from helping rangers to monitor the biodiversity or to restore trails, carry out conservation activities such as reforestation activities, removal of invasive species; or even providing guiding services for groups.</p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a program for volunteers (national and international)</li> <li>• Call for interest</li> <li>• Implement and report about the programme.</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	A regular group of volunteers spend some time in MNP to collaborate in developing some environmental related activities.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Local communities Khelvachauri Municipality APA Universities		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ By 2019, a national volunteer program has been designed.</li> <li>✓ By 2020, international volunteers are interested in volunteer in MNP.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X
<b>BUDGET</b>	6.000 Gel/year		

## STRATEGIC LINE 5: MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Develop a strong brand should be one of the priorities of Machakhela National Park, the brand will help the Park to build an identity within the Region and nationwide. The brand should be associated to quality environment and quality tourism services, so efforts should be made in order to develop high standards in the area.

Annual marketing plans should be developed to promote define priority actions to promote the Park and its values. These plans should be defined in collaboration with APA, DTR, and the private sector. These operational plans should include online marketing activities.

New technologies are changing the way people travel and organize the trips. According the PA's visitors survey internet is one of the main sources of information. Updated information about MNP should be available in its own webpage and also in APA's and DTR website. The online campaign should be extended further that the Facebook profile, and other technologies such as applications shall be considered.

Finally, the creation of events and educational and recreational activities in the PA's can work as a tool for attracting visitor's, especially in low season. These events should help to promote traditions, and the environmental values of Ajara PA's.

### OBJECTIVE 5.1. Machakhela National Park will be known at national and international level by 2020.

Action	Elaborate an annual Operational Marketing Plan	5.1.1
<b>Justification</b> Marketing and promotion are essential to increase awareness about PA's and therefore increase the number of visitors.		
<b>Description</b> <p>Machakhela National Park, as recently established does not have a brand/logo yet. The design and definition of a brand should be a priority for the Park. This brand should be defined in the framework of the development of a marketing strategy for the National Park, and this must be compatible with the overall mission and objectives of the Tourism Strategy.</p> <p>The new designed brand should evoke the tangible and intangible elements that Machakhela National Park represents, being the physical and symbolic manifestation of the Park's core values. It is recommended that the process of branding includes the participation of major stakeholders.</p> <p>The annual marketing operational Plan will include the main activities to be developed throughout the year to promote the National Park. Among the activities that can be included in the operational plan are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Organization of a Public Relations event.</b> These event should be conducted prior the season and the objective will be to promote any new development activity of major achievement (inauguration of the new administration building, etc.)</li> </ul>		



- **Promotional/Educational Film.** A short educational film (around 10 minutes) about the values of the Park shall be recorded. This film would present to visitors Machakhela National Park, its importance and values. The film can be showed in the exhibition area of the new administration building, and it will give visitors an overview of the richness of the Park.
- **Design and print brochures/posters/maps** The main target groups for the brochures should be: tour operators/travel agencies (local, regional, national level) and tourists The brochures should have an appealing image and should be printed in different languages (Georgian, English, and Russian)
- **Organize specialized tours for tour operators/press (fam trips).** It would be important to also invite relevant travel bloggers or travel influencers (blog trips), since online media is a powerful tool to attract visitors.
- **Participate with APA/DTR in fairs, promotional events** (as it is described in Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy Machakhela should be promoted together with other PA's (Mtirala and Kintrishi) under common Ajara Protected Areas umbrella. Recommended travel fairs are: ITB Berlin, CMT Stuttgart; Utrecht, Poland, Ukraine.
- **International presentation events priority markets.** These events should be coordinated and organized by Georgian embassies abroad.
- **Organization awareness events at national level** (for instance promotional green campaigns in shopping malls. Reserve some space in shopping centres during weekends or special dates to promote Ajara Protected Areas.
- **Organization and participation in local events**

The Plan should also include the activities defined in the Ajara Protected Areas Plan

#### Activities included

- Hire a marketing/Graphic designer expert to design the logo/brand
- Define in a participated way the brand and National Park image
- Define the main actions to be included in the Marketing Operational Plan (including budget, and calendar of actions)
- Validate the Marketing Strategy

<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Increase the level of awareness of nationals and foreigners on the National Park Increase the demand on tourism activities developed		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Machakhela Advisory Council members		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	APA/MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017, a Marketing Operational Plan is elaborated and validated by stakeholders. ✓ By 2018, MNP has developed a brand and logo.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	22.000 Gel		



