

Topic: Public Private Partnerships to leverage urban nature and biodiversity for development

1. Introduction

According to Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosova (2011), Kosovo has approved recently a law on Public Private Partnerships (PPP), with the aim to establish a legal framework, which includes the content of the agreements and responsibilities of both parties. PPP has evolved in many sectors to ensure the efficiency of services provided to the society. Wolff (2007) points out the need to improve public utilities services because of lack of resources given from the government. PPP between government, UDNP and UN Economic Commission for Europe increased the access, efficiency and quality of utility services. Furthermore, various projects have been implemented in sectors, such as energy, telecommunication and transportation, where the private sector had the opportunity to participate by providing the necessary resources to meet the needs of society (Partnerships Kosovo, 2009). Moreover, Gupta (2011) explains an example of PPP between UNDP, Labour and Social Welfare, the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce and the private sector, with the aim to increase the job opportunities through incentives to private sector.

Despite a proven track record of success of PPP in other sectors, there has not been done any PPP related to the urban nature, more specific in the national parks development in the cities. Lack of the investment in national parks is leading to the destruction of biodiversity. Nevertheless, there are some reasons why the proposed national park of Bjeshket e Nemuna (Cursed Mountains) has a great potential to generate income from tourism development, which will lead to the investment in species conservation. Cursed Mountains in regards to geological, geomorphologic, fauna and floristic composition represents important massif to Kosovo and beyond. Their value includes Rugova Canyon and the spring of the White Drin River. Cursed Mountains area includes two major medieval sites of cultural heritage, as following the monastery of Deçani, and the Patriarchate of Peja, which are the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site (UNEP Vienna ISCC, 2010).

The findings of this research will largely rely on secondary data from related studies and publications alongside selected case studies to understand PPP and identify the best practices from national parks. The findings will be analyzed to fit to the proposed national park, the Cursed Mountains.

To solve this problem, the research question has been formulated:

“How can PPP help the national parks to support species conservation through sustainable tourism in the cities?”

2. Main body

Today, it is a challenge for so many countries to protect the nature, because of the destruction of nature accompanied with biodiversity loss, which is happening continuously. Some reasons are the lack of financial resources, poverty and population growth. Therefore, financing conservation is essential and this can be done by the involvement of the private sector. Biodiversity is very important factor to have economic growth. Even though the nature is taken for granted, the government, private sector, NGOs and community should work together to save ecosystems through investments in conservation and restoration (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007)

There is a rapid growth of cities in the developing countries, which has increased the needs of citizens. Governments are facing challenges to meet their basic needs because the tax revenues are not sufficient. Therefore, many countries are employing PPP as a solution, which means creating relationship between public and private sector. Private sector includes businesses, non-governmental organizations and community. In PPP, the government contracts the private sector to do certain services under specific performance standards. Therefore, the government is considered the primary provider (Bennett, Grohmann & Gentry, 1999).

According to Diop (n.a), UNDP has developed a programme for Public Private Partnership for the Urban Environment in order to build capacities within the members of government, businesses and community to address the urban environmental issues. The government is unable to provide all the services to the public, which shows a need to get support from private sector by human and financial resources. From this partnership, everyone is expected to benefit. Private sector will provide agreed services and investments, while public sector will pay the agreed fees, and prevent unforeseen competition during the operation. Also, the community expects from PPP to provide services which are affordable to citizens.

This research paper is concentrated in the benefits that PPP brings in national parks through tourism development in the cities, which will lead revenues that will enable the investment to support species conservation. According to FAO (2011), biodiversity plays a vital role in human life; therefore, sustainable use is essential for improved quality of life in urban areas. One of the major issues that national parks in the developing countries deal is the lack of financial support. This causes problems to obtain wildlife conservation programs and salary payment for staff, which leads to loss of biodiversity values (Saporiti, 2006).

The African national parks are examples that have benefited from PPP. Private partner generates profits through operations in shops, restaurants, as well as lodges. Some of the revenue sources are the recreation fees, hunting fees, commercial operations in protected areas and tourist contributions in voluntary basis. These funds are used efficiently to support species conservation. By using this strategy, the national parks were able to increase employment in neighboring communities, which led to economic growth. Moreover, investment in restoring flora and fauna was done to attract tourists, and save the biodiversity values. The development of PPP resulted in increased revenue and investment in rehabilitation (Saporiti, 2006). More specific is the Nairobi National Park, which is considered unique national park in the world and it support species conservation through tourism attractions, such as various animals, Ivory burning site Monument, safari walk, walking trails as well as picnic sites (Kenya Wildlife Service, 2011).

