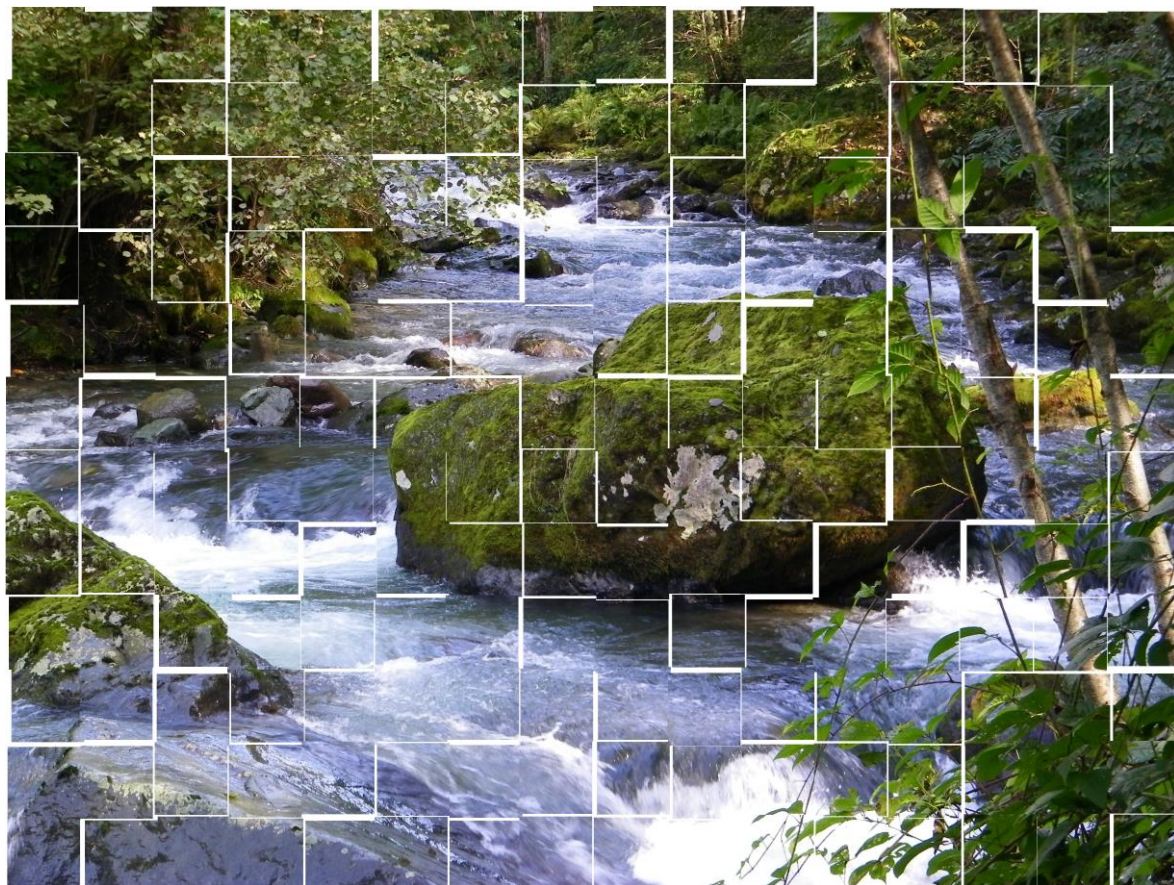


# **MTIRALA NATIONAL PARK TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**



## **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**

## MTIRALA 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.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>APA</b>	Agency of Protected Areas
<b>CBD</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity
<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>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature
<b>KPA</b>	Kintrishi Protected Areas
<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>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

Mtiral National Park together with Machakhela National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas is a priority conservation area to preserve the Colchic mountain ecosystems. Developed under the UNDP program “*Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region’s Protected Areas*”, the “*Adjara Protected Areas System Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy and Plan of Action*” seeks to provide a pragmatic strategy and plan for increasing sustainable revenues derived from tourism without negatively affecting the conservation objectives of the Protected Areas in the Adjara Region.

The *Mtiral National Park Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020* is aimed at providing guidelines for the effective development of sustainable tourism within the boundaries of the protected area and its support zone. In order to achieve this purpose, the plan evolves around five specific objectives:

1. To increase National Park visibility at national and international level.
2. To increase the number of visitors by offering a high-quality experience that meets their expectations.
3. To increase economic revenues derived from tourism by implementing a sustainable system of revenue-capture mechanisms.
4. To improve the social and economic situation of the communities living around Mtiral National Park through the creation of new economic and employment opportunities.
5. To preserve and enhance Mtiral National Park (MTNP) natural and cultural resources.

In order to achieve these objectives, an extensive research and consultation process was carried out. The information was presented to the stakeholders for its validation and the comments received were incorporated in the elaboration of the final document of the Strategy and Action Plan.

As a result of a preliminary assessment of the administrative and human resources, tourism attractions, services and values of the MTNP, the following constraints and opportunities were identified as the most important to be considered in the Strategy and Action Plan:

CONSTRAINTS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited participation of stakeholders in decision making of PA’s.</li><li>• No clear policy or framework for concession development.</li><li>• Lack of resources and materials to improve tourism experience.</li><li>• Need to improve accessibility.</li><li>• Short tourism season.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rich landscape and ecological diversity, including important birdwatching hotspots.</li><li>• Good availability of adventure and sports activities.</li><li>• Local communities’ dynamism and hospitality.</li><li>• Proximity to Kintrishi Protected Areas and Machakhela National Park.</li><li>• Proximity to Batumi and Kobuleti.</li><li>• Presence of various tour operators working in the 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 MTNP, 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:

- » **Local culture**
- » **Adventure tourism (variety of available activities)**
- » **Birdwatching**

These are 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. Two new trails were identified to have a great tourism potential: Korolistavi trail (9 km) with two possible alternative routes which need to be further investigated in order to adequately develop the trail; and the Agara trail that connects the charismatic village of Aghara to the park, with different connections with the existing routes. Alternatively, a route that connects the three protected areas was explored.
- a) **Business opportunities** based on services that can be provided by local communities and small companies to meet the needs of tourists and visitors of the protected area, such as accommodation services, catering services, information, local product marketing, guided tours, transportation services, etc).

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





A total of five **STRATEGIC LINES** were defined, comprising a series of activities to be developed in order to achieve those GOALS. The following chart summarizes the *Mtiral 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 at PA level to increase governance in the Park is established by 2017.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
1.2.1	Establish a Mtiral NP Advisory Council.
<b>OBJ. 1.3. By 2020, tourism generated income increases by 50% in Mtiral National Park.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
1.3.1	Introduce an entrance fee to contribute to the conservation and sustainable development of Mtiral National Park.
1.3.2	Establish adequate management for existing infrastructures.
<b>OBJ. 1.4. A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural and local communities is defined and implemented by end of 2019.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
1.4.1	Develop a study on the carrying capacity visitor management in Mtiral National Park.
1.4.2	Elaborate and implement a Visitor Impact Monitoring System.
1.4.3	Elaborate a survey among local community members regarding tourism.
1.4.4	Elaborate a visitor satisfaction survey.

<b>Strategic Line 2: Capacity Building</b>	
<b>OBJ. 2.1. Build the capacities and skills of PA's staff in sustainable tourism, environmental issues and business planning.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
2.1.1	Design and implement a training programme for PA's staff.
2.1.2	Organize study tours for rangers/PA's staff.
<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.
2.2.3	Design and implement a training programme about organic agriculture and product packaging for local farmers /producers.

<b>Strategic Line 3: Local communities development</b>	
<b>OBJ. 3.1. Tourism service providers associated to Mtirala National Park comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2019.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
3.1.1	Assess quality service level of local providers of accommodation and catering facilities.
<b>OBJ. 3.2. At least, five new local businesses are developed and running by year 2020.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
3.2.1	Assess and support new potential business in the communities of the support zone.
<b>OBJ. 3.3. Cultural and traditional assets are investigated, enhanced and promoted by the Protected Area administration by 2020.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
3.3.1	Conduct assessment to identify main cultural assets in Mtirala National Park and its support zone.

<b>Strategic Line 4: Infrastructure and services development</b>	
<b>OBJ. 4.1. By 2017, accessibility to Mtirala National Park is easy and comfortable.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
4.1.1	Sign an agreement with Road Department to improve the access road to Mtirala National Park.
4.1.2	Improve access to Park areas and provide a suitable area for car parking.
<b>OBJ. 4.2. Demand of existing tourism products increases by 50% by 2018.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
4.2.1	Identify existing needs for effective implementation of activities such as horse riding and canyoning.
<b>OBJ. 4.3. New and sustainable tourism infrastructures and products that allow visitors to explore and discover new areas in Mtirala National Park are developed by 2018.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
4.3.1	Design and develop a new trail in Korolistavi.
4.3.2	Design and implement new products for niche segments.
<b>OBJ. 4.4. A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Ajara Protected Areas is fully operational by 2019.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
4.4.1	Develop a trail that joins Mtirala National Park with Kintrishi Protected Areas and Machakhela National Park.
<b>OBJ. 4.5. By 2020, a comprehensive environmental educational programme aimed at locals and visitors is functioning.</b>	
4.5.1	Design and implement an environmental education and interpretation program for local and visitors.
4.5.2	Design a volunteer program in coordination with universities and regional education centres.

<b>Strategic Line 5: Marketing and promotion</b>	
<b>OBJ. 5.1. By 2020, Mtirala National Park will be widely known at national and international level.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
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 hotels.
<b>OBJ. 5.2. Information related to Mtirala National Park is easy accessible through new technologies.</b>	
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
5.2.1	Create a visitor friendly tourism website for Mtirala 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 the 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 became 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.

The UNDP project *“Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region's Protected Areas”* is designed to enhance the management effectiveness, bio-geographical coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas of the Ajara Autonomous Region of Georgia in order to better conserve the globally unique Colchic Forest.

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.

Under the UNDP program: *“Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region's Protected Areas”*, the elaboration of the *“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 *Ajara Protected Areas Strategy and Action Plan*, which has been recently elaborated, provides an overarching strategy for achieving major goals related to sustainable tourism development and it is the framework in which the *“Mtirala Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan”* has been developed.

Mtiral National Park together with Machakhela National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas is a priority conservation area to preserve the Colchic mountain ecosystems. However, each protected area has its own particularities that should be further enhanced and promoted.

Established as a National Park by the Law of Georgia (*“Law on Mtirala National Park”* n° 3147) in May 25<sup>th</sup> 2006, tourism has been gaining importance in the Park since. Thanks to the support of

international donors, the area has a wide range of infrastructures and services available already and efforts should focus on consolidating the existing trend and ensuring its sustainability.

## 2.2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The **overall purpose** of the *Mtirala 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 further enhance existing recreational and educational activities and to develop new ones based on the natural and cultural values of the park that are consistent with the park conservation objectives, providing additional economic opportunities for the local population and increasing National Parks appreciation.

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

- » To increase National Park visibility at national and international level.
- » To increase the number of visitors by offering a high-quality experience that meets their expectations.
- » To increase economic revenues derived from tourism by implementing a sustainable system of revenue-capture mechanisms.
- » To improve, through the creation of new economic and employment opportunities, the social and economic situation of the communities living around Mtirala National Park.
- » To preserve and enhance Mtirala National Park natural and cultural resources.

## 2.3. GENERAL APPROACH

The approach of this *Strategy and Action Plan* follows the principles of the Adjara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism and Action Plan. The **guiding principles** of the *Strategy* are:

- » **CO-ORDINATION:** Increasing the levels of co-ordination and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders in order to achieve an integrated destination approach. The creation of structures that allow the exchange of information and the development of common actions will increase the efficiency of planned activities.

- » **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. The integration of tourism private sector will facilitate 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. Besides this, 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, two principles are especially aimed for Mtirala National Park:

- » **COMPETITIVENESS:** The National Park, as a "business" that offers products and services to the tourism market, has to be recognized. It is important that Mtirala National Park is distinguished, in the tourism market, from other protected areas in the Region and in the country. This competitiveness is based on the reinforcement of the strengths of the Park, developing a unique selling proposition and criteria for offering a quality experience.
- » **DIVERSIFICATION:** The tourism offer of Mtirala National Park is largely concentrated around Chakvistavi village. The strategy should focus on the diversification of products and visitor zones in order to reduce tourism pressure in this area. The management of tourism flows around Chakvistavi will be key to ensure its sustainability.

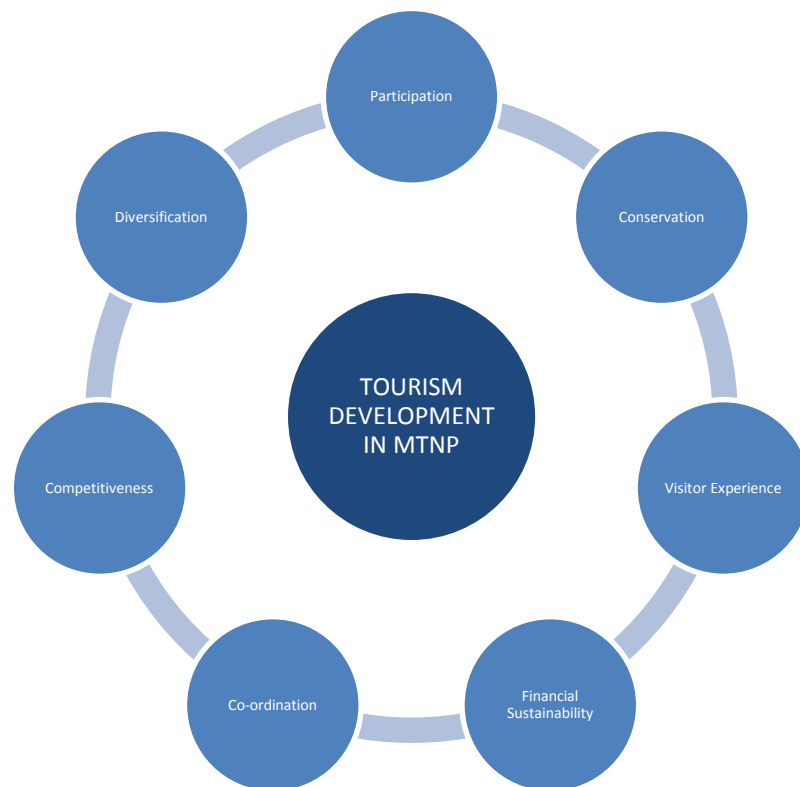


Figure 1: Guiding Principles of the Mtirala National Park Strategy and Action Plan.

## 2.4. METHODOLOGY

The Mtirala 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 Mtirala National Park administration staff, local tourism service providers, regional tourism administration, national experts, etc.

Public consultation on the draft Strategy was held on September 27<sup>th</sup> for stakeholder revision and validation, in addition, a meeting with APA was held on October 17<sup>th</sup>. Comments on the draft Strategy and Action Plan were incorporated to the Strategy for the elaboration of the final version of the Mtirala National Park Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020.



Figure 2: Steps for the elaboration of the Mtirala Natinal Park Sustainable Tourism Strategy. Source: HIDRIA



### 3. MTIRALA NATIONAL PARK AND SUPPORT ZONE

#### 3.1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The National Park of Mtirala was established in May 25, 2006 (Law No. 3147 of Mtirala National Park) comprising a total area of 15,698 ha. The Park is located 28,8 kilometers away from Batumi by car and 12 km in a straight line from the sea. The park is accessible by one-hour drive from Batumi to the visitor center located in Chakvistavi. The boundaries of the protected area are located between the municipalities of Kobuleti, Khelvachauri and Keda. The Management Plan for the Park was approved in August 2015 in order to comply with the requirements of the Law on the System of Protected Areas (LPA) (Order #96, 28/01/2008).

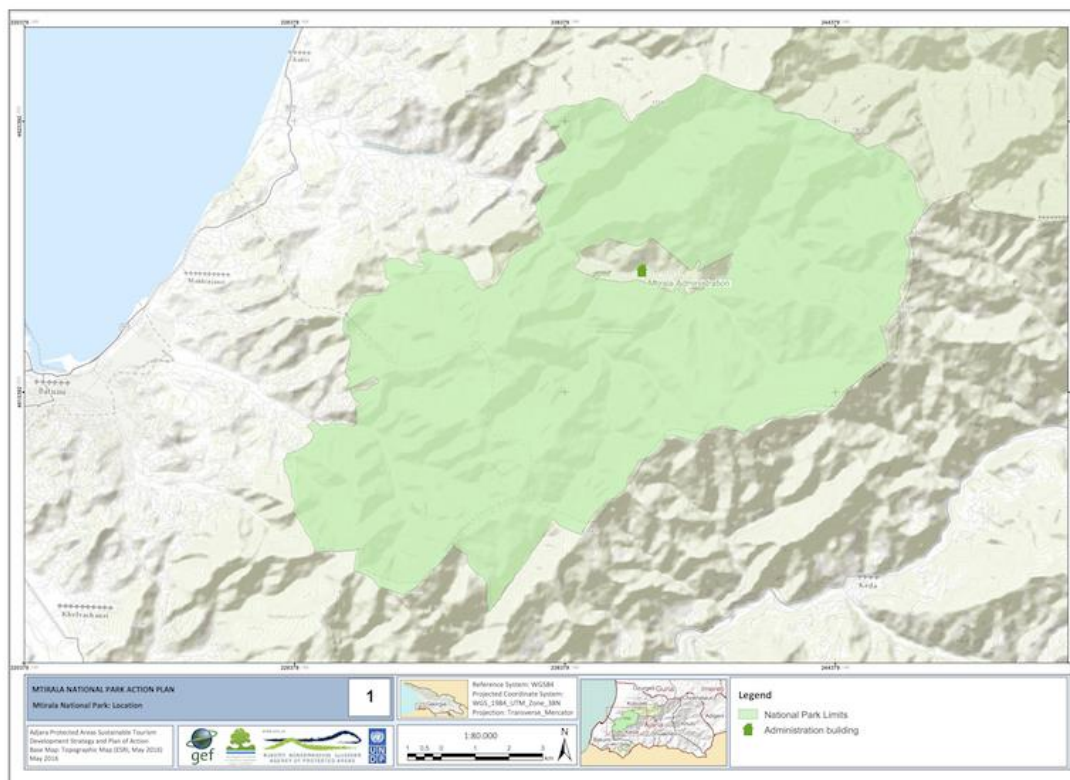


Figure 3: Mtirala National Park Location Map.

Along with the Kintrishi Nature Reserve and the Machakhela National Park, Mtirala National Park forms part of an ecological corridor established to preserve the endangered ecosystem of Colchic Forest. This ecological corridor also involves the Camili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey, completing a transboundary conservation area that characterizes the southwest Caucasus, and it is recognized internationally as a biodiversity hotspot.

The Colchic forest is a type of mixed temperate forest ecosystem characterized by the abundance of relict species remaining from the glaciation occurred during the Tertiary period that did not affect the Western Caucasus. The biodiversity of flora and fauna present in the Park is representative of

the mountainous type of Colchic ecosystem, with an altitude that ranges from 500 to 1,200 meters above sea level.

Located between the Black Sea and the Adjara mountain system, the mountains of Mtirala intercept the air from the Black Sea and determine Mtirala National Park very humid climate. Although Ajara region in general is quite rich in precipitation, Mount Mtirala is by far the most humid spot of the region, not surprisingly, the place name Mtirala means “weeping” and was given to this mountain because the abundant precipitation that reaches 4,520 mm a year.

Mtirala National Park’s pristine Colchic humid broad-leaved and mixed forests include chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) trees, with understories of evergreen shrubs such as several species of azaleas (*Rhododendron ponticum*, *R. unguernii*, *R. luteum*), *Ruscus colchicus*, cherry laurel (*Laurocerosus officinalis*) and Black Sea holly (*Ilex colchica*). It should also be noted the existence of exceptional shrub formations called *shkeriani*, present in the gorge of the river Namtsvavistskali. These formations are characterized by a complex of evergreen and creeping shrubs developing below the forest canopy that build up the second stratum of the forest. Among the species present in *shkeriani* formations is the rare *Epigaea gaultherioides*.

The Colchic ecosystem hosts a great biodiversity of fauna including large mammals like the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), as well as interesting species of reptiles and amphibians, many of them included in the IUCN’s Red List of Threatened Species, such as the Caucasian salamander (*Mertensiella caucasica*), the Clark’s lizard (*Darevskia clarkorum*) and the Caucasian viper (*Vipera kaznakovi*). The park has also several interesting species of invertebrates, like the Causasian festoon (*Zerynthia caucasica*), an endemic butterfly that is currently classified as *vulnerable* under the IUCN Red List.

The boundaries of Mtirala National Park are located within an important bottleneck for migratory birds moving from the northern latitudes to the south. The Transcaucasian flyway of migratory birds include many species of raptors, passerines water birds. Among the species that can be observed in their migratory routes are the common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*), the Montagu’s harrier (*Circus pygargus*), the pale harrier (*Circus macrourus*), the Eurasian and Levant Sparrowhawks (*Accipiter nisus*, *A. brevipes*), among others. In fact, the area is considered internationally as an important bird and biodiversity area (IBA) corresponding to the code GE014 in Batumi (Birdlife International, 2016). The park has a birdwatching tower available for visitors although its use is not yet prominent and requires more investment in promotion as well as complementary information and guidance for the visitors to enjoy this activity.