Action	Participate in the creation of the Ajara Protected areas membership card.		5.1.2
<b>Justification</b> The creation of a “Friends of Ajara Protected Areas Card” has been proposed in the Ajara Sustainable Tourism Strategy as an efficient tool for promotion and awareness raising, especially for the domestic market. The creation of this Card is considered a positive way to encourage not only to visit the PA’s but also to keep cardholders informed about PA’s development projects, news, celebration of events, etc. This card can also be used to raise revenues.			
<b>Description</b> The “Friends of Ajara Protected Areas Card” is aimed to promote Ajarian protected areas and the services associated to them. The target groups for this card and the individuals that will benefit from having the card. The benefits will include discounts in associated providers and also to be informed about offers, events, etc. through a newsletter.  In the other hand, in order to be able to extend the number of discounts to be offered it is needed the active collaboration of tourism providers. These are the second target group of this card. With their involvement the providers will benefit by:  a) Getting recognition as Protected Area supporters, improving their image towards sustainability and quality services. b) Increasing their exposure without high investments  MNP should be directly involved in promoting the benefits of joining the card among the tourism service providers in the area.			
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings with stakeholders and potential partners.</li><li>• Promotion of the card (brochure, presentation event, contest, etc.).</li><li>• Monitoring and reporting.</li></ul>			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Increase PA’s visibility in the domestic tourism market Involvement of private sector in the promotion of the National Park		
AGENTS INVOLVED	Tourism service providers		
COORDINATOR	MNP/APA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2018, several meetings with tourism providers have been held to promote the Ajara Protected Areas Membership Card.		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2018	PRIORITY	HIGH X MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	1.500 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Organize a calendar of events to increase visibility of the National Park</b>	<b>5.1.3</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Events are good occasions to attract visitors to PA's, especially in low season. Events can be related to cultural, environmental or recreational issues to attract a different range of visitors. These events should provide an opportunity for discovery the Areas.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Machakhela National Park should develop a calendar of events to be held throughout the year. The celebration of these events would help to increase the visibility of the National Park and increase visitation level in low season.</p> <p>The National Park administration should design the calendar of events at least a year in advance to have enough time to organize it. The celebration should count on the collaboration of administrations, communities (should be coordinated in the Regional Advisory Council.)</p> <p>Some of the topics that could serve the basis for the celebration of events could be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Spring/autumn</b> festival (celebrate blossom, chestnut day, etc.) Several events can be organized related to the season changing.</li> <li>2. <b>Earth Day</b> (and other international celebrations)</li> <li>3. <b>Open day</b>. In specific days such as the anniversary of the day Machakhela National Park was gazetted, the Georgia Independence Day, anniversary of the creation of the APA, or the creation of the protected areas system etc. special activities should be planned such activities for children, special free guided tours, etc. These celebrations would be an opportunity to attract new visitors to the Park</li> <li>4. <b>Honey related events</b> (in conjunction with the Ajara Beekeeping association, etc.)</li> <li>5. Actively participate in <b>local celebrations</b> such as Machakhloba, Gandagana, etc.</li> <li>6. Organization of <b>bird-related activities</b> during the Batumi bird festival, this would increase the visibility of the Park, and due to the popularity of these event people will be to know some of the biodiversity values of the National Park.</li> <li>7. Organization of some kind of competition (weekend for geocachers, a competition for kayakers,...)</li> <li>8. Specials days dedicated to some fauna species, for instance, to Bear with presentations about their habitat, diet, behaviour, etc.</li> </ol> <p>The events should be used to promote environmental education among visitors. Some of these events should be planned together with Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas.</p> <p>These events should be promoted in the website and social network profiles.</p>		
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaboration on an annual program of events to be developed in and around Machakhela National Park (should be done a year in advance for budgeting purposes).</li> <li>• Establish cooperation agreements with potential partners (NGOS, local communities, etc.) and with Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas.</li> <li>• Define an operational Plan for organizing and implementing the event.</li> <li>• Definition and implementation of promotional activities.</li> <li>• Monitoring and reporting.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Increase visibility of Machakhela National Park	

<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Local Communities Municipalities NGO's Associations Tourism private sector		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2020, at least 3 events have been celebrated.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2020 (Annual)	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	3.000 Gel/year		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Design and produce new promotional material that includes new products, routes</b>	<b>5.1.4</b>
<b>Justification</b> In order to promote and market the developed trails and activities, as well as the National Park and its values, promotional material has to be produced. Information brochures, maps, leaflets should be designed, printed and distributed among local tour operators and other tourism providers.		
<b>Description</b> The promotional material will help visitors to understand the value of the protected areas, and also inform them about the activities that can be done within the boundaries of the Park. These materials should provide detailed information and description of the National Park aimed for local and international visitors.  The promotional material should emphasise the fragile nature of the areas visited and contain advice to future visitors to the protected areas Important materials that should be produced are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Maps of the Park</i>, marking the trails and other important areas.</li> <li>- <i>Brochures</i> of the protected area with general information about the area, activities that can be done, main species to be spotted, regulations of the area, etc.</li> <li>- <i>Trail brochures</i>, explaining main values of the trail, points of interest and other relevant information.</li> <li>- <i>Souvenirs</i>, producing some type of souvenirs (recycled agendas, pencils, etc.) to be distribute among stakeholders can contribute to increase awareness about the protected areas.</li> </ul>		
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the type and contents of promotional materials to be produced</li> <li>• Design and print attractive materials</li> <li>• Distribute some of the materials among collaborators, stakeholders, etc.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Increase the level of awareness of the National Park. Increase the demand of existing activities.	
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA	

	DTR TTOO Tourism providers Transportation services (bus/taxi/airport/train)		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2019, new and attractive brochures have been published. ✓ By 2018, maps of the area are available for visitors.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018-2019	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	9.000 Gel		

Action	Organize fam-trips with local and national tour operators to promote new activities developed	5.1.5
<b>Justification</b> Machakhela Gorge is new destination for Georgian TOs. They are lack of information about natural and cultural sites, as well as service providers. Familiarization trips and press tours are essential to increase awareness and interest among potential customers.		
<b>Description</b> Based on statistics by Ajara Tourism and Resorts Department, the most arrivals in Ajara is organized from Turkey, Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Poland etc. TOs and journalists from most frequently visited countries (especially for Turkish TOs which is working on Upper Machakhela part) should be invited to introduce product, service providers. Batumi is main destination after (Tbilisi) for MICE tourism in Georgia. Post conference tours and special offers can be prepared for corporate clients in order to increase interest toward MNP and invite TV Media.		
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Meeting with TOs/GITOA to hear tourism demands</li><li>Prepare Special offer for Fam trips</li></ul>		
EXPECTED RESULTS	Increase interest toward the MNP	
AGENTS INVOLVED	GITOA MNP	
COORDINATOR	DTR	
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2019, at least two fam trips have been organized.	
EXECUTION TIME	2018-2019	<div>PRIORITY</div> <div>HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/></div>
BUDGET	13.000 Gel	

