

Promoting Sustainable Forest Management in Eastern Europe & Russia

Accomplishments & Lessons Learned from
IUCN's Activities in the ENPI FLEG Program

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Abstract

The Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) II European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) East Countries Programme (ENPI FLEG Program) supports participating countries' forest governance. At the regional level, the Programme, funded by the European Union and implemented by the World Bank, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and World Wide Fund for Nature, aims to implement the 2005 St. Petersburg FLEG Ministerial Declaration and support countries to commit to a time-bound action plan. At the national level the Programme reviews or revises forest sector policies and legal and administrative structures. It also aims to improve knowledge of and support for sustainable forest management and good forest governance in participating countries. At the sub-national (local) level, the Programme tests and demonstrates best practices for sustainable forest management and the feasibility of improved forest governance practices at the field-level on a pilot basis. The ENPI FLEG Program is an innovative approach that was developed in response to illegal forest activities in Eastern Europe and Russia. With respect to the participating countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia, the ENPI FLEG program seeks to establish sustainable forest governance practices and improve rural forest-dependent community livelihoods by working with governments and civil society.

This report focuses on the IUCN activities in the ENPI FLEG Program (IUCN-FLEG). Through interviews with IUCN-FLEG program staff and country coordinators, nine notable activities were documented and analyzed in order to identify key factors facilitating activity effectiveness, common challenges encountered, and major lessons to be learned. Key facilitating factors included IUCN-FLEG's professional reputation and network, the program's adaptability to the local context, and the program's structure and culture that encouraged learning and adaptation. Some common challenges were community distrust of outsiders, uncertainty due to government reforms, changes in institutional culture, and financial and human capacity limitations of governments in the region. Several lessons were drawn from the analysis of IUCN-FLEG activities. For instance, the IUCN-FLEG was effective at implementing its activities by adopting a facilitative role within existing institutional processes and adapting to the institutional and socio-political context in which they were operating. Similarly, sustainable forest governance in the program's participating countries was fostered by connecting with likeminded and committed professionals on the ground. Finally, the IUCN-FLEG program's ability to create synergies with governments, NGOs and citizens involved in forestry sectors in Eastern Europe and Russia allowed them to have a consequential impact in the region despite the program's modest size.

Chapter 1: Introduction, Context & Methods

I. Introduction

At great odds and in markedly different countries, activities undertaken by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) are raising awareness of threatened forest resources and widespread community forest dependency in Eastern Europe and Russia through education, policy reform and community engagement. While governments in several of these countries seem aware of the importance of forests to rural community livelihoods, few efforts had been made to institute policy measures that ensure sustainable resource use. To this end, the IUCN recognized the need to facilitate efforts to advance sustainable forest governance mechanisms by working in collaboration with governments, NGOs, and communities to change perceptions and build a deeper understanding of sustainable forest management. These IUCN activities were undertaken as part of the larger ENPI-FLEG Program.

The Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) II European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) East Countries Programme (ENPI FLEG Program) supports participating countries' forest governance (see Appendix L). At the regional level, the Programme, funded by the European Union, aims to implement the 2005 St. Petersburg FLEG Ministerial Declaration (<http://www.enpi-fleg.org/about/st-petersburg-declaration/>) and support countries to commit to a time-bound action plan. At the national level the Programme reviews or revises forest sector policies and legal and administrative structures. It also aims to improve knowledge of and support for sustainable forest management and good forest governance in participating countries. At the sub-national (local) level, the Programme tests and demonstrates best practices for sustainable forest management and the feasibility of improved forest governance practices at the field-level on a pilot basis.

The ENPI FLEG Program is an innovative approach that was developed in response to illegal forest activities in Eastern Europe and Russia. Implemented by the World Bank, IUCN and World Wide Fund for Nature, the ENPI FLEG Program in the participating countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia seeks to establish sustainable forest governance practices and improve rural forest-dependent community livelihoods by working with governments and civil society. The initial objectives of the ENPI FLEG Program were to build knowledge, understanding, and capacity for more sustainable forest practices through education, new community enterprises, scientific research, and institutional reforms and policy. The ENPI FLEG Program is a unique mechanism that is fostering collaboration across borders in a region of historical conflict and creating synergies across multiple sectors to shift perspectives around forest resource use.

This report describes and analyzes IUCN's activities under the ENPI FLEG Program implemented in the seven aforementioned participating countries. As such, the report is about innovation in advancing forest sustainability in emerging democracies that are faced with the challenge of addressing illegal forest use activities. The report tells the story of the implementation

of a formal top-down international agreement, the St. Petersburg Declaration, in a very bottom-up, adaptive manner that engages communities and enhances commitment to more science-based and equitable sustainable forestry practices. Further, this report highlights the factors that enable this type of innovation to be nurtured, and demonstrates how planting the seeds of change in a limited but deliberate and context-specific manner can prove consequential.

II. Background on FLEG

The Boreal forests that span a large part of Eastern Europe and North and Central Asia provide unparalleled economic, social, and environmental benefits to rural communities and their livelihoods in these regions (IUCN, 2014). Yet climate change, environmental degradation, and unsustainable management policies pose an increasing threat to this vital ecosystem, endangering the forest resources as well as the communities that depend on them for economic and subsistence needs.

Regional Challenges to Forest Governance

Forest management in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Russia (see Figure 1) is uniquely characterized by a post-Soviet context, which historically regarded forests as merely a wood source and not an ecosystem providing myriad social and ecological services (ENPI FLEG, 2016). Furthermore, the policies instituted in these countries as they established independence and democratic governance in the post-Soviet transition, such as market reforms, decentralized decision-making, and privatization of previously state-owned lands, have led to economic recession, high unemployment, and high poverty, especially in rural communities (Bakkegaard, 2014). The impacts of these policies in turn have led to high dependence on forest resources for subsistence use in these rural areas.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the forestry sector in Eastern Europe and Russia underwent significant reforms (Wendland, Lewis, Alix-Garcia, Ozdogan, Baumann, Radeloff, 2011). Previously, natural resources, including land, forests, minerals and water resources were property of the State under the Soviet Union. Neither private forest ownership nor private forestry existed and state cooperatives and enterprises were the only entities that were permitted to use the forest and its resources (Lazdinis, Carver, Lazdinis, Paulikas, 2009). As a result of the centralization of decision-making, the State was the primary authority in the selection of forest policy instruments and forest policy implementation. Further, forest resources were used according to guidelines provided by the State (Lazdinis et al, 2009). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the decentralization of forestry institutions meant that each former Soviet country was responsible for establishing their own national forest management and governance structures.



While each country in the former Soviet Union instituted forest management practices in the wake of the collapse, timber extraction and substantial illegal logging became common practice as a result of high poverty and weak institutional oversight (Taff, Müller, Kuemmerle, Ozdeneral, Walsh, 2009).

Some of the most pressing forestry issues in the region, mainly illegal logging, poaching, and unsustainable forest use practices are deep-rooted issues that impact these countries' long-term economic development, forest revenues, and livelihoods of forest dependent communities. Compounding these issues is the fact that, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the government agencies responsible for managing forests and natural resources in these countries had to be reestablished. The challenging socioeconomic conditions of the post-Soviet era has made it difficult for these emerging democracies to rebuild the capacity of their forestry governance institutions.

Poor governance of forest resources combined with weak law enforcement and management practices by government agencies has led to illegal logging and associated trade and corruption in the region. This uncontrolled illegal activity has resulted in losses of revenue from forest resource use to governments and communities, and widespread degradation of forest ecosystems and biodiversity (ENPI FLEG, n.d.). It should be noted that there are two distinct types of illegal forest resource use prevalent throughout the region. Forest resources, especially firewood, are often taken illegally by rural communities to satisfy their subsistence needs. In this case, forest management policies may not reflect the subsistence needs of communities to access and use forest resources for community-level purposes. However, a far greater proportion of illegal logging in the region is driven by unregulated wood harvests by timber companies to export timber and resources to international markets. This type of illegal activity can be tied to government corruption and organized crime within these countries. It also poses a challenge to countries that import timber from the Eastern European and Russian region and that are concerned about illegal activity in their timber supply chains. Both forms of illegal activity challenge the ability of government agencies in the region to sustainably manage forest resources.

In 2005, the ratification of the St. Petersburg Declaration by 44 countries marked a fundamental milestone in addressing issues of illegal logging. This declaration was the result of the Ministerial Conference on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance, signed in St. Petersburg, Russia. It represents the commitment by 44 governments from the European and North Asian region and other participating countries to address illegal logging and associated forest crimes (ENPI FLEG, 2005). Additionally, in 2013, a regulation of the European Parliament, the (Illegal) Timber Regulation, No. 995, went into effect to counter the trade of illegally harvested timber and timber products. The Regulation works to ban all access to illegally harvested timber in European Union markets and is legally binding in all 28 EU member states (European Commission, 2016).

The European Union's commitment to sustainably sourced timber

The EU's commitment to advancing the principles of sustainable use of natural resources within its member countries and its commercial partners in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean is implemented through what was previously the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), now known as the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) (EU

Neighbourhood Info Center, 2016, European Commission, 2016). The ENPI had a budget of €1.2 billion to be allocated between 2007 and 2013 to a wide range of institutions, including international organizations, NGOs, and decentralized institutions and entities in partner countries. In the particular case of the EU's Eastern European partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) and Russia, part of the ENPI's objectives of advancing environmental sustainability and good governance extended to ensure that the source of forest resource imports to the EU is sustainable and properly managed (ENPI FLEG, 2014, European Commission, 2016).

