

**Call for Expression of Interest for Selection of NGO for**  
**Improving Capacity and Opportunities for Local Communities in**  
**Machakhela Valley to provide touristic services**

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), within its Project “Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Achara Region’s Protected Areas” is seeking Expressions of Interest (EOI) from active NGOs for Improving Capacity and Opportunities for Local Communities in Machakhela Valley to provide touristic services.

The project is designed to enhance the management effectiveness, biogeographically coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas of the Achara Autonomous Region of Georgia in order to better conserve the globally unique Colchic Forests (temperate rainforest).

The project will support the government to bring about the functional operation of the recently established Machakhela National Park which will form the last link in a chain of 4 protected areas established to conserve the Colchic forests of the region (i.e. Kintrishi, Mtirala and Machakhela in Georgia and Jamili in Turkey). Additionally, the project will help to build management effectiveness and sustainability of all the protected areas in this chain in Achara and help establish transboundary links with the Jamili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey.

Particular focus of this technical support is in regard to building the practical capacity and practices related to the involvement of local population in protected areas and the better application / utilization of the buffer zone (support zone) concept. In this context project has provided support to the local population in the Machakhela valley in preparation of a Community Development Action plan. Local communities in the support zone of Machakhela NP, have identified specific activities for solving of local problems and prioritized them according to the urgency. In the action plan, tourism was identified as one of the priority development directions for the local community for increasing the sustainable revenues without negatively affecting the conservation objectives of the Protected Areas in the Achara Region. In addition to the Community Development Action plan, project has carried out an assessment of the tourist potential of the area in order to identify the new services and facilities that are more likely to contribute to sustainable tourism development. The results of the study are reflected in the Machakhela National Park Strategy and Action Plan which provides the guidelines for the proper development of sustainable tourism within the boundaries of the protected area and the support zone.

#### **SCOPE OF WORK**

UNDP Project seeks to select qualified non-governmental organization as a partner for implementing specific activities from the Machakhela Support Community Development action plan and Machakhela National Park Tourism Strategy aiming at improving capacity and opportunities for local communities in Machakhela Valley to provide touristic services.

The activities are as follows:

- 1 Making an inventory of cultural monuments, making up routes, maps, and arranging paths
- 2 Evaluating and promoting alternative tourism products / services (the Machakhela River rafting/kayaking perspectives, canyoning and equestrian services)
- 3 Developing better skills of the people involved into the local tourism through trainings and consultations (in cooperation with the community development contractor)

- 4 Assess quality service level of local providers of accommodation and catering facilities
- 5 Promoting local craft production (Machakhela gun, etc.)
- 6 Organizing local festivals (in cooperation with the Community Development contractor)
- 7 Preparation of a bilingual (Georgian and English) brochure for tourists about the Machakhela National Park and Machakhela Valley
- 8 Organize familiarization trips with local and national tour operators and hotels to promote new activities developed

### **Background and justification for the selected activities<sup>1</sup>:**

#### **1. Making an inventory of cultural monuments, making up routes, maps, and arranging paths**

Machakhela Valley has important ethnographical and cultural values and holds good potential for tourism development, especially for its geographical position being close to the sea and the city of Batumi. The area hosts several cultural assets with historical importance and with diverse conservation status. These assets should be researched and preserved.

Visitors are interested in learning about places through their cultural manifestations, the knowledge and promotion of cultural assets can be used as a tool for tourism product differentiation in Machakhela National Park. The main issues are a lack of knowledge and low awareness and the infrastructure which basically doesn't exist. Cultural heritage sites have been identified by local people equally important as the unique riverine and forest ecosystems of Machakhela valley.

There are directional signs installed in the valley showing the way to cultural monuments, however the access paths are not arranged and their histories are poorly studied.

#### **2. Evaluating and promoting alternative tourism products / services (the Machakhela River rafting/kayaking perspectives, canyoning and equestrian services)**

Machakhela Valley has good potential for developing additional adventure and sports activities. There are several rivers in the area, some of which are suitable for water recreational activities.