Action	Organize fam-trips with hotels		5.1.6
<b>Justification</b> The main stakeholders of MNP are hotels in Batumi, Gonio and Kvartsi. They are interested to establish additional services for clients, especially when there is non-swimming weather. Hotels provide transportation and guide service but they are now aware of MNP recreational resources.			
<b>Description</b> Machakhela NP is new destination for hotels. Selling virtual product without knowledge and experience is quite difficult in tourism. It is recommended to invite hotel representatives (receptionists, guest relations and managers) and introduce MNP with its facilities and infrastructure.			
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prepare FAM trip program</li><li>• Promo material for distribution at hotels</li><li>• Establish cooperation agreement with stakeholders</li></ul>			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Increased number of visitors		
AGENTS INVOLVED	Hotels and other accommodation providers MNP Local communities		
COORDINATOR	DTR		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2018, at least two fam trips have been organized for hotels in the Region.		
EXECUTION TIME	2018	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	4.000 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 5.2. Information related to Machakhela National Park is easy accessible through new technologies.**

Action	Create a visitor friendly tourism website for Machakhela National Park optimized for search engines	5.2.1
<b>Justification</b> <p>Websites are essential to promote any tourism destination or protected area. Travel consumers have become increasingly demanding of tourism websites and social media platforms in terms of content that is highly relevant to their needs. Almost 40% of visitors to Ajara PA’s have organized their visit with information available in the internet. Therefore, adding more resources to the internet will facilitate potential visitors to find all relevant information to better organize the trip.</p> <p>Currently, most of the information related to Ajara PA’s is hosted in APA website. This website is not user-friendly, especially for promotional purposes. The website publishes relevant information about the areas</p>		

but this information is not related to the “support zone”, areas: no information on how to get there, means of transportation available, etc.

#### **Description**

should have a website from which not only the environmental values of the PA can be promoted but also to offer detailed information about the activities in the Park, especial events, provide information about accommodation provided (including local guest houses), etc.

Some key elements of the website:

- 1) Timely written and updated content (available in the language of target audiences)
- 2) Include quality and positive images of the destination (visual designed)
- 3) User-friendly
- 4) Appealing to target markets
- 5) Readable on multiple devices (desktop and mobile)

This website should be integrated to social network profiles to encourage an active participation with users. PA’s staff should be trained to update regularly new content to the website.

Google analytics should be used to measure website traffic. It would be useful to create an email list or newsletter to informed list members about Ajara PA’s news. Another tool for positioning is the use of keywords; this is an important element in online marketing success. It would be important to develop a list of around 120 words that will be used throughout the site (including words of interest to the different target markets).

In addition, the DTR website: [www.gobatumi.ge](http://www.gobatumi.ge) is a good example of destination website. The site has already important information available about the region and Ajara PA’s. This information should be updated regularly and enriched with potential new trails and products developed in the PA’s.

Currently, the website has available brochures and maps to download, and this opportunity should be used for the promotion of brochures with information of Ajara PA’s.

Strengthen the collaboration between DTR and Ajara PA’s around this marketing strategy can enhance the image of the destination, and, in the other hand can help to reduce costs for content creation and advertising.

#### **Activities included:**

- Definition of requirements of websites.
- Develop the websites (website developer)
- Update regularly the websites.
- Monitoring and reporting about website use.

#### **EXPECTED RESULTS**

Increase online visibility of Machakhela National Park

#### **AGENTS INVOLVED**

APA  
GNTA  
DTR  
MAC

#### **COORDINATOR**

MNP

<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2019 MNP website is published		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2018	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM..X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	3.500 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Create downloadable multimedia trails and include detailed information on Ajara Protected Areas in the Gobatumi app</b>	<b>5.2.2</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Hiking is one of the popular activities in Ajara PA's, it is a great opportunity for enjoying the beauty of the PA's.</p> <p>Detailed information on trails are very useful for those hiking willing to engage in this activity. The provision of interactive maps is an added value for those taking self-guided hikes.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Maps are a valuable tool for hikers, however giving the possibility of downloading the map and use it in the smartphone helps to reduce the use of paper and printing costs; and it is an added value for hikers. The maps should be ready for download in the websites of the PA's, and visitors should be informed about this possibility.</p> <p>An additional option is to develop a mobile app or to use the gobatumi app to download relevant information about Ajara PA's, so visitors can use this app for visiting the area (main sightseeing, useful information, what to do in Ajara PA's, etc.</p> <p>National Geographic has developed an app for the America's most visited national parks that include photo gallery, visitor information, and maps to enhance visitors' experience. The app also includes information on accommodation options, etc.</p> <p>The app should be free to download, and available for Android, IOs and Windows Phone.</p>		
<p><b>Activities involved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track needed trail information.</li> <li>• Develop an official mobile application for different mobile operating systems that will allow visitors to explore existing trails</li> <li>• Promotional activities.</li> <li>• Monitor and reporting.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Information of trails can be downloaded GoBatumi app offers detailed information on Ajara PA's	
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Ajara PA's administration APA DTR	
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	DTR	