The park surroundings are also rich in historical and cultural heritage including the presence of old settlements. The village of Chakvistavi itself was established in the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and it is the only settlement present in the area, located in the center of the National Park boundaries but excluded from the territory of the protected area. Other cultural attractions include churches such as the St. George’s Church in Chakvi (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), as well as fortresses like the Petra Tsikhisdziri (6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), which is adjacent to the National Park, and other artifacts and old infrastructures like burial grounds, sacrifice sites and old bridges.

With the support of international organizations like WWF and UNWTO, new tourism products were recently developed in the park, including two recreational trails that are currently marked and equipped with interpretation boards and maps; the trails are called “Chestnut Trail” and “Cold Spring Trail”. Other active tourism products include horse riding, canyoning along the river gorges and a zip-line<sup>1</sup>. Camping sites and picnic places are also available for visitors, as well as additional local services that include a number of guesthouses and some local product markets and shops.

Traditional celebrations and festivals complete the cultural offer available for the visitors of the park. An example of local celebrations is the Fest of Chakvi Water Gorge, held in the village of Chakvistavi, during which rural communities gather to celebrate with folk dances and popular songs. The celebration is usually accompanied by local food and handicrafts, and it attracts many visitors to the area every year in September.

Mtiral National Park is currently the most popular destination among the Ajarian protected areas, especially by domestic tourists that plan their trip individually to enjoy nature and practice active sports in a unique setting. However, infrastructures and services need to be improved in order to provide an integral and quality service for tourists and to give more value to the resources available in the park. In addition, other priority objectives contemplated in the Management Plan are focused on ensuring long term protection of the Park’s natural biodiversity through investment in capacity building and cooperation to control and monitor both, human and natural factors, that threaten the conservation of its natural values, specially poaching, over-logging, the proliferation of invasive species and plant diseases, and other human-wildlife conflicts.

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<sup>1</sup> Canyoning and zipline were developed in the framework of the UNWTO project: *Support for Georgia in the Field of Protected Area Development*.



Khala Community is made up of three villages; Khala, Gorgadzeebi and Chakvistavi, while Ortabatumi includes seven communities: Ortabatumi, Agara, Kapreshumi, Masaura, Salibauri, Korolistavi and Tsinsvla.

The village Chakvistavi, consisting of 77 inhabitants of 21 households, is fully surrounded by the lands of Mtirala National Park and therefore, the village has special importance for the development of recreational and touristic activities (including eco-tourism, agro-tourism) connected with the Mtirala National Park.

TERRITORIAL UNITS	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	NUMBER OF ACTUAL POPULATION	PERMANENT POPULATION
<b>KHALA COMMUNITY</b>	<b>942</b>	<b>3.617</b>	<b>3.669</b>
Khala	497	2.045	2.068
Gorgadzeebi	424	1.495	1.521
Chakvistavi	21	77	80
<b>ORTABATUMI COMMUNITY</b>	<b>2.675</b>	<b>10.052</b>	<b>10.083</b>
Ortabatumi	328	1.216	1.224
Agara	248	911	915
Kapreshumi	351	1.359	1.364
Masaura	179	716	716
Salibauri	449	1.309	1.315
Korolistavi	341	1.319	1.322
Tsinsvla	779	3.222	3.227

Table 2: Demographic data of Mtirala National Park support zone settlements. Source: Black Sea Eco Academy

The distribution of population according to age and gender is presented in the following table:

AGE	NUMBER OF ACTUAL POPULATION		
	TOTAL	Gender	
		Woman	Man
<b>KHALA COMMUNITY</b>	<b>3.617</b>	<b>1.793</b>	<b>1.824</b>
0-15	592	290	302
15-19	1.015	568	447
16-59 (women)	1.241	1.241	
16-64 man)	1.346		1.346
60 > (women)	262	262	
65 > (man)	176		176
<b>ORTABATUMI COMMUNITY</b>	<b>10.052</b>	<b>5.045</b>	<b>5.007</b>
0-15	3.051	1.598	1.453
15-19	2.243	1.089	1.154

16-59 (women)	3.015	3.015	
16-64 man)	2.939		2.939
60 > (women)	432	432	
65 > (man)	615		615

Table 3: Distribution of Mtirala National Park support zone population according to age and gender. Source: Black Sea Eco Academy

There is high level of migration in Ortibatumi and Khala communities mostly due to unemployment.

## ECONOMIC DATA

According to the study elaborated by Black Sea Eco Academy in the area, the most important economic activities in the support zone of the Mtirala National Park are:

### » Agriculture

Agriculture is the main source of income of Khala and Ortibatumi commune villages, mainly they produce **vegetables, citrus and fruit**; traditionally, breeding of crop, fruit and potato are developed there.

A large part of the production is aimed for their own use, only a small portion is to be sold in the market.

Khala and Ortibatumi commune villages have the great potential in terms of production of number of agricultural products (especially fruit).

Beekeeping is also an important activity, not only for the locals as food product, but also for the tourists. The population of support zone can also gather non-timber products in protected area, such as nuts, mushrooms, berries and medicinal plants.

### » Tourism

Since National Park is attracting an important number of tourists, local population is investing in small businesses: a new hotel was built and a restaurant opened in village Chakvistavi, river crossing cable was constructed and a new shop was built.

Also in nearby village, Khala, a grocery store, trout pond and restaurant were opened. In addition, a small shop of honey and gifts, managed by local community organization, was opened at the entrance of the Park. All products offered here are transported from neighbourhood villages.

## **BASIC INFRASTRUCTURES**

The infrastructure of support zone of the Mtirala National Park is better developed compared with other protected areas located in Ajara. The road gets to all villages; however, majority sections of roads are not covered with asphalt and during the winter period the roads to the mountainous villages are blocked due to the heavy snow.

Ortabatumi and Khala communities have power supply, and villages' population receives potable water from local streams, although usually in winter the water becomes frozen causing problems to local population.

There are six schools in Ortabatumi and Khala communities. Population received first medical aid at the village dispensaries, located in new villages of Ortabatumi and Khala.

There are mixed-type shops in the villages of both communes, where one can purchase food and small industrial products.

## 4. ASSESSMENT OF THE AREA

### 4.1. MTIRALA NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

#### 4.1.1. Management system

**ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

Mtirala National Park is centrally organized as administration unit of APA. It has one of the best-arranged administration infrastructures in Ajara, which is open for visitors throughout the year. This administration building is located in village Chakvi (Kobuleti municipality), 15 km from Visitor Centre in Chakvistavi.

MTNP has team of 20 members including: 3 management and administration, 1 environment specialist; 2 senior rangers, 11 rangers, 1 visitor service specialist, 1 secretary, 1 accountant and 1 housekeeper/office staff.

During the summer season, park administration recruits seasonal workers, two local guides for zip line services. Rangers were responsible for this activity until then.

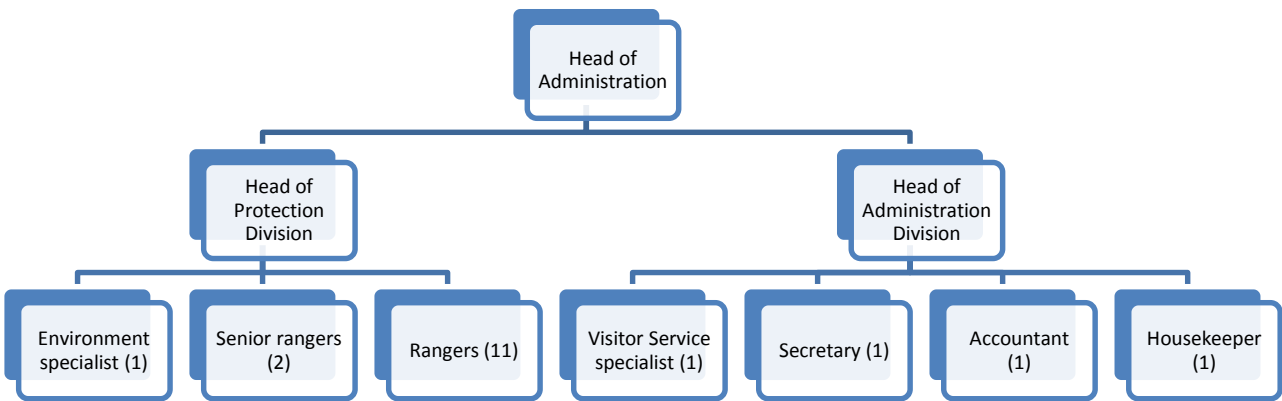


Figure 5: Organization chart of the Mtirala National Park. Source: MTNP

According to discussions maintained with park administration, there is need of English/Russian speaking guides and trainings in marketing, sales, foreign languages, tour guiding and project preparation.



## BUDGET

The annual state budget of MTNP is part of total annual state budget of APA. In addition, the MTNP gets additional funds from CNF.

The operational budget in 2015 was 129.490 Gel (state budget).

### 4.1.2. Existing Management Plan

The **Management Plan** (MP) of MTNP was elaborated in 2015 and is valid until 2020. Based on MP the action plans are elaborated annually, and cover detailed actions and concrete activities together the budget lines.

Main objectives of Mtirala MP that should be achieved for 2020 are:

- » MTNP with its ecological corridors is, as a part of Georgian and Adjarian natural heritage, one of the nature hotspots of Caucasus region.
- » MTNP's diversity of species is conserved and habitats are maintained close to their natural conditions. Long-term conservation aims and measures are systematically developed in regards to the box tree (*Buxus colchica*) and associated diseases causing box wood mortality.
- » Local culture, kitchen, heritage and traditions of the area are maintained, supported and promoted. Local products are appreciated not only by visitors, but also distributed to other Georgian regions. Marketing, sales and service systems are well organized.
- » MTNP is interesting for its biodiversity, including its endemic and relict species, natural and pristine landscapes. All the research results, as well as articles and data sent to the National Park administration and APA are combined and stored.
- » Local people are aware of the importance of biodiversity of MTNP and its values and take an interest in the management of the National Park. The population, including schoolchildren and students, are actively taking part in protection actions.
- » Mtirala is one of main recreational centres for holidaymakers to Ajara in terms of eco-tourism and recreation.
- » Outdoor tourism activities are conducted respecting the carrying capacity of natural ecosystems and zonation of the National Park as well as expectations and social needs of visitors;
- » Tourism services and activities in MTNP are mainly conducted by the local population and contribution of the park to the local economy is increased.
- » The administration of MTNP manages the park efficiently with necessary financial and technical means and required number of skilled staff.

MP programmes of MTNP are the following:

MTIRALA NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRAMMES			
1.	Protection and patrolling	2.	Eco-education
3.	Biodiversity conservation and research-monitoring	4.	Communication and Public Relations
5.	Sustainable use of natural resources	6.	Development and maintenance of infrastructure
7.	Eco-tourism	8.	Strengthening the staff and technical capacity of the Administration

The tourism related activities for 2016, defined in the Annual Action Plan, include<sup>2</sup> :

- » Creation of database of natural and cultural resources;
- » Support and control groups/individuals of scientific researchers on MTNP territory.
- » Eco-educational activities;
- » Collaboration with local municipalities and other stakeholders;
- » Organization of introduction courses, “open classes for children, meetings with village schools and implementation of special thematic programs for junior rangers, eco-camps and organization of Green Calendar Events.
- » Provide APA regularly with visitors’ statistics.
- » Sign agreement with TOs;
- » Development of eco tourism products – visitor survey, design tourism offers based on market, design tourism materials etc.

In 2016, the Mtirala and Machakhela Friends Association was created. 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 is:

- Enhance Mtirala and Machakhela administrations and support efficiency of their activities.
- Promote Mtirala and Machakhela PAs 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 PAs
- Support the development of surrounding communities of Machakhela and Mtirala

<sup>2</sup> Source: Annual Action Plan 2016

- 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

#### 4.1.3. Zoning

According to the Mtirala National Park Management Plan, approved in August 2015, the park is divided into three functional zones, following the guidelines of the LPA:

- **Strict Protection Zone:** destined to ecosystem preservation and non-intrusive research and education (15,7% of Park's total area).
- **Traditional use zone:** for the development and maintenance of economic activities connected with the protection of nature and the traditional use of renewable resources (15,7% of Park's total area).
- **Visitor's zone:** destined to nature protection and recreational and educational activities (51,4% of Park's total area).

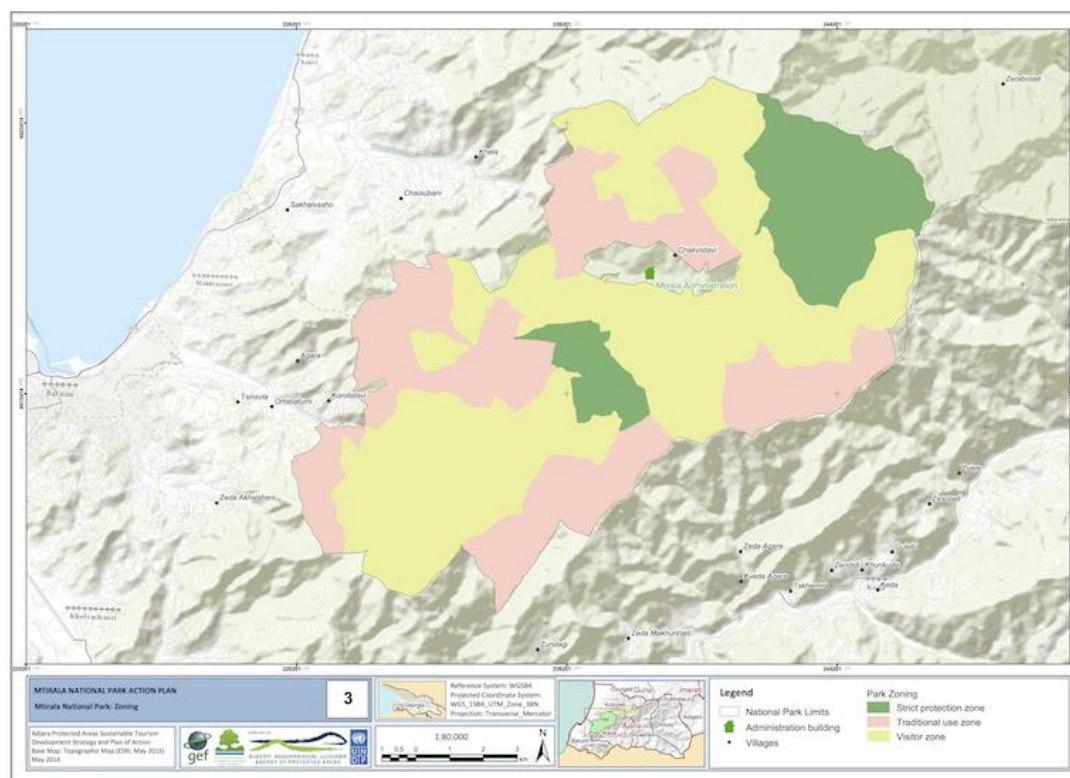


Figure 6: Mtirala National Park Preliminary Zoning Map.

The zones above are mainly destined to protect natural ecosystem, allowing for the development of educational, research and tourism activities, outside of the strict protection zone, as long as they are compatible with the National Park's conservation objectives.

The establishment of functional zones for the Mtirala National Park was based in an assessment of the zoning categories that were in effect before the elaboration of the Management Plan and the pressures affecting the Park values. The following features characterize each of the above zones:

- The **Strict Protection Zone** is comprised by untouched ecosystems, including beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) primary forests and perennial shrubs such as yew trees (*Taxus baccata*). Most of the territories under this zone type are important habitats for emblematic species like the brown bear (*Ursos arctos*), the lynx (*Lynx lynx*) and the chamois (*Rupicabra rupicabra*), which can be observed in the higher mountain areas.
- The **Visitor's Zone** includes territories that have been more or less modified due to human interference but are currently regulated regarding the use of natural resources, i.e. timber cutting is not allowed and other activities may be as well limited. This zone includes interesting sites for visitors, such as scenic viewpoints, recreational areas and unique natural and cultural features.
- The **Traditional Use Zone** includes those areas that have been traditionally used by people living in the surroundings of the Park territory and depend on the park's natural resources to sustain their livelihoods. Some activities that occur in the traditional zone include collecting fuel wood, grazing, and collecting nuts and berries. These areas are eligible to design specific restoration measures, specially in those areas heavily disturbed by human use in order to restore the native natural ecosystem.

The Management Plan defines the activities that are allowed within each functional zone based on its characteristics. The following Table summarizes the activities permitted in each zone according to the Mtirala National Park Management Plan.

ACTIVITIES	FUNCTIONAL ZONES		
	Strict Protection Zone	Visitor's Zone	Traditional Use Zone
Non-manipulative scientific research, inventory and monitoring activities.	✓		
Eco-educational activities that do not cause any impact to the environment.	✓		
Conservation, maintenance and restoration of species of wild fauna and flora and the important habitats present within its boundaries.		✓	✓
Ecosystem protection and implementation of restoration activities.		✓	✓
Scientific research and monitoring activities.		✓	✓
Environmental monitoring and research, including the installation of the necessary equipment to carry out such activities.		✓	✓

Educational activities.		✓	
Limited use of vehicles for business-related duties or for emergency situations, natural disasters, catastrophes and restoration activities. The transport is unrestricted on the road to Chakvistavi (main village in the Park).		✓	✓
Cadastral activities.		✓	✓
Horse riding, mountain biking and snow shoeing along the main trails.		✓	
Establishment of infrastructures necessary for environmental protection and eco-tourism.		✓	
Collection of nuts, berries and edible fungi for visitor use only.		✓	
Maintenance of the ecological balance of the territory.			✓
Sustainable use of natural resources.			✓
Access of visitors by walking, biking and horse riding.			✓
Establishment and maintenance of infrastructure needed for protection and eco-tourism activities.			✓
Use of non-wood products by local population for personal use under conditions allowed by Georgian law.			✓
Use of primary and secondary wood products necessary to meet household demands for energy, heating and cooking, according to Annex 6 of Management Plan.			✓
Installation of bee hives in a way that do not damage any trees or other natural features.			✓
Ensuring local people's access to clean drinking water, according to natural conditions.			
Other activities allowed by legislation.		✓	✓

Table 4: Activities allowed within each category of the protected areas and functional zones  
Source: Mtirala National Park Management Plan (Agency of Protected Areas, 2015)

## **4.2. ASSESSMENT OF THE ATTRACTION AND SERVICES OF MTIRALA NATIONAL PARK AND SUPPORT ZONE**

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 National Park and its support zone are located in the westernmost part of Ajara-Imereti range, on Kobuleti-Chakvi ridge, which divides Adjara into west and east parts. The distance from the sea (Chakvi village) to the nearest point of the park is 12 km. The park is located in 20 km distance from Batumi. In the west (seaside) part, there are a seashore zone (10 m above sea level), hilly zone (500-600 m above sea level) and mountainous zone (1500 m above sea level). The eastern part (inner mountainous) is characterized with low gorges (250-350 m above sea level), mountain belts (1800-2000 m from sea level) and highland, which is stretched up to Kenchiani mountain on Arsiani ridge - 3000 m from sea level.

The Park comprises a total area of 15,698 ha. characterized by flora and fauna typical to Colchic forests, which is an indication that the tertiary relicts that survived through the glacial period are represented within the park. The National Park conserves the mountainous type of Colchic ecosystems.

Mtirala is the most humid place (with an annual rainfall level of 4.520 mm in the Mtirala Mountains, situated 1.381 meters above sea level) in Georgia. Frequent rains and fog make the landscape of Mtirala National Park very special. This is where the toponym “Mtirala” (in Georgian: the one who cries) is derived from. The climate in the area is largely influenced by these local mountains; they serve as a barrier to the humid airflows that come in from the sea.

On the territory of the National Park of Mtirala and its support zone there are three climatic belts:

- 1) The sea humid climate with mild warm snowless winter and long summer;
- 2) Humid climate, moderately cold winter and long warm summer;
- 3) Sufficiently humid climate with moderately cold winter and comparatively dry hot summer.

The annual mean rainfall is over 2000 mm, while on the slopes of Didi Mtirala Mountain towards the sea, it is over 4000 mm. Air humidity makes up 80-85%, and misty days are frequent.

The average annual temperature is changing with absolute altitude from 12-14° C (500-600 meter above sea level) to 5-6°C (1000-1200 m). In the low belt of the mountain, the average temperature of the hottest month (August) is 20°C, while for the coldest month (January) it is 20°C. The absolute minimum at 1000-1200 m above the sea level is - 13,6°C. The number of days, when the air



temperature does not drop below 0°C is at average 274. The height of snow cover in the middle and upper belts of the mountain is at average 3-4 m.

## PHYSICAL FEATURES

The geological structure of the territory of the National Park and the support zone mainly consists of tuffogenic rocks of andesitic compound of the tertiary period and deposit formations of the Quaternary period.

Similar to the whole territory of Ajara, the area is represented by three types of soil. Broad-leaved forests at 600 metre above sea level are spread along red earth soils that are quite rare for moderate latitudes. There are two types of these red soils: red shallow (Haplic Ferralsols) and red true or podzolic (Haplic Histosols or Rodic Acrisols).

With increasing the absolute height, red earth soils are changed by yellow–brown forest and brown-forest soils, with mainly beech grove and beech-chestnut grove, in small quantities fir-tree and silver-tree forests with inclusion of beech trees.