The EU's policy focus on improving sustainable management of forest resources derives from the economic importance to the EU of timber and other related forest product imports from the ENPI region and Russia. In 2007, the EU imported approximately 15.4% of its total timber and processed wood used for construction and manufacturing industries from several Eastern European partners and Russia. Though this percentage varied during the world economic crisis of 2008-2009, by 2011, import share from the ENPI region in the EU market was around 13% (European Commission, 2011).

Objectives and Accomplishments of the FLEG program

In the wake of these policies and international agreements, the European Commission identified a strong need for efforts to help ENPI countries and Russia advance more sustainable forest management practices at the government and community level. The FLEG program was initiated to address the threats of illegal forest activities and corruption in this region through multi-level processes to address the complex and sensitive issues related to illegal forest activities. The program is funded by a grant provided by the European Commission, using funds from the ENPI, and administered by the World Bank through a multi-donor trust fund. The grant has supported FLEG for two phases, from 2008-2012 and 2013-2016 (ENPI FLEG, 2014), and is implemented through partnership agreements in cooperation with the IUCN and WWF. The World Bank, IUCN, and WWF are referred to as FLEG's Implementing Organizations (IOs). The Austrian Development Agency began its contribution to this fund in 2012 (ENPI FLEG, n.d.). The countries that participate in FLEG are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Russia.

In 2008, the first phase of ENPI FLEG, known as FLEG I, was implemented to address the issue of illegal timber in the supply chain of the ENPI region under the directives of the St. Petersburg Declaration (ENPI FLEG, n.d.). FLEG I spanned a four-year period, from 2008-2012, with the goal of addressing complex and politically sensitive issues related to illegal logging at national and regional levels. FLEG I also placed a strong emphasis on fostering collaboration amongst major stakeholders from governments, civil society, and the private sector. Activities implemented during FLEG I assisted partner countries in the ENPI region to create an institutional and political environment that is more conducive to implementing broad forest governance reforms and strengthened collaborative ties between participating countries (ENPI FLEG, n.d.).

FLEG's second phase, FLEG II, spans the period of 2013-2016. FLEG II's main goal is to build on the achievements of FLEG I, with the broader focus of promoting sustainable forest governance in addition to influencing the regulation of illegal logging. FLEG II has four main

objectives, to: i) improve forest policy and legislation, ii) assist in capacity building in participating countries, iii) promote sustainable management and use of forests, and iv) promote sustainable livelihoods for forest dependent communities. Thus far, these objectives have led to many accomplishments such as the development of suggestions for amendments to national forest laws, and enhanced dialogue between governments, forest related businesses, and NGOs. FLEG II has also facilitated trainings on sustainable forest management for forestry practitioners, developed programs and materials for education institutions, promoted voluntary forest certifications for businesses, enhanced cross-border relations to reduce illegal logging, and launched pilot projects on eco-tourism development in forest dependent communities (ENPI FLEG, n.d.).

FLEG has effectively fostered communication and action to address unsustainable forest practices through steering committee meetings with the FLEG focal points from each participating country. Focal points are high-ranking government officials, such as a Deputy Minister from a country's Natural Resource Ministry or a National Forestry Agency. Close collaboration with focal points has fostered ownership of the FLEG program in participating government agencies, and has led to a prioritization of FLEG issues on national policy agendas (ENPI FLEG, n.d.). Furthermore, an ongoing benefit of the FLEG program has been the continued effort to re-establish professional forestry networks within the ENPI region that dissolved with the breakup of the Soviet Union and its centralized governance structure (ENPI FLEG, n.d.).

FLEG's initiatives and activities thus align with the ENPI objectives and a key part of the EU's Environment Governance Pillar (ENPI FLEG, 2014), as well as with the EU's commitments to the St. Petersburg Declaration of 2005 to take action on addressing illegal logging (ENPI FLEG, 2015). In this context, FLEG promotes sustainable forest governance, management, and protection of forests in the ENPI region and Russia and aims to improve forest governance practices at the national, sub-national, and municipal levels (ENPI FLEG, 2015).

FLEG's Goals for this Project

Since FLEG's inception, the IUCN introduced and implemented numerous activities in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine under the auspices of the FLEG program. The IUCN wanted to ensure that these activities were well-documented and able to be shared more broadly within the international conservation community. They also desired to have an external assessment of their activities that would identify key facilitating factors and challenges, and draw overarching lessons from their experiences. To this end, the IUCN enlisted the assistance of a graduate student team from the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE) to develop a series of case studies on a subset of the IUCN's activities implemented in the ENPI region and Russia under FLEG.

This report is the product of the SNRE team's independent assessment of the IUCN-FLEG program. In narrative form, it tells the stories of nine notable IUCN-FLEG activities and highlights the factors that enabled these activities to have impact. It synthesizes the major lessons to be learned from this innovative program, and should be of interest to IUCN-FLEG program staff and country program coordinators (CPCs), FLEG funders, and other FLEG program stakeholders seeking to better understand the processes and strategies that guided effective implementation of IUCN-FLEG activities. Additionally, this report should advance understanding of the FLEG

program's applicability to future forest management initiatives in Eastern Europe, Russia, and other regions of the world.

III. Research Methodology

IUCN-FLEG activities are spread out across different countries in the ENPI region and Russia to address specific forest management-related issues. The SNRE team chose a research approach that would document the process through which each activity was implemented by prompting its implementers to reflect on the circumstances that facilitated or challenged the achievement of planned outcomes. IUCN-FLEG activities were carried out in each country by a Country Program Coordinator (CPC). These coordinators are all highly qualified and respected professionals in the fields of environment and forest management, and are native to the countries in which they are implementing FLEG activities. They have extensive knowledge of the details and main components of each activity. The purpose of documenting their experience was to extract facilitating factors and challenges and organize them in narrative form. This narrative not only served as a mechanism to share IUCN-FLEG's experience with a broader audience, it also allowed the CPCs and the IUCN-FLEG team to reflect on key elements of activity implementation to prompt further analysis and insights into their work.

In order to perform this assessment and analysis in a uniform and systematic manner, the SNRE team developed an interview protocol of questions that would be asked of each IUCN-FLEG CPC and staff member. The questions contained in this protocol focused on extracting the motivations and initial goals of each activity, important participants in the activity, noteworthy challenges and milestones, and prominent outcomes that the activities generated. The SNRE team conducted in-depth interviews with each IUCN-FLEG CPC as well as the IUCN-FLEG program coordinators to identify and analyze the processes and strategies that guided implementation of IUCN-FLEG activities in each country and across the region. The SNRE team's research objectives were to:

- Ensure that institutional knowledge of the implementation strategies and accomplishments of IUCN-FLEG program activities were captured in written form.
- Emphasize broader lessons to be learned from the IUCN-FLEG program experience.
- Generate knowledge that the IUCN can use to increase the capacity of the IUCN-FLEG program to effectively promote sustainable forest governance.
- Generate knowledge that enhances understanding of sustainable forest management and protection in the ENPI region and, potentially, in other parts of the world.

IV. Research Stages

In order to achieve these objectives, the SNRE team organized the research in five stages:

1. Literature and background document review
2. Case study selection and background review
3. Data collection and interview process
4. Case study analysis and writing
5. Identification of lessons learned

Stage 1: Literature and background document review

During the first stage of research, the SNRE team conducted a focused literature review to provide the necessary background knowledge to perform a rigorous qualitative analysis of IUCN-FLEG activities, understand the socio-political context in which the FLEG program took place, and investigate relevant topics relating to forest governance that informed IUCN-FLEG activities.

The literature review covered the topics of: i) the historical and socio-political context surrounding forest management in the ENPI region; ii) existing documentation of FLEG's objectives, structure, and activities in the ENPI region; and iii) qualitative research methods. Similarly, two SNRE team members attended the IUCN-FLEG Coordination Meeting at the IUCN headquarters in Gland, Switzerland in March 2015 where they became familiar with the context of IUCN-FLEG program, the program staff and the activities being performed under the program.

Stage 2: Case study selection

In the second stage of the project, the SNRE team worked in close collaboration with IUCN-FLEG program coordinators Richard Aishton (ENPI-FLEG Program Coordinator) and Ekaterine Otashvili (ENPI-FLEG Project Officer) to identify a set of 12 IUCN-FLEG activities that were representative of IUCN-FLEG's work in each of the seven participating countries and the region as a whole and that warranted in-depth analysis using a case study method. Following this step, IUCN-FLEG CPCs in charge of implementing each selected activity shared documents and related background information with the SNRE team.

Stage 3: Data collection

Stage three consisted of collecting data to perform the case study analysis in order to derive overarching facilitating factors and challenges that would inform lessons learned. To this end, the SNRE team developed interview questions (Appendix A) that would: i) document steps, results, and reasons for effectiveness of IUCN-FLEG activity implementation; ii) identify and assess the motivations that support and challenge sustainable forest management at the community, regional, national, and international levels of IUCN-FLEG activity implementation; and iii) report lessons learned, and identify effective implementation strategies.

The SNRE team provided the interview questions to each CPC in advance of the in-person, script-guided interviews in order to help each CPC begin recalling details about their activities that

were to be analyzed. The interviews explored each CPC's perspectives on the initial goals of their activities, the context in which those activities took place, their aspirations and considerations in developing activities, activity outcomes, and the most preeminent aspects of the activity implementation process.

These activity-specific interviews took place at the IUCN headquarters in Gland, Switzerland, during July and August 2015 (Appendix C). For each activity to be analyzed, the SNRE team performed two interviews with the activity's implementing CPC, with an average duration of two hours per interview. An initial interview with each CPC focused on the activity implementation process. A second, follow-up interview with each CPC investigated particular topics of interest for IUCN-FLEG and SNRE team members, or relevant information that surfaced during the first interview in more detail. This second interview also asked CPCs about the Regional Forest Dependence Study (Appendix B). These interviews were conducted by teams of two SNRE team members, with one team member designated as the interviewer, and the other as the observer and recorder. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by either a SNRE team member or a professional transcriber.

