

REC Caucasus Regional Newsletter

FCFPP Project

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IN FOCUS

> During the centuries forests were existential basis for human activities. As well as in other regions, in the Caucasus forests and particularly ones located close to populated areas had two main functions: economic and cultural/spiritual. Despite modern technologic development, changes in legislations, and forest management schemes during the last century, forests continue to have two main abovementioned functions for local population, especially in the mountain regions of the Caucasus.

Unfortunately, many forests in the Caucasus which are used by rural communities have been, and are continuing to be degraded. Involving communities in the forest management can help to address these problems.

The term "Community Forestry" means involving the population living in and around forests in management planning, utilization, protection and maintenance of forest with the aims that the population will benefit from the products and services provided by forests and that forests will be sustainably managed.

The EU-funded regional project "Fostering Community Forest Policy and Practice in Mountain Regions of the Caucasus" implemented by REC Caucasus in three South Caucasus countries, as well as by Russian REC in Russia, is focused on development of new institutional, legal and technical set-up for community forest management. In particular, the project supports secured land tenure and forest rights of local communities, implementation of institutional arrangements and land use policies for forest conservation and sustainable use. Also, the project supports awareness raising activities among local



communities and local authorities on sustainable forest management, its relation and impact on other fields such as climate change, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Immediate reforestation measures under the project can solve problems such as land-slides, mudflows, avalanches and protect populated areas from natural disasters.

The overall objective of the action is to foster community forest policy and practice in mountain regions of the Caucasus in order to address deforestation and climate change issues, secured land tenure and forest rights, rural poverty reduction, conservation and sustainable development needs of local communities in the Caucasus Region.

The project's specific objective is to respond to current demands of the countries in elaboration of relevant institutional, legal and technical set-up for community forest management, awareness raising and capacity building of local communities and local authorities on sustainable forest management and demonstration of best

approaches/methods of immediate reforestation and landscape restoration.

In this issue:

Capacity Building Trainings in Armenia

Community Visit in Koghb and Jujevan

Field Visit in Adygeya

Awareness Raising Activities in Azerbaijan

Field Visit in Racha

Joint Monitoring of Forest Restoration Activities in Georgia

FCFPP Visibility Actions

Regional Guidelines for community Forest Management



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Trainings in Zikatar in Armenia

In April, 2012, REC Caucasus Armenia BO conducted capacity building trainings on "Sustainable Forest Management" at the "Zikatar" training centre (Forest Research and Experimental Centre).

The trainings began with the meeting of Mass Media representatives and tree planting activists in the Zikatar's park.

More than 27 representatives of Mass Media including local "Ankyun +3" and "Tavush" TV companies, representatives of NGOs including FLEG, WWF, REC Caucasus, Environmental Survival, Support Development of Forestry and Forest Industry, Jujevan Forestry, Koghb Forestry, Zikatar SNCO as well as Koghb and Jujevan community members attended the trainings.



During the workshop, knowledge assessment questionnaires on sustainable forest management and other related topics were distributed to the participants.

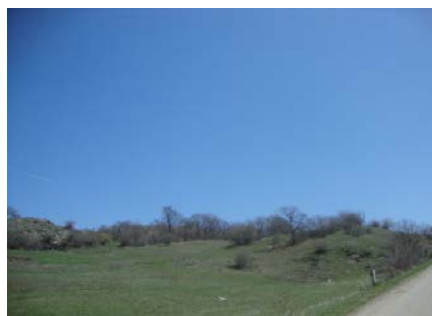


Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP) analysis for Koghb and Jujevan communities, non-wood forest use, conservation and ecotourism development issues, as well as National Guidelines for Community Forest Management were also presented to the workshop participants.

Community Visits in Koghb and Jujevan

Field visits were organized to the communities of Koghb and Jujevan in 2012.

The aim of the field visit was to organize consultations and update reforestation plans with the Koghb and Jujevan Local Self-Governments (LSG), Community Councils and Community Based Organizations (CBO), as well as "Mshkavanq" LLC and "Jujevan Forestry" LLC on the ways of effective implementation of reforestation activities.



During the meetings the reforestation plans were presented to the LSGs and Community Council for the final approval. It was agreed that all reforested areas would be fenced and the following types of trees would be planted: ash-tree, walnut-tree, oak, chestnut tree, wild pear-tree, which have high economic value and features.

Field Visit in Adygeya

In the past month, Russian REC Caucasus organized field visits to Adygeya with the aim to develop new plans of implementation of reforestation activities, also review Public Forest Council activities, discuss draft version of Community Forest Management Plan and conduct educational seminars on Sustainable Forest Management among local communities. The visit included on-sight shooting of a video, as well as the workshop in Department of Forest Management of Adygeya.

During the meetings, the local population confirmed that crucial issue is the restoration of a forest tree nursery, in order to have permanent planting material for reforestation and regeneration of damaged forests. However legal regulation of tree nursery reconstruction is not completed by lawmakers, which complicates the rehabilitation process.



Review of Forest Groups activity showed that interest of young people in forest subjects heightened, moreover, foresters and teachers act jointly in education process. New plan of reforestation was discussed, developed and approved.



