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SWOT analysis of Sasca Montana commune

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Abstract:

This paper presents the current state of rural development of the Sasca Montana commune, in Caras-Severin county and a SWOT analysis of the commune with strengths and weaknesses and also the measures and works taken in account in order to achieve a sustainable rural development. Some "opportunities" and "threats" will appear in the "strengths" and "weaknesses" of Sasca Montana commune.

Following this analysis we can decide whether the locality can fulfill the plan, and under what sort of conditions.

Keywords: Sasca Montana, SWOT analysis, sustainable rural development, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats.

1. INTRODUCTION

Montana Sasca commune is located in the south-west of Caras-Severin county, in the mountain area of southern Banat at the interference of Mountains Locvei to the West, Almaj Mountain to the east and Anina Mountains to the north-east, 17 km from DN 57 national road. Montana Sasca village is linked by road, in south with Moldova Noua (25 km) south-east over the hills of Almaj and New Sopot (19 km) and Bozovici (40 km) and north of Oravita (30 km). The nearest railway station is at Racasdia (19 km). At 30 km far from Sasca Montana there is Naidăș locality, where there is a land border crossing to Serbia-Montenegro Federation, and in Moldova Noua there is a river border crossing point (the Federation of Serbia & Montenegro).

The entire Sasca Montana commune together with villages belonging to it (Sasca Romanian, Slatina Nera Bogodiș and Potoc) covers an area of approximately 1980 hectares and is located in National Park buffer zone Beusnita - Nera. The main activity of people in communities Sasca Montana for nearly a century has been mining, but in 1998 once the restructuring of large copper mine in the mining sector, Sasca Montana mine entered a conservation process.

Restructuring of the mining sector has led to many layoffs of staff, their total number being about 65%. Basically almost all areas of employment declines. Although the mining sector almost disappeared from the village Sasca Montana chances of recovery are very

high because the village has a great potential in other sectors such as agro-tourism, exploitation biomass, traditional crafts, organic farming etc. Therefore, a detailed SWOT analysis for Sasca Montana is requested.

SWOT analysis is a methodology for a sustainable development project. The method is descriptive and includes: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (risks) [1]. Strengths and weaknesses are related to the current situation of the village and its development strategies, achieving a comparison with competing locations. Opportunities and threats coming from the direction of the market environment and competition, and they usually are matters over which the area it has no control. SWOT Analysis takes into account settlement organization, its performance, products and key strategic markets.

SWOT analysis allows focusing on key areas and making assumptions in areas over which there is less detailed knowledge [1]. Following this analysis we can decide whether the locality can fulfill the plan, and under what sort of conditions. Some "opportunities" and "threats" will appear in the "strengths" and "weaknesses" of the village Sasca Montana.

Parameters which are analyzed for strengths and weaknesses of Sasca Montana commune: 1. Infrastructure 2. Environmental factors 3. Tourism 4. Rural development, agriculture and forestry 5. Education and culture, human resources and employment [2], [3].

2. SWOT ANALYSIS

2.1. INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure is one of the most important parameters in terms of sustainable development of Sasca Montana (Tab. 1.).

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Tab. 1. Strengths and weaknesses of Sasca Montana infrastructure.

Infrastructure	
Strenghts	Weaknesses
<p>1. Most houses are build of stone and bricks;</p> <p>2. The existence of a good electrical network in the commune;</p> <p>3. The existence of a water supply project for Sasca Montana and Sasca Romana which has already started.</p>	<p>1. Poor quality of communal roads and streets inside villages;</p> <p>2. Inadequate waste collecting and recycling systems;</p> <p>3. Existence of some areas that are almost isolated because of the lack of communication phone network;</p> <p>4. No water supply network in the commune;</p> <p>5. The non-existent sewerage network and wastewater treatment plant.</p>

The opportunities for Montana Sasca infrastructure are: investments in rehabilitation of communal roads but also the county authorities must rehabilitate the road linking the village with large cities. Also purposeful is the development of fixed-line network, mobile and internet on the whole range of commune in all villages, extending the water supply network and especially the achievement of a sewerage network with treatment plants for the entire commune.

Threats for the improvement of infrastructure are: lack of financial resources both at local and county level to improve the quality of roads or for an extended network of water supply and sewerage.

2.2. ENVIROMENTAL FACTORS QUALITY

Environmental factors quality is generally an important parameter for the sustainable development of a community, but especially for a commune like Sasca Montana, with a high tourism potential and chances for development of tourism in the future (Tab. 2.).

Tab. 2. Strengths and weaknesses for the quality of Sasca Montana environmental factors.