All seven CPCs received a set of follow-up questions via email at various intervals from September 2015 to March 2016, asking them to elaborate on the most relevant aspects of IUCN-FLEG program coordination. IUCN-FLEG Program Manager, Richard Aishton was interviewed three times regarding IUCN-FLEG Regional Forest Dependence Study (Appendix B). IUCN-FLEG CPCs and other IUCN-FLEG staff interviewed during the summer of 2015 received follow-up questions via email during October 2015 and March 2016 requesting further information about relevant topics that arose while performing the activity analyses.

Stage 4: Case study analysis and writing

During stage four, case studies were developed and written by the SNRE student team using information obtained through the interviews with CPCs and complemented by desk research conducted on the context of each IUCN-FLEG activity. This information included the historical and socio-political context of the country being analyzed and each CPC's account of the activity, which was derived from the interview responses. The framework for case study documentation and analysis provided a structured and consistent method to document and analyze each of the selected activities. One case study was written for each activity that was selected to be included in the final report.

SNRE team members worked in pairs to develop each case study. Following the interviews with the CPC responsible for the IUCN-FLEG activity, the student team organized, transcribed, and summarized recorded materials. Next, case study contents were contextualized using ancillary information found through desk research regarding the broader social, political, economic or scientific research circumstances surrounding each activity. One SNRE team member took the lead on writing the first draft of the case study; each draft then received additional input and review by the supporting SNRE team member.

Case study drafts were sent to their respective CPCs and the IUCN ENPI-FLEG Program Coordinator and Project Officer for review. This review allowed for the provision of further details

and the expansion of sections of case studies that were of particular interest to the IUCN-FLEG program team. Case studies are presented in alphabetical order in this report according to the country where the activity took place. Some activities that were implemented in FLEG II were not selected for the purposes of this analysis because there was insufficient information about the activity, information about the activity was inaccessible, or the activity had not been completed at the time the SNRE team was performing research. Consequently, only nine of the 12 initially identified activities were analyzed in a case study form.

Stage 5:

In stage five, the SNRE team performed a cross-case analysis of the selected activities in order to derive overarching lessons learned from the IUCN's experience under the FLEG program. The SNRE team highlighted facilitating factors and challenges common across all or most case studies that significantly affected the IUCN-FLEG's activity implementation process. From the analysis, overall conclusions and lessons learned were drawn about IUCN-FLEG's experience in the ENPI region.

V. Roadmap for Report

Chapter One has provided an introduction to the IUCN's need for this project, the unique regional context in which the FLEG program is implemented, and the SNRE team's research goals and methodology.

Chapter Two presents in-depth, narrative case studies for nine notable FLEG activities. These case studies provide the reader with an overview of each activity, highlighting the activity's goals and objectives, the process through which the activity was developed and implemented, factors that facilitated the effectiveness of the activity, challenges faced, and the activity's accomplishments and outcomes.

Case Study 1: Climate Change Adaptation, Azerbaijan, discusses IUCN-FLEG's study on the impacts of climate change on Azerbaijan's forests and forest-dependent communities. IUCN-FLEG produced a comprehensive report outlining the readiness of government officials at the national and local level to identify and implement climate adaptation measures, and recommended strategies for climate adaptation for forestry officials.

Case Study 2: Empowering Forest-Dependent Communities through Roadshows, Armenia, documents how IUCN-FLEG engaged directly with local forest-dependent communities to strengthen their knowledge of forest sustainability and improve their access to government officials and the governmental decision-making process. The Roadshows activity generated claims and appeals from community members aimed at solving forestry issues, which were presented to the Armenian government for consideration.

Case Study 3: Forest Dependence Study, Belarus, describes the IUCN-FLEG Forest Dependence Study in rural Belarus that sought to investigate the characteristics of forest resource use by rural communities. The forest dependence study helped determine the

dependency of rural communities on their local forests, and will ideally provide more clarity on community forest dependence dynamics.

Case Study 4: Forest Pest and Disease Management, Georgia, describes the process by which IUCN-FLEG assisted with forest pest and disease management in Georgia. IUCN-FLEG helped the Georgian government assess forest pests and diseases in three protected areas, and fostered scientifically-based forest governance by giving recommendations on conservation activities to government forest management planning.

Case Study 5: Tusheti Protected Landscape Community Management, Georgia, discusses IUCN-FLEG's collaboration with the Tusheti Protected Landscape Administration in Georgia to facilitate the policy transfer of management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape from the national to municipal government level. IUCN-FLEG identified the policy gap that prevented the municipality from managing the landscape, and built capacity of local officials to effectively take over management responsibilities.

Case Study 6: Agency Moldsilva's Communication Strategy, Moldova, documents IUCN-FLEG's assistance to Moldova's forestry agency, Agency Moldsilva, in their efforts to redesign the Agency's communication strategy as a result of demand by the Moldovan public for transparency and accountability from government agencies. Collaboration between IUCN-FLEG and Agency Moldsilva led to creation of the Department of Information and Public Communication within the agency and improvements to Agency Moldsilva's website, providing increased access to the general public to information about Moldova's forestry sector.

Case Study 7: Bezhanitsy Eco-Tourism Development Alliance, Russia, documents IUCN-FLEG's collaboration with Polistovsky Nature Reserve officials, local citizens of Tsevlo and local authorities in the Bezhanitsy municipal district in northwest Russia. The case describes the development of an eco-tourism alliance as means to resolve conflict over non-timber forest resources that arose after the Nature Reserve was created in 1994. The Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism development alliance transformed the relationship between citizens of Tsevlo and the Nature Reserve by introducing alternative sustainable livelihoods and promoting the stewardship of forest resources.

Case Study 8: Open Letter on Forest Reform Legislation, Ukraine, is about how IUCN-FLEG adapted its programmatic strategies to respond to proposed reforms to Ukraine's forestry sector in the aftermath of the Ukrainian revolution of 2014. The Open Letter to the Ukrainian Parliament provided expert opinion and expertise about the potential negative consequences of proposed forestry reforms on Ukraine's forest industry sector, successfully preventing two detrimental reforms from being carried out.

Case Study 9: Regional Forest Dependence Study discusses IUCN-FLEG Regional Forest Dependence Study that quantified the relationship between rural communities and their natural resource base, to determine what income these communities received from the forest. This study made significant progress on demonstrating the full economic value of

the forest resources, and sparked interest amongst governments in the ENPI region in understanding the economic benefit of protecting forest resources.

Chapter 3 presents a set of facilitating factors and challenges that were each shared across several activities, identified through a cross-case analysis that sought to identify themes that unified IUCN-FLEG's experience across its work in the ENPI and Russian region

Part I overviews the prevalent factors that appeared to facilitate the effectiveness of IUCN-FLEG activities. The characteristics and professional qualifications of the CPCs and how they influenced activity implementation are discussed. The positive professional reputation and networks that IUCN-FLEG established through its previous and ongoing work in the ENPI and Russian region and how they facilitated the program's ability to establish new partnerships and leverage expertise and authority from existing professional relationships is assessed. The influence of IUCN-FLEG's program management style and internal and external communications approach is examined.

Part II identifies challenges that IUCN-FLEG faced across multiples countries and activities, and highlights commonalities in the circumstances that led to these experiences. It examines the challenges IUCN-FLEG faced in working directly with communities, especially with regard to gaining trust, mediating conflict, and ensuring participation. It focuses on the challenges that were unique to IUCN-FLEG's work and relationships with government partners, and how the characteristics of government partners sometimes presented barriers to activity implementation. The difficulties IUCN-FLEG faced in leveraging the program's own limited resources, and in working with partners who lacked the technical and human capacity to implement necessary work are described.

Chapter 4 discusses the overall conclusions drawn and lessons learned from IUCN-FLEG, with the goal of informing the effectiveness of future programs that aim to improve the governance of forests and forest-dependent communities. It describes: how IUCN's structure and overarching objectives as an institution allowed the IUCN to promote and lay the groundwork for future change across the region; how IUCN played a facilitating role on existing institutional process but was also adaptable to the institutional and socio-political context in which they were operating; IUCN's ability to connect with likeminded and committed professionals on the ground; and, how IUCN's ability to create synergies with governments, NGOs, and citizens involved in forestry sectors in Eastern Europe and Russia allowed the organization to have a consequential impact in the region in spite of the program's modest size.

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Chapter 2: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Climate Change Adaptation, Azerbaijan

Case Study 2: Empowering Forest-Dependent Communities through Roadshows, Armenia

Case Study 3: Forest Dependence Study, Belarus

Case Study 4: Forest Pest and Disease Management, Georgia

Case Study 5: Tusheti Protected Landscape Community Management, Georgia

Case Study 6: Agency Moldsilva's Communication Strategy, Moldova

Case Study 7: Bezhanitsy Eco-Tourism Development Alliance, Russia

Case Study 8: Open Letter on Forest Reform Legislation, Ukraine

Case Study 9: Regional Forest Dependence Study

Case Study 1: Climate Change Adaptation, Azerbaijan

Prepared by: Allegra Wrocklage

A. Activity Highlights

Azerbaijan is a country of mountains and arid flatlands, with relatively sparse forest cover. As the impacts of climate change on forests in Azerbaijan accelerate, the need to adapt forest management practices for these effects is increasingly important. However, little research or analysis has been done on the vulnerabilities of Azerbaijan's forests to climate change, inhibiting consideration of climate change concerns in national forestry policy and leading to a lack of training and education for Azerbaijan's forestry sector professionals on the impacts of climate change. This constrained the capacity of forestry sector professionals to adaptively plan for the impacts of climate change on Azerbaijan's forests and the rural communities that depend on forest resources.