Awareness Raising Activities in Azerbaijan

In past months, Azerbaijan has dynamically contributed to raising public awareness on Community Forest Management, in terms of organizing meetings with local population and other stakeholders in pilot regions.

Community Forest Management Steering Committee meetings have also been held, in order to determine specific objectives and approaches to project implementation and expected results of the action.



During the meetings it was decided to ensure public participation in project activities, in accordance with the CFMP, start activities related to organization of Media Tours in pilot regions, ensure observation of the activities implemented by Forest Planting Company, the local community and the project team, as well as start Study Tour preparation actions for experience exchange on FCFPP project activities.

Landscape Restoration and Planting Activities in Shahriyar Community

Over 22 500 various types of trees were used in the reforestation activities in Shahriyar community of Goygol District in Azerbaijan. Local municipality and Community Committee representatives together with community members took part in forest planting and landscape restoration activities.

Field Visits in Racha in Georgia

REC Caucasus team visited Racha region recently. The meetings held during the visit were attended by representatives of both community members and local authorities of villages Chiora, Ghkola and Ghebi.

The meeting aimed to introduce the activities planned within the framework of the project and select the land areas for forest landscape restoration. Representatives of local authorities and community members also discussed issues regarding forthcoming trainings.

As a result of joint efforts, the local population, together with REC Caucasus team selected 73 ha forest land for reforestation activities, which consists of both 66 ha territory as the land funded by the EU project and 7 ha as the one funded by Eurasia Partnership Foundation for restoration activities. Population of pilot villages expressed their commitment to take part in reforestation activities, which is crucial for increasing civic participation of local people in forest rehabilitation processes in the pilot regions.



REC Caucasus has also created other beneficial opportunities for rural farmers in order to improve and enrich cattle feed. In the rehabilitation process, reforested areas have been fenced to protect tree plants from impacts of external factors, such as grazing, floods etc. In newly ploughed and planted soils, large amounts of grass began to grow, especially in the territories near fences.

Joint Monitoring of Landscape Rehabilitation Activities

U.S. Forest Service experts and REC Caucasus project team conducted joint monitoring of forest landscape rehabilitation activities, implemented in the frames of REC Caucasus's two projects: the EU funded project "Fostering Community Forest Policy and Practice in Mountain Regions of the Caucasus" - and the Eurasia funded project "Introduce of Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Local Communities and Increase their Preparedness against Natural Disasters".



During the monitoring mission, experts visited sites in the high-mountain villages of Gebi and Chiora in Racha, where forestation activities are going on 4,3 ha territory, in addition, natural regeneration of 63 ha forest territories in the same villages are underway.

Within the visit, RECC's project team and U.S. Forest Service experts have met Mr. David Gagoshidze, the Georgian President's Attorney in Racha, Lechkumi and Kvemo Svaneti Region.



The purpose of the visit was sharing of experience and assessment of implemented activities, as well as recommendations and suggestions for the future steps. The detailed discussions and experience sharing stakeholder workshop with U.S. Forest Service experts were conducted in the building of the Ministry of Environment Protection in Georgia. The process of forest landscape rehabilitation will be continued with supervision of the U.S. Forest Service experts.

Awareness Raising Activities

As the part of visibility actions, within the framework of the FCFPP project, various information brochures and publications have been developed by four participating countries, including the Regional Guideline for Community Forest Management.



Branch offices of REC Caucasus were actively engaged in development of awareness raising materials on project implementation, such as CDs, pamphlets and video films, which were distributed to target groups during the national meetings and events such as “International Forest Day”, “Environment Day” and “Earth Day” implemented by RECC Armenia. More than 2000 copies of booklets, 200 copies of CD info packages, 1000 copies of info-sheets and 1000 copies of info folders have been spread out during the community meetings, workshops, seminars and trainings conducted by REC Caucasus within FCFPP project.



Relevant publications for awareness raising purposes were distributed in local communities as well as to community councils, villagers, foresters including Textbook “Recommendations on Social Aspects of Forest Certification using FSC Scheme”, Journal “Sustainable Forest Management” (WWF publisher) with relevant articles of project experts, educational booklet and educational video film “Forest I live in. What is sustainable forest management” (DVD).

Regional Guideline for Community Forest Management

The publication was prepared within the FCFPP project with the efforts of national and international experts. The purpose of the Regional Guideline for Community Forest Management is to set out guiding principles and provide recommendations for implementing forms of community forestry within the project Fostering Community Forest Policy and Practice in the Mountain Regions of the Caucasus.

The guiding principles and recommendation set out in the document are not normative, since each country will still need to adapt them for incorporation into its own legal framework. National guidelines are prepared and will be presented in the next issue of FCFPP project newsletter.

Legal Analysis of Community Forestry Issues

Legal analysis of the existing Forestry related legislation has been recently developed.

The International Expert elaborated a review based on the country analyses of legislation, visits to the pilot areas and discussions with project staff and stakeholders. The FCFPP project team carried out legal analyses of forest and land laws and regulations at national levels, as well as packages of relevant amendments to existing national legislations and regional model guideline for development of community forest management plans were elaborated and will be presented in the following issue of the newsletter.

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