<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2019, all trails available in the Park can be downloaded through the website or app		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2019	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X
<b>BUDGET</b>	3.000 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Define and implement a social media strategy using different channels.</b>	<b>5.2.3</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>The use of social networks as promotion channels is known as social marketing. Social media plays a key role in every aspect of the travel and tourism industry. During their holiday, a great percentage of travellers' upload comments and photos on social media outlets using smart phones. Social media are a new source of information for travellers. Tourists made their decisions on comments from other fellow travellers. Creating a social media strategy can help to better position Machakhela National Park in the domestic and international market. The opinions of other travellers are highly valued and the active participation of visitors in the Machakhela National Park social media profiles should be encouraged.</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Machakhela National Park counts already with Facebook profile. Additional profiles should be created in other social media channels such as Flickr, Instagram or YouTube. Visitors should be encouraged to upload pictures and videos to these profiles creating a community of followers. The presence in the social media can contribute to better position the areas in the Google search.</p> <p>The social media profiles should also be used to keep followers informed about events and other important issues related to the National Park, therefore they have to manage them regularly. In addition, Machakhela National Park should review potential comments by visitors, especially those that have participated in any of the activities that will be available in the Park. This revision is especially important to identify potential bad reviews and address them, improving the areas that generate complaints from visitors.</p> <p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition of the two-year social media strategy.</li> <li>• Implement the strategy</li> <li>• Monitoring and reporting.</li> <li>• Update the social media strategy</li> </ul>		
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Increase visibility of Machakhela National Park in online social media.	
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA DTR	
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNP	
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017, a two- year Social Media Strategy is elaborated	

<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	1.200 Gel/year		

## 9. SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

STRATEGIC LINE 1: MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE										
Objective 1.1. The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) is a mechanism to coordinate tourism development in Adjara Protected Areas by 2017										
Code	Action	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.1.1	Assist and actively participate in the development of multistakeholder platform at regional level – Regional Advisory Council	Department Tourism and Resorts of Adjara AR (DTR)	Ajara Environmental Department Municipalities of Adjara Adjara PA's administrations/APA Tourism Private Sector (TTOO/TA, hotels, restaurants, etc.) Local Communities NGOs	300 Gel/year	HIGH					
1.1.2	Establish collaboration alliances with potential partners	MNP	DTR Municipalities of Adjara Shota Rustaveli University Tourism Private Sector (TTOO/TA, hotels, restaurants, transport, etc.) Local Communities NGOs	450 Gel/year	MEDIUM					
Objective 1.2. A participatory mechanism at PA level to increase governance in the Park is established by 2017										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.2.1	Establish a Machakhela NP Advisory Council	MNP	Department Tourism and Resorts of Adjara AR Ajara Environmental Department Khelvachauri Municipality APA Tourism Private Sector (hotels, restaurants, etc.) Local Communities: Sindieti, Chkhutuneti, Kokoleti, etc. NGOs	2.500 Gel	HIGH					
1.2.2	Create a Friends of PA's association in Machakhela National Park	MNP	Department Tourism and Resorts of Adjara AR Ajara Environmental Department Khelvachauri Municipality APA Tourism Private Sector (hotels, restaurants, etc.) Local Communities: Sindieti, Chkhutuneti, Kokoleti, etc. NGOs	3.500 Gel	HIGH					

Objective 1.3. Links with Camili Biosphere Reserve are established to create a Transboundary Protected Area by 2019										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.3.1	Establish a platform for regular transboundary communication and knowledge sharing (actions, problems and opportunities)	MNP	APA Adjara Protected Areas administration (Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas) Camili Biosphere Reserve Administration Adjara Environmental Department Universities from Georgia and Turkey	15.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
1.3.2	Foster coordinated action among PA's administrations to contribute to the conservation goals of the entire transboundary ecosystem.	MNP	Adjara PA's administration CBR Administration Municipalities of Georgia and Turkey included in the boundaries of the transboundary PA Adjara Environmental Department Universities from Georgia and Turkey	22.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
1.3.3	Jointly coordinate and implement actions to support and promote gathering activities and marketing actions (festivals, local markets, etc.).	MNP/CBR	APA Adjara PA's administration CBR Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Adjara DTR NGOs	20.000 Gel	LOW					
Objective 1.4. By 2020, tourism is a source of generating income for MNP.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.4.1	Design and implement a mechanism for generating revenues from tourism (Tourism User Fees)	MNP	Machakhela Advisory Committee members	1.800 Gel	MEDIUM					
Objective 1.5. A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural and local communities is defined and implemented by end of 2018.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.5.1	Elaborate and implement a Visitor Impact Monitoring System	MNP	APA MNP Staff	7.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
1.5.2	Elaborate a survey among local community members regarding tourism	MNP	DTR Local communities Khelvachauri Municipality	1.100 Gel	LOW					
1.5.3	Elaborate and conduct visitor satisfaction survey	MNP	DTR APA Tourism service providers (hotels, guesthouses, etc.)	1.100 Gel	MEDIUM					

STRATEGIC LINE 2: CAPACITY BUILDING										
Objective 2.1. Increase knowledge and skills of PA's staff in sustainable tourism, environmental issues and business planning										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
2.1.1	Design and implement a training programme for PA's staff.	APA	MNP staff APA	12.000 Gel	HIGH					
2.1.2	Organize study tours for rangers/PA's staff	APA	MNP staff APA	18.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
Objective 2.2. Increase local communities' knowledge about PA's environmental values and tourism related issues.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
2.2.1	Design and implement a training program for local communities.	APA	NGO Khelvachauri Municipality Local communities DTR Shota Rustaveli University	12.000 Gel	HIGH					
2.2.2	Organize study tours for community members	APA	NGO MNP Local communities	18.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
STRATEGIC LINE 3: LOCAL COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT										
Objective 3.1. Tourism service providers associated to Machakhela NP comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2020.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
3.1.1	Assess quality service level of local providers of accommodation and catering facilities	APA	DTR GNTA MNP SPPA/ELKANA TTOO	2.800 Gel	MEDIUM					
Objective 3.2. At least, five new local business are developed and running by year 2020.										
3.2.1	Assess and support new potential business in the communities of the support zone	Friends of Machakhela National Park	MNP DTR APA Khelvachauri Municipality	40.000 Gel	HIGH					