To address these issues, IUCN-FLEG worked with forest management professionals in Azerbaijan's Department of Forest Development, at both the national level and regionally within the Shamakhi and Ismaili districts, to conduct pilot studies assessing the potential effects of climate change on forests and forest-dependent communities. IUCN-FLEG published a report detailing the results of this study, identifying key areas of vulnerability and recommending adaptation measures for the forestry sector to prepare for climate change impacts. This report urged national and municipal governments to consider climate adaptation activities and their associated local investments as a top priority in forestry planning and management (ENPI FLEG, 2015b).

Since IUCN-FLEG implemented the pilot studies and published the report, the need for climate change adaptation has achieved a new level of awareness in Azerbaijan's forestry sector. Climate change adaptation considerations are now included in the institutional resources of Azerbaijan's forest sector, and forest sector professionals use the approaches recommended by IUCN-FLEG in their day-to-day management activities. Overall, IUCN-FLEG was able to mainstream climate change adaptation into Azerbaijan's forestry sector and create an attitude of readiness for the threats of climate change. Although many adaptation measures remain to be implemented and the risks of climate change to Azerbaijan are still not fully understood, IUCN-FLEG effectively helped introduce climate change adaptation into national policymaking and raised awareness for actions to address the issue amongst government officials, forestry experts, and communities.

B. Background

Forest Dependency in Azerbaijan

A range of climates and geographies characterize Azerbaijan. The north of Azerbaijan is bordered by the Caucasus Mountains and is mainly highland, with an alpine to temperate climate. The central area of the country is mainly lowland plains, which have low precipitation and is generally considered semi-desert or dry steppe climate. While forests originally covered about 35% of Azerbaijan, due to human-driven deforestation over the past 200 years only about 11% remains forested today. Of Azerbaijan's forests, 95% are located in mountainous regions, with the remaining 5% located in plains areas (ENPI FLEG, 2015a). The Department of Forest Development within the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources is responsible for management of Azerbaijan's forests.



Picture 1: A rural village in Azerbaijan. Photo by ENPI FLEG II.

Forests and forest products play an important economic and social role for rural communities in Azerbaijan. Many rural communities settle in close proximity to forests to have access to firewood for heating, especially during winter months. Rural communities rely on local forests for their timber, food products, and medicinal plants. The development of tourism has also begun to play an important role in providing a source of income for rural communities. Yet unregulated tourism activities, illegal grazing, and illegal logging threaten Azerbaijan's forests (ENPI FLEG, 2015a).

Impacts of Climate Change on Azerbaijan's Forests

Climate change has already had an impact on Azerbaijan's forests and their dependent communities, and will continue to do so. Azerbaijan has already recorded a decrease in precipitation and an increase in average temperatures; droughts were especially prevalent in 2014 (Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, 2011). It is likely, according to predictions, that climate change in Azerbaijan will also cause heat stress and death to tree species that are not accustomed to higher temperatures which, combined with drought, will increase the risk of forest fire (ENPI FLEG, 2015a).

Given Azerbaijan's arid landscape and limited forest resources, communities that depend on forest resources are very sensitive to changes in forest cover. These communities are already witnessing changes in their local environments that could be attributed to climate change. For example, communities reported changes in water availability, pasture resources, and forest resources, with which they were ill prepared to cope. However, as community members seldom had a background understanding of climate change, they did not understand why these changes were happening or how to prepare for and manage them.

The impacts of climate change have the potential to significantly affect the economic viability of communities that depend on forest resources for their livelihoods, potentially causing increased unemployment in these communities and out-migration to other regions (ENPI FLEG, 2015a). According to Azer Garayev, FLEG II Country Program Coordinator for Azerbaijan, it became clear there was a need to assess what information these communities had on climate change and what information they lacked to address it, in order to evaluate their ability to cope with these risks (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015).

A Lack of Knowledge

While Azerbaijan is a participant in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other international climate change initiatives, in-country projects linked to these initiatives have no focus on how climate change impacts would specifically affect forests in Azerbaijan. Further, there were no studies on Azerbaijan's forestry sector to investigate how the country's forests would be affected by climate change, how forests could be managed to meet the risks of climate change, and how forest-dependent communities would be affected.

Before IUCN-FLEG developed and implemented their research through the pilot studies initiative, FLEG II consultant Bariz Mehdiyev carried out meetings with organizations working on climate change issues to exchange expertise and knowledge about climate change projects and programs in Azerbaijan. These included the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, which was working on Azerbaijan's Third National Communications to the UNFCCC, and the Asian Development Bank, which was working to improve information on climate change mitigation investment opportunities in Azerbaijan's energy and transport sectors (Asian Development Bank, 2014). From these meetings, Mehdiyev identified a lack of knowledge about the potential impact from climate change amongst forest-dependent communities and government agencies responsible for forest management, and a lack of capacity to address it. These communities also needed help planning adaptive measures to cope with the unexpected impacts of climate change (ENPI FLEG, 2014).

Activity Goals and Objectives

IUCN-FLEG identified key strategies needed to address this lack of knowledge and understanding on how to adapt to the impacts of climate change in the forestry sector and forest-dependent communities. First, assessments on the vulnerability of Azerbaijan's forests and forest-dependent communities to the impacts of climate change would be needed to fill the existing research gap. The knowledge gathered from these assessments could guide climate change education initiatives for the forestry sector and the public, and inform policy making regarding forest management. Ultimately, these initiatives could build capacity for Azerbaijan's forest sector to develop local strategies to adapt to climate change.

To advance this goal, IUCN-FLEG conducted baseline assessments to:

- Assess the possible impacts of climate change on forest biodiversity and ecosystem services, and the resulting potential loss of economic benefits from these forest resources to forest-dependent communities.
- Assess the level of knowledge and understanding of climate change adaptation by forestry management professionals in government agencies and the national and local level.

IUCN-FLEG also pursued education and policy objectives, including:

- Educate forestry professionals and decision makers in government agencies at the national and community level about the effects of climate change on Azerbaijan's forests, in order to illustrate the need for adaptation actions.
- Raise the awareness of forest-dependent communities about the impending risks of climate change, particularly related to their forest dependency needs.
- Advance forest management policies and strategies related to climate change at the local and national levels.

Implementation

IUCN-FLEG undertook a series of strategies to meet its objectives on advancing awareness of climate change adaptation for the forestry sector in Azerbaijan. First, IUCN-FLEG undertook assessments to understand the vulnerabilities of Azerbaijan's forests and forests-dependent communities to climate change. These assessments sought to identify how these impacts could affect community well-being, and the capacity of forest management agencies to adapt to these impacts. IUCN-FLEG further collaborated with national government agencies to design targeted education initiatives on strategies to address specific climate change impacts on forests. Finally, IUCN-FLEG's attention to climate change adaptation in the forestry sector resulted in the inclusion of climate change adaptation in key national forestry policies.

Assessing Vulnerability to Climate Change

IUCN-FLEG sought to assess climate change impacts on forests and forest-dependent communities and adaptation readiness through a pilot study of communities in key regions of Azerbaijan. FLEG's National Focal Point Rahim Ibrahimov, who is with Azerbaijan's Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, first proposed the pilot study to the FLEG National Program Advisory Committee in Azerbaijan. The National Program Advisory Committee then worked with Garayev, Mehdiyev, and Isa Aliyev, Azerbaijan's UNFCCC National Focal Point from the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, to select two pilot regions for assessment: the flat, arid Shamakhi district and the more mountainous and semi-arid Ismailli district. These pilot regions were selected in order to study two of the main forest types in Azerbaijan, and how they are impacted by climate change.

Forest-dependent communities within these regions were selected in order to assess how climate change would affect the forest resources these communities depend on. The selected communities were considered "typical" of their regions in both population size and socioeconomic context. IUCN-FLEG's pilot studies sought to analyze the vulnerability of these communities to the potential changes in forest resources that climate change could cause, and the forestry sector's capacity to cope with and adapt to the risks facing these communities.



Picture 2: The forests around the village of Lahij in the Ismailli district of Azerbaijan have been degraded and the impacts of climate change are becoming more evident. Photo by ENPI FLEG II.

After communities for the pilot studies were selected, starting in March 2014 Mehdiyev spent eight months participating in meetings, discussions, interviews, and roundtables in the study's pilot regions and in Baku, Azerbaijan's capital, with national and local-level members of forest management government agencies. The goals of these meetings were to discuss the baseline state of the Azerbaijan forestry sector's readiness to address and adapt to the impacts of

climate change, especially relating to resource management for forest-dependent communities. Mehdiyev also prepared a questionnaire for forestry sector professionals to assess their knowledge of climate change and its impacts. The questionnaire asked about the interviewee organization's understanding of climate change, their access to climate change information and ability to interpret it for usefulness, and their capacity to implement adaptation activities (Appendix F). The survey data was collected in the summer of 2014, after which it was compiled and analyzed.

In January 2015, IUCN-FLEG published on its website the *Final report on climate change impact (including social and economic impact) to local forest of Azerbaijan* (ENPI FLEG, 2015a). This report described the findings of the pilot community studies that analyzed the vulnerability of forest areas to expected climate change. It also contained the results of the surveys and interviews conducted with the national and local forestry professionals on the potential impacts of climate change on Azerbaijan's forestry resources and community knowledge of these impacts. The report described the vulnerability of the pilot communities to the impacts of climate change based on the communities' forest-dependency, how the forest resources will be affected by climate change, and how prepared communities were to understand and adapt to these risks (ENPI FLEG, 2015a).