Mtirala NP mountain area (highest point is at 1,762 m a.s.l. close to Mt. Morvili peak, which lies outside the national park) is full of fast running small and medium-size rivers that creates waterfalls and nice gorges. Among them the most impressive are Chakvistiskali and Korolistiskali (the main hydro-arteries of the slope of Kobuleti-Chakvi ridge facing the Black Sea) directly running into the Black Sea, creating rapids and beautiful narrow gorges (among them, canyons).

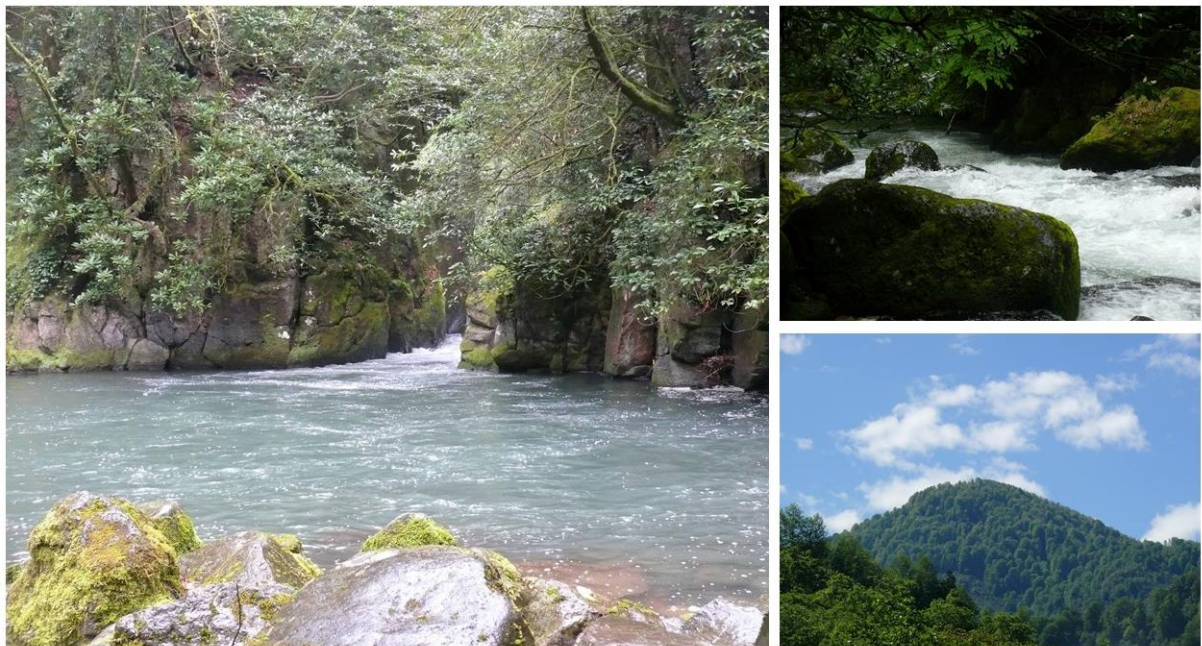


Figure 7: Main geological features of Mtirala National Park. Source: MTNP

## BIOTIC FEATURES

### » FLORA

The vertical zonation of the park's forest line is located between 500 m to 1200 m above sea level. Beech and chestnut forests and mixed Colchic type forests intermingle in the park.

The largest territory of park is covered by forest phytocenoses with dominant beech: in the lower zone there are chestnut and beech but in the first tier hornbeam (*Carpinus caucasica*), ash-tree (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and others are also frequent. In the undergrowth (*Staphylea colchica*), box tree (*Buxus colchica*), Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*), azalea (*Rh. luteum*), (*Laurocerasus officinalis*) etc are frequent. In the same zone are spread cenoses with dominant chestnut, which compositively is not very different from cenoses with beech mix.

Mtiral National Park's unique nature is mostly found in the upper zone of the forest. Special originality gives to the place evergreen, high bushes formation "shkeriani" (shrubbery Phytocenoses). Here we have many unique Colchic relict shrubs: *Rhododendron ponticum*, *Rh. ungerii*, *Rh. luteum*, *Ilex colchica*, *Laurocerasus officinalis*, *Ruscus colchicus*.

These vegetation unities are presented in the river Korolistkali gorge (at the source of its right tributary Namtsvavistskali) where in the shrubbery can be found rare type of Ajara-Lazeti *Epigaea gaultherioides*.

The special conservative value of formation "shkeriani" is that here at 1 ha. we come across 30-35 ligneous types (tree, bush, lianas), which is quite rare for moderate zone conditions of world. Shrubbery is not rich with herbaceous cover, which is caused by density of bushes. But some species loving humidity and shadow still can be found here: these are *Dryopteris oreopteris*, *Athyrium filix-femina*, *Blechnum spicant*, *Oxalis villosa* etc.

The flora present in the Park is typical to Colchic Forest, with presence of relict species that survived from the glacial period.

Several species of plants and animals of the National Park are included in the international or Georgian red list. The relict endemic species of plants are: Pontic oak (*Quercus pontica*), Medvedev birch (*Betula medwedewii*), Ungerni Shqeri (*Rhododendron ungerii*), Epigea (*Epigaea gaultherioides*). The latter, two evergreen bushes and *Betula medwedewii* belong to the rarest local endemic relicts and can be met only in Adjara and adjacent Turkey.



LATIN NAME	GEORGIAN NAME	NATIONAL STATUS
<i>Betula medwedewii</i>	მედვედევის არყი	VU
<i>Buxus colchica</i>	კოლხური ბზა	VU
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	ჩვეულებრივი წაბლი	VU
<i>Corylus colchica</i>	კოლხური თხილი	VU
<i>Epigaea gaultheroides</i>	გაულთეროიდული ეპიგეა	VU
<i>Juglans regia</i>	კაკლის ხე	VU
<i>Quercus hartwissiana</i>	კოლხური მუხა	VU
<i>Q. pontica</i>	პონტოური მუხა	VU
<i>Rhododendron ungerii</i>	უნგერნის შჟერი	VU
<i>Staphylea colchica</i>	კოლხური ჯონჯოლი	VU
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	უთხოვარი	VU
<i>Ulmus glabra</i>	შიშველი თელადუმა	VU

Table 5: Tree and shrub species on the Mtirala National Park territory that are included in the Red List of Georgia. Source: Mtirala National Park Management Plan.



Figure 8: Flora species present in Mtirala National Park. Source: Georgia Biodiversity Database.

## » FAUNA

From mammals on the territory of the park there are found such animals as roe, (*Capreolus capreolus*) and boar, from birds – small eagle (*Hieraaetus pennatus*), lute (*Milvus migrans migrans*), (*Pernisapivorus*), hawk (*Acipitertgentilis marginatus*).

Mtiralala has a diverse amount of birds of prey, some of which include: the Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard, Northern Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Eurasian Hobby, and Common Kestrel. Wild boar are the ungulates living in the area.

Brown bears are the distinctive predator of the park, but lynx and wolves can also be found within its boundaries.

LATIN NAME	GEORGIAN NAME	IUCN CATEGORY	NATIONAL STATUS
<b>Mammals</b>			
<i>Rhinolophus mehelyi</i>	მეპელის ცხვირნალა	VU	VU
<i>Lynx lynx</i>	ფოცხვერი		CR
<i>Ursus arctos</i>	მურა დათვი		EN
<i>Rupicapra rupicapra</i>	არჩვი		EN
<b>Birds</b>			
<i>Aquila clanga</i>	დიდი მყივანი არწივი	VU	VU
<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	ბეგობის არწივი	VU	VU
<i>Falco cherrug</i>	გავაზი	EN	CR
<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	თვალშავი		EN
<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	თეთრკუდა ფსოვი		EN

Table 6: Fauna species included in the IUCN Red List (categories CR, EN and VU) and in the Red List of Georgia categories CR and EN to be met on the National Park territory. Source: Mtiralala National Park Management Plan



Figure 9: Some species present in Mtirala National Park. Source: Georgia Biodiversity Database



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

##### ACCESIBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

Mtirala National Park is located 25 km away from Batumi and 12 km from Kobuleti. The access to Mtirala National Park is from Chakvi, the distance from Chakvi to the Visitor Centre is about 15 km (45 minutes by car).

Main public transportation system to access to Mtirala National Park are taxis and minibuses. Several minibuses offer the possibility to travel daily from Batumi or Kobuleti to Chakvi; and from Chakvi the best option is to take a taxi (it costs approximately 30-40 Gel).

A direct minibus that covers the route "Batumi-Chakvistavi" leaves from Batumi bus station on Mondays and on Friday at 16:00 (3 Gel).

Road to Mtirala National Park is not in good condition and this situation is a constraint for further tourism development, as the journey takes longer and it is uncomfortable. Recently, several new road signs have been located, improving the signalling in the area, however, access from Agara should also be marked and main sign located at Chakvi junction should be renovated.



Figure 10: Taxis in Chakvi (top left); new road signs towards Mtirala National Park, road condition (bottom right). Source: HIDRIA

## VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Existing tourism infrastructure (mostly funded by international donors) provides a good hospitality service in the area. Mtirala National Park counts on several and in good condition visitors' infrastructures such as a Visitor Centre, camp sites, trails with some tourism facilities, etc. Available infrastructures are described below:

### » ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

Mtirala National Park administration building is located in Chakvi, while visitors centre in village Chakvistavi, which is 15 km away from administrative centre. It is a modern building that has several offices for the administration and a meeting room.



Table 7: Mtirala National Park administration building in Chakvi. Source: MTNP

There are other Visitor Facilities, within National Park boundaries, that are analysed in more detail in this section. The following map provides an overview of the existing visitor facilities:

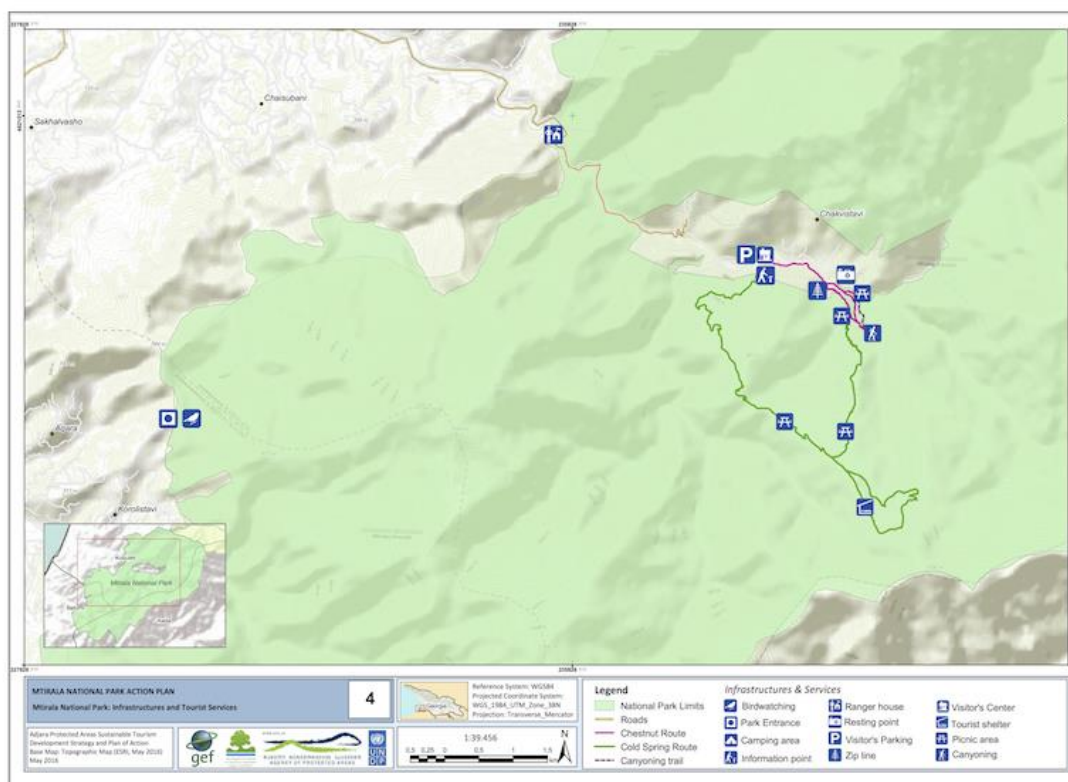


Figure 11: Map of Visitor Facilities in Mtirala National Park. Source: HIDRIA

## » VISITOR CENTRE

The visitor centre is located in Chakvistavi village. The building has modern installations funded by Government of Norway and WWF Caucasus.

The Visitor Centre has an exhibition area where visitors have the opportunity to become familiar with the specifics of the National Park, and services. The centre also provides accommodation, four double rooms with private toilet, and a kitchen are provided.

In addition, in the backyard there is space for a camping area with picnic and toilets.

The guest rooms are not adequately managed. Mtirala National Park administration awarded for exploitation the accommodation facilities, but the results were not satisfactory and, in 2015, accommodation facilities were not operational. APA has plans to delegate in the Park's administration the management of their facilities instead of give it on concession; however, the collaboration with private businesses, especially local, would be highly recommended.





Figure 12: Visitor Centre in Chakvistavi. Source: HIDRIA

Close to the centre there is a separate building with library, shop, medical centre, internet cafe run by local family (2010, WWF).

In the area of the entrance to the Visitor Centre there are some signs without any panel, these signs should be repaired. It would be recommended that at least in one of the signs a good quality map indicating the different routes and service available is displayed.

## » TRAILS

Mtiral National Park has two trails available for tourists. These trails have been built with the support of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The existing trails are mostly for hiking however, the Tsivtskaro is also suitable for biking.

### 1. **Tsablnari** (Chestnut forest trail) *Distance: 7 km (1 day)/Type: hiking/ Difficulty: Easy*

The trail starts from the visitor centre, runs along the gorge of the Chakvistkali river that has to be crossed in a cable car, another local attraction. It has been designed for educational and entertaining purposes. Some interpretive panels are located along the trail; however, some need to be repaired.

Highlights of this trail are a 15 metres waterfall and a small lake. This trail also runs along the area where the zip line is located.

The trail has a camping site and designated picnic spots and fire pits.



Figure 13: Main sightseeing in Chestnut Forest Trail. Source: HIDRIA

This trail is very popular among visitors, especially because of the cable car and the zip line. It has clear educational and recreational purpose and it does not need many improvements.

**2. Tsivtskaro (Cold Spring Route)- Circular trail.** *Distance: 15 km (2 day)/Type: hiking, horseback riding/ Difficulty: high.*

This two-day trail starts at the visitor centre, 260 meters above sea level, and ends at 1.250 meters above sea level. Colchic broad-leaved mixed forest types characterize the beginning of the trail and, by the end, 70% of forests are beech trees. Besides vegetation, visitors can find the tracks of creatures such as brown bears, roe deer, martens, the European Badger, Chamois, and many other animals.

From the tourist shelter, the trail runs along untouched beech groves, where visitors can also use springs and picnic spots that are located nearby. The route can be used for scientific observations of both flora and fauna.

According to sources, the trail is in good condition, however it should be better marked to avoid confusion, and ensure visitors safety. It requires some physical preparation as the trail ascends to an important height.



The most important facility along this trail is the tourist shelter, located in km 9 from the beginning of the trail. This shelter has two rooms that can accommodate 8 people, and it is also equipped with a toilet and a shower with hot water. Sun collectors provide electricity (there is also a battery).



Figure 14: Main sightseeing in the Cold Spring Trail. Source: MTNP

Both trails area self-guided; however, Mtirala National Park has some local guides available. These guides do not speak foreign languages and this is a handicap for an extension of this type of services.

### **3. Water-based trail for canyoning. 700 metres long**

UNWTO project also developed a canyoning trails, where individuals can travel through canyons and slide down waterfalls using a variety of techniques. The area designated for canyoning activities in Mtirala NP is approximately 700 meters long. Rangers were provided with professional training to conduct this activity; however, this service is not being implemented.

#### **» RANGER HOUSE**

On the boundaries of Mtirala National Park, there is a Ranger House. This building is in good condition; however, the place is closed most of the time. The building has a great potential to be further use for tourism purposes, especially to provide visitors information or even serve as a shop for local products.

» **BIRDWATCHING TOWER**

In 2015, a bird watching tower in Korolistavi was constructed. The newly built infrastructure is a two story wooden tower, with benches and tables. The tower provides a nice view of the mountains and it is a privileged place to watch birds.



Figure 15: Ranger House and bird watching tower in Mtirala National Park. Source: HIDRIA

#### 4.2.3. Outdoor recreational activities

Mtiral National Park offers a wide range of recreational activities; however, some of these activities are not operational. In the following table, it is presented a summary of the recreational activities available:

OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.				
ACTIVITY	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	POSITIVE ASPECTS	COMMENTS
Hiking	Chakvistavi	Hiking is the most common activity. As already mentioned, there are two trails in good condition for visitors to enjoy the National Park.	The trails are suitable for different types market segments, the Chestnut trail is short and easy for all type of visitors, while the Cold Spring Trail requires some physical effort.	Additional hiking routes can be developed in the area.
Horse riding	Chakvistavi	Horseback riding is available along the Cold Spring Trail.	Supports local economy.	It is not always available. Local provider is not always ready to provide the horses. Locals should be encouraged to ensure horses availability.
Zip line	Chakvistavi	Is the most popular activity. The zip line was built in the framework of a UNWTO project and has become very popular.	Important source of income for the Park. Attracts a large number of visitors.	The trail is short and it would be interesting to extend it.
Bird-watching	Korolistavi	Mtiral National Park it is a great place for bird-watching. The area is an important bottleneck for migratory birds (Batumi Flyway) in spring and autumn. More than 1,000.000 raptors migrate through the	A bird watching tower has been recently constructed in the Korolistavi area. Local NGOs and ecotourism enterprises promote bird watching in the area.	This activity should be further enhanced and promoted. Bird-watching has a great potential in Ajara. Bird watching is an important economic activity.

		corridor annually, having one of the highest volume of raptor migration in the world.		
<b>Canyoning</b>	Chakvistavi	A canyoning trail has been developed in the framework of a UNWTO project; however, this activity is not adequately implemented. According to workers, there is not adequate material to conduct this activity.	It is an attractive activity for hard-ecotourists.	Currently, it is not being developed. According to rangers, the needed equipment is not available.

Most of the activities and infrastructures available in the Park are concentrated around Chakvistavi, although at this point it is not an issue, if the numbers of visitors continue to increase it may bring social issues in the long term.

A study on the carrying capacity in the area should be conducted, especially for the area around Chestnut trail. New areas and activities outside Chakvistavi should be developed to reduce further social and environmental pressures derived from tourism.



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

Mtirala National Park's administration implements an eco-educational programme that includes several actions with the main goal of contributing to increase awareness of young and adults about the values of the Park, and to explain the purpose of establishing the National Park.

The actions include:

- a) Eco-educational lectures and seminars in public schools and other educational institutions. Several actions are organized according to Green Calendar.
- b) Meetings with the population neighbouring the National Park.
- c) Eco-tours and eco-camps are organised for students of various universities and for other groups of young people (responsibility of resources management specialists).
- d) Clean-up actions.
- e) 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, Earth Day, etc. During these celebrations, seminars are organized for students and young rangers in related topics.



Figure 16: Eco-educational activities organized by Mtirala National Park. Source: MNTP

### 4.3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPPORT ZONE

#### 4.3.1. Cultural resources in Mtirala National Park Support Zone

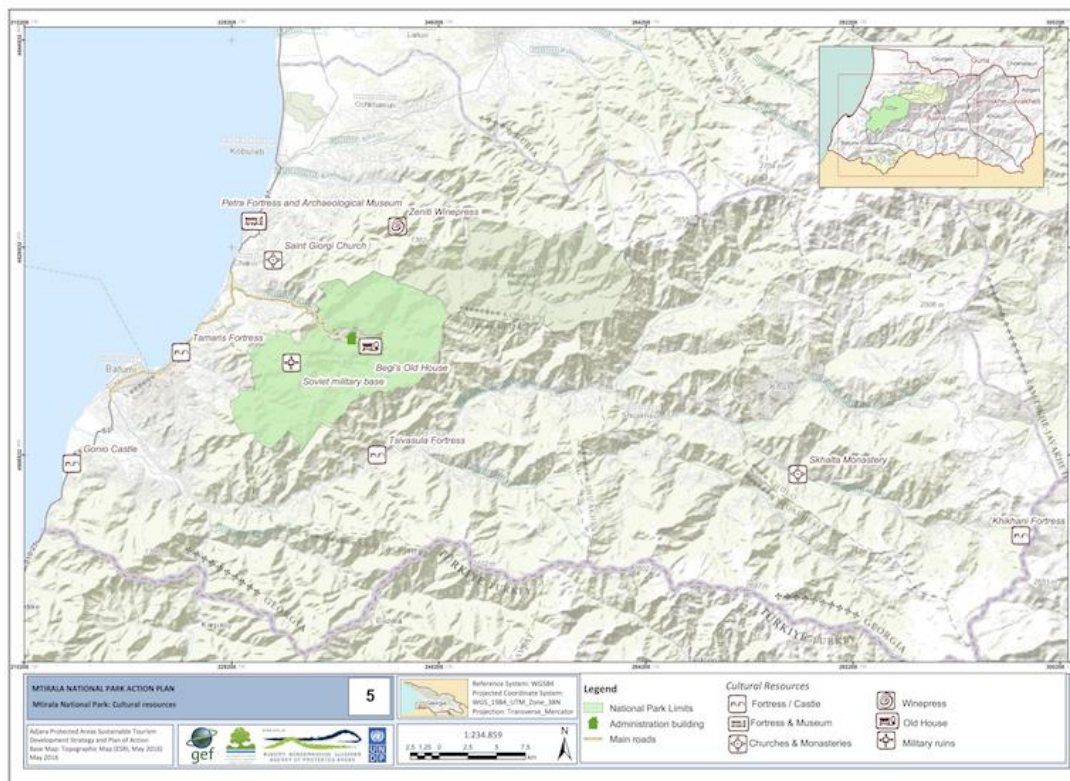





Figure 17: Location of the main natural and cultural resources in Mtirala National Park support zone. Source: HIDRIA

Near Mtirala NP, that is the territory of three municipalities: Kobuleti, Khelvachauri and Keda, visitors can find the remains of old cities, churches, fortresses, burial grounds and sacrifice sites, old bridges, metal and ceramic items and abandoned irrigation channels.