Objective 3.3. Cultural and traditional assets are investigated, enhanced and promoted by the Park administration by 2019.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
3.3.1	Organize trainings and workshop to enhance the skills of artisans in packaging, and business skills	DTR	Municipalities Local communities MNP Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Ajara A.R.	14.200 Gel	MEDIUM					
3.3.2	Create a local market to promote locally-produced products.	NGOs	DTR MNP Local Associations Khelvachauri Municipality	15.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
3.3.3	Conduct scientific research to identify main cultural assets in MNP and its support zone	Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports	DTR NGOs MNP Khelvachauri Municipality	35.000 Gel	LOW					
STRATEGIC LINE 4: TOURISM PRODUCT AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT										
Objective 4.1. By 2019, visitors have access to information and interpretation about the Park in a Visitor Centre										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.1.1	Elaborate a project to rehabilitate and adapt the administration building to a visitor centre.	MNP	Khelvachauri Municipality APA DTR	ONGOING	HIGH					
4.1.2	Design and install road directional signs	MNP	APA Road and Rehabilitation Department Khelvachauri Municipality DTR	4.000 Gel	HIGH					
Objetivo 4.2. New cost-effective tourism activities and services in which local communities are involved are developed by 2019.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.2.1	Construct new trails that allow the development of recreational activities	MNP	APA DTR Khelvachauri Municipality Local communities	92.000 Gel	HIGH					
4.2.2	Design and implement thematic tours in Machakhela National Park	MNP	Local communities Tourism providers APA	22.000 Gel	MEDIUM					

Objetivo 4.2. New cost-effective tourism activities and services in which local communities are involved are developed by 2019 (cont.)										
4.2.3	Develop complementary water-based activities	MNP	APA / DTR Private investors Local communities	2.500 Gel	LOW					
4.2.4	Develop and implement wildlife tours	MNP	APA/ DTR Ministry of Environment Ilia University NGOs /Local communities	19.000 Gel	LOW					
Objective 4.3. By 2020, at least two marketable products/activities that enhance local traditions and cultural values are available.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.3.1	Design and implement gastronomy related activities: cooking and tasting events	DTR	Local Communities APA/ MNP Khelvachauri Municipality NGOs	7.500 Gel	LOW					
4.3.2	Promote and support the celebration of local folk festivals that gather communities and share local arts and culture.	DTR	MNP Khelvachauri Municipality NGOs Local communities	5.000 Gel	LOW					
Objective 4.4. A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Ajara Protected Areas is developed and successfully functioning by 2020.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.4.1	Develop a route that joins Machakhela National Park and Mtirala National Park.	APA	Municipalities Local communities DTR / APA Mtirala National Park	9.000 Gel	HIGH					
Objective 4.5. By 2020, a comprehensive environmental educational programme aimed at locals and visitors is functioning.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.5.1	Design and implement an environmental education and interpretation program for local and visitors	MNP	DTR Khelvachauri Municipality Shota Rustaveli University Environmental NGOs (SaBuKo, etc.)	5.500 Gel	MEDIUM					
4.5.2	Design and implement a volunteer program in coordination with universities and regional education centers.	MNP	Local communities Khelvachauri Municipality APA Universities	6.000 Gel/year	LOW					



STRATEGIC LINE 5: MARKETING AND PROMOTION										
Objective 5.1. Machakhela National Park will be known at national and international level by 2020										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
5.1.1	Elaborate an annual Operational Marketing Plan	APA/MNP	Machakhela Advisory Council members	22.000 Gel	HIGH					
5.1.2	Participate in the creation of the Ajara Protected areas membership card.	APA/MNP	Tourism service providers	1.500 Gel	HIGH					
5.1.3	Organize a calendar of events to increase visibility of the National Park	MNP	Municipalities NGO's Associations Tourism private sector	3.000 Gel/year	MEDIUM					
5.1.4	Design and produce new promotional material that includes new products, routes	MNP	APA DTR TTOO Tourism providers Transportation services (bus/taxi/airport/train)	9.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
5.1.5	Organize fam-trips with local and national tour operators to promote new activities developed	DTR	GITOA MNP	13.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
5.1.6	Organize fam-trips with hotels	DTR	Hotels and other accommodation providers MNP Local communities	4.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
Objective 5.2. Information related to Machakhela National Park is easy accessible through new technologies.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
5.2.1	Create a visitor friendly tourism website for Machakhela National Park optimized for search engines	MNP	APA/ GNTA DTR MAC	3.500 Gel	MEDIUM					
5.2.2	Create downloadable multimedia trails and include detailed information on Ajara Protected Areas in the Gobatumi app	DTR	Ajara PA's administration APA DTR	3.000 Gel	LOW					
5.2.3	Define and implement a social media strategy using different channels	MNP	APA DTR	1.200 Gel	MEDIUM					

## **10. ANNEXES**

### **10.1. VISITOR SATISFACTION SURVEY**





## **10.2. MAPS**




































### 10.3. EXAMPLES OF HOW TO PREPARE A THEMATIC TOUR AND AN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY FOR FAMILIES