By analyzing the results of the pilot studies, the report described how Azerbaijan's forests and forest-dependent communities were highly vulnerable to the projected negative impacts climate change will have on forest resources. The report also explained that there was a poor understanding of the risks posed by climate change to the forestry sector, and a limited institutional capacity at the national and local levels of government to determine and adapt to them. Significantly, forestry sector professionals working at a local level were shown to have less awareness of the negative impacts of climate change than national-level stakeholders, and how to adapt to them (ENPI FLEG, 2015a).

Finally, the report provided recommendations for forest sector professionals and government officials to include planning for climate change risks in forest management, especially through adaptive management practices that could incorporate provisions for the uncertainty of extreme events. Some recommendations included hosting workshops and trainings to educate local government officials on climate change risks and adaptation measures, and to improve the administrative, technical, and financial capacity of national-level forestry institutions (ENPI FLEG, 2015a). The report, notes Garayev, "gives Azerbaijani officials a solid understanding of the challenges and importance of addressing climate change in Azerbaijan's forest landscapes so they can make wise decisions when taking the necessary next steps" (personal communication, July 13, 2015).

Training and Education

IUCN-FLEG assisted in developing manuals specifying climate adaptation activities for Azerbaijan's forestry sector to facilitate the education of forestry professionals and communities on the impacts of climate change to forests. Azerbaijan's Ministry of Emergency Situations approached IUCN-FLEG to develop a manual on the increased risk of forest fire caused by climate change targeted to policymakers, forestry professionals, and forest-dependent communities. Since publishing the manual, the Ministry of Emergency Situations uses it for training communities to address forest fire risks through climate change adaptation measures. The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources is now also providing training related to climate change issues for forestry

sector professionals, using the results and recommendations provided by IUCN-FLEG's report on the pilot studies. The Ministry of Emergency Situations also creates annual forest fire prevention plans, and Garayev believes the report's results will be useful to the development of these plans (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015).

The Ministry of Education also asked IUCN-FLEG to develop manuals on forest fire prevention, which are now being used by the Republican Center of Environmental Education of the Ministry of Education in schools across Azerbaijan. Garayev considers youth education on climate change an opportunity to create a new generation of young foresters, whose interest in protecting Azerbaijan's forests may influence adults to lessen their negative impact on forests (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015).

Policy Initiatives

A key result of IUCN-FLEG's work with national-level forestry professionals and policymakers who assessed the results of the pilot studies was the inclusion of climate change adaptation approaches in national policy, and national conceptual and strategic documents related to forestry. To Garayev, these actions provide evidence of the institutionalization of climate change considerations in Azerbaijan's policy and forestry management activities (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13,



Picture 2: Deforestation, such as in this area of Azerbaijan, is contributing to climate change. Photo by ENPI FLEG II.

2015). For example, climate change adaptation for forests is included as a priority policy objective for Azerbaijan's national forestry policy in Azerbaijan's *National Forest Program Forest Policy Statement and Action Plan 2015-2020* (Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, 2013). This national forestry plan will be the first in Azerbaijan to include climate adaptation measures for the forestry sector and, according to Garayev, will "provide and support the development of adaptation issues and mitigation issues related to the forest sector on the national level in the future" (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015). The plan, currently in draft form, was approved by the Ministry of Environment. It now awaits approval from the Cabinet of Ministers, which is composed of the heads of all central executive bodies in Azerbaijan.

Another important outcome of IUCN-FLEG's assessments, from Garayev's perspective, was the readiness that IUCN-FLEG helped to foster amongst the forestry sector and country of Azerbaijan concerning the impacts of climate change. According to Garayev, because IUCN-

FLEG introduced the regional and local impacts of climate change on forests into policy planning in Azerbaijan, there is an increased sense of readiness to begin addressing the issue. “[People] will be ready to change [their] style of life, style of agriculture, style of using forest resources. It’s one of the important steps” (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015).

IUCN-FLEG’s work also highlighted how forest-dependent communities were socially and economically dependent on these resources by showing which aspects of forest resources were vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Garayev felt that this work was an opportunity for the national and community-level governments to further examine and understand their dependence on forest resources, by understanding how they would be impacted if these resources were affected by climate change (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015).

C. Analysis

Facilitating Factors

IUCN-FLEG’s Strong Reputation

Garayev emphasized the importance of professional relationships in his work for IUCN-FLEG in Azerbaijan, especially with local governments in the pilot regions, and how successful results from previous IUCN-FLEG activities helped in the development of new partnerships (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015). Professional relationships fostered through IUCN-FLEG’s reputation from past work enabled Garayev and Mehdiyev to identify and engage key forestry decision makers, as they had previous experience working with these individuals. The inclusion of a range of stakeholders in Azerbaijan’s forest sector to design the activity and choose pilot regions for study was very important. Further, active participation of local residents and stakeholders in the pilot regions, especially members of the local authorities and administrations, helped to determine community readiness from climate risks and needs.

Building Upon Existing Professional Expertise and Relationships

The previous professional experience of the IUCN-FLEG representatives also facilitated the effectiveness of IUCN-FLEG’s activities in Azerbaijan. Garayev lent his previous experience in designing educational methodologies to creating the training manuals based on information from the climate adaptation study. He previously worked for a program focused on sustainable development in the mountain regions of the Caucasus, using informal education and training techniques. These methodologies were replicated in the framework of this activity. Mehdiyev also had extensive experience in climate change-related consultancy work, and is now working on activities related to energy efficiency in Azerbaijan.

Collaboration Across Ministries for Greater Impact

Another facilitating factor for this activity was the involvement of several national ministries in Azerbaijan, which recognized converging interests in planning for the impacts of climate change in the forestry sector. For example, the Ministry of Emergency Situations recognized that the hotter, drier conditions that climate change would likely bring about would cause an increase in the number and intensity of forest fires. The Ministry of Emergency Situations already witnessed an increase in forest fire, and recognized this activity as an opportunity to begin addressing this issue through public outreach. The Ministry of Emergency Situations and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources also created a joint committee across the two ministries to focus specifically on climate change adaptation in the context of preventing forest fires. Finally, the Ministry of Education also supported the activity through working with IUCN-FLEG to develop educational manuals for adults and schoolchildren. The involvement of a wide range of interdisciplinary agencies helped to bring more awareness to the issue of climate change as affecting a wide range of stakeholders and community members, and helped to regionalize and localize the impacts of climate change by connecting them to these ministries' activities.

Building Networks of Expertise

Coordination with other European Union funded projects and international climate initiatives, especially the Clima East Policy Program, was also a facilitating factor. The Clima East program assists the Eastern Neighbourhood Partnership Countries and Russia in approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation, through pilot projects and policy initiatives (Clima East, n.d.). IUCN-FLEG had a good working relationship with Clima East due to previous pilot projects Clima East implemented in Azerbaijan. Through this IUCN-FLEG activity, regular meetings between Clima East experts and senior Azerbaijani officials responsible for the implementation of forestry policies in Azerbaijan created a unique opportunity to forward the discussion of climate change in Azerbaijan (ENPI FLEG, 2015b). Involving the UNFCCC National Focal Point for Azerbaijan and the director of the National Climate Change Center, which is a part of Azerbaijan Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, was also very helpful for building networks of expertise for the activity at the national government level.

Challenges

One significant challenge was translating the global impact of climate change to the local community level. Garayev reports that when discussions of climate change were first raised in these communities, their reaction was to dismiss it as a “global” problem that did not directly affect them (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015). In fact, many perceived climate change as a problem that, while affecting other countries, did not have a direct effect on Azerbaijan. It was thus a challenge for Garayev and Mehdiyev to explain how the global problem

of climate change could in fact have regional and local effects on Azerbaijan, many of which were already evident.

Next Steps

Monitoring Impacts

A next step for this activity will be to continue monitoring the study's pilot communities, using the initial surveying techniques, to track how climate change continues to affect these forest-dependent communities and how they are working to adapt. Garayev acknowledges that at least five years may pass before the impacts of climate begin to become evident in these communities (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015). One possibility for implementing monitoring could be through public participation programs that engage the public in monitoring the impacts of climate change in the pilot regions and communities. IUCN-FLEG is specifically working to develop a special monitoring methodology for schoolchildren. Although this methodology would be basic and involve simple monitoring tools, it would be very useful for showing schoolchildren the impact of climate change on local forest resources and biodiversity while also collecting monitoring data. Garayev also believes this is a cost-effective option for implementing monitoring programs (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015).

Expanding the Analysis

Azerbaijan's government is currently looking for grant or donor money for technical support to further develop and implement the forest sector's national adaptation strategy. Garayev also emphasized that policy development related to climate change adaptation is a key next step for bringing these recommendations forward, both at the national level and the municipal level (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015). This policy should go beyond purely the forestry sector as well, and perhaps include emergency prevention legislation.

Garayev hopes that the methodology will be expanded to include other communities and regions in Azerbaijan. Garayev acknowledged that more municipal-level work is needed to fully understand the impacts of climate change across the country and the activities needed to address them, and sees this as a helpful next step for the activity. Garayev also highlights the need for including a more diverse range of communities in the study (A. Garayev, personal communication, July 13, 2015). Especially given the drastic range of climate and forest zones that exist in Azerbaijan, from its arid to mountainous regions, the forest-dependent livelihoods of communities across these regions vary dramatically and needs to be studied.