Ruins of fortresses and bridges of the Early and Late Middle Ages are found in the surroundings of Mount Mtirala (or Tsiskara). The most important monuments of those periods are the 13<sup>th</sup> century Skhalta church of hall type, Khikhani, Gonio and Petra castles.


*Notes: \*located on the territory of MNP; \*\* located in support zone of MNP; \*\*\*located beyond support zone, in Khelvachauri, Khulo municipalities.*

FORTRESS		
NAME OF PLACE / LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	PICTURE
<b>Gonio-Apsaros Fortress ***</b> Village Gonio Khelvachauri municipality	<p>The village Gonio is a home to the city-fortress of Gonio-Apsaros, where the magnificent bronze Gonio-Afsaroni Castle-City is located (Gonio Village - Khelvachauri municipality). The area is considered the birthplace of Colchic bronze culture. Some of the finest examples of goldsmithery have been discovered here, some examples of which include a statue of a young boy, bracelets, a locket engraved with a muse and many more.</p> <p>Gonio Fortress that was functioning from I BC– IX AD is located in one km distance from river Chorokhi and in 800 metres from seaside. The length of the fortress is 228 metres, width – 195 metres. It occupies 44.5 sqm</p>	 <p>Source: Gobatumi</p>
<b>Batumi Fortress (Tamara Fortress) ***</b> Khelvachauri Municipality	<p>The Batumi Fortress is located at the estuary of the Khorolistskali River, Tamara. Dated from VIII century. Batumi Fortress is part of the chain of fortifications built in west Georgia in late Roman-early Byzantine epoch and played an important role during Byzantine-Persian war for gaining domination over the region. It has been confirmed that the hill which preserves the ruins of the fortress was the oldest settlement discovered on the territory of Batumi.</p>	 <p>Source: <a href="http://www.limenproject.net">www.limenproject.net</a></p>
<b>City-fortress of Petra–Tsikhisdziri ***</b> Tsikhisdziri	<p>The city-fortress of Petra–Tsikhisdziri is located 5 km away from Kobuleti. Owing to its strategic location, Petra played an important role in the sixth century AD, during Byzantine- Persian war for Lazica.</p> <p>Near the Acropolis was discovered a site of a former settlement which contains cultural layers from late Bronze, early Iron, Classical, Hellenistic and early Byzantine periods.</p>	 <p>Source: <a href="http://www.limenproject.net">www.limenproject.net</a></p>




<sup>3</sup> <http://www.limenproject.net/>



<p><b>Khikhani Fortress***</b> Khikhadziri village, Khulo Municipality</p>	<p>Khikhani Fortress was built in the 13th century A.D. Inaccessible from three sides, the fortress occupied a strategic position and retained its military function for 700 years. It is believed that the site was originally occupied by a church (the Church of St. George) built in 1230 A.D</p>	
<p><b>Sagoreti*</b> Village Pirveli Maisi (former Sagoreti village)</p>	<p>Fortification fortress on the right bank of Ajaratskali. The fortress is located on the cliff and covers 200 sq.metre. The fortress is damaged, only the fragment of defence wall and the part of the fortress is preserved. It is dated back to XIV-XV cc.</p>	

RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS		
NAME OF PLACE / LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	PICTURE
<p><b>Skhalta Temple (XII c.)</b> Skhalta</p>	<p>The Skhalta Cathedral is a Georgian Orthodox monastery and cathedral church in Khulo Municipality, dating from the mid-13th century. It is a large hall church design, with fragments of the 14th or 15th century Paleologian-style wall painting.</p>	
<p><b>St. George's Church</b> Village Chakvi</p>	<p>One of the wonderful monuments that have survived to date is St. George's Church in Chakvi that is dated to about 13th-14th century AD, where frescos have also survived.</p>	<p>PICTURE NOT AVAILABLE</p>



MONUMENTS OF MATERIAL CULTURE AND HISTORICAL BUILDINGS		
NAME OF PLACE / LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	PICTURE
<b>Wine press</b> Zeniti Village	<p>Another interesting site is a stone wine press house in the village of Zeniti located adjacent to Mtirala National Park that is a monument of the Hellenic epoch dating back to the 3rd century BC. It is an 8 m long and 3 m wide monolith cone-shaped structure where levers and the press were placed. The Zeniti wine press had high capacity, which confirms ancient traditions of viticulture and wine production in the region. The development of viticulture in the Chakvistskali valley is also confirmed by remains of ancient wine cellars remaining in almost every village there.</p>	 <p>Source: Cultural Heritage Preservation Agency of Ajara</p>
<b>The house of Begi*</b> Village of Chakvistavi	<p>The sample of ancient architecture, which is distinguished with its walls that are built by egg white</p>	
<b>Soviet base</b> Mount of Mtirala, near Korolistavi	<p>There are some remnants of an air-defence base (radio-locator and other buildings) on and near the peak of Mount Mtirala, used by Russian soldiers for military service. This is also part of history of Soviet period telling a story of the Russian occupation in Georgia.</p>	

According to a legend, the village of Chakvistavi was established in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> Century AD by four brothers who had fled from the neighbouring region of Guria after being involved in a murder. At that time the area in which Chakvistavi was established was virtually unknown: it was cut off from the Black sea coast by flood plains and impenetrable bamboo forest and the only access was by difficult tracks over the forest-covered mountain ridge from Kintrishi. It was only when some men

fishing on the lower reaches of the Chakvi river saw off-cuts of timber that had obviously been work by hand that word spread that there was a village at the head of the river.

The four founders of the village took wives from nearby villages, presumably in the traditional way of kidnapping, and over the ensuing centuries a vibrant community developed. In the 1870's, towards the end of Ottoman rule over the region, there were 650 households in the village but with the development of tea plantations in Ajara inhabitants began to migrate down to the coast and the village declined.

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

There are seven tourism-related businesses around Mtirala National Park that offer their services to local and visitors:

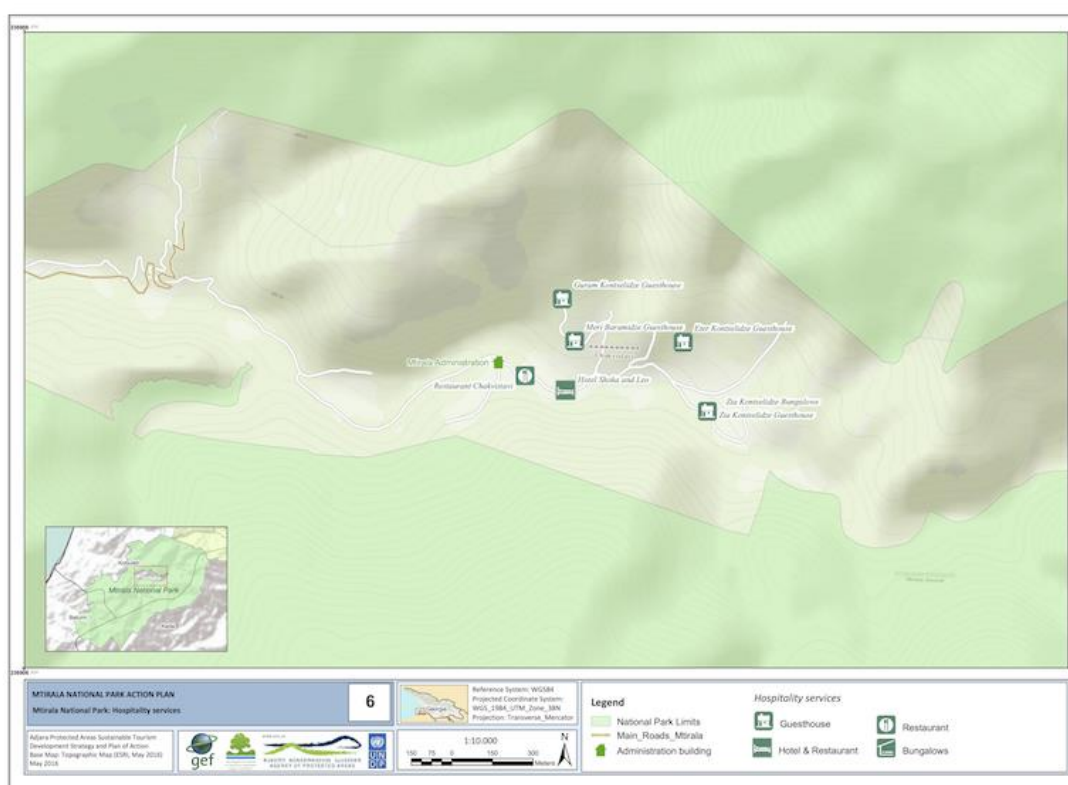


Figure 18: Hospitality businesses in the support zone of Mtirala National Park. Source: HIDRIA

## ACCOMMODATION

The current accommodation offer in Mtirala National Park support zone is concentrated in Chakvistavi. The existing accommodation capacity is made up, basically, of guesthouses and one hotel. Some of the guesthouses have already some experience and are largely benefiting from


tourism, even they are expanding the business. Other guesthouses have started more recently and they are benefiting from the support of the Department of Tourism and Resorts (DTR).

The guesthouses don't have internet connection and the marketing efforts are non-existent. DTR has placed signs to show the direction of the different guesthouses, promote them in their website ([www.gobatumi.com](http://www.gobatumi.com)) and facilitate the booking process. The word of mouth is functioning as main promoting tool and some of these guesthouses are fully booked during high season.


The quality differs from one guesthouse to other and it is recommended that common standards are met in order to succeed as a tourism destination. Some of the guesthouses providers are demanding more and specific trainings related to customer service, languages and management. The Hotel Shoka & Leo has a more professional approach to the accommodation business. They offer middle range accommodation combined with tours services. This hotel employs already some locals and it has produced some leaflets to promote the place. They have plans to develop some other accommodation options such as camping places.


The increase in the tourism demand, it is easily perceived in the new developments that are already planned as the parking or even catering places.

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


ZIA/GELA KONTSELIDZE GUESTHOUSE	
<p><b>Location:</b> Chakvistavi</p>	
<p><b>Description:</b> The guesthouse has 4 double rooms available, and two bathrooms. The average price is 50-60 Gel per day, including three meals. They receive an important number of visitors from Germany, Poland, Ukraine or Norway. They are many times overbooked. Zia is also developing 5 cottages and additional toilets. They expect to have internet available soon.</p>	


<p><b>Contact:</b> Zia Kontsetlidze Tel. +995 557 65 17 64/ 555 55 91 22</p>	
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GURAM KONTSELIDZE GUESTHOUSE	
<p><b>Location:</b> Chakvistavi</p>	
<p><b>Description:</b> This guesthouse can accommodate 4 visitors simultaneously (2 rooms available) It was renovated with support of WWF The average price in 35 GEL/per day. Three meals included (traditional Georgian cuisine). They mostly receive domestic tourists.</p>	
<p><b>Contact:</b> Guram Kontselidze Tel.: +995 558 46 68 28</p>	

ETER KONTSELIDZE GUESTHOUSE	
<p><b>Location:</b> Chakvistavi</p>	
<p><b>Description:</b> The average price in 50 GEL/per day. Three meals included.</p>	
<p><b>Contact:</b> Eter Kontsenlidze Tel. +995 558 71 90 06</p>	




MERY BARAMIDZE GUESTHOUSE	
<b>Location:</b> Chakvistavi	
<b>Description:</b> This guesthouse can accommodate 4 visitors simultaneously. The average price is 50 GEL/per day. Three meals included.	
<b>Contact:</b> Mei Barmidze Tel. +995 577 46 99 44	

HOTEL SHOKA AND LEO	
<b>Location:</b> Chakvistavi	
<b>Description:</b> The hotel has 5 double rooms with private bathrooms and toilets. They also offer catering (Ajarian traditional dishes). The average price is 70 Gel/per day. (2 persons)/ 100 Gel (for 3 persons), including breakfast. They are on booking.com and sometimes are fully booked. They offer tourism activities such as horse riding or cycling.	
<b>Contact:</b> Tel. +995 593 35 84 35 // 577 55 94 29	

In addition to the existing guesthouses in Chakvistavi, there are other areas with some potential for accommodation development. For instance, there are villagers in Agara ready to offer accommodation services to visitors.

## RESTAURANTS

The restaurants offer in the area is very limited. In Chakvistavi there are only two restaurants available, the restaurant Chakvistavi (open only during high season) and Shoka & Leo. There is room for additional catering places or for families offering “take-away”/Lunch boxes” for visitors. Some catering developments area already planned.

RESTAURANT CHAKVISTAVI	
<b>Location:</b> Chakvistavi	
<b>Description:</b> It is run by local family supported by WWF/Norwegian project funds.	
<b>Contact:</b> Jeiran Kontsenlidze Tel.: +995 59300 93 32; 557 74 53 80	

## SHOPS

There is a Honey House, “Nobati”, close to the MNP administration building in the village of Chakvi. This honey house has been funded by NGO Mta da Bari (WWF/Norwegian support project). This shop sells locally produced honey, helping local villagers to promote their local products.

Also, a family owns a small place where honey and vodka are offered. Recently, a small market place in Chakvistavi was opened; and small shop in village Khala provides simple food for travelers.

Villagers in Chakvistavi were granted with Bee hives, one of them has bee hives making studio; while another resident has comb making workshop (donor - WWF) - 2010.



Figure 19: Honey House in Chakvi. Source: HIDRIA

## 4.4. ANALYSIS OF TOURISM DEMAND

### 4.4.1. Existing tourism demand

Mtirala National Park is the most visited protected area in Ajara. Tourism figures show an increasing growth in the number of visitors to the NP, especially from 2013 to 2014. In 2015, the total number of visitors was 21.981 representing a 4% decrease in comparison with 2013 figures. .

Month	2013	2014	2015	2015 (Georgian)	2015 (Foreign)
January	162	84	186	215	24
February	315	259	247	162	37
March	276	427	463	396	67
April	862	882	822	659	163
May	2.101	2.153	1.823	1.502	321
June	2.899	3.112	2.035	1.367	668
July	2.492	4.599	4.632	2.708	1.924
August	3.263	6.871	7.004	4.523	2.481
September	2.206	2.786	3.054	1.965	1.084
October	957	969	725	559	166
November	704	639	659	529	130
December	216	187	331	275	56
<b>TOTAL (year)</b>	<b>16.453</b>	<b>22.968</b>	<b>21.981</b>	<b>14.860</b>	<b>7.121</b>

Table 8: Number of visitors to Mtirala National Park. Source: MTNP

The monthly analysis of visitors reveals a high seasonality in visitation patterns. The “high-season” extends from May to September, being August the month in which the Park receives a higher number of visitors (7,004 in 2015).

The seasonality is related to the climatic conditions and that Ajara Region is a well-known summer destination for Georgians and neighbouring countries.

According to existing statistics, in 2015 68% of visitors were national and 32% international. A great percentage of international visitors to Mtirala NP come from neighbouring countries, such as Ukraine and Russia. In the following figure, are represented the most important international markets.

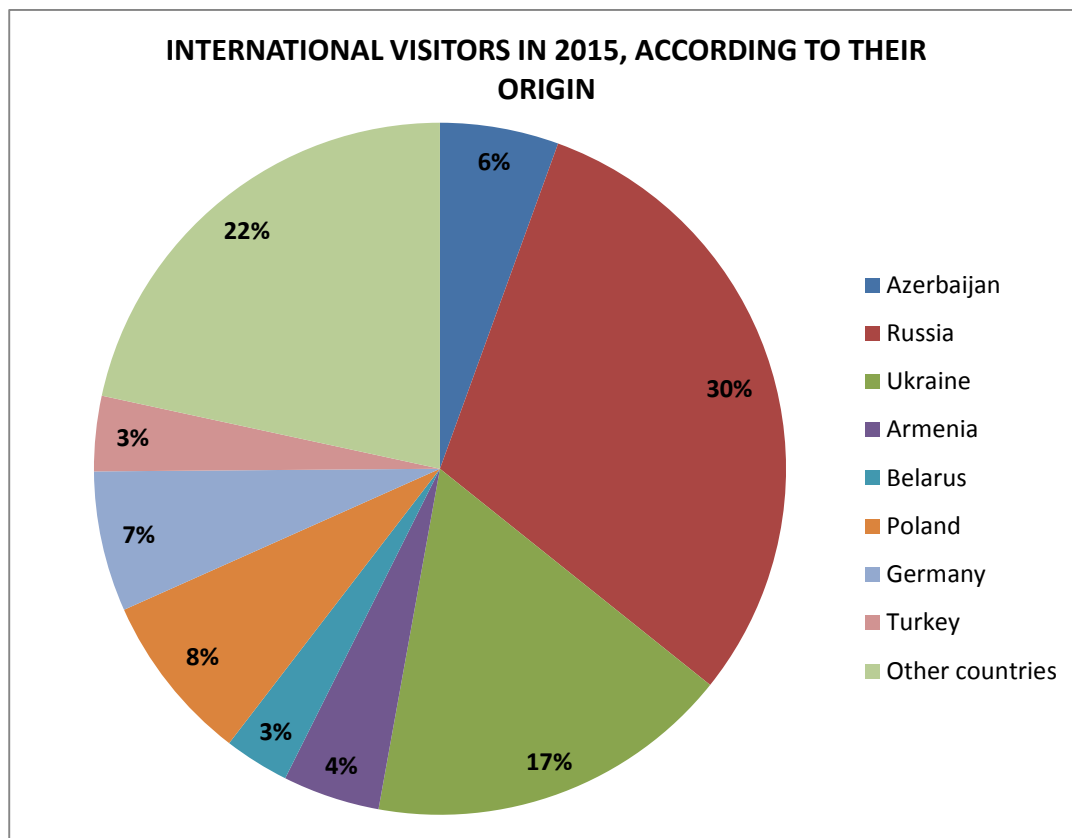


Figure 20: International Visitors in 2015, according to their origin. Source: MNTP

In terms of economic income, the amount generated by tourism services and activities in 2015 accounted 8.014 Gel, which is a similar amount to the one collected in 2014 (8.017 Gel).

Most of the revenues derive from accommodation services (picnic places, rental of sleeping bags, rooms), outdoor recreational activities.

Although the Park promotes additional activities such as canyoning and horseback riding, no revenues are being perceived from these activities. In the following figure, a comparison between the income raised in 2014 and 2015 is presented. It can be observed that zip line is the activity that generates most of the revenues for the Park. In contraposition, it is shown how hotel room (accommodation provided in the Visitor Shelter) did not generate any revenues in 2015 due to the lack of management.



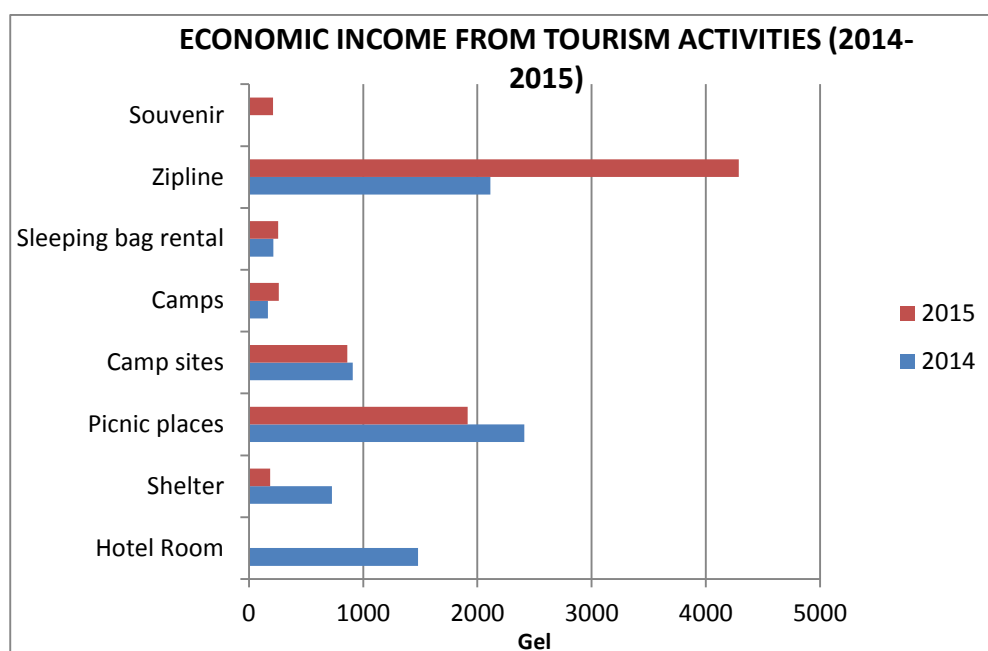


Figure 21: Economic income generated by tourism activities in 2014-2015 (Gel). Source: MNTP

#### 4.4.2. Economic benefits for local communities

Tourism development in Mtirala National Park has contributed significantly to improve the socio-economic situation of the communities living around the Park, especially Chakvistavi.