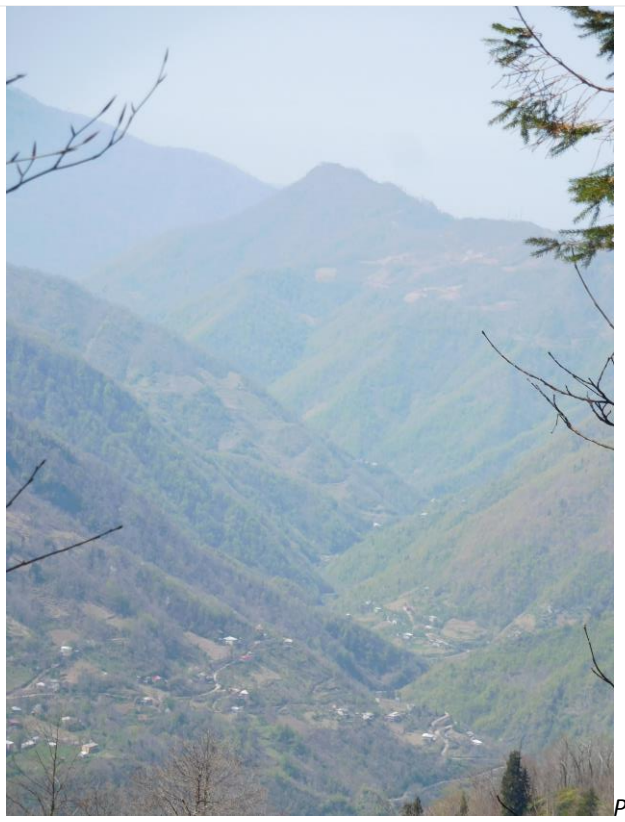
EXAMPLE THEMATIC TOUR	TREES OF THE PROTECTED AREA		
Implementation	Mtirala National Park		X
	Kinstrishi Protected Areas		X
	Machakhela National Park		X
Theme/Topic to be developed	The trees and other interesting vegetation in the Protected Area		
Public Objective	General Public/families		
Duration of the activity	1' 20"	Maximum number of participants	15
TYPE OF ACTIVITY	Educational		
	Interpretive		X
	Promotion of the values of the NP/PA		X
OBJECTIVES			
Learn about the different forms of the trees and the leaves. Learn some curiosities about how trees adapt to the environment. Learn about the cultural relation about trees and people (tradicional uses of the trees, etc.) Estimulate the use of senses (smell, sight and touch) in the process of learning about the values of the protected area.			
DESCRIPTION			
Conduct a thematic tour of about 4/5 km, with several stops in which a brief explanation is made. It is important to encourage visitor to use their senses: observe, touch, smell and hear nature and vegetation.			
Preparation of the activity			
The guide/visitor specialist should identify the most suitable places to conduct this activity and the relevant stops (around 4/5). The stops should be located where a particular/endemic species is located, or other relevant areas that can relate the area with the topics to be explained.			
Development			
*Guide Presentation - Prepare a affective introduction *Presentation of the activity (the guide should explain visitors the objective of the trail, how long it will take, and main stops during the tour) *The tour should be around 5/6 km long, along which visitors will learn about main species of the Park, their characteristics, etc. * The guide should be enthusiastic, use simple language, without neglecting the technical level, create expectations between the established stops, and attend all questions visitors might have.			
Human resources/materials			
A guide/expert and materials to support the activity. It is recommended that the guide/expert has knowledge on Environmental interpretation. The materials to support the activity could be images showing how the trees look like in the different seasons, products that have been elaborated in the past with the wood, aromatic leaves, etc.			
Adaptaci3ns			
Content of the tour should be adjusted to general public and children.			
Avaliaci3n			
The activity should be evaluated. A evaluation questionnaire should be distributed among partipants after the workshop. The evaluation questionnaire should be analysed by the Visitor Specialist.			

Protected Areas work as natural pharmacies			EXAMPLE 01
Implementation	Mtirala National Park	X	
	Kinstrishi Protected Aras	X	
	Machakhela National Park	X	
Theme/Topic to be developed	Medicinal Plants of the National Park		
Public Objective	Children above 15 years old		
Duration of the activity	1' 15"	Max. Number of participants	20
TYPE OF ACTIVITY	Educational		X
	Interpretive		
	Promotion of the values of the NP		X
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>			
* Discover some of the medicinal plants of the National Park, traditional uses and their medicinal properties. * Increase awareness about the richness of Protected Areas.			
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>			
Preparation of natural cosmetics: a stick against mosquito bites, a balsam against headache, a lip balm using medicinal plants (for instance: rosmary, lavender, etc). Note: the plants should be adjusted to what it is available locally			
<b>Development</b>			
*Presentation of the expert and the activity. *Brief explanation (a ppt. presentation can be used) about the importance of the National Park and its values. * Description and explanation of the plants that are going to be used for the elaboration of the cosmetics and their medicinal properties. * The guide leads the activity elaborating each of the proposed cosmetics, the way of preparation is quite easy and involves: heat the ecological wax, mix the the oil and essences of the medicinal plant. * After the elaboration, the containers are identified with the stickers. * Conclusions and evaluation			
<b>Human resources/materials</b>			
The activity shall be conducted by a guide/natural resources expert (also a local expert could be invited) The needed materials for the preparation of the cosmetics are: electrical stove, saucepan, ecological wax, oils macerated with medicinal plants, oil esences, glass/plastic containers, sticks. Note: This activity can be substituted by the elaboration of bee wax figures or other products related to beekeeping/honey, elaboration of ecological soaps, etc.			
<b>Recommendations</b>			
*The plants to be used should be collected from gardens/cultivated plants (DO NOT COLLECT WILD plants) * Avoid rooting out the plant. *Collect the plant when it is mature in order to ensure that the active ingredients are already developed.			
<b>Evaluation</b>			
The activity should be evaluated. A evaluation questionnaire should be distributed among partipants after the workshop. The evaluation questionnaire should be analysed by the Visitor Specialist.			
<b>PICTURES</b>			
			