D. Lessons Learned

1. Developing a multi-tiered set of strategies tailored to the needs of each level of government and policy decision makers: IUCN-FLEG's work in Azerbaijan resulted in a set of carefully developed and ordered strategies that sought to inspire action on climate change adaptation. The focus of this activity was important in that it aimed to create readiness towards adapting the forestry sector to climate change in a way that was unique to each tier of government with which IUCN-FLEG worked, specifically through education and introducing a consideration of climate change risks to national policymaking. The stage has been set for further action on climate change adaptation given the base level of expertise and awareness it fostered. Azerbaijan is now more prepared to tackle the next step of implementing adaptation management activities.
2. Engaging IUCN-FLEG representatives who are both native to the country within which the IUCN-FLEG project is being implemented, and have previous professional experience in the project's area of practice: Garayev and Mehdiyev were both Azerbaijani natives, giving them unique insights and connections into the structure and culture of the organizations that they worked with to accomplish IUCN-FLEG's work. Further, both brought previous professional experience relevant to their work with IUCN-FLEG, which allowed them to take advantage of unique opportunities and expand the impact of IUCN-FLEG's climate change adaptation assessments.
3. Framing global issues through a tangible, local lens to inspire action: One of the challenges faced in this activity was that climate change was often seen as a global challenge that either would not affect local communities or would not be able to be addressed at the local level. By framing the issue through actionable terms of forestry management, IUCN-FLEG was able to create channels of engagement and action on the issue.
4. An inclusive process that engaged individuals and organizations at all levels in Azerbaijan, thereby building broad-based understanding and support: IUCN-FLEG was able to do this by involving a range of government ministries (Education, Emergency Situations, Ecology and Natural Resources) in order to attract a range of stakeholders, interests, and knowledge towards solving the problem of forestry management adaptation.

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Case Study 2: Empowering Forest-Dependent Communities through Roadshows, Armenia

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A. Activity Highlights

Forests in Armenia face a very serious threat from both illegal logging and unsustainable forest resource use and management. Forest dependent communities suffer as they watch their livelihoods slip away but have little knowledge or capacity for more sustainable practices and little ability to influence or seek assistance from the government. With these pressing issues in mind, IUCN-FLEG established a series of on-the-ground activities to build community understanding of forest sustainability and better connect communities to government officials. IUCN-FLEG's unique approach has empowered local communities with both knowledge and access to decision-makers, thereby enhancing the potential for more sustainable forest activity.

Despite controversy over the exact amount of forested area, according to the latest data Armenia's forests cover an area of 332,333 ha, or 11.1% of the country's total area (Ecolur, 2011). The current state of Armenian forests is the result of decades of poor management policies and forestry use practices predominantly unchanged since the Soviet era. The biggest threat to Armenian forests is the high demand for fuelwood and industrial timber, for which demand continues to exceed supply (Junge, et al., 2011). Significant demand and the very low "annual allowable cut" has also resulted in the "shadow market trade" (Junge, et al., 2011). In 2009, IUCN-FLEG partnered with Hayantar SNCO (specifically Martun Matevosyan, FLEG Focal Point in Armenia) to address forest management in an effort to reduce illegal logging, improve forest governance, introduce policy reforms, and collaborate with NGOs, local environmental organizations, and forest communities (IUCN, 2014). Hayantar is the agency under the Ministry of Agriculture of Armenia that manages 75% of the country's forests (ENPI FLEG II, 2015). The increased media coverage on forestry issues sparked by the IUCN-FLEG activities helped propel further attention on forest management issues impacting forest-dependent communities and the need for improving the institutional structure led by Armenia's forest authority, Hayantar.

In order to address the long-standing forestry issues in Armenia, IUCN-FLEG designated an in-country coordinator to collaborate with Hayantar in an effort to tackle illegal logging and unsustainable forest resource use. IUCN-FLEG recognized that in order to address these issues, they had to raise environmental awareness, increase the sense of community ownership over forests, assure public access to decision making, and increase community credence and trust in their ability to protect forest resources (Ecolur, 2010). Informal face-to-face discussions called Roadshows were implemented in forest-dependent communities to spark dialogue and help bring the needs of the communities to the government's attention.

Partnering with local organizations was an important step towards engaging with government officials. Therefore, IUCN-FLEG partnered with two environmental NGOs, Ecolur

Information NGO in 2010 and Armenian Forests NGO in 2015. With the NGO partners, the IUCN-FLEG field team visited forest-dependent villages to collect people's stories and views on forestry topics and to share information on the ecological importance of forests given "the fact that in all communities' forest resources were mainly used for heating" (ENPI FLEG, 2010).

Engaging with the various communities proved exceptionally effective and helpful. Not only was the IUCN-FLEG field team able to capture the current sentiment of the villagers, but they were able to collect specific proposals and suggestions from community members on how to solve the many forestry related problems they face. Further, the collection of the community proposals helped the team to highlight potential policy changes.

This case study explores how IUCN-FLEG partnered with local environmental NGOs and the Armenian national forestry agency (Hayantar) to create a pathway for forest-dependent communities to become more involved with the decision-making process that directly affects their lives. This IUCN-FLEG activity showcases a unique example of how on-the-ground, casual conversations with rural communities can heighten the knowledge and confidence needed to effectively voice concern and influence forestry policy. IUCN-FLEG's activity in Armenia also demonstrates an approach to increasing the knowledge of journalists about forestry issues, thereby increasing broader public awareness and concern in the country following media coverage.



Picture 1: Illegal cutting for fuelwood in Armenia forests.
Photo by ENPI FLEG II

B. Background

Armenia is the smallest in land area of the fifteen former Soviet Socialist republics with an estimated population of 2.989 million (World Population Prospects UN, 2015). The natural topography of Armenia consists of many high mountains, river basins and numerous alpine lakes (IUCN, 2014). As a result of illegal logging and other unsustainable forest uses, total forest area has been decreasing in the past decade and now covers only about 11.1% of total land area in the country (Ecolur, 2011).

Forest management is in transition in Armenia, with increasing forestry sector interest and public pressure for more sustainable management practices. However, this change is challenged by continued illegal logging and lack of capacity at the national level to pursue new approaches. Most foresters receive their information about the economic value of forests from Hayantar, but their understanding of environmental and social values of forests is limited. Hayantar is also far behind in reporting the extent of illegal logging activities and hence that data is underreported. These data discrepancies have led communities to question the government's motives. In a past study conducted by IUCN and its partners in Armenia's forestry sector, the actual incidence of illegal logging was determined to be 80 times higher than official statistics (Urutyanyan, et al., 2010)

& Junge, et al., 2011). These findings sparked concern and confusion among Armenians, perpetuating their distrust of government.

In order to address these community concerns, the Roadshows field team encouraged open dialogue around the discrepancies between official and unofficial data and why these discrepancies existed. The field team also felt it was important to foster this dialogue because it recognized that Hayantar hoped to rebuild damaged relationships and regain the trust of forest-dependent communities (L. Balyan, personal communication, March 29, 2015). The original concept for the Roadshows activity in Armenia was developed from a communication strategy aimed at raising awareness and maximizing the impact of FLEG's work in Armenia. Dan Petrescu, a consultant for the World Bank, was hired to develop this communication strategy and tasked with creating a plan for all IOs in FLEG I. This strategy included various activities to raise awareness about forestry issues and encourage community engagement through workshops. Roadshows in Armenia was one of Petrescu's proposals, intended to be implemented as a pilot project to better understand the knowledge gaps about illegal logging and forest management that exist in forest-dependent communities (L. Balyan, personal communication, March 23, 2016).

Need for Activity

Prior to this activity, community members of rural, forest-dependent communities had no way of expressing their forestry related concerns in a manner that would be heard by Ministry and government officials. IUCN-FLEG saw a need to help them connect to their government and raise their environmental awareness. Community members had no capacity to hire media representatives and journalists to tell their story, nor did they know how to stimulate concern among government officials, let alone how to even communicate with them. Residents of these forest-dependent communities are tied to their jobs and have little time to commit to anything other than fulfilling duties connected to their livelihood. However, when an outsider visits the town with fresh news from the city, regardless of the type of news, community members often make time to hear the news despite their busy schedules. Hence, IUCN-FLEG entering communities from the outside was able to stimulate good discussion because the field team attracts attention simply by being newcomers.

One major concern expressed by the forest-dependent communities was the inability to freely collect deadwood for heating and cooking purposes. Deadwood remains the most desired forest resource in these communities because individuals use it to heat their homes throughout the year. Prior to IUCN-FLEG's Roadshows activity, it was illegal to collect deadwood without paying a fee to the local forestry agency and receiving permission. The cost and inconvenience of getting permission was problematic, and hence many individuals collected deadwood illegally. As an alternative fuel source to deadwood, the Armenian government introduced natural gas to rural areas through a program beginning in 2004 (PanARMENIAN.Net, 2009). Although the cost of gas heater installation is covered by the government, most overhead and upkeep costs are not. This added expense has made gas heat a less desirable alternative for most households.

Activity Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Roadshow activity was to collect and share information with communities on forest management and, in turn, learn about community concerns and proposals for addressing specific issues. The overall objectives of the Roadshow activity were to:

- Raise environmental awareness
- Raise the sense of community ownership over forest
- Assure public access to decision making
- Encourage confidence in communities' ability to protect the forest resources they rely on (Ecolur, 2010)

Through this activity, the IUCN-FLEG field team organized discussions to consult with local communities to better understand their understanding and perceptions of forest management and forest dependence and the social, economic, and environmental problems they were confronting. By identifying these needs and issues, IUCN-FLEG would be better-positioned to advance change in forest and other environmental laws and policies.