Environmental factors quality	
Strenghts	Weaknesses
<p>1. Existence of some extended areas covered by forest which have an important role for ensuring ecological balance;</p> <p>2. Unaffected rural space, that is very clean, especially in the mountain area;</p> <p>3. Natural capital of special value because of the genofond, biodiversity, landscape and water resources;</p> <p>4. Sasca Montana commune is located at the adjacent area (buffer zone) of a National Park.</p>	<p>1. Existence of former mining area with the waste dump and tailings pond that represent the most important pollution source;</p> <p>2. Low level of public conscience for the regional and local environmental problems;</p> <p>3. Lack of politics for the minimalization/recycling of wastes from economic activities;</p> <p>4. Unfavorable technical-economic indicators of investments for sewerage systems;</p> <p>5. Lack of a proper monitoring system for the use of environmental information;</p> <p>6. Lack of ecological landfill waste;</p> <p>7. Lack of works for the soil erosion and landslides prevention.</p>

The opportunities for the quality of environmental factors of Sasca Montana commune are: implementation of projects for information and awareness of local community on environmental protection, implementation of strategies for differentiated waste collection for recycling, reuse and possibly their reappraisal. Also there is need to develop integrated projects for the entire commune to build a sewage system and wastewater treatment plants, soil erosion control and neutralization of tehnicobiologic mining waste deposits by technical and technical-biological methods and, especially of the tailings pond which causes massive long term pollution [4], [5].

Threats to environmental factors quality are: lack of financial resources for financing and co-financing of projects financed by Structural Funds, the lack of population information related to European environmental standards, insufficient knowledge about the development and administration of projects financed by Structural Funds for , environment and infrastructure projects and people mindset of indifference to environmental protection.

2.3. TOURISM

Being situated in a mountainous area, adjacent (buffer) to Nera Gorge - Beusnita National Park tourism is one of the great opportunities for future development for common Sasca Montana (Tab. 3.).

2.4. RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Tab. 3. Strengths and weaknesses for tourism in Sasca Montana commune.

Tourism	
Strenghts	Weaknesses
<p>1.The local population is very friendly and hospitable;</p> <p>2.Nature is mostly untouched and not polluted;</p> <p>3.Folklore abd culinary traditions of the region;</p> <p>4.Presence of old places of worship and Slatina Nera monastery;</p> <p>5.Large surfaces of protected area (Cheile Nerei-Beusnita National Park);</p> <p>6.Existence of a touristic information centre in Sasca Romana locality;</p> <p>7.Existence of adventure travel;</p> <p>8.Surplus of places for living in this rural area and therefore a great opportunity to practice tourism.</p>	<p>1.Lack of unified management of protected areas in order to allow tourism in these areas;</p> <p>2.Punctual pollution from the tailings pond and waste dump in Sasca Montana;</p> <p>3.Lack or low quality of travel bookmarks;</p> <p>4.Little developed infrastructure for the acces to tourist attraction;</p> <p>5.Inadequate space for storage and recycling waste in tourist areas;</p> <p>6.Low quality touristic services because people are not informed about the possibility of accessing structural funds for tourist hostel;</p> <p>7.Lack or poor quality of infrastructure for tourism activities where natural resourse with high potential exist;</p> <p>8.Progressive degradation of cultural and artistic heritage;</p> <p>9.Lack of education on rural population and lack of opportunity to practice rural tourism packages to this segment;</p> <p>10.Poor representation of niche tourism in the area.</p>

The **opportunities** for tourism in Montana Sasca are: implementation of projects for the information and awareness of local community on the tourist potential and the possibility of accessing funds for development of tourist infrastructure. Other opportunities are extremely important for tourism: establishing an integrated management of tourist routes and development of tourist information centers, information on local population shift to organic farming, traditional crafts and exploitation of the forest (berries, etc.), activities with large possibilities of recovery of products in a tourist area [2], [3].

Threats to tourism are: aging population of the village, without a great interest to develop a tourism business, lack of information on the feasibility of projects and lack of financial resources for financing and co-financing of projects for development of business in tourism.

Farming, fruit growing, viticulture, animal husbandry and ecological forestry, related to tourism, are also important opportunities for Sasca Montana development (Tab. 4.).