- Rafting/kayaking and canyoning: The Machakhela river and its tributaries should be noted as great tourism potential. According to local residents, tourists use this river for rafting but there is no information about it in the tourist guides of Adjara.
- Horse riding: The extensive possible trails and steep terrain provide the possibility for alternatives to foot trekking. Local people keep horses but they don't have skills and good equipment.
- Other water-based activity that can be developed is FLY-FISHING. The valley has several rivers in which fly fishing can be practiced. The fly-fishing should be regulating in specific locations, seasons and permits should be issued to not affect the rivers biodiversity.

It should be noted that water trails should be developed in appropriate water locations, ensuring that all safety issues are considered. The exact trail should be identified for a professional as there are several considerations to be taken into account when developing a trail such as the effects of wind, a rise in water levels, the water flow, etc. As this activity can also be directly linked to other businesses such as: introductory lessons to kayaking. The facilities that should be developed associated to the

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<sup>1</sup> In all selected activities the staff from Machakhela National Park should be involved as relevant and gender equality and women empowerment aspects should be considered.

trail are mostly the access and egress facilities and if necessary some signs indicated the trail head from main road.

### **3. Developing better skills of the people involved into the local tourism through trainings and consultations (in cooperation with the community development contractor)**

Local communities around Machakhela National Park play a key role in the Parks tourism development and 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 Achara PA's and their needs.

Several trainings should be implemented to enhance the capacities of local communities is issues related to tourism, environment and business. Prior to the development and implementation of the trainings, priorities should be defined in conjunction with those interested. Training content should be adequate to the needs of the local communities.

The proposed training topics include: - Tourism and hospitality - Environmental values of Achara PAs - Ecotourism concepts - Marketing and promotion - Quality criteria in products and services - Business planning (for small scale enterprises) - Basic accounting.

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.

### **4. Assess quality service level of local providers of accommodation and catering facilities.**

Creating 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 Achara PA's (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, however other standards can also be considered of The Pilot projects to support accommodation/catering facilities shall also be Identified.

### **5. Promoting local craft production**

Visitors travelling to different areas are willing to try and buy products that are not available at their home places. Moreover, the locally-produced souvenirs can contribute to create economic opportunities for locals and promote local traditions. The production of souvenirs/organic product can facilitate the integration of local communities in the tourism value chain.

Machakhela preserved some knowledge of making crafts. There are few women who are good at traditional embroidery and weaving. And there are also few men who make hand-made items. The Machakhela rifle is well known. The artisans are living in the support area of Machakhela National Park, should be contacted and engaged to create handicrafts that can be marketed to visitors. Proposals for provision of economic support to artisans to develop their activities should be prepared.

### **6. Organizing local festivals (in cooperation with the Community Development contractor)**

Local festivals are one of the important means to promote destination place(s), establish direct linkages between stakeholders/service providers, to enhance local initiatives, to collaborate with local government institutions and promote/sell traditional product/souvenirs directly from farmers.

There is traditional festival of "Machakhloba" which is organized annually by the local municipality government and the Department of Tourism and Resorts of Adjara. However, in order to promote local cultural values and support tourism it's better to arrange more, smaller-scale events and festivals in the villages of the valley, integrating elements such as the agriculture, gastronomy, traditional practices, etc.

The traditional rural cooking should be used as a competitive advantage and develop some services related to the local communities use local products to elaborate their dishes, keeping the gastronomic heritage and promoting the production of local and organic vegetables, fruits, cereals, honey, nuts, berries, medicinal herbs, organic Jams, (plum) sauces, cheese, etc

## **7. Preparation of a bilingual (Georgian and English) promotional materials for tourists about the Machakhela National Park and Machakhela Valley**

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 should be designed, printed and distributed among local tour operators and other tourism providers.

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 and in the valley. These materials should provide detailed information and description of the National Park and 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:

- Maps of the Park, marking the trails and other important areas.
- Brochures, with general information about the area, activities that can be done, main species to be spotted, regulations of the area, etc.

## **8. Organize familiarization trips with local and national tour operators and hotels to promote new activities developed**

Machakhela Gorge is new destination for Georgian Tourism Operators. They lack information about natural and cultural sites, as well as service providers. Familiarization trips and press tours are essential to increase awareness and interest among potential customers. Besides TO's, there are number of hotels in Batumi, Gonio and Kvartiati which are interested to establish additional services for clients, especially when there is non-swimming weather. They are important stakeholders MNP and the valley.