Implementation

Two rounds of Roadshows were conducted in Armenia between FLEG I and FLEG II. The first Roadshow happened in 2010 and was led by the NGO Ecolur. The second took place in 2015, organized by the NGO Armenian Forests.

FLEG I – Initiating the Roadshows and Opening Up New Communication

In 2010, IUCN-FLEG partnered with Hayantar during FLEG I in 2010 and initiated the implementation of a series of Roadshows in rural forest-dependent communities of Armenia. These Roadshows were open-air discussions, run by national experts in the NGOs, Ecolur (2010), and Armenian Forests (2015), who aimed to connect local Hayantar officials with representatives of local governments. Open-air discussions can be described as public, casual, and accessible discussions that take place in the center of town. Further, the activity sought to collect and share information with communities, learn about community issues, and solicit proposals and recommendations for solutions. Luba Balyan is the IUCN-FLEG CPC for Armenia and worked directly with NGO forestry experts and community members involved with this activity.



Picture 2: Interview with a Teghut villager. Photo by L. Balyan, IUCN

The Roadshows in Armenia, leading with the slogan: “Turn to the Law, Protect Yourself and Your Forest,” were organized by IUCN-FLEG in 20 forest dependent communities in the Syunik, Vayk, Gegharkunuk, Lori, and Tavush regions of Armenia. Ecolur forestry experts were delegated by IUCN-FLEG to travel to the various communities and engage the local residents in

open-air discussions in their village squares or mayor's office and town halls. While visiting the communities, the field team aimed to spark open communications with local residents on forestry issues, while also offering information on the importance of natural resource conservation. The discussions were held in the villages in order to encourage diverse participation, including that of women, youth and school children, public representatives of local authorities, NGOs, and employees of the environmental and forestry sectors (Ecolur, 2010).

In FLEG I, in order to effectively engage with the community members' varying degrees of knowledge and expertise, the Ecolur forestry experts used a range of communication tools during their meetings. Discussion groups were divided into public, open-air discussions and discussions with school children. Open-air discussions were used to create a space for interactive and informal conversation on a range of forestry related topics that would be comfortable for locals to speak if they so desired. The field team purposefully avoided holding lecture-style discussions to encourage an active dialogue and to avoid intimidation. According to Balyan, the curiosity in people helped significantly. "It's the fact that it's not you inviting him to this meeting, but it's curiosity that brings these people to these meetings. It sounds funny but it really worked" (L. Balyan, personal communication, July 13, 2015). Furthermore, all the community feedback was sound-recorded for later transcriptions. For visual learning, the field team presented a film about illegal logging in Armenia titled "From Need to Greed." Posters with the slogan "Is this all you can leave us" were also displayed for increased visibility.



Picture 3: An expert talks with school-children about the importance of forests. Photo by L. Balyan, IUCN

For children, school presentations included pictures, animations on forests, and information on what forest logging is in order to discuss the effects of human activity on the environment. The presentations were meant to be interesting and purely factual to avoid stirring controversy or promoting personal opinions. The team also encouraged the children to think about how this information relates to what was happening in their own village. Not only did these presentations spark curiosity in the school children, but it helped bring back the conversation to the households, prompting communication between children and adults about forestry issues.

Offering community members a platform to speak on forestry issues through the Roadshows not only gave them room to express their frustrations, but it offered a medium for the field team to educate residents on their rights to access forestry information and their rights to voice their opinion when a political decision is being made by government agencies regarding the management of local forest resources (Balyan, 2012). In addition to dialogue on forestry issues, the team educated communities on the value of the forest as an ecosystem that provides essential services for human life. As such, the team sought to help the community understand that the forest serves many essential purposes and is not just a source of fuel, wood, or timber.

Despite the effort by the field team to create a comfortable space in which to converse, community members were initially hesitant to speak openly about their concerns for fear of facing criticism or intimidation from government officials. But over time, the field team observed an increase in commitment from the communities, and their willingness to share evolved as they began to feel more comfortable with the casual conversations. Moreover, the team specifically began noticing more active members in the communities who were very outspoken on the issues. It became a part of the team’s approach to identify these individuals early on and leverage their active engagement to help guide the feedback being collected on knowledge, perceptions, and complaints. Although this was an initially unplanned strategy, it was quickly adopted into the Roadshows approach because it proved effective to work with the community members who were most articulate about community-level issues and concerns.

To sustain the attention of community members after the field team left the villages, the team left informational leaflets behind. The leaflets included detailed contact information (such as telephone numbers and emails) of key agencies and organizations (including IUCN-FLEG) that community residents could contact when they had follow up questions or comments. These leaflets also explained the functions of the key agencies and officials linked to forest management and protection – Hayantar, State Forest Monitoring Center (Ministry of Agriculture), State Environmental Inspectorate (Ministry of Nature Protection), IUCN-FLEG, regional Aarhus Centers, and NGOs. Balyan described this process as important because it made local residents feel supported and demonstrated IUCN-FLEG’s investment in the continued wellbeing of their community (personal communication, July 13, 2015).

FLEG II – Building Momentum and Creating Policy Proposals

Upon beginning Roadshows II, it became clear to Balyan that Roadshows had a positive effect in increasing media attention as well as bridging forestry experts to communities. Following the year-long break after FLEG I ended, Balyan received a call from one of the forestry experts of Ecolur commenting that “it had been a year since forests had received proper coverage in the media due to FLEG’s suspension” (personal communication, March 23, 2016). In addition to the decrease in media attention, the forestry experts had to halt their travels to forest-dependent communities because there was no funding after FLEG I ended in 2012. Balyan explains that the forestry experts “stopped receiving information on what was going on in the villages and hence had no update on the situation” (personal communication, March 23, 2016). Although there are other programs than FLEG that facilitate NGO and community dialogue, this clear need to sustain community interaction propelled the work of IUCN-FLEG into Roadshows II.



Picture 4: IUCN-FLEG team led by Nazeli Vardanyan. Photo by ENPI FLEG II

The plan for Roadshows II was to capture even more ideas and information and build off of Roadshows I. For the second Roadshows, IUCN-FLEG partnered with the NGO Armenian Forests. Together with Nazeli Vardanyan, the Environmental Attorney and Director of Armenian Forests, Inga Zarafyan, President of NGO Ecolur and expert in environmental media and public mobilization, Amalya Hambarzumyan, an expert in awareness raising and natural resources, and Erik Grigoryan, an environmental economist, IUCN-FLEG visited 20 forest-dependent communities, both new and previously seen in FLEG I. Specific criteria for selecting communities for the second phase included: a) communities not visited during Roadshows I, and b) communities which were visited during Roadshows I but where conditions were poor and required another visit to compare what had changed since Roadshows I. Community conditions were considered poor when records indicated many problems were occurring and there was a clear need for an updated list of recommendations for the government. Returning to previously visited communities also allowed the team to assess any changes or progress made in management and use of the forests. Once communities were identified, the IUCN-FLEG field team travelled from village to village repeating the format of inviting citizens to the town hall to hear the field team introduce themselves and explain the aim of the visit.

The second phase of Roadshows used the same approach as Roadshows I, with only a few additions to the tools used for communication. During FLEG II, the IUCN-FLEG field team organized one high-level round table discussion and one press conference in the city of Yerevan, not previously done in FLEG I. For this round table, they invited key stakeholders to raise the main issues and discuss challenges faced by forest-dependent communities. Furthermore, they invited journalists who collected and published a series of stories called “Stories from the Forest.” Each story featured problems experienced by a particular forest-dependent community that had been visited. The stories were then published on the Ecolur website, the leading online environmental information portal in Armenia.

An additional difference from FLEG I to FLEG II was the presence of an environmental economist in the group. Balyan recruited Grigoryan to join the team for FLEG II because it became clear that the list of community proposals needed an economic justification, as quantifiable results would be more influential to government officials than declarative statements. Currently, his work is still underway.

Journalist Trainings

As a supplement to Roadshows during FLEG I, IUCN-FLEG conducted a separate activity called Investigative Journalist training. Both activities began in 2010, but the journalist trainings were implemented between June and October of 2010. This activity provided journalists with trainings in environmental reporting that included opportunities to witness current debates and dialogues between government officials, scientists, environmental NGOs, and community members. In so doing, the journalists were exposed to various viewpoints and could report a more accurate picture of the environmental issues facing forest dependent communities of Armenia. They were also provided opportunities to visit illegal logging hot spots to gain a first-hand perspective on the degree of destruction. According to Balyan, it is extremely important that journalists receive the clearest and most accurate information on environmental issues which can improve public debates and in turn enable them to hold the governments accountable (personal

communication, July 13, 2015). Having the journalists present during open discussions between stakeholders proved to be very significant as Armenia's forestry issues have been highly under reported.



Picture 5: Media tour in the Lori region.
Photo by ENPI FLEG

For these trainings, IUCN-FLEG invited 15 journalists from various media outlets (TV, radio, print and online media). The speakers at the open discussions ranged from scientists and geo-representatives to the government (Hayantar), representatives of the ministry, to foresters. Although each party had their individual approach and views on forest protection, they were all willing to enter an open dialogue on issues and challenges in the forestry sector.

According to Balyan, bringing various speakers together in front of the journalists to discuss issues of tension provided an “opportunity for the journalists to capture the actual truth about what is going on in the forestry sector” (personal communication, July 13,

2015). The open discussion format of the journalist trainings and Roadshows both brought interested parties together to potentially collaborate and, at the very least, to communicate.