According to a recent study elaborated by Malkhaz Adeishvili in the framework of the UNDP/GEF project “*Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Ajara Region’s Protected Areas*”, the establishment of the Mtirala National Park has brought many benefits to the community, among them: the supply of electric power, cellular phone connection, and above all the creation of new economic opportunities related to tourism.

As it has been mentioned, several families are engaged in tourism activities and this is causing some positive effects over the population as the reduction of the migration from Chakvistavi and even some families are returning back.

Moreover, Mr. Adeishvili had done an estimation on the economic value (in Gel) of the different ecosystem services provided by the National Park for the local families. According to his estimation, the total economic value of the tourism activities is 1,244,655 Gel<sup>4</sup>, from which at least 13 households as well as taxi drivers and tour agents have benefited.

This figure reveals that tourism is contributing significantly to the social wellbeing of local population, and the efforts should continue in order to extend these benefits to other groups and communities.

<sup>4</sup> “Assessment of the Ajara Protected Areas Ecosystem Service Values and Benefits. Field level surveys and assessment in the target protected areas”. Malkhaz Adeishvili, draft November 2015

#### 4.4.3. Market trends and influences affecting consumer behaviour

Tourism industry has experiencing important changes over the last decades in terms of visitation patterns and visitor behaviours, the identification of current and future trends is relevant in order adequate the tourism offer to visitor's demands.

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.

In addition, there are other general tourism trends that should be taken into account:

- » Tourists are more **physically and intellectually active** now than previously. There is a trend to being more adventurous on holiday, seeking in trying out new activities, including different outdoor sports as well as walking and cycling. The desire of learning while travelling is also demanding educational activities and experiences related to PA's through interpretation centres, educational/interpretive paths, etc.
- » **Environment, attractive landscapes** and healthy nature are becoming more important in the decision process. People's concern about environmental issues and sustainability is generating "greener" life styles and, therefore, there is a growing demand for destinations with higher environmental standards.
- » Demand for **unique experiences** and authenticity.
- » **New technologies and internet use** are changing the way people travel and experience the visitation. Social media, peer ratings, user-generated blogs are concepts completely integrated in the tourism industry. Moreover, the extensive use of mobile devices such as smartphones or tables to obtain travel information demands websites suitable for access from mobile device, travel apps for getting all relevant information of the destination, etc.

#### 4.4.4. 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.

The existing activities in Mtirala National Park caters for different markets. Day-trippers have short-trails to discover nature as well as the zip line and several picnic options. For those expending a long weekend, longer trails are offered and there are different options of accommodation available.

Also hard-ecotourists have activities available such as the canyoning. However, the offer can be improved.

The development of other niche markets such as bird-watchers, it is in an early stage. Specific tours should be developed to cater for this market. Excursions at the time birds can be spotted, the availability of expert guides and the possibility of having lunch boxes should be offered to this market.

In order to attract a larger number of international market, attractive information in different languages (at least Russian, English and Turkish) should be developed. The presence of specialized guides that can speak foreign languages is a challenge to overcome.

## 4.5. MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Park administration has a limited budget to develop promotional activities. The Park counts on some brochures, which shall be improved, and a Facebook profile to give some exposure to the natural values of the Park

Mtirala National Park is promoted through both agencies, the Agency of Protected Areas (APA) and the Department of Tourism and Resorts (DTR) at Regional Level.

### AGENCY OF PROTECTED AREAS (APA)

In the website of APA (<http://apa.gov.ge/en/>) information regarding Mtirala National Park can be found<sup>5</sup>, this information includes data regarding access to the park, description of the main characteristics of the Park and the existing trails. This information is available in English, Russian and Georgian.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://apa.gov.ge/en/protected-areas/cattestone/mtiralas-erovnuli-parkis-administracia/kolxetis-erovnuli-parkis-damatebiti-girsshesanishnaobani/kintrishis-daculi-teritoriebis-damatebiti-girsshesanishnaobani>

The information provided is very basic and the design is not appealing for visitors. The current website does not allow visitors to download the GPS tracks of the trails or even to download a digital version of the Park's brochures.

APA has not available any application or mobile solution related to tourism in Ajara Protected Areas.

On the other hand, APA is making important efforts to promote Protected Areas at international level. In 2015-2016, APA participated in several tourism fairs at national and international level to promote 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.

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

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

Table 9: List of International Travel Fairs. Source: HIDRIA

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.

## DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND RESORTS

As the organization responsible for tourism development in Ajara region, the DTR promotes activities related to Mtirala National Park. In the official tourism website ([www.gobatumi.com](http://www.gobatumi.com)) information related to the Protected Area can be found. However, this information is limited and mostly refers to its main values and attributes.

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

### a) Route/tours development

The DTR has designed and promotes a tour to Mtirala. The tour is called “Mtirala National Park – The Park of a weeping mountain”. The tour has a duration of 8 hours at it can be enjoyed from June to November. The cost of the tour is 35 USD at it includes transportation, guide assistance, a hiking tour, and local dinner.

This tour is offered in the different Tourism Information Centres that DTR has available.

DTR also organizes private transportation to the protected area for those visitors that request it.

### 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 Mtirala National Park.



Figure 22: Brochure of the Protected Areas in Ajara. Source: Ajara Region official website

The website also promotes the different accommodation options that can be found in Chakvistavi village.

***c) Guesthouses signs***

The DTR has designed and installed several signs in the area to inform visitors about the location of the guesthouses in Chakvistavi. Besides this the DTR is providing training to these local providers to enhance the quality of the offered services.

***d) Other promotional activities: Press and Tour Operators Fam Trips.***

In June 2016, DTR organized a press tour with journalists of National Geographic and other popular media publishing for visiting Ajara. Also Polish journalists were visiting the region within. Press representatives were visiting among others the Batumi, Botanical Garden and high-mountainous Ajara, including Mtirala National Park and the services offered there. Within the press tour journalists were also given an opportunity to taste the local dishes.

These type of events are important to position Mtirala at international level in relevant markets.

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

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

- **Limited institutional capacity to operate effectively and efficiently:**
  - Core competencies of PA workers (especially rangers) are not adequately defined and do not respond to organizational needs in relation to environmental education and tourism.
  - Rangers are not willing to engage in tourism-related activities, as these are not part of their “defined” core competencies.
  - Skills of administration in hospitality and tourism areas are limited, and should be enhanced for attending adequately existing and future demand.
- **Limited participation of stakeholders in decision making of PA's:**
  - Limited involvement of adjacent communities, especially Chakvistavi, in the decision-making process of the Park.
  - TTOO and other tourism providers in the area do not collaborate with Mtirala National Park administration, especially for promotion.

- Limited co-operation with DTR, although DTR promotes the Park and supports local communities, especially in Chakvistavi, there is limited co-ordination in the planning of actions.
- **Concession system:**
  - There is no clear policy or framework for concession development. The rooms available in the Visitor Centre are not being used due to lack of effective management.
- **Tourism experience:**
  - Most of the visitors use zip line while other existing activities (horseback riding or canyoning) are not being promoted by the Park.
  - Lack of necessary materials to conduct some activities, for instance equipment for canyoning or even helmets for horse riding. This lack is clearly affecting the performance of these activities.
  - Quality of the services offered by private sector should be improved (especially in terms of guest house services).
- **Accessibility:**
  - Roads infrastructure to access the Park is uncomfortable, and public transportation system unreliable and inadequate, providing a challenge for tour operations and also for individuals that do not have a private car to visit the PA's.
- **Short-tourism season:**
  - Although Ajara PA's are open all year round, visitation to the areas occurs between May and September, being August the month with higher number of visitors. The climate in low season months such as March, April, or even September/October is suitable for mountain and sports activities.
  - During high season, the high visitation level in Chakvistavi is already causing some discomfort to locals.



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

Mtirala 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:**
  - Mtirala National Park hosts a rich biodiversity with unique flora and fauna and an attractive mountainous landscape.
  - Bird watching areas. Mtirala is one of the areas in the Region where migratory birds can be easily spotted. There are already some infrastructures however, they are not adequately promoted.
- **Good availability of adventure/sports activities**
  - Mtirala is already a well-known National Park thanks to the Zip line. Other sports activities are already offered such as horseback riding and canyoning, however they are not adequately promoted.
  - Mtirala National Park has good conditions to develop winter activities such as snowshoeing that could help to attract visitors during low season, and increase income during these months.
- **Local communities' dynamism and hospitality:**
  - Local communities are willing to engage in tourism related activities. Chakvistavi village shows an important level of entrepreneurship in terms of tourism businesses (there are already several guesthouses operational, as well other types of accommodation options, catering places, etc.
  - Villages outside the boundaries of the Park such as Zundaga or Agara are willing to get involved in tourism development. Aghara is developing a route that would connect the village with the "Cold spring route".
  - Local communities are warmth and hospitable.
  - 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.
- **Proximity to Kintrishi Protected Areas and Machakhela National Park:**
  - Mtirala National Park shares boundaries with Kintrishi Protected Areas. The proximity to Machakhela National Park makes feasible the development of a combined route that includes the three Protected Areas.

- **Proximity to Batumi and Kobuleti:**

- Batumi and Kobuleti, as coastal destinations, 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.

- **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 Mtirala 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 Ajara PA's administrations.</li> <li>• Investments from international donors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively participate in participatory structures such as the Regional Advisory Council.</li> <li>• Define concrete actions and projects that can be supported by international donors.</li> </ul>
<b>MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open all year round.</li> <li>• Public transport to Chakvi and taxis are available</li> <li>• Close to Kobuleti and Batumi.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop winter activities to extend the tourism season.</li> <li>• Special transportation system should be organized to bring people to the MTNP, especially during high season.</li> <li>• Design promotional activities to attract Batumi and Kobuleti visitors. Also agreements with tourism operators.</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> </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> </ul>
<b>CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Batumi Raptor migration area.</li> <li>• Colchic forest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote bird-watching activities and participate and bird-watching related events. Collaboration with specialized tour operators.</li> <li>• Develop interpretive routes and new trails that promote these natural values. Promote trekking activities.</li> </ul>

<b>CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scenic beauty.</li> <li>• Interesting fauna</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop interpretive routes and new trails that promote these natural values. Promote trekking activities.</li> <li>• Assess and develop wildlife tours</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zip line attracts an important number of visitors.</li> <li>• Availability of several activities (horseback riding, canyoning)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create new interesting services to extend the stay of visitors in the area.</li> <li>• Encourage and promote the undertaking of these activities.</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURES AND FACILITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good quality of tourism infrastructure and facilities.</li> <li>• Two trails already developed and in good condition.</li> <li>• Bird-watching tower.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase management efficiency of existing infrastructures and facilities.</li> <li>• Improve existing trails by developing interpretive content. New facilities.</li> <li>• Develop specific niche product focused on bird watching.</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM DEMAND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing number of visitors.</li> <li>• Well known protected area at national level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer quality services and activities to increase visitor repetition.</li> <li>• Improve positioning at international level.</li> </ul>

	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	<b>REDUCE WEAKNESSES</b>
<b>MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of cooperation with DTR and GNTA.</li> <li>• Staff lacks of tourism related skills</li> <li>• Quality of existing statistics is low.</li> <li>• Limited budget</li> <li>• Inexistence of governance structures to involve local community in decision-making process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in the Regional Advisory Council</li> <li>• Design training for MNP administration in tourism related skills.</li> <li>• Improve the system of collecting visitors statistics and the information to be obtained.</li> <li>• Design training in business planning and project writing.</li> <li>• Create a participatory structure to encourage participation of local communities, private business in Park's decision making.</li> </ul>
<b>MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road to access the Park in bad condition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign agreement with Road Department to improve accessibility to the area.</li> </ul>

<b>CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor regular public transport to MNP.</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>Limited space for car parking in Chakvistavi.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Habilitate a space for car parking in Chakvistavi, limit the car access to the Visitor Center area.</li> </ul>
<b>LOCAL COMMUNITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distrust of local population to Park administration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve local communities in decision making and management of the National Park.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low environmental awareness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elaborate an Environmental Education Programme for locals and visitors.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High level migration towards big cities (Batumi, Tbilisi)</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>Enhance the capacity of locals to create tourism products in conjunction with the National Park.</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>
<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>Develop sustainable activities to promote the natural and cultural resources.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not assessment on cultural resources in the area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an assessment on cultural resources in the area.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited of interpretive material to promote the values of the Protected Area (some in bad condition)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop comprehensive educational and interpretive material to promote the protected area.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of needed equipment for development of activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchase needed equipment to conduct existing activities and ensure visitors safety.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor quality of existing tourism services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the quality of tourism service providers, provide training and create standards and certification system.</li> </ul>

<b>TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURES AND FACILITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing tourism infrastructure is underutilized (Visitor Centre, ranger house).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve management effectiveness of existing infrastructures.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some of the facilities/infrastructure are in bad condition (ex. Panels).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substitute and update damaged panels and other facilities</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM DEMAND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of English speaking guides.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize foreign languages training courses for local community members and guides.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited expenditure of tourists.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce entrance fee and increase income generation options.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High seasonality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop winter sports activities and other activities to be enjoyed in low season</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited tourism promotion. Lack of funds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an annual marketing operative plan with different traditional and digital actions to increase awareness on the Protected Area.</li> </ul>

	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>ENHANCE THE OPPORTUNITIES</b>
<b>MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of Friends of Mtirala PA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively participate and involve stakeholders in the Association.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in the Regional Advisory Council (RAC).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively participate and involve stakeholders in the Council.</li> </ul>
<b>LOCAL COMMUNITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest of surrounding communities in participating in tourism development (Agara, Zundaga).</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 INFRASTRUCTURES AND FACILITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combined trail for the tree Ajara Protected Areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a common promotional campaign to market the trail and the Region.</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>
	<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>



<b>TOURISM DEMAND</b>	<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>TTOO interest.</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>MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Congestion of cars in the area of the Visitor Centre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish clear limits to vehicles to Park area. Promote use of public transportation.</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 local traditions and customs.</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.</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>
<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 Mtirala 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.

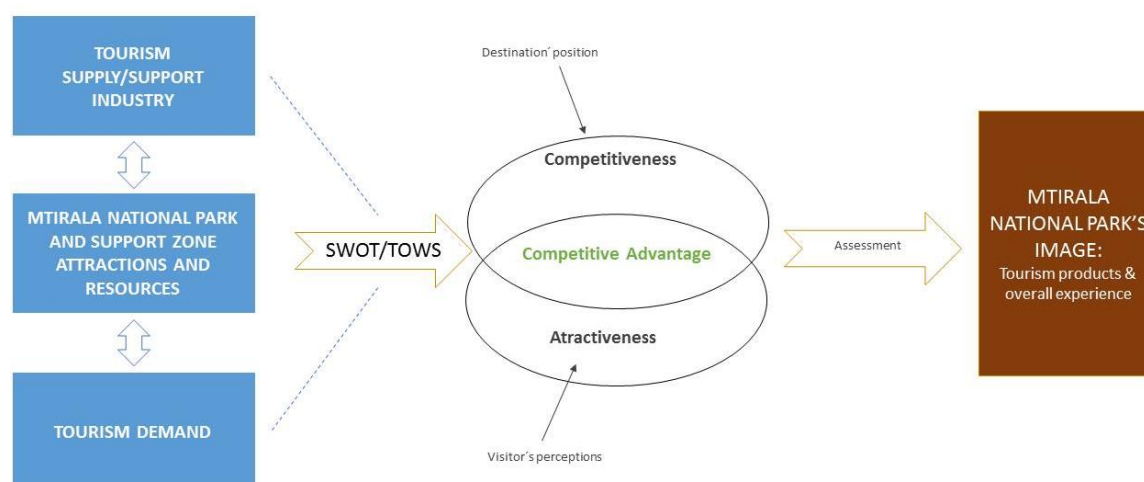
As shown in the assessment, Mtirala National Park is a well-known and well-developed Park. Investments of several donors over the last years have positively contributed to its development. In addition, the efforts of APA and DTR have contributed to promote the Park at national and international level.

For the next five years, Mtirala National Park should focus on (1) consolidating the achievements reached over the last years by improving the quality of existing services, (2) reinforce its positioning as an adventure tourism destination by increasing the activities offered, and (3) develop new areas for tourism to reduce the tourism pressure over Chakvistavi.

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

- » Local culture
- » Adventure tourism (variety of available activities)
- » Birdwatching

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.



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

Since Mtirala National Park counts on an important development level, the proposed new facilities and activities are focused on developing new areas that can contribute to extend the activities available beyond Chakvistavi, creating new economic opportunities for other areas such as Korolistavi or Agara.

Based on existing natural and cultural assets (competitive advantage) and prevailing tourism trends, the potential tourism services and facilities that can be developed in Mtirala National Park would be:

### TOURIST TRAILS

During the assessment, two new trails have been identified:

**a) Korolistavi trail.** The trail would start from the Park entrance in Korolistavi. This route would follow an existing route up to km 9. From this point the trail would have two alternatives:

- **Alternative 1.** Towards the Soviet ruins. This trail would have a total distance of 10.40 km. This route would be better suited for hiking, biking and horse riding. This route is also in good condition and only minor works would be needed.
- **Alternative 2:** Towards Chakvistavi. This trail would have a total distance of 15 km. Since to get to Chakvistavi, visitors would have to cross a bridge, it would not be recommended for horse riding (the suitability for biking has to be checked).

This route could also start from Chakvistavi side; however, the hike up would be more difficult. This trail has not been completely assessed, therefore should be investigated.

This trail is also suitable to develop snowshoeing during wintertime.

**b) Agara trail.** This trail would start in the community of Agara and to the visitor shelter located in the Cold Spring Route, and from there visitors could hike toward Chakvistavi following the Cold Spring Route. Alternatively, visitors on the Cold Spring route could take the circular route, or from the Visitor shelter hike towards Agara.

The Agara trail is almost finished; local villagers have been working in creating the trail on their own initiative. Park administration is also working in developing their side to facilitate the union from the visitor shelter up to the Park boundary towards Agara. Therefore, it is likely that can be operational soon.

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.

The development of these routes will also facilitate the development of additional services that can create economic income such as bike rental or snow shoeing.

For more details, see Annex 2- Maps 7, 8 and 10.

## **BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES**

Finally, to complement the tourism offer in the Park, several business opportunities have been identified. The business opportunities are 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.).

As it has already been mentioned, the hospitality offer around Mtirala National Park is located in Chakvistavi; there are other villages that are willing to be engaged in tourism business. Agara, for instance, with the development of the trail that connects the village with the Cold Spring Trail (and potential trail that will join the three protected areas) has a lot of potential for further development. There are already some initiatives on going.

The business opportunities will be related to the provision of accommodation and other hospitality services such as guesthouses, catering places, guiding services, etc.

## 7. STRATEGIC PLAN

### 7.1. VISION, MISSION AND GOALS

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

The **VISION** of the Mtirala National Park is: *“By 2020 Mtirala National Park will be a well-known national park for the quality of its infrastructures, hospitality services and its environment. Local communities fully support its conservation efforts and are directly benefited from the tourism development in the area.”*

The **MISSION** of Mtirala National Park is the protection and conservation of the Colchic Forest and its associated biodiversity; the dissemination of its natural values by promoting environmental education and sustainable tourism activities through which visitors can enjoy and actively learn about it.

Based on the established vision, the **GOALS** of the *Mtirala 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 their objectives to meet the overall goals and to contribute to the vision of the Mtirala National Park. Setting clear, measurable, specific, relevant and achievable objectives is important for a successful Strategy.

### 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 at PA level to increase governance in the Park is established by 2017.
- **OBJ. 1.3.** By 2020, tourism generated income increases by 50% in Mtirala National Park.
- **OBJ. 1.4.** A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural and local communities is defined and implemented by end of 2019.

### 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 Mtirala National Park comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2019.
- **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 Protected Area administration by 2020.

### Strategic Line 4: Infrastructure and services development

- **OBJ. 4.1.** By 2017, accessibility to Mtirala National Park is easy and comfortable.
- **OBJ. 4.2.** Demand of existing tourism products increases by 50% by 2018.
- **OBJ. 4.3.** New and sustainable tourism infrastructures and products that allow visitors to explore and discover new areas in Mtirala National Park are developed by 2018.
- **OBJ. 4.4.** A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Adjara Protected Areas is developed 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.** By 2020, Mtirala National Park will be widely known at national and international level.
- **OBJ. 5.2.** Information related to Mtirala National Park is easy accessible through new technologies.



## 8. ACTION PLAN

### STRATEGIC LINE 1: MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Increasing the effective management and governance will be the engine of tourism development in Mtirala 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. This structure should be participative, involving a broad range of relevant stakeholders such as regional government, municipalities, local communities, etc.

Governance is an essential concept to ensure protected areas sustainability. A key issue for governance includes ensuring participation of all stakeholders in decisions that affect them and consensus building.

Management is also responsible for providing a meaningful experience for visitors, by ensuring the quality of the activities available and the natural environment. Regular monitoring should be conducted to identify any negative impact from tourism activity. In addition, measure visitor satisfaction is key to address any potential weakness that may occur in the Protected Area.