Tab. 4. Strengths and weaknesses for rural development of Sasca Montana commune by agriculture and forestry

Rural development, agriculture and forestry	
Strenghts	Weaknesses
<p>1.Large area of forest per capita;</p> <p>2.Important sources of income by forest exploitation;</p> <p>3.Additional sources of income (wildberries, snails, mushrooms,tourism);</p> <p>4.The forest road network also serves the rural community;</p> <p>5.This area is suitable for beekeeping with possibility for obtaining biological products;</p> <p>6.Some localities in the commune are suitable for fruit growing and viticulture;</p> <p>7.Possibilities of practice of ecological agriculture;</p> <p>8.Houses built out of durable materials (generally of stone);</p> <p>9.The new built houses have proper equipment;</p> <p>10.Existence of a construction project for building a hospital for children with cancer and of an orphanage.</p>	<p>1.Low density of population;</p> <p>2.The poverty of population from this rural area;</p> <p>3.High aging of population;</p> <p>4.Small natality rate;</p> <p>5.Low productivity in agriculture caused by chopped privetly owned land, inadequate irrigation, small production units;</p> <p>6.Existence of some fallow and unused agricultural areas that are private or state property;</p> <p>7.There are no channels for recovering wood;</p> <p>8.There are no regulation for using forestry bases in tourism;</p> <p>9.Low diversification of agri-tourism services;</p> <p>10.Lack of jobs for middle aged people;</p> <p>11.Lack of investition for rural economy diversification;</p> <p>12.There is only one doctor for the entire commune;</p> <p>13.Low degree of complexity in rural education.</p>

Major opportunities for Sasca Montana commune are that the implementation of projects will attract young people into rural areas to develop business in tourism, agriculture and ecological animal husbandry [2], [3].

Major threats are: low fundraising possibilities and the great difficulty of attracting valuable young people in rural areas.

2.5. EDUCATION AND CULTURE, HUMAN RESOURCES AND LABOR MARKET

Education and culture, human resources and labor market are also an essential parameter in rural development (Tab.5.).

Tab. 5. Strengths and weaknesses in education and culture, human resources and labor market Sasca Montana.

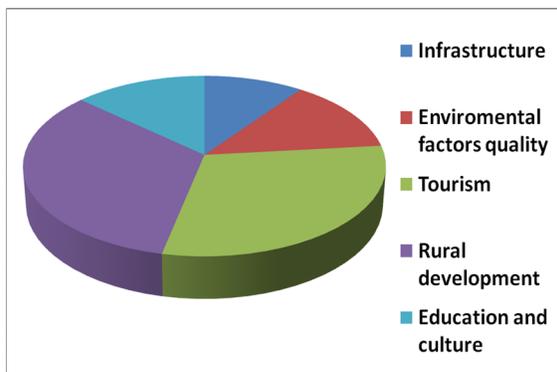
Education and culture, human resources and labor market	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>1.Existence of a school with 1 to 8 grades in Sasca Montana and schools with 1 to 4 grades in the neighboring villages;</p> <p>2.Existence of a cultural home in each village of the commune;</p> <p>3.Starting with 2011, in Sasca Montana, there will be a national jazz and rock festival which will turn international in 2012;</p> <p>4.If funds will be absorbed for tourism and agriculture, there is a possibility of assimilation of workforce in these fields.</p>	<p>1.Low complexity grade of rural education;</p> <p>2.Lack of qualified personnel in education and lack of incentives for the integration of young teachers in rural education;</p> <p>3.Need for rehabilitation of some schools and of cultural homes;</p> <p>4.The high degree of population aging and with no cultural interest</p> <p>5.Few young people and less qualified personnel in almost all sectors;</p> <p>6.In the current situation the lack of employment opportunities for youth and the high unemployment.</p>

Opportunities for education, culture, human resources and employment are: creation of clear and attractive programs to attract young people into rural areas where they can develop a business in tourism or agriculture. There also must be done appropriate investments in schools and cultural centers, and attracting qualified young people in schools or in other sectors.

Major threats are: general situation of education in the whole country with major difficulties attracting qualified young people, and delay and difficulty of implementing rural development medium and long term programs.

Analyzing the overall parameters from swot analysis of Sasca Montana commune (Fig. 1.) we notice in all cases a dominance of weaknesses:

Fig. 1. Comparison of parameters considered in the swot analysis for rural development of Sasca Montana.



3. CONCLUSIONS

SWOT analysis of Sasca Montana commune has identified several priority principles that should underpin the elaboration of strategy for sustainable development in Montana Sasca commune, namely:

1. increase the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry
2. implementation of projects and programs to attract young people in Sasca Montana in order to start a business in tourism and organic farming;
3. making constant investment in infrastructure: roads, schools and cultural homes;
4. restoration of degraded landscape in tailings pond and waste dump area. Potential emissions of harmful waste is a constant threat to each environmental factor, and the also to the entire ecosystem;
5. environmental protection and conservation of the countryside biological biodiversity on agricultural lands and forest biodiversity.

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