## 10.4. PROPOSAL FOR TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

NAME OF THE ROUTE	ROUTE TO KOKOLETI
<b>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</b>	<p>This is a linear trail which features some relevant cultural and historical aspects of the villages located in the support zone of Machakhela Protected Area.</p> <p>This route follows the existing road to the communities in the area (crossing Ajarisagmarti – Chikuneti and Kokoleti). This is an area of historical importance and counts on impressive views over the Turkish side of the Valley (view point)</p> <p>The trails should interpretive facilities along the way to offer visitors the possibility of learning about the ethnographical and cultural values of the area while enjoying the beautiful landscape.</p> <p>In the area of Kokoleti, the park administration staff has recently investigated a new trail that can connect Sindieti to Kokoleti (with a approx.. length of 17 km). This potential trail has to be further investigated and evaluated for development.</p> <p>Starting point: administration building/ end point: Kokoleti view point over Turkish Machakhela.</p>
<b>LENGTH</b>	<p>The total length of this route is 15,58 km (one way)</p>
<b>KEY ELEMENTS OF THE ROUTE</b>	<p>The key elements of this trail are based on the historical and ethnographical aspects of the area. Some of this elements should be used in the development of the interpretive content of the trail</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Origin of the name of the Valley</li> <li>- Cultural traditions (wine cultivation, traditional agriculture, etc)</li> <li>- Traditional dishes: honey products, bean, honey cake, pumpkin dishes, Lobio with corn flour etc.</li> <li>- Traditional style of life (nomads)</li> <li>- Traditional architecture of the Villages</li> <li>- Beautiful view of Machakhela Gorge</li> <li>- Relationship with Turkish side</li> <li>- Natural resources: waterfalls,</li> </ul>

<p><b>PICTURES</b></p>		<p>Picture 1</p>
		<p>Picture 2</p>
<p><b>CHARACTERISTICS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of difficulty: <i>Medium.</i></li> <li>• Type/duration: <i>Hiking (around 8 km)</i> <i>Biking</i></li> </ul>	

	<i>Horse riding</i>
<b>POTENTIAL MARKET</b>	<p>The potential market that the route is addressed to soft ecotourists interested in practicing sports in a natural environment while learning about the values of the Protected Area.</p> <p>Age range: 18 to 55. Potential visitors are mainly domestic tourists and international visitors coming from neighbouring countries (Armenia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Russia, etc.) and other European countries: Poland, Germany, UK, etc.</p>
<b>POTENTIAL SERVICES</b>	<p>Accommodation</p> <p>Catering</p> <p>Traditional product tasting</p>
<b>REQUIREMENTS - FACILITIES</b>	<p>The requirements to carry out this route are:</p> <p>1. WORKS:</p> <p>The trail follows existing road therefore no major works are required.</p> <p>2. TRAIL FURNITURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Signs</b>, the types of signs proposed are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Directional signs</b>: indicating intersections, distances, indicating relevant facilities: camping, picnic areas, the view point, water sources.</li> <li>✓ <b>Trailhead/end information board</b>: providing the essential information to the trail user: map showing the route, grade of the trail, length, emergency service contact details, brief description, etc.</li> <li>✓ <b>Interpretive Boards</b>. Indicating some of the natural resources. An interpretive board should be located where the view point is.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>3. FACILITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Camping</b>: An area for camping can be habilitated close to the end of the trail (see map 12) The area for camping needs to be conditioned and also the access to the camping area.</li> <li>- <b>Picnic area</b>: Close to the camping there an area suitable for picnic, two or three tables and benches should be located there.</li> <li>- <b>View point</b>: At the end of the route an impressive view (see picture 2), this view should be enhanced with better access, some benches to enjoy the view and some security fence.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, there are some panels on this route that should be repaired:</p>




NAME OF THE ROUTE	ROUTE TO SKURDIDI
BRIEF DESCRIPTION	<p>This is a circular trail which features some relevant environmental and historical aspects of the area.</p> <p>The route departs from Skurdidi Village and the initial 5,4 km follow an existing dirt road. The path ascends up to a height of 1.276 m where a hut is located. From the hut the path follows, passing a border control. The area after the border control crosses the forest in an interesting walk with nice view of the mountains. The area has some interesting vegetation species.</p> <p>In the end of the route there is a nice river, the path towards the river should be arranged.</p> <p>A car parking could be habilitated in the beginning/end of the route, so hikers can access by car to the area and then hike the route.</p> <p>It is recommended that the route continues to Zeda Chkhutuneti Village. This connection can help to increase visitor spending in the area. However, the connecting path has to be assessed. According to administration staff the potential connecting route is not in good condition and it is not attractive. A reforestation program could be design to improve the situation of the area; in addition, a recreational area picnic could be developed</p>
LENGTH	<p>The total length of this route is 13,32 km (the circular route). From the end of the route to Zeda Chkhutuneti there area 10,24 km.</p>
KEY ELEMENTS OF THE ROUTE	<p>The key elements of this trail are based on the historical and ethnographical aspects of the area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Environmental aspects: the forest highlighting the subtropical and subalpine zones (how the species change at different altitudes); biodiversity</li> <li>- Mountain views, the geology of the area</li> <li>- The significance of the area as a bordering area: World War II, Cold War, etc.</li> <li>- Ethnographical/historical aspects</li> </ul>