**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
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Mtirala National Park together with Machakhela 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, the Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan has been defined. In the framework of the strategy, a multistakeholder platform, in which the main stakeholders are involved, has been recommended.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>A Regional Advisory Council (recently established) is functioning at the Department of Tourism and Resorts of Ajara (DTR). This Regional Advisory Council can play a key role in increasing the cooperation level among PA administrations, DTR, and other stakeholders. The RAC unites representatives of private sector and municipalities and facilitates public and private dialogue on the tourism issues.</p> <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. Mtirala 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>			
<b>Activities included</b> <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>	DTR		
<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>
<b>Justification</b> <p>Tourism industry is complex and contains different fields of economy such as transport, food industry, hospitality etc. The establishment of strategic alliances or cooperation agreements can facilitate the achievement of set goals.</p> <p>It is recommended that Mtirala National Park administration establishes strong linkages with stakeholders/representatives both public and private sector.</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, Batumi Botanical Garden, Shota Rustaveli University, tourism suppliers, transportation providers, etc.</p>		

<b>Description</b> <p>One of the main stakeholders of the Park is DTR, which promotes the Region, as a tourism destination; and specifically the protected areas. Although the Regional Advisory Committee will provide a framework for cooperation with DTR, it is important to develop specific agreements for the development of Mtirala National Park. Relevant aspects are: the small business development program for local suppliers/ implementation of training activities, etc.</p> <p>Batumi and Kobuleti hotels and other hospitality providers in the municipalities of Khelvachauri and Kobuleti are relevant partners in order to promote the National Park; as well as the Batumi Botanical Garden. The Botanical Garden receives a great number of visitors annually, and it is a good place from which promote the Ajara Protected Areas, and especially Mtirala National Park due to its location.</p> <p>Transportation companies play also an important role, increasing the frequency and routes towards Mtirala National Park should be a goal that has to be negotiated.</p> <p>Other potential partners for product development could be: Georgian Fly Fishing Club, Georiders (for mountain biking routes), Batumi Raptor Count, etc.</p>			
<b>Activities included</b> <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 Khelvachauri and Kobuleti Municipalities Shota Rustaveli University Tourism Private Sector (TTOO/TA, hotels, restaurants, transport, etc.) Local Communities NGOs		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<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 Mtirala 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>Mtirala Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan</i>, strong cooperation with stakeholders' regional government, Khelvachauri and Kobuleti municipalities and, especially, the private sector, and local communities is needed.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>To ensure good level of governance in Mtirala National Park is necessary to establish a multi-stakeholder governance structure. The recommended action is to create the Mtirala 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 Mtirala National Park support zone. It is the responsibility of MTNP and the stakeholders to define the Terms of Reference that should be the framework for its development.</p> <p>During the assessment phase it has been identified that communication between National Park and local communities should be improved. The involvement of local communities, especially those interested in developing tourism related activities such as Chakvistavi, Agara or Korolistavi is key for the sustainability of tourism in the Park</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 Mtirala 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 "Mtirala National Park Advisory Council" will be assessed in 2016 in the framework on an UNDP project..</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 Mtirala National Park decision-making process.	

<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR Ajara Environmental Department Khelvachauri and Kobuleti Municipalities International Donors APA Tourism Private Sector (hotels, restaurants, etc.) Local Communities: Chakvistavi, Agara, Zundaga, ... NGOs		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017, the Terms of Reference for the regulation of the Mtirala NP Advisory Council are approved. ✓ At least two meetings are held annually.		
<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: By 2020, tourism generated income increases by 50% in Mtirala National Park.**

Action	Introduce an entrance fee to contribute to the conservation and sustainable development of Mtirala National Park.	1.3.1								
<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 Mtirala National Park it is recommended to introduce an entrance fee that can contribute to increase awareness on the need of increasing conservation efforts and increase appreciation about National Park.</p>										
<b>Description</b> <p>It is proposed that a pilot initiative for the introduction of entrance fees is initiated in Mtirala NP. This is the NP that receives a higher number of visitors, it is quite known, and it already offers a wide range of recreational opportunities.</p> <p>The introduction of entrance fees in Mtirala can generate important income level to further develop and improve the services offered by the Park. The introduction of entrance fees can be also an added value strategy. People increase appreciation of an area when they have to pay something for it.</p> <p>The proposed entrance Fee Structure would be very low to not discourage visitation.</p>										
<table><tr><th colspan="2">ENTRANCE FEE STRUCTURE</th></tr><tr><th>Visitor</th><th>Mtirala MP</th></tr><tr><td>General</td><td>3 Gel</td></tr><tr><td>Groups (above 10p)</td><td>2 Gel /pp</td></tr></table>			ENTRANCE FEE STRUCTURE		Visitor	Mtirala MP	General	3 Gel	Groups (above 10p)	2 Gel /pp
ENTRANCE FEE STRUCTURE										
Visitor	Mtirala MP									
General	3 Gel									
Groups (above 10p)	2 Gel /pp									

	Local residents	Free
	School Children /Students	Free

In 2015, 21.981 tourists visited Mtirala National Park: 14.860 nationals and 7.121 foreigners. To calculate potential revenues derived from entrance fee, we'll calculate that all foreigners and 65% would of the nationals would pay the general entrance fee (we assume that 35% can be locals/school children, etc.). Based on these estimations the revenues for 2015 in entrance fees would be 50,340 Gel.

In order to facilitate the acceptance of entrance fee, some compensation can be included in the prices such as a discount for using the zipline, camping place or even the accommodation in the shelter. The amount to be collected through entrance fee would be higher than the collected through other activities, and moreover, this compensation would encourage the use of other services provided by the Park administration

The payment of fee should also include a brochure of the area in which should be explained the importance of paying fees, what these fees will be used for, also other information should be included in the brochure such a map of the National Park, the activities that can be done, prices of the activities, etc.

The fees can be collected at the visitor centre against a ticket. Additional personnel should be hired to collect the fee. An accounting system to track and analyse fees being collected should also be established.

It is important that, prior to the establishment of the entrance fee system, an awareness campaign is defined and implemented to clearly explain the reasons and objectives of the fee system. In addition, a survey among visitors on the willingness to pay should be conducted.

Promoting public awareness and acceptance of user-pays is a key factor for encouraging public support. Especially important is that visitors perceive that they are paying for a service and not for an entry.

The introduction of fees should be publicised through a wide range of media (brochures, advertisements in local newspapers, etc.), travel agencies commercializing the area should be informed through a mailing campaign.

The project should be monitored and if successful should be implemented in Kintrishi PA and Machakhela NP (once services and infrastructures are improved).

If in the near future 50% of visitors pay entrance fees the income could sum up to 40,000 Gel, which would be 4 times more than present revenue of Mtirala NP).

<b>Activities included:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaborate a Plan to introduce the entrance fee in Mtirala National Park</li> <li>• Present the Plan to relevant stakeholders to be agreed (Regional Advisory Council and Mtirala Advisory Council)</li> <li>• Implement the activities included in the Plan (conduct a willingness to pay survey, elaboration of an awareness campaign, plan the infrastructures and facilities needed to ensure the collection of fees, etc.</li> </ul>	

<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Mtirala National Park increases its financial sustainability and it is an example for other Protected Areas on how to introduce entrance fees. .
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<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Mtirala Advisory Committee and Regional Advisory Committee members		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ By 2017, at least two meetings are held to discuss about the introduction of fees</li> <li>✓ The Plan to introduce the entrance fee is approved and implemented by the end of 2018</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2019	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	27.000 Gel (including awareness campaign and implementation of actions needed to collect fees)		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Establish adequate management for existing infrastructures</b>	<b>1.3.2</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>The Visitor Centre in Chakvistavi has four rooms available to rent. These rooms were managed by a third party during 2014. In 2015, the concessionaire renounced to the concession, the rooms were not managed during 2015.</p> <p>APA has plans to delegate in the Park's administration the management of their facilities instead of give it on concession; however, the collaboration with private businesses, especially local, would be highly recommended.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Hotel rooms in the visitor centre offer a great potential to raise economic revenues for Mtirala National Park administration. National Park administration has limited capacities to manage it, and it is not part of its core business. Therefore, it is recommended to rent it to a third party (preferably a local).</p> <p>In 2016, Mtirala National Park has received support from donors to renovate and manage the hotel room. However, in order to sustainable sustain this infrastructure without donors' support, a comprehensive business plan should be elaborated, potential investors or managers invited and establish an agreement with local entrepreneurs to run the business.</p> <p>In addition, the Park counts on a ranger house that it is not being used. This ranger house could be utilized as an additional souvenir shop, for bike rental, etc.</p>		
<p><b>Activities included:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear concession system is defined for the hotel room in the Visitor Centre.</li> <li>• The management of the hotel room is presented to public</li> <li>• Concession is signed for a short period (2-3 years) with option to be extended.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Hotel room is an important source of economic income for Mtirala National Park.	
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA	
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP	

<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017, adequate management system is established in hotel room in visitor centre.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	700 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 1.4: A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural and local communities is defined and implemented by end of 2019.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Develop a study on the carrying capacity visitor management in Mtirala National Park</b>	<b>1.4.1</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Protected Areas' role includes, on the one hand to ensure the protection of natural and cultural resources, and on the other hand to facilitate public use and enjoyment. For the sustainable development of tourism in protected area, the balance between these two goals has to be achieved. Directly related to this is the concept of carrying capacity, that has been defined as <i>"the maximum amount of visitors that can be at the same time in the tourist destination without causing negative effects on the physical, economical and socio-cultural values of society/community and without causing a (considerable) decrease in visitors' satisfaction"</i> meaning, the number of tourists that can be managed by a protected area without negatively affecting the natural resources or even the local communities.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Mtirala National Park is receiving an increasing number of visitors. This growth is derived from the efforts made in the creation and development of visitors' infrastructures and services. Most of these services are concentrated around Chakvistavi Village, increasing not only the environmental pressure in the area but also the social pressure over the villagers.</p> <p>The expansion of the tourism activities might have an impact on the natural resources that should be prevented by effectively measuring where the visitation limits have to be established.</p> <p>The carrying capacity should be defined based on the natural and cultural values and visitors potential impact. This study should be complimented with the visitor impact monitoring and the assessment of potential impacts of tourism on local population. All this information is basic to define the necessary measures to reduce the negative impact caused by the tourism activities. The preventive and corrective measures to be taken include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Producing leaflets on codes of conduct for visitors,</li> <li>- Adequate facilities and services for visitors,</li> <li>- Set limit to the number of visitors per day</li> <li>- Etc.</li> </ul> <p>Another aspect that should be taken into account is the number of vehicles that can manage the area. Around the Visitor Centre in Chakvistavi, there is a limited space for parking. There are already some plans (initiative of locals) to develop a car park area. However, administration should also take a leading role and define clear limits to the car that can have access to the park, and where exactly should park. In addition, regular public transportation system should be available for visitors to access to the area.</p>		

<b>Activities included</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a study for the evaluation of the optimum standing capacity (Carrying capacity).</li> <li>Identify measures to reduce the negative impact caused by the tourism activity.</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	An effective visitor management system is established.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA DTR Chakvistavi village		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2018, a technical assistance (i.e. University/private company) to conduct the study of the carrying capacity.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2018	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	21.000 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Elaborate and implement a Visitor Impact Monitoring System</b>	<b>1.4.2</b>
<b>Justification</b> <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 Mtirala National Park. Furthermore, monitoring visitor's use is essential to keep management informed to take measures, if needed, to address identified issues.</p>		
<b>Description</b> <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. 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>Some of the aspects to be monitored and to be completed with the communities' survey and the visitor satisfaction survey (described in actions 1.4.3/ 1.4.4)</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 MTNP Staff (rangers, visitor's specialist, etc.)		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ In 2017, the indicators to be measured and the baseline have been defined.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017(elaboration of baseline and indicators) 2019 (conduct the visitor impact monitoring)	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	8.500 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Elaborate a survey among local community members regarding tourism</b>	<b>1.4.3</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Tourism development can have a positive or negative impact on local. It is important to monitor not only the environmental cost that tourism development may have on Mtirala National Park but also the social impact on the communities of the support zone, and especially in Chakvistavi, the village around which most of the tourism development of the Park is occurring. A survey on the local communities' perception about tourism should be conducted. The survey should be a tool to avoid potential adverse effects and ensure their well-being.</p>		

<b>Description</b> <p>Tourism development is expected to bring social and economic benefits to the local communities located in the support zone of the protected areas. Tourism, however, may have also some negative impacts, that is necessary to prevent. Among these potential socio-cultural negative impacts that can derived from tourism are the change or loss of identity and values.</p> <p>Chakvistavi village is a traditional village in which live around 20 families. Tourism in the National Park is mostly concentrated around this village. Currently, there are 6 families offering accommodation options and there are other initiatives on going. During high season, the visitation level in the area is quite high, therefore, it is important to monitor potential impacts on local communities and to evaluate their level of satisfaction with existing visitation patterns.</p>			
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design a survey for local communities (Chakvistavi)</li> <li>• Conduct the survey</li> <li>• Analyse the results</li> <li>• Identify corrective measures if needed</li> </ul>			
<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 Municipalities		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2018, a survey to identify potential issues regarding tourism development in the communities has been designed.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018-2019	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	1.100 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Elaborate a visitor satisfaction survey</b>	<b>1.4.4</b>
<b>Justification</b> <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>		
<b>Description</b> <p>In addition to the local communities' survey, it is important to conduct satisfaction surveys with visitors. Mtirala National Park already collects surveys on visitor satisfaction. However, the information collected is very limited, and should be improved in order to better identify weaknesses in the services and infrastructures available. Besides this, the survey should provide the Park valuable information about visitor's profile and their specific interests. This information can be used to adjust the existing products to the different markets.</p>		

<p>These surveys can be designed and left in the different hotels, guesthouses, and also in the Visitor Centre. 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 weak aspects of the tourism offer. APA has already a template for the visitor satisfaction survey. This template should be adjusted to the reality of Mtirala National Park.</p> <p>An example of a visitor survey is provided in <b>Annex 1</b>.</p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design a visitors' satisfaction survey (APA has already one)</li> <li>• Conduct the survey</li> <li>• Analyse the results</li> <li>• Identify corrective measures if needed</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Visitors are satisfied with the services offered and their quality level.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR APA Tourism service providers (hotels, guesthouses, etc.)		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ By 2018 a survey to measure visitor satisfaction in MTNP is designed and it is available for tourists.</li> <li>✓ At least 60% of annual registered visitors complete the survey</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2019	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X 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. According to an assessment elaborated by Black Sea Eco Academy, during the profiling of the support zone communities, the environmental awareness of local population is very low.

The training sessions should include as topics: the importance of the protected areas, in terms of their role in biodiversity conservation and the sustainable socioeconomic development for the community; the sustainable use of natural resources, climate change resilience, etc.

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 defined by the quality of service and personal interaction experienced at destination; therefore, the development of quality interactions with PA's staff and local service providers is an important element of the tourism destination.

A relevant issue to take into account in relation to capacity building is the relevance of partnerships. Forming partnerships with local NGO's, academic institutions and private sector means that the PA's can make use of their experience, knowledge and skills to promote training and educational programmes (for instance: ELKANA, Shota Rustaveli University in Batumi, Hotels and Restaurants Association, etc.).

### OBJECTIVE 2.1. Increase knowledge 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.</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 training modules 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 training 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 be the 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
Languages (English)		X
Project writing	X	
Business planning	X	

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.

<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.

<p>Rangers working in protected areas 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 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.</li> <li>– Infrastructure and trails</li> <li>– Interpretation and environmental education</li> <li>– General Hospitality and tourism</li> <li>– Protection and enforcement</li> <li>– Emergency response (safety procedures)</li> <li>– Foreign languages</li> <li>– Monitoring</li> </ul> <p>All mentioned above are considered in structured capacity building program within the protected area system, (APA/SPPA project).</p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define training curricula for the PA's members.</li> <li>• Identify potential trainers/experts in the Region.</li> <li>• Establish an annual training calendar.</li> <li>• Implement training modules.</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	MTNP administration staff is fully trained in relevant issues		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	MTNP Kobuleti Vocational Education Training Centre NGOs Kobuleti and Khelvachauri Municipalities Local communities DTR Shota Rustaveli University		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	APA		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ A least two training courses are organized annually for MTNP administration staff.		
<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>	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 than theoretical courses. Study tours to other advanced protected areas such as Lagodekhi and Borjomi-Kharagauli as well as to other international protected areas would facilitate the exchange of best practices and create new ideas and strong linkages. The share 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 Mtirala National Park Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan, Mtirala’s administration staff, especially rangers and management staff, needs 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, visits to Okatse Canyon, Borjomi – Kharagauli and other national and international protected areas.		
<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	MTNP	
COORDINATOR	APA	
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ At least two study tours at national level are organized for MTNP administration staff during the period</li><li>✓ At least on study tours at international level is organized for MTNP administration staff during the period</li></ul>	
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2019	<div><div>PRIORITY</div><div>HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X 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 Mtirala National Park play an important role in the tourism development in the Park. Local tourism enterprises in the “support zone” should be supported to achieve their objectives in terms improving their well-being through the opportunity of creating new business and employment. 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 Mtirala 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 should be implemented to enhance the capacities of local communities in 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>The proposed training topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tourism and hospitality</li> <li>- Safe sanitation and food hygiene practices</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 (<i>see action 1.4.4</i>)</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> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>	NGOs Kobuleti/Khelvachauri Municipalities Local communities DTR Shota Rustaveli University Kobuleti Vocational Education Training Centre MTNP		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	APA		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ A least two training courses are organized annually for local communities' members.		
<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>	12.000 Gel/year		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Organize study tours for community members</b>	<b>2.2.2</b>
<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 other international protected areas would support the capacity building of community members engaged in tourism. Community members are the main stakeholders of Mtirala National Park. One of the main objectives of PAs is to support the initiatives of local population and their involvement in small businesses.		
<b>Description</b> Guesthouse owners, producers and other tourism service suppliers lack of quality service skills. They are motivated to develop small businesses and work in tourism, and need some support to improve their service level. Study visits will help communities in following aspects: <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. These study tours can be organized in conjunction with the communities located around Kintrishi and Machakhela National Parks.		
<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's MTNP DTR Local communities		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	APA		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least two study tours at national level are organized for local community members engaged in tourism business during the period</li> <li>✓ At least on study tours at international level is organized for local community members engaged in tourism business during the period</li> </ul>		
<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		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Design and implement a training programme about organic agriculture and product packaging for local farmers /producers</b>	<b>2.2.3</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Organic farming is closely linked to ecotourism or other forms of sustainable tourism. Organic agriculture is defined as an approach to agriculture and food production that is environmentally sustainable and can generate several positive impacts to rural society. Travellers visiting protected areas are interesting in consume organic food and other environmentally friendly products. It is an opportunity for farmer to generate additional income by producing environmentally friendly products that can be marketed/used in local catering places, guest housed or even to be sold to visitors.</p> <p>Most of local producers farm using traditional systems, encouraging the maintenance of this system and ensuring the products are organic is also a way of preserving biodiversity.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Tourism can represent an additional source of income for some members of the local communities living in the support zone of Mtirala National Park. However, tourism should not be regarded as the only way to improve their quality life.</p> <p>Agriculture is one of the main economic activities in the communities of the support zone. Maintaining and ensuring the sustainability of their traditional way of life is also important. Most farmers can also benefit from producing organic products that can be marketed for a more conscious traveller that is concerned about the origin of the food they eat and they quality of its production.</p> <p>Farming is also a good approach to traditions and culture, and agrotourism experiences could also be developed.</p> <p>Several fruits and other products are commonly produced in the communities around Protected Area. The elaboration of some prepared food/ or even juices to be offered to visitors can be an additional</p>		

<p>source of income. However, local producers should be adequately trained to be engaged in this type of businesses.</p> <p><i>(This action is related to action 3.2.1)</i></p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify farmers willing to participate in mentioned trainings</li> <li>• Identify training needs and develop a training curricula</li> <li>• Implement the training courses</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Local produced products are promoted.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Local communities NGOs		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Municipalities		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2018, at least two training courses have been carried out for local farmers.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018-2019	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	5.500 Gel		

### STRATEGIC LINE 3: LOCAL COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT

One of the main aims of tourism in protected areas is to enhance 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, ensuring 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 and promoting the purchase of local products by visitors, and supporting the promotion of new forms of employment (guides, etc.).

Some communities around Mtirala National Park are already benefiting from tourism development in the area (Chakvistavi), there are other areas that have an important potential to also benefit from the increasing level of visitors to the Park.

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. Mtirala National Park administration staff shall carry out a programme, in conjunction with DTR, to improve the quality of tourism services offered.

**OBJECTIVE 3.1. Tourism service providers associated to Mtirala National Park comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2019.**

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 improvement. 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. Quality visitor accommodation and catering is a vital role to develop any destination as consumers today have high expectations regarding their travel experiences.

The quality of services offered in and around Mtskheta National park (especially guesthouses) need to be improved. Services are not professional enough and some standards should be implemented.

The Biological Farming Association ELKANA, a Georgian non-governmental organization, has developed quality standards for rural tourism enterprises that can be used for those services providers in the area.

#### **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. The award of a certification can encourage the service providers to improve and market their services.

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**

- Definition the quality standards for tourism service providers.
- Training for visitor specialists' in the quality standards.
- Training for tourism service providers in the quality standards.
- Assessment to tourism service providers and elaborate recommendations of improvement.
- Provision of Certifications tourism service providers.
- Reporting.