Another successful case study of the biodiversity conservation is the 13 years partnership of Total Corporate Foundation for Biodiversity and the Sea and the Port-Cros National Park, located in southern of France. The aim of this park is to conserve marine and coastal life, as well as education and public awareness of the value of flora and fauna there. Further to this, there is Coastal Protection Agency that is responsible for scientific and technical management of the wetlands. Moreover, the City of Hyères supports this partnership for sustainable tourism and income generation for the city. This partnership has helped to make this national park famous

with one million visitors per year. The success lies on the common vision and stakeholders' engagement in the management of the park (IPECA, 2011).

Moreover, from the field trip in Jerusalem during the training, there are national parks and gardens that have benefited from PPP. Gazelle Valley is an example of Urban Nature Wildlife Park in Jerusalem, where the environmental organizations in collaboration with the community convinced the municipality to make it a park, rather than having buildings there. Now, they are making plans together to provide the resources needed for the park, increase the number of tourists, as well as give the herd of gazelles a chance to flourish (Dvir, 2010). There are other examples of collaboration between municipality, NGOs and community, where they have turned a garden with rubbish into a clean one where they grow food and use as a place to hang out with the neighbors. Moreover, school children gathering benefited from education and public awareness on how food is grown in the garden, and environmental protection. Similarly, Riley (2011) has initiated to grow food in her garden by communicating the idea to the neighbors, which was done successfully.

The proposed national park in Kosovo has an opportunity to develop sustainable tourism, and protect conservation by offering winter sports center and summer activities facilities. Summer tourism includes activities, such as open nature, alpinism, hunting and fishing for families, workers, and others. During this season, the mountain climate is attractive for tourists, with emphasize in vertical vegetation, different ecosystems, beautiful landscape, water abundance which represent healthy climate for tourists. Except for the rivers like White Drini, Peja Bistrica, Decani Bistrica, other smaller water sources like Vrella-Istog, Vrella-Vrella, Radavci Rill, White Water-Peja, Black Water-Peja, Vrella e Gubavcit-Peja, Vrella e Lubeniqit-Lubeniq, Vrella e Jasiqit-Jasiq, Vrella of Big Meadows-Jasiq, Vrella e Isposnicës, Vrella e Belajes, Vrella e Junikut-Junik and Vrella (Haxhaj) are sources of the clean and healthy water, which attract the tourists. Furthermore, winter tourism includes potential activities of skiing. There are approximately 31.500m and can cope with 30.000 skiers. Leading ski lands are: Kopaonik, Rusolia Top, Leqenati Mountains and Mokna Mountains. Also, there is high potential for recreational in this area. It includes driving through the scenic canyon, hiking in the mountains, as well as mountain and rock climbing (UNEP Vienna ISCC, 2010).

This can be achieved by having PPP, where the government engages the private sector to perform certain functions. Shops, restaurants and lodges can be managed by private sector, which will increase the employment opportunities. Generation of the revenues through tourism will help to invest in conservation programs. Therefore, the private sector will gain profit by providing human and managerial resources, while the government will have the image of offering better services. Only through tourism, natural values can be presented and protected.

Indeed, it is worth to mention that there are some gaps, which question a successful partnership. This is because public and private sector have different interests and lack of trust might exist in their relationship (Diop, n.a). The private sector tend to think that government approaches are waste of time and include complex administrative procedures, while the government sees private sector as getting advantage from them because of their profit generation. However, both actors should realize that because of the limited resources, collaboration is necessary to avoid

redundancies and missed opportunities, which are caused by uncoordinated activities. Both of them benefit and the government improves its services through managerial skills and technology from private sector (Bennett, Grohmann & Gentry, 1999).

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the PPP has been a successful tool that helps the government to provide better services, which fulfils the needs and maximizes the benefits of the society. PPP is used for the sectors for which the government is not able to provide outstanding services, so improvement has been done by collaboration with private sector. There are the best practices of PPP in national parks of Africa and France, where they have succeed by developing tourism and enhancing the education and investment about species conservation. Both the government and private sector have benefited from this partnership, ensuring the acceptance of community and economic development.

The potential of the proposed national park in Kosovo, Cursed Mountains, shows that degradation of the national park can be minimized only by incorporating the PPP. To succeed, clear objectives should be set to ensure that both parties benefit. A management plan is required to explain the key issues, guidelines, financial and income details, tourism approach, education and public awareness and community involvement for wildlife protection. PPP will be helpful for private sector opportunities to develop, access to better services for society and economic recovery. However, the main challenge is the political and legal status, being a new state with no reputation of contracting party. Other challenges are related to the choice of the private sector partner, collaboration and transparency between parties, the clarity of the contract and protest from the community. Indeed, to cope with the challenges and promote urban nature, the joint effort is crucial.

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