**PICTURES**



	
<b>CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of difficulty: <i>Medium</i></li> <li>• Type: This is a circular route suitable for hiking.</li> </ul> <p>A linear route for biking and horse riding is also possible up to the Hut and from there, bikers and horse riders should return.</p>
<b>POTENTIAL MARKET</b>	<p>The potential market that the route is addressed to soft ecotourists interested in practicing sports in a natural environment while learning about the values of the Protected Area.</p> <p>Age range: 18 to 45. Potential visitors are mainly domestic tourists and international visitors coming from neighbouring countries (Armenia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Russia, etc.) and other European countries: Poland, Germany, UK, etc.</p>
<b>REQUIREMENTS - FACILITIES</b>	<p>The requirements to carry out this route are:</p> <p>1. WORKS:</p> <p>From the beginning to KM no major works are needed.</p> <p>From km x to KM. of the trail the path needs major works to develop the trail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Clearing of vegetation</b> to enable visitors to pass safely</li> <li>✓ <b>Removal of wires</b>, the area is full of wires that remain from the time was occupied by the Russian. This wires are dangerous for visitors and the removal should be ensured.</li> <li>✓ <b>Renovation of existing ladders</b>,</li> <li>✓ <b>Safety structures</b> (barriers, railings, secure surfacing) but these works should be done taking into account the “nature experience”, meaning that is necessary to not overdo. All the structures should be built using natural and local materials to minimise maintenance cost and environmental impact (some guidelines are provided in the Report “<i>Pilot Route in Machakhela National Park</i>”</li> </ul> <p>2. TRAIL FURNITURE</p>

- **Signs**, the types of signs proposed are:
  - ✓ **Directional signs**: indicating intersections, distances, indicating relevant facilities: camping, picnic areas, view point, water sources, distance to the hut, etc.
  - ✓ **Trailhead/end information board**: providing the essential information to the trail user: map showing the route, grade of the trail, length, emergency service contact details, brief description,
  - ✓ **Interpretive Boards**. Indicating natural resources (interpreting different species for visitors, the area has some rhododendron, some tea species, etc. The historical relevance of the occupancy and the border should further investigated and explained.

### 3. FACILITIES:

- **Hut** The existing hut (See picture below) has to be completely renovated to offer accommodation to visitors. At least a kitchen and four beds should be accommodated in the new hut. Also the existing toilet has to be completely renovated.





- **Picnic area.** A picnic area should be arranged where the hut is located. By locating the picnic in this area, people that goes on bike or on horse can stop here before descending again.

An additional picnic area can be arranged in the end of the route.

**Other recommendations:**

In the end of the route there are two buildings from the era of the occupation. It is recommended that these buildings are rehabilitated. One of the buildings can be used for community purposes: organization of workshops (i.e. gastronomic workshops or other purposes), the other building can host an Interpretation Centre of the Cold War and the presence of the Russians in the area.





*Note: As the trail passes by a border police control, potential issues with the bordering police should be arranged. Also property issues on the abandoned buildings should be clarified.*

## **11. MINUTES OF MEETING – STRATEGY VALIDATION WORKSHOP**















## 12. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **ASSESSMENT OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF PROTECTED AREA STAFF IN EASTERN EUROPE.** ProPark (2014)
- **A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO TOURISM DESTINATION MANAGEMENT.** World Tourism Organization (2007)
- **CATALYZING FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF GEORGIA’S PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM. Development of Protected Areas Sustainable Financial Plan and Capacity of Agency of Protected Areas for Cost-Effective Protected Area Management.** Overall assessment of Revenue Options and Cost-Saving Opportunities. UNDP/GEF (2011)
- **CBI PRODUCT FACTSHEET: BIRDWATCHING TOURISM FROM EUROPE.** CBI Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2015).
- **ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT. A Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers.** Volume I and II. The Nature Conservancy.
- **FORGING LINKS BETWEEN PROTECTED AREAS AND THE TOURISM SECTOR. How tourism can benefit conservation.** UNEP. 2005
- **GEORGIAN BIODIVERSITY DATABASE.** <http://www.biodiversity-georgia.net/>
- **GOVERNANCE OF PROTECTED AREAS: FROM UNDERSTANDING TO ACTIONS” Best Practices Protected Areas Guidelines.** Borrini-Feyerabend et. al., IUCN 2013
- **MACHAKHELA NATIONAL PARK RESOURCE INVENTORY STUDIES AND MAPPING.** Ilia University/UNDP April 2016
- **NATIONAL SOUVENIRS FROM KHELVACHAURI,** produced within the project “Cultural Development is the source for prosperity of the community”
- **NON-CONSUMPTIVE USE OF BROWN BEARS IN TOURISM: GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSIBLE PRACTICES”** Prepared within the framework of the LIFE DINALP BEAR Project. Ljubljana. January, 2016
- **PROTECTED AREA STAFF TRAINING. GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT.** IUCN. 2011
- **PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR COMMUNITY PROFILING AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING OF SETTLEMENTS WITHING THE SUPPORT ZONE AREAS OF FOREST PROTECTED AREAS IN ADJARA REGION.** Black Sea Ecoacademy/UNDP 2016
- **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS. Guidelines for Planning and Management.** Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 8. World Commission on Protected Areas. (IUCN).

- **TASK REPORT ON TESTING TOURIST ENTRANCE FEES DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMA AND/OR ALTERNATIVE REVENUE GENERATION SCHEMMES.** UNDP/GEF project “Catalyzing Financial Sustainability of Georgia’s Protected Area System”. Testing site-level revenue generation7, mechanisms in Tusheti PA’s. NACRES (2012)
- **TIES GLOBAL ECOTOURISM FACT SHEET.** TIES.2006
- **TOURISM CONCESSIONS IN PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS. GUIDELINES FOR MANAGERS.** UNDP 2014
- **TOURISM AND VISITOR MANAGEMENT IN PROTECTED AREAS. GUIDELINES FOR SUSTAINABILITY.** Developing Capacity for a Protected Planet. IUCN. 2015