#### **EXPECTED RESULTS**

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

<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR GNTA MTNP SPPA/ELKANA TTOO		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	APA		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017, at least 3 trainings focusing on the standards and quality should be developed. ✓ By 2018, at least 80% of the guesthouses should be certified.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2018	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	2.800 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 development of the support zone is vital for the sustainable tourism development of Mtirala National Park. The creation of new businesses should be a mechanism for creating economic and employment opportunities for locals living in the area.</p> <p>Moreover, the support of local business would increase locals' appreciation for conservation of the Park.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>In addition to Chakvistavi, there are other communities with potential for developing tourism related services. Among these communities are, Agara and Korolistavi.</p> <p>Agara is located in the southwest side of Mtirala. Locals, on their own initiative, are developing a trail toward the boundaries of the Park. On the other side, the Park administration is developing another trail from the Tourist Shelter located in the Cold Spring Route that would join the Agara trail. Agara can be also an important point in the Ajara protected areas combined trail.</p> <p>The development of this trail can bring some visitors to the community. In addition, local villagers are ready to get engaged in providing some tourism services, and have already available some rooms to rent.</p> <p>Korolistavi, located on the south eastern side of Mtirala boundaries, has a Park's entrance nearby. Recently, a bird-watching tower has been constructed close to this entrance. From this entrance it is possible to develop a trail. (See <b>Annex 2, Maps 7-8</b>).</p> <p>The development of this trail can bring an important number of visitors towards this area, creating the demand for additional community services such as guesthouses, catering services, etc.</p>		

It is important that Park administration and DTR are actively involved and support the communities in this development.

Based on this, the additional business that could be supported are:

- 1) **Guesthouses/accommodation services.** The accommodation services can be complemented with the provision of agrotourism activities, provision of local gastronomy, etc. The area of Korolistavi has a great potential to offer additional accommodation services.
- 2) **Catering places.** Catering places would be also needed in Korolistavi.
- 3) **Horse rental.** Additional horse rental services could be provided in this area.

Even if biking is developed, some repair service would be available.

The provision of guiding services should be a priority of the Ajarian Protected Areas, guides offer an added value to the protected area, as they are in charge of communicating the values of the Park and increase appreciation. Guiding is also a important source of employment, especially for young people.


#### Activities included

- Identify local initiatives
- Preparation of business plans
- Create some small grants to support local business.
- Monitor the performance of the new business
- Assess the creation of a Tourism Business Association.

<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>	MTNP International Donors DTR APA NGOs		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Protected Areas Friends Association (if already implemented) or MNTP		
<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>	2018-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	30.000 Gel		



**OBJECTIVE 3.3. Cultural and traditional assets are investigated, enhanced and promoted by the Protected Area administration by 2020.**

Action	Conduct assessment to identify main cultural assets in Mtirala National Park and its support zone	3.3.1
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>The area around Mtirala National Park 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 the creation of additional tourism products that can help to diversify the tourism offer in the area.</p> <p>The research activities can include not only monuments but also, traditional practices, festivals, etc.</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Several fortresses, religious buildings, etc. are present in the area of Mtirala, some of them already mentioned in <i>section 4.3.1</i>. Beside this, there are some elements of the material culture (traditional water mills) and ruins that should be registered, investigated and promoted.</p> <p>The origin of Chakvistavi is also associated to a legend, this aspect should be further investigated and even a thematic trail could be developed. An example on how to develop thematic trails can be found in Annex 4.</p> <p>Customs and traditions should be enhanced and promoted, as it also gives the opportunity to visitors to learn about local culture and to experience the area.</p>		
		



In addition, according to several sources it was one of the areas included in the Silk Route. A recent project “Black Sea Silk Corridor” has included this area as one of the areas of the Silk Road.<sup>8</sup> The project’s objective is “*re-tracing the route of the western Silk Road through four countries: Armenia, Georgia, Turkey and Greece*”.

#### Activities included

- Identify main assets to be studied (database)
- Conduct scientific research
- Share results
- Elaborate a Plan to conserve and promote historical assets
- Seek for international funds to restore some of the assets.

<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Greater understanding of the importance of the cultural values of the area Preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR International Donors NGOs MTNP Kobuleti Municipality State Universities
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2018, there is a database of tangible and intangible cultural resources of the area.

<sup>8</sup> For more information: <http://ge.blackseasilkroad.com/en/wiki/Kintrishi/674/790>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 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.</li> <li>✓ By 2020, there is a Plan to restore some of the cultural assets present in the area.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2018-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X
<b>BUDGET</b>	40.000 Gel		

#### STRATEGIC LINE 4: INFRASTRUCTURES AND SERVICES 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.

Mtirala National Park offers several recreational activities for visitor enjoyment. Visitor infrastructures are also in good condition and there is no need to make high investments. The design and development of new tourism services and infrastructures are recommended to shift tourism flow towards less developed areas with the intention of reducing tourism pressure over Chakvistavi. Besides this, attention has to be paid to maintain the infrastructures in order to ensure visitor's satisfaction and safety.

**OBJECTIVE 4.1. By 2017, accessibility to Mtirala National Park is easy and comfortable.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Sign an agreement with Road Department to improve the access road to Mtirala National Park.</b>	<b>4.1.1</b>
<b>Justification</b> Repair and maintain roads to Ajara PA's is especially important to improve level of safety and satisfaction of visitors and local communities. This is also a requirement from TTOO in order to bring their customers to the PA's.		
<b>Description</b> The poor condition of the roads leading to mostly Mtirala NP and Kintrishi PA makes travel to these destinations tiring and uncomfortable. Some sections of the road leading to Mtirala are in poor condition, making difficult for visitors to enjoy the whole experience. An agreement with Road department should be signed to improve these areas. In addition, the road improvement should be extended towards the communities that are around Mtirala National Park. The area of Korolistavi entrance should also be improved, at least the 2km before the entrance.		
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with the Department of Road and Rehabilitation of the Government of Ajara.</li> <li>• Elaborate project for road rehabilitation.</li> <li>• Repair and rehabilitate the road.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Journey to Mtirala National Park is safe and comfortable.	
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR Department of Environment Kobuleti /Khelvachauri municipalities	



	Department of Road and Rehabilitation of the Government of Ajara		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Municipalities		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ A project for road rehabilitation has been approved by end of 2017		
<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>	350 Gel (participation in meetings)		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Improve access to Park areas and provide a suitable area for car parking</b>	<b>4.1.2</b>
<b>Justification</b> Public transportation to Chakvistavi is quite limited. During high season, an important number of cars are parked in front of visitor centre diffculting access to local villagers and creating traffic issues in the area.		
<b>Description</b> Visitors access to Mtirala National Park mostly by private car. Access by private car is creating congestion problems around Visitor Centre in Chakvistavi, especially during high season. Car parking in the area should be regulated. There is already a local initiative to provide a car parking area for visitors. In addition, Park administration should provide a suitable area for car parking in order to reduce the number of cars parked in front of the visitor centre.  Public transportation from Batumi and Kobuleti bring visitors to Chakvi, and from Chakvi visitors should take a taxi to reach Chakvistavi. In order to facilitate access, during high season, minibuses should be available to bring visitors directly to Visitor Centre.  During the celebration of the Batumi Bird Festival in 2016, the DTR established an agreement with the event organizers to provide public transportation service to the festival area. This initiative functioned very well and should be organized for Mtirala National Park.		
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with the taxis and other transportation providers.</li> <li>• Organize minibus transportation from Batumi and Kobuleti to Mtirala National Park during high season.</li> <li>• Identify and locate a suitable area for car parking.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Visitors easily access to Mtirala National Park by public and private means of transportation.	
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR Kobuleti /Khelvachauri municipalities APA	
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Municipalities	
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017, a suitable area for car parking is identified	

<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2016-2017	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	5.200 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 4.2. Demand of existing tourism products increases by 50% by 2018.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Identify existing needs for effective implementation of activities such as horse riding and canyoning</b>	<b>4.2.1</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>Mtirala National Park has several recreational activities available; however are not efficiently implemented. Park administration should focus on promoting existing activities prior to develop new ones.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>During 2013 and 2014, UNWTO in the framework of the project <i>Support for Georgia in the Field of Protected Area Development</i> a zip line park and a canyoning path were developed. Rangers were also trained for effective implementation of both activities. While zip line is been successfully implemented, canyoning is almost unknown.</p> <p>Canyoning is a great activity for adventurers to discover the Gorges In Mtirala. According to rangers, one of the difficulties of implementing this activity is the lack of appropriate equipment. Besides this, some rangers are not comfortable being involved in tourism related responsibilities.</p> <p>The purchase of needed equipment for the implementation of canyoning activities should be a priority for National Park administration. Rangers should also get an economic compensation for their active involvement in this type of activities. The provision of an economic incentive could encourage rangers to implement and be active in the development of these activities.</p> <p>Administration staff should check with adventure tourism providers the possibility of providing this activity through a third party against a fee. This could be also a solution to improve tourism activities performance in the Park.</p> <p>Horse riding is also a product offered but it is not always available. A space for horses should be provided nearby visitor centre, especially during the season, to facilitate the provision of this service. It should also be ensured that needed equipment is available.</p>		
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and purchase needed equipment to implement canyoning and horse riding activities.</li> <li>• Promote these activities among visitors</li> <li>• Monitor implementation of these activities to identify additional gaps or weaknesses.</li> </ul>		
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	Canyoning and horse riding become popular activities in Mtirala National Park	
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR APA Chakvistavi local community	
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MNTP	

<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017, helmets and other needed equipment for canyoning is available.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	2.500 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 4.3 New and sustainable tourism infrastructures and products that allow visitors to explore and discover new areas in Mtirala National Park are developed by 2018.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Design and develop a new trail in Korolistavi</b>	<b>4.3.1</b>
<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, trekking, cycling, horse-riding. Trails are developed with the aim of providing a pleasant, safe and enjoyable experience to trail users and visitors to an area. Trails are essential to ensure that outdoor recreation activities are undertaken in harmony with the surrounding environment.</p> <p>The creation on additional trails in Mtirala National Park would contribute to two different goals, (a) to allow visitors to enjoy its natural and cultural values; (b) to diversify the tourism offer and drive a shift of tourism flows towards less developed areas.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>An attractive trail has been identified in Mtirala National Park. The trail would start from the Park entrance in Korolistavi. This area has a great potential for tourism development. Recently, a bird-watching tower has been constructed in the area</p> <p>Cultural tours based on the historical past of the area (presence of Russians) or also the rich wildlife of the area (birds, bear watching) can be developed in the area.</p> <p>This route would follow an existing route up to km 9. From this point the trail would have two alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Alternative 1.</b> Towards the Soviet ruins. This trail would have a total distance of 10.40 km. This route would be better suited for hiking, biking and horse riding. This route is also in good condition and only minor works would be needed.</li> <li>- <b>Alternative 2:</b> Towards Chakvistavi. This trail would have a total distance of 15 km. Since to get to Chakvistavi, visitors would have to cross a bridge, it would not be recommended for horse riding (the suitability for biking has to be checked).</li> </ul> <p>This trail has not been completely assessed, therefore should be investigated.</p> <p>This route could also start from Chakvistavi side, however the hike up would be more difficult.</p> <p>The trail is suitable for the development of several activities such as hiking, biking and horse riding. It is also suitable to develop snowshoeing or cross-country skiing during wintertime.</p>		



The snow-covered mountains offer some fantastic opportunities for winter nature photography, as well as the chance to follow animal tracks in the fresh snow or other wildlife related activities (*see action 4.3.2*).

Along this route (km.8), there are several buildings that can be renovated and used as refuges/mountain huts or recreational areas. Some picnic tables can be located around this area improve the recreational services. It is recommended that the future huts are wooden and respect the surrounding environment. In order to reduce maintenance cost, these huts should be simple constructions.

Other infrastructures that can be located in this trail such as additional picnic areas (close to the area of the soviet ruins), etc.



Additional information about this trail is provided in Annex 2.

#### Activities included

- Identify works needed to implement the trail (works, signs, interpretive materials, infrastructures, etc.).
- Elaborate the executive plan of needed infrastructures.
- Implement the trail

#### EXPECTED RESULTS

New recreational infrastructures and services are available in other areas of the Park.

#### AGENTS INVOLVED

International Donors  
Regional Advisory Council  
APA  
DTR

<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017 the complete trail has been assessed ✓ By end of 2018, needed infrastructures have been constructed.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2018	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	38.000 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Design and implement new products for niche segments</b>	<b>4.3.2</b>
<p><b>Justification</b>                      Mtirala National Park, as the other protected areas in Ajara, receives a higher number of visitors during summer months, especially during May and September. The Park has the potential of developing new activities that attract specific market segments and during low season. The extension of the visitation months should be a long-term objective of the Park to increase its sustainability.</p> <p><b>Description</b>                      Mtirala National Park has important resources that can attract specific and relevant ecotourism segments.</p> <p>First, bird watching, this is a growing tourism activity worldwide. Mtirala is an important bird area, and this potential should be developed. Important NGOs and other private companies organize an annual event in the Region to attract bird watchers</p> <p>Mtirala National Park should create and develop special products for bird watchers that include excursions to hot spots, expert guides, accommodation, transportation, etc. Combined tours that include other bird relevant areas as Shuamta village, Sakhalvasho, etc. should be developed.</p> <p>Participation in the Batumi International Bird Festival is also important.</p> <p>Large Mammals, brown bears and other mammals are present in the area. Important tourism products can be developed around wildlife viewing. There are several examples in Europe, and other areas in the world that have designed specific tours and thematic activities around wildlife. These activities not only create important economic revenues but also increase awareness about the importance of this species.</p> <p>The area of Korolistavi has a great potential to develop wildlife tours. 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</p> <p>Additionally, the area counts on several rivers and streams with potential for Fly-fishing activities. In 2016, an important event was celebrated in Mtirala National Park related to this activity. It is an activity that attracts in important number of visitors. There is a Fly-fishing association at national level.</p> <p>This catch and release activity could be developed during some weeks in the Park area.</p>		

The organization of these activities during low season can help to extend the season and increase visitation level throughout the year.			
<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>	Tourism season in Mtirala National Park is extended		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	DTR Local communities Tourism providers NGOs Batumi Raptor Count Fly fishing associations APA		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ At least two additional specific tourism products are developed by 2019		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2016-2018	<b>PRIORITY</b>	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET</b>	5.500 Gel		

**OBJECTIVE 4.4. A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Ajara Protected Areas is fully operational by 2019.**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Develop a trail that joins Mtirala National Park with Kintrishi Protected Areas and Machakhela National Park.</b>	<b>4.4.1</b>
<b>Justification</b> <p>Ajara Region hosts three important areas that represent the Colchic Forest, with important natural and cultural resources. It is important 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) for the three protected areas, would be very beneficial for each of the protected areas and for the Region as a destination.</p>		
<b>Description</b> <p>Mtirala National Park share borders with Kintrishi Protected Area creating the possibility of developing a route from Mtirala National Park to Kintrishi. Besides this, the distance from Mtirala to Machakhela National Park is not long and it is possible to cross, by hiking, from one Park to the other.</p>		



This trail would give visitors the opportunity to learn and enjoy the Colchic Forest. The trails should be organized as a 3 / 4 days trail, stopping either in guesthouses tasting traditional dishes or at provided huts.

- **Trail towards Kintrishi Protected Areas**

The potential route towards Kintrishi Protected Areas crosses the strict zone, therefore, it has to be carefully planned and managed.

Currently, this section of the route is not adequate (mainly for safety reasons) for hiking although it has already been used by some visitors. Although seems that this route follows the ancient trade route from Chakvistavi to Khino (Silk Road), major works are needed in order to develop this route.

According to sources there was a connecting path between both protected areas that was used as a trade route; also the Russian used this route. The historical background of this potential trail should be investigated and promoted.

The route starts at the end of village Chakvistavi and there is almost no path to follow (*see figure 1*). This initial part runs along the river (*see figure 2*), and there is a high risk of falling down. Therefore, safety rails among other works are needed.

The total distance of this trail (up to the boundary with Kintrishi Protected Areas) is 8 km. Once visitors arrive to Kintrishi Protected Areas, they have the opportunity to either go towards the visitor centre or continue the trip towards Khino and the Lake Tbilveli.



Figure 1



Figure 2

- **Trail towards Machakhela National Park.**

This trail towards Machakhela can follow two different directions:

From this point there are two possibilities to reach Mtirala:

- 1) **Through Agara:** this route has positive and negative aspects:
  - a. Negative. Safety issues: Visitors have to walk along the road to Keda for more than 10 km in order to reach Agara.
  - b. Positive: Agara community is involved in tourism development; villagers are preparing 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.
- 2) **Through Zundaga:** this route has positive and negative aspects
  - a. Negative: Zundaga community is not aware about tourism development and they have limited linkages with both protected areas, Machakhela and Mtirala.
  - b. Positive: The way to reach Zundaga is easier as it avoids the walk along the road to Keda.

The recommendation is to start using the Agara route, as this area is more developed. However, visitors should be informed about the distance to reach Agara and the safety issues. A satisfaction survey should be conducted with potential visitors to evaluate their opinion of this route.

The combined Adjara 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>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, Agara, etc. (especially for Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks)</li> <li>- Provides visibility to the three protected areas.</li> </ul> <p>The route to be developed can be checked in <b>Annex 2 – Map 10</b>. In the map is also presented the complete route for the three Protected Areas.</p> <p>The route (including Machakhela National Park 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><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the potential change of zoning status on the area, and potential environmental impacts.</li> <li>• Assess the needs of the trail.</li> <li>• Elaborate a trail development plan (each Park should be responsible for developing the needed infrastructures and works in their territory, however, the conceptualization and design should be agreed among them).</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 Machakhela National Park Kintrishi Protected Areas		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	APA		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2018, visitors can hike safely from Mtirala National Park to Kintrishi Protected Areas and to Machakhela National Park.		
<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>	16.500 Gel.		

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

<b>Action</b>	<b>Design and implement an environmental education and interpretation program for local and visitors</b>	<b>4.5.1</b>
<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</p>		



is related to providing information to visitors on the places they are currently in and encouraging them to appreciate and care for them.

Mtirala National Park counts already with some panels on the existing routes, organizes activities and events related to Green Calendar; however, these activities should be improved and enhanced.

### Description

One of the main objectives of the Protected Area 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 Kintrishi Protected Areas.

These programme should include different activities such as:

- 1) **Production of a video to be presented in the Visitor Centre.** In order to enrich the experience in the visitor centre a 5-10 minutes video about National Park should be elaborated. This video can be exhibited in the Visitor Centre for schools or interested visitors.
- 2) **Development of Interpretive Materials**
  - a. Design and print leaflets and posters that promote the values of the Protected Area 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.
  - b. Design and print leaflets on the activities/routes that can be done in the Protected Areas. The production on these materials should be done once new infrastructures have been developed.
  - c. Design specific Interpretive Materials (interpretive boards) for the routes to be developed (see actions 4.3.1/4.4.1)

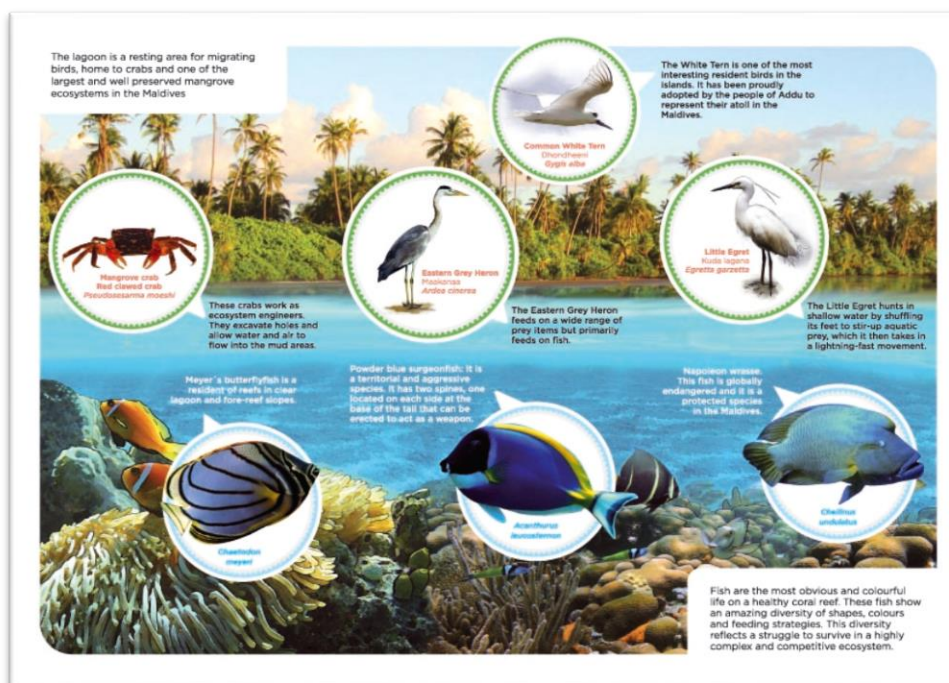






Figure 23: Examples of leaflets for Protected Areas. Source: HIDRIA

**3) Presentations.** The presentations should be designed in an interpretive way to better achieve defined objectives of knowledge and behaviour.

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

#### 4) Celebration of Special Days

The protected area administration already organizes activities related to worldwide celebrated environmental-related days, such as the World Environment day, Day of the forests,

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.

#### 5) Organization of Cleaning/Recycling Campaigns and other environment related workshops

Several waste problems have been identified, especially in the local communities, related to throwing waste to the river, landfills, etc. Awareness campaigns on waste issues should be regularly implemented, especially focus on children and youth.