Based on statistics by Achara Tourism and Resorts Department, the most arrivals in Achara is organized from Turkey, Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Poland etc. TOs and journalists from most frequently visited countries (especially for Turkish TOs which is working on Upper Machakhela part) should be invited to introduce product, service providers. Batumi is main destination after (Tbilisi) for MICE tourism in Georgia. Post conference tours and special offers can be prepared for corporate clients in order to increase interest toward MNP and invite TV Media. Besides, Machakhela valley is new destination for hotels. Selling virtual product without knowledge and experience is quite difficult in tourism. It is recommended to invite hotel representatives (receptionists, guest relations and managers) and introduce MNP.

## **PRINCIPLES OF SELECTION OF QUALIFIED NGO AND CONTRACTUAL MODALITIES**

The selection of the qualified NGO will be performed according to the criteria listed below. The Micro Capital Grant Agreement will be signed with the selected NGO according to the UNDP regulations.

- **Qualification criteria:**

**For the NGO:**

1. At least 3 years' experience in implementing tourism development projects
2. Experience in work with local communities on capacity development projects
3. Experience of implementing tourism related projects of total value no less than USD 20,000 within last 4 years
4. Good track record confirmed by at least 2 letter of references from the clients and or donors of similar projects implemented at least within the last 4 years
5. Good tax payment record
6. Availability of staff with community tourism development experience

**For the Team leader:**

- At least 4 years' experience in Managing the tourism related projects including project team building and identification of suitable experts
- At least 3 years' experience in eco-tourism product development
- Experience development and implementation/marketing of biodiversity –based tourism products, preferably in the context of Protected Areas
- Experience in Development of community-based tourism and work on the grassroots level
- Experience develop training sessions to increase the capacity of local people and other main tourism stakeholders, protected areas staff

## **REQUIRED DOCUMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO ESTABLISH QUALIFICATION OF PROPOSERS**

The interested NGOs should submit the following documentation:

1. Official stamped letter of expression of interest for implementing the announced scope of work signed by a CEO of an organization
2. Grant Proposal filled and signed by the head of the applying NGO (please see the template attached) demonstrating:
  - 1.1 the NGOs profile: the list of the projects implemented at least within last 4 years, indicating budgets, donors, clients and general description (not more than half a page for each project).
  - 1.2 Description of the methodology and approach toward improving capacity and opportunities for local communities in Machakhela valley to provide touristic services
  - 1.3 Budget proposal
  - 1.4 Other information per the template grant proposal
2. CVs of the key personnel including the Team Leader, Procurement Specialist and Monitoring Specialist
3. Tax Registration/Payment Certificate issued by the National Revenue Authority evidencing that the Proposer is updated with its tax payment obligations, or Certificate of Tax exemption, if any such privilege is enjoyed by the Proposer
4. At least 2 letters of references from the clients and or donors of similar projects implemented at least within the last 4 years

## **SUBMISSION OF THE PACKAGE FOR DOCUMENTS FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST:**

- **Deadline for submission of the package:**

The package of documents and the letter of expression of interest should be submitted in hard copies no later than **17:00, 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2016** in a sealed envelope with a text on it: '**Improving Capacity and Opportunities for Local Communities in Machakhela Valley to provide touristic services**'. In addition to the hard copies one electronic copy of all documents (text and/or PDF files on a CD).

- **Address of submission:**

Proposals will be received at the address indicated below:

UNDP project office, 71 Melikishvili street, Batumi 6009, Georgia

UNDP will not consider any package of expression of interest that arrives after the deadline.

### **The consultation meeting:**

The consultation meeting will be held in person and via Skype on **21<sup>st</sup> November, 2016, 15:00 hrs** at UNDP project office, 71 Melikishvili street, Batumi 6009, Georgia

The organisations interested to attend the meeting should notify UNDP via e-mail to the following address: [irakli.goradze@undp.org](mailto:irakli.goradze@undp.org)

### **Contact Person for the Call for Expression of Interest:**

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