Examples of workshop themes to be developed for families and children are provided in Annex 4.

In addition, the presence of visitors will increase the pressure over the natural resources, awareness on the importance of keeping the environment clean should be raised, a code of conduct on the "leave no trace" could be produced, etc.

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

<b>Action</b>	<b>Design a volunteer program in coordination with universities and regional education centres.</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>Mtiral National Park has a large potential for the development of a volunteering program. The development of this 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 Protected Areas.</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> <li>- To reinforce National Park's administration staff.</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>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>		

<b>Activities included</b> <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 MTNP to collaborate in developing some environmental related activities.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Local communities Kobuleti/Khelvachauri Municipalities APA Universities		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<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 MTNP</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

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. By 2020, Mtirala National Park will be widely known at national and international level.**

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. Marketing activities have to be carefully planned to reach desired markets and meet the defined objectives. An annual operational plan should be elaborated in conjunction with major stakeholders.		
<b>Description</b> 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Organization of a Public Relations event.</b> These events should be conducted prior the season and the objective will be to promote any new development activity of major achievement (creation of a new trail, development of a new tourism service, etc.)</li> <li>- <b>Promotional/Educational Film.</b> A short educational film (around 10 minutes) about the values of the Park shall be recorded. This film would present to visitors Mtirala 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.</li> <li>- <b>Design and print brochures/posters/maps.</b> 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 be printed in different languages (Georgian, English, and Russian). Detailed maps with the routes should be given to visitors, especially once the entrance fee is implemented. .</li> <li>- <b>Participate with APA/DTR in fairs, promotional events.</b> Together with APA and DTR, participate in relevant national and international fairs, by sending promotional videos, brochures, etc.</li> <li>- <b>Organization and participation in local events.</b> Several cultural and traditional events are celebrated around Mtirala National Park. The administration should be actively involved in those</li> </ul>		

<p>activities to raise awareness among locals about the Park. The participation in these events also demonstrates the level of implication of the National Park in local communities' development.</p> <p>The Plan should also include the activities defined in the Ajara Protected Areas Plan</p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire a marketing/Graphic designer expert to design the logo/brand</li> <li>• Define in a participated way the brand and National Park image</li> <li>• Define the main actions to be included in the Marketing Operational Plan (including budget, and calendar of actions)</li> <li>• Validate the Marketing Strategy</li> </ul>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	<p>Increase the level of awareness of nationals and foreigners on the National Park</p> <p>Increase the demand on tourism activities developed</p>		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Mtirala Advisory Council members		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017, a Marketing Operational Plan is elaborated and validated by stakeholders.		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2020	<b>PRIORITY</b>	<p>HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>LOW <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>BUDGET</b>	18.000 Gel		

<b>Action</b>	<b>Participate in the creation of the Ajara Protected areas membership card.</b>	<b>5.1.2</b>
<p><b>Justification</b></p> <p>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.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>The "Friends of Ajara Protected Areas Card" is aimed to promote Ajarian protected areas and the services associated to them.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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:</p>		

<p>a) Getting recognition as Protected Area supporters, improving their image towards sustainability and quality services.</p> <p>b) Increasing their exposure without high investments</p> <p>MTNP should be directly involved in promoting the benefits of joining the card among the tourism service providers in the area.</p> <p>Mtirala National Park can work as a pilot area to develop this card, since it is the area with a higher development level, and counts on several guesthouses around the Park that could be offering the benefits associated to the card.</p>			
<p><b>Activities included</b></p> <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>			
<b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b>	<p>Increase PA's visibility in the domestic tourism market</p> <p>Involvement of private sector in the promotion of the National Park</p>		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Tourism service providers		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP/APA		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	<p>✓ By 2018, several meetings with tourism providers have been held to promote the Ajara Protected Areas Membership Card.</p>		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2018	<b>PRIORITY</b>	<p>HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>LOW <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>BUDGET</b>	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>Mtirala 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.) and also the other protected areas in Ajara. Some of these events should be planned together with Machakhela National Park and Kintrishi Protected Areas.</p> <p>Some of the topics that could serve the basis for the celebration of events could be:</p> <p><b>1. Spring/autumn festival: Epiagea Blossom</b></p>		

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Earth Day</b> (and other international celebrations)</li> <li><b>Open day.</b> In specific days such as the anniversary of the day Mtirala 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><b>Honey related events</b> (in conjunction with the Ajara Beekeeping association, etc.).</li> <li>Actively participate in <b>local celebrations</b> such as Chakvi Water Gorge</li> <li>Participate in Bird-watching activities</li> </ol> <p>The events should be used to promote environmental education among visitors. These events should be promoted in the website and social network profiles.</p>			
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elaboration on an annual program of events to be developed in and around Mtirala 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 Machakhela 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 Mtirala National Park		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	Local Communities Municipalities NGO's Associations Tourism private sector		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<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		



Action	Design and produce new promotional material that includes new products, routes		5.1.4
<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>- Maps of the Park, marking the trails and other important areas.</li><li>- Brochures, with general information about the area, activities that can be done, main species to be spotted, regulations of the area, etc.</li><li>- Souvenirs, 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>			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Increase the level of awareness of the National Park. Increase the demand of existing activities.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	APA DTR TTOO Tourism providers Transportation services (bus/taxi/airport/train)		
COORDINATOR	MTNP		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2019, new and attractive brochures have been published. ✓ By 2018, maps of the area are available for visitors.		
EXECUTION TIME	2018-2019	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	9.000 Gel		

Action	Organize fam-trips with hotels	5.1.5
<b>Justification</b> The main stakeholders of MTNP are hotels in Batumi and Kobuleti. They are interested to establish additional services for clients, especially in low season. Hotels provide transportation and guide service but they are now aware of MTNP recreational resources.  DTR organizes already several famtrips for tour operators and journalists.		
<b>Description</b> Hotels and other service providers in Kobuleti and Batumi are important markets for Ajara Protected Areas. This coastal area is an important destination, at national and international level, receiving thousands of visitors annually. Some of these visitors are interested also in discovering the rural areas and develop some activities in nature. Hotel staff should be aware about the tourism offer available so they can provide the information to the clients. 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 them the National Park and its infrastructures.		
<b>Activities included</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prepare FAM trip program (together with DTR)</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 MTNP Local communities	
COORDINATOR	DTR	
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2018, at least two fam trips have been organized for hotels in the Region.	
EXECUTION TIME	2018	<div>PRIORITY</div> <div>HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X</div>
BUDGET	4.000 Gel	

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

<b>Action</b>	<b>Create a visitor friendly tourism website for Mtirala National Park optimized for search engines</b>	<b>5.2.1</b>
<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>		

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

DTR has also available online brochures and information related to the Park, but the information is not very detailed. DTR also promotes the guesthouses and services available in the Park. However, for improving the attractiveness of the Park, an individual website that allows the interaction with users should be designed.

#### **Description**

Mtirala National Park 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).

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 Mtirala National Park

<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA GNTA DTR MAC		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<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>Mtirala National Park counts on some brochures but the quality should be improved.</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> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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 Mtirala National Park in the domestic and international market. The opinions of other travellers are highly valued and the active participation of visitors in the Mtirala National Park social media profiles should be encouraged.</p>		
<p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Mtirala National Park counts already with Facebook profile, however, their activity is quite low. 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.</p> <p>In addition, the visitor specialist of the 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 Mtirala National Park in online social media.		
<b>AGENTS INVOLVED</b>	APA DTR		
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	MTNP		
<b>ASSESSMENT INDICATORS</b>	✓ By 2017, a two- year Social Media Strategy is elaborated		
<b>EXECUTION TIME</b>	2017-2020	<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.	DTR	Ajara Environmental Department Municipalities of Ajara Ajara PA's administrations/APA Tourism Private Sector (TTOO/TA, hotels, restaurants, etc.) Local Communities NGOs	300 Gel/year (meetings)	HIGH					
1.1.2	Establish collaboration alliances with potential partners.	MTNP	DTR Khelvachauri and Kobuleti Municipalities 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 Mtskheta NP Advisory Council.	MTNP	DTR Ajara Environmental Department Khelvachauri and Kobuleti Municipalities International Donors / APA Tourism Private Sector (hotels, restaurants, etc.) Local Communities: Chakvistavi, Agara, Zundaga, ... NGOs	2.500 Gel	HIGH					
Objective 1.3. By 2020, tourism generated income increases by 50%.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.3.1	Introduce an entrance fee to contribute to the conservation and sustainable development of Mtskheta National Park.	MTNP	Mtskheta Advisory Committee and Regional Advisory Committee members	27.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
1.3.2	Establish adequate management for existing infrastructures	MTNP	APA	700 Gel	HIGH					

Objective 1.4. A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural and local communities is defined and implemented by end of 2019.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.4.1	Develop a study on the carrying capacity visitor management in Mtirala National Park.	MTNP	APA DTR Chakvistavi village	21.000 Gel	HIGH					
1.4.2	Elaborate and implement a Visitor Impact Monitoring System	MTNP	APA MTNP Staff (rangers, visitor's specialist, etc.)	8.500 Gel	MEDIUM					
1.4.3	Elaborate a survey among local community members regarding tourism	MTNP	DTR Local communities Municipalities	1.100 Gel	MEDIUM					
1.4.4	Elaborate a visitor satisfaction survey	APA	DTR APA Tourism service providers (hotels, guesthouses, etc.)	1.100 Gel	MEDIUM					
STRATEGIC LINE 2: CAPACITY BUILDING										
Objective 2.1. Build the capacities 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	MTNP Kobuleti Vocational Education Training Centre NGOs Kobuleti and Khelvachauri Municipalities Local communities DTR Shota Rustaveli University	12.000 Gel	HIGH					
2.1.2	Organize study tours for rangers/PA's staff	APA	MTNP	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	NGOs Kobuleti/Khelvachauri Municipalities Local communities DTR Shota Rustaveli University Kobuleti Vocational Education Training Centre MTNP	12.000 Gel	HIGH					
2.2.2	Organize study tours for community members	APA	NGO's MTNP DTR Local communities	18.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
2.2.3	Design a training programme about organic agriculture and product packaging for local farmers /producers	Municipalities	Local communities NGOs	5.500 Gel	MEDIUM					
STRATEGIC LINE 3: LOCAL COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT										
Objective 3.1. Tourism service providers associated to Mtirala National Park comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2019.										
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/MTNP SPPA/ELKANA TTOO	2.800 Gel	HIGH					
Objective 3.2. At least, five new local businesses are developed and running by year 2020.										
3.2.1	Assess and support new potential business in the communities of the support zone	Protected Areas Friends Association (if already implemented) or MINTP	MTNP International Donors DTR/APA NGOs	30.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
Objective 3.3. Cultural and traditional assets are investigated, enhanced and promoted by the Protected Area administration by 2020.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
3.3.1	Conduct assessment to identify main cultural assets in Mtirala National Park and its support zone	Min. of Education, Culture and Sports	DTR International Donors NGOs MTNP/Kobuleti Municipality State Universities	40.000 Gel	LOW					

STRATEGIC LINE 4: INFRASTRUCTURES AND SERVICES DEVELOPMENT										
Objetivo 4.1. By 2017, accessibility to Mtirala National Park is easy and comfortable.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.1.1	Sign an agreement with Road Department to improve the access road to Mtirala National Park.	Municipalities	DTR Dept. of Environment Kobuleti/Khelvachauri municipalities Dept. of Road and Rehabilitation of the Government of Adjara	350 Gel (meetings)	HIGH					
4.1.2	Improve access to Park areas and provide a suitable area for car parking	Municipalities	DTR Kobuleti /Khelvachauri municipalities APA	5.200 Gel	MEDIUM					
Objetivo 4.2. Demand of existing tourism products increases by 50% by 2018.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.2.1	Identify existing needs for effective implementation of activities such as horse riding and canyoning.	MTNP	DTR APA Chakvistavi local community	2.500 Gel	HIGH					
Objective 4.3. New and sustainable tourism infrastructures and products that allow visitors to explore and discover new areas in Mtirala National Park are developed by 2018.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.3.1	Design and develop a new trail in Korolistavi	MTNP	International Donors Regional Advisory Council/APA/DTR	38.000 Gel	HIGH					
4.3.2	Design and implement new products for niche segments	MTNP	DTR/Local communities Tourism providers NGOs /Baturmi Raptor Count Fly fishing associations APA	5.500 Gel	MEDIUM					
Objective 4.4. A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Adjara Protected Areas is fully operational by 2019.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.4.1	Develop a trail that joins Mtirala National Park with Kintrishi Protected Areas and Machakhela National Park.	APA	Municipalities Local communities/DTR APA /MTNP/MNP/KPA	16.500 Gel	HIGH					

<b>Objective 4.5. By 2020, a comprehensive environmental educational programme aimed at locals and visitors is functioning.</b>										
<b>Code</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>	<b>Agents involved</b>	<b>Estimated Budget</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
4.5.1	Design and implement an environmental education and interpretation program for local and visitors	MTNP	APA DTR 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.	MTNP	APA Universities	6.000 Gel/year	LOW					
<b>STRATEGIC LINE 5: MARKETING AND PROMOTION</b>										
<b>Objective 5.1. By 2020, Mtirala National Park will be widely known at national and international level</b>										
<b>Code</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>	<b>Agents involved</b>	<b>Estimated Budget</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
5.1.1	Elaborate an annual Operational Marketing Plan	MTNP	Mtirala Advisory Council members	18.000 Gel	HIGH					
5.1.2	Participate in the creation of the Ajara Protected areas membership card.	APA/MTNP	Tourism service providers	1.500 Gel	HIGH					
5.1.3	Organize a calendar of events to increase visibility of the National Park	MTNP	Local Communities Kobuleti/Khelvachauri 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	MTNP	APA /DTR/TTOO Tourism providers Transportation services (bus/taxi/airport/train)	9.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
5.1.5	Organize fam-trips with hotels	DTR	Hotels and other accommodation providers MTNP Kobuleti/Khelvachauri Municipalities Local communities	4.000 Gel	LOW					

Objective 5.2. . Information related to Mtirala 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 Mtirala National Park optimized for search engines	MTNP	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.	MTNP	APA/DTR	1.200 Gel	MEDIUM					



## **10. ANNEXES**

### **10.1. ANNEX 1: VISITOR QUESTIONNAIRE**





## **10.2. ANNEX 2: MAPS**





























### 10.3. ANNEX 3: PROPOSAL FOR TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

NAME OF THE ROUTE	ROUTE TO KOROLISTAVI
BRIEF DESCRIPTION	<p>The route would start in the Park entrance located close to village Korolistavi (see map 7 and 8), the trail would follow an existing route, so now major works are needed.</p> <p>The area is very interesting from the geological point of view and has several natural assets that contribute to the scenic beauty (waterfalls, forest, etc.). The area has nice views over the Kobuleti and Chakvi areas.</p> <p>Due to the trails conditions, it would be suitable for biking, hiking and also horse riding.</p> <p>The trail would follow the existing route up to km 9. From km 9 would have 2 alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Alternative 1:</b> Towards the Soviet ruins. This trail would have a total distance of 10.40 km. This route would be better suited for hiking, biking and horse riding. This route is also in good condition and only minor works would be needed.</li> <li>- <b>Alternative 2:</b> Towards Chakvistavi. This trail would have a total distance of 15 km. Since to get to Chakvistavi, visitors would have to cross a bridge, it would not be recommended for horse riding. This route could also start from Chakvistavi side, however the hike up would be more difficult. This trail has not been completely assessed, therefore should be invested.</li> </ul> <p>This trail has a great potential to develop winter activities such as snowshoeing. Special works are needed to rehabilitate the trail for these activities (especially trail marking).</p> <p>Since in the beginning of the trail a bird-watching tower has been located, the main topic of this trail could focus on wildlife. It is important to also highlight the historical aspects of these trails.</p>
LENGTH	The total length of this route is 11km (towards the soviet ruins) – 15 km towards Chakvistavi.
KEY ELEMENTS OF THE ROUTE	<p>The key elements and some topics for future interpretative content of this trail are based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mountainous landscape - Geology</li> <li>- Scenic beauty (forest, waterfalls, lake)</li> <li>- Wildlife (mainly brown bears)</li> <li>- Historical areas</li> </ul>

**PICTURES**



Figure 1

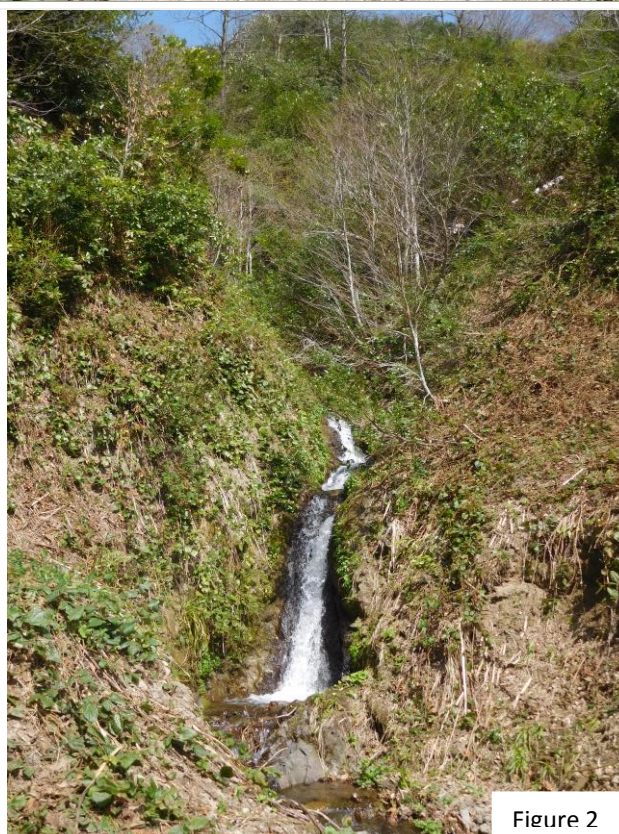



Figure 2

	 <p>Figure 3</p>
<b>CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of difficulty: <i>Medium</i>.</li> <li>• Type: <i>Hiking (Alternative 1 and 2)</i> <i>Biking and Horse riding. Winter activities (alternative 1)</i></li> </ul>
<b>POTENTIAL MARKET</b>	<p>The potential market that the route is addressed to soft ecotourists interested in hiking in a natural environment while learning about the values of the Protected Area. The trail is also suitable for bikers or horse riders, skiers so this trail would be suitable for more adventure tourists.</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>REQUIREMENTS - FACILITIES</b>	<p>The requirements to carry out this route are:</p> <p>1. WORKS:</p> <p>The trail up to km 9 follows existing road therefore no major works are required.</p> <p>The alternative 1 trail, does not need major works. The trail should be marked and cleaned from weeds, branches, etc.</p> <p>The alternative 2 trail has not been completely assessed, but currently the trail is not adequately marked.</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> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>If the trail is also developed for snow shoeing, it is important to mark it accordingly.</p>







	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><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 and cultural resources.</li></ul> <p>3. FACILITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Picnic area.</b> It would be recommended to locate a picnic/resting area in the area of the soviet ruins (following APA standards). In this point, visitors would have the opportunity to rest before descending back.</li><li>- <b>Winter huts/resting area.</b> On the trail there are several abandoned huts. These huts should be conditioned as winter huts/refuges. These huts would be used by hikers/skiers to rest. Simple wooden huts should be designed to offer basic but comfortable accommodation.</li></ul> <p>Additionally, road signs towards this area have to be improved. There are already some signs indicating direction and distance towards the bird watching tower, however, the signs do not mention the presence of Mtirala National Park.</p>
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## 10.4. ANNEX 4: 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 (traditional 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.			
Adaptaci3n			
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 participants 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: rosmmary, 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. <i>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.</i>			
<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>			
			

ELABORATION OF A NEST BOX			EXAMPLE 02
Implementation	Mtirala National Park	X	
	Kinstrishi Protected Areas	X	
	Machakhela National Park		
Theme/Topic to be developed	Birds in the Protected Area		
Public Objective	Families with children + 7 years old		
Duration of the activity	1' 30"	Max. Number of participants	15
TYPE OF ACTIVITY	Educational		X
	Interpretive		
	Promotion of the values of the NP		X
OBJECTIVES			
* Discover some of the birds living in the Protected Area * Increase awareness about the richness/ecological values of Adjara Protected Areas.			
DESCRIPTION			
Children will learn how to build a nest box. Bird nest box provide a safe area for chicks against their predators and harsh weather. Children can take the nest box home and then paint it and decorate it. <i>Note: Similar activities can be: preparation of traditional baskets (with a local expert), elaboration of pots for flowers, etc.</i>			
Development			
*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 (especially birds). * Description and explanation on the importance of the bird nest box * The guide leads the activity elaborating the nest box. * Conclusions and evaluation			
Human resources/materials			
The activity shall be conducted by a ranger or other appointed staff. The needed materials for the preparation of the nest box are: wood pieces, ecological glue.			
Safety issues			
The activity is safe for children: they will assemble/join the pieces that have been previously cut to prevent them to handling sharp objects.			
Evaluation			
The activity should be evaluated. A evaluation questionnaire should be distributed among participants after the workshop. The evaluation questionnaire should be analysed by the Visitor Specialist.			
PICTURES			
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## **10.5. ANNEX 5: MINUTES OF MEETING- STRATEGY VALIDATION WORKSHOP**















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