In 2010-2011 during FLEG's phase I activity in Armenia, forests received the most media coverage to date on the topic of illegal logging (Balyan, 2012). This allowed the topic of forests to come to the forefront of public issues in Armenia and improved the quality of media coverage of illegal logging in Armenia.

Results

There were three main accomplishments of the Roadshows activity. These include the collection and formal advancement of community claims and appeals, legalization of deadwood collection, and increased media attention.

Community claims and appeals presented to the Armenian Government

Through the many informal discussions across 20 different communities, the IUCN-FLEG field team managed to collect a set of community claims and appeals to be presented to the Armenian government by the end of FLEG I. The appeals dealt with “ways of improving social standards with regards to forest management and ways in which the government can improve this situation by passing or enacting new legal acts” (L. Balyan, personal communication, 2016). Further, some of the proposals included the development of ecotourism, subsidies for gas and electricity bills for poor local residents, new projects on using alternative sources of energy, and more active involvement of locals in timber processing businesses (ENPI FLEG, 2010). The main aims of presenting this package to the government was to expose them to the very real concerns of the communities and to maximize the probability of the concerns to be considered at the level of legal action. This collection was also a great opportunity for the voices of the community

members to be considered at the decision-making level. In 2011 these proposals were presented to Hayantar on the condition that the list would be further lobbied in the Armenian parliament.

Legalization for forest-dependent communities to collect forest deadwood

The collection of community proposals was key in triggering the process that allowed the concerns of forest-dependent communities to rise in the national government's agenda. One of the proposals that came out of Roadshows was seeking community rights for free access to deadwood so that community members could remove it without any penalty or fee. This issue was especially important to the locals as deadwood is their main source of heat and energy. The decree was drafted by Hayantar SNCO and the Ministry of Agriculture of Armenia. Notably, the decree on "Free Provision of Deadwood to Forest-dependent Communities" was received very well by communities, authorities, and NGOs and was approved by the Armenian government shortly afterward and put into law in 2011. The Act allows collection of up to 8 m³ of deadwood, to 200 forest dependent communities free of charge. Although this is a significant step in the right direction, local communities know very little about how the specifics of the law (such as volume of deadwood allowed and sites designated for collection), giving way to new corruption risks (Balyan, 2012). A potential risk for corruption could occur if the head of villages or regional administrations were to claim that the law applies to pensioners only, thus falsifying the content of this law. This would pose an argument stating that the deadwood is not available for various reason. A second corruption risk is having only half of the deadwood intended offered (e.g. 4m³ instead of 8m³) to families and charging the other 4m³ as transportation cost. Despite risks of misconduct, this law was a great achievement by the activity because it pushed and succeeded with government action. It remains to be monitored by the public at the local level.

Media spotlight on illegal logging

Another significant accomplishment that resulted from Roadshows was that illegal logging was finally covered by the media in newspapers and television. Media coverage shared the new data generated by IUCN-FLEG independent experts and countered the inaccurate government reports. One of the key findings reported on was that "FLEG's research revealed the consumption of fuelwood to exceed supply and estimated illegal logging to be at 240,000 m³ annually which is nearly 80 times higher than official statistics" (Balyan, 2012). According to Balyan, this contribution is by far the most highly valued because this data has never been publically shared before, and is now widely credited to IUCN-FLEG. Thanks to the attention built from Roadshows, the media began to cover forestry issues like never before.

C. Analysis

Facilitating Factors

Engagement with Outspoken Community Members

While not an initially planned strategy, seeking capable and outspoken community members to represent community concerns in meeting forums proved helpful for Roadshows. Usually, it was not difficult to identify these individuals because "the community delegates this

person to go talk to important people” (L. Balyan, personal communication, July 13, 2015). This approach enabled community needs to be represented at a higher level and in government discussions that otherwise may not have included community members. The IUCN-FLEG team incorporated this strategy rather quickly into the activity design and sought articulate and influential community members who were aware of local forest issues. They were able to accurately represent community concerns and provide useful information. These community members were noticeably courageous, as they spoke openly with the field team when they arrived and began asking questions. As most villagers were passive and uncomfortable sharing information, it was not difficult to identify the outspoken citizens who stood out.

Engaging communities in casual dialogue on their home turf

Face-to-face dialogue within individual villages leveraged the comfort and convenience of each community’s home territory to encourage engagement with the IUCN-FLEG team and partners. Having the field team travel to the villagers also helped increase participation as community members did not need to travel much distance in order to engage in the discussions.

Balyan’s approach to engaging community members in casual dialogue rather than formal one-way lectures was an important factor that facilitated the success of this activity. In order to glean accurate information, it was necessary for community members to talk freely. The step to helping community members feel comfortable was to begin by asking them questions and providing them a safe space in which to talk. This process allowed for a back-and-forth dialogue to emerge and helped them to raise the issues they were facing without feeling investigated. For community members who did not feel comfortable sharing information at the time of these discussions, contact information (such as telephone hotlines) was left behind in case they changed their minds.

Providing opportunities for continued information exchange beyond the Roadshows

Providing a way for community members to contact IUCN-FLEG after the activity’s completion was useful for continued information exchange. Because the activity was designed to engage communities in open dialogue, it was not possible to ensure every community member was talked to even with the best efforts, due to shyness, intimidation, or simply having nothing to contribute at the time. The IUCN-FLEG team made sure that these voices could be heard later if they so desired by providing leaflets with contact information. It was important to let community members know that a Roadshows visit was not a singular event, but a continuing process that intended to help forest-dependent communities progress towards sustainable forest management. This would in turn motivate community members to engage with IUCN-FLEG and the Roadshows and report illegal logging activities to the NGOs and activists who were available to help.

A native CPC with expert knowledge

Having a professional and native CPC on the IUCN-FLEG team proved beneficial to the activity’s success and progress in numerous ways. Due to Balyan’s professional background in avian ecology and conservation for over 15 years, she was already aware of available organizations and agencies that had the capacity and potential to help implement Roadshows. Thus, she was

well-positioned to immediately focus more on leading, organizing and implementing the activity. With a professional background in forestry and experience growing up in Armenia, Balyan's confidence and charisma allowed her to maintain realistic expectations, target key players and understand their motives, be conscientiousness about the strategic approach to local forestry officials, prioritize preparation before meetings, and to build trust with in-country organizations and government members. Given Balyan's status as a trusted expert, the IUCN-FLEG Program Manager Richard Aishton provided her the freedom to manage, coordinate, decide on further steps, and to make judgments regarding activity implementation. This dynamic between Balyan and Aishton not only allowed Balyan flexibility, but instilled confidence in her ability to perform and make decisions based on her strong knowledge of what would likely work well in Armenia.

Collaboration with in-country NGOs and experts

Involving in-country environmental NGOs provided the activity with expert knowledge on Armenia's forestry sector. The NGOs Armenian Forest and Ecolur were both involved as partners for Roadshows, working on monthly interim reports, a final report, and a written package of community appeals relating to forest use that can be used by the government (Ecolur, 2010). These in-country environmental and forest experts were invaluable to the IUCN-FLEG team, contributing not only to working resources and technical support, but also in communication and networking. Their varied expertise in areas such as environmental law, environmental economy, public awareness, biodiversity, natural resource conservation, forest management, and business administration enabled villagers to ask wide-ranging questions and receive well-informed answers (Ecolur, 2010)..

Challenges

Although professional and experienced people were involved with Roadshows, the reality of entering a rural village for the first time does pose unforeseen challenges. Upon realizing these challenges, the IUCN-FLEG field team would respond and strategize in a manner that kept the momentum of the activity. Specifically, the field team encountered two main challenges in implementation of Roadshows: community member availability and suspicion towards the IUCN-FLEG field team.

Availability of community members

One challenge IUCN-FLEG faced during Roadshows was planning their events around the availability of community members. As availability shifted according to low and high seasons of agricultural production, it became clear that scheduling the discussions around this event was key to talking to the most people. Especially during high seasons of production, it was challenging to ensure community representatives were available for Roadshows meetings. Men were especially unavailable during high season because they were working in the fields outside the village, while the women were mostly at home and in the villages. For the Roadshows conversations it was important to have a balanced gender representation so as to draw a more accurate story given differing perspectives within the villages.

Community suspicions

Initial levels of discomfort prompted by the presence of IUCN-FLEG within the villages proved to be a barrier for communication. According to Balyan, for reason of corruption within the country, many people have lost confidence in the government and instead are filled with cynicism (L. Balyan, July 14, 2015). Distrust of government has been instilled by the decline of the economy combined with the disinterest and/or corruption by people in power who were perceived to have little concern for community level needs and challenges. Given this loss of faith and distrust of the government, it was difficult at first for IUCN-FLEG to prove their sincere intent to help the communities because citizens were skeptical that IUCN-FLEG was aligned with the government. Eventually, when community members could hear IUCN-FLEG experts talk forthrightly with government officials about pressing community concerns, their trust in IUCN-FLEG's intentions grew along with their willingness to participate in the dialogues.

Next Steps

Follow-up to the decree on deadwood collection

Although the success of the deadwood decree provided forest-dependent communities freedom to collect this resource without concern, some unanticipated problems were revealed when communities were revisited. Specifically, in the small village of Artavan, the needed amount of wood was no longer available for families to collect, not even by the most disadvantaged people. The citizens of Artavan explained that they had to travel long distances to gather any deadwood, as the forest line had retreated because of logging activities. It is necessary for them to hike up steep areas to collect needed deadwood and much of the population is physically unable to do so (ENPI FLEG, 2015).

Although Vardanyan followed up with the head of the local forestry branch to discuss these limitations, similar problems concerning the implementation of the decree were found in other villages visited during the Roadshow. In addition, the harsh conditions encountered in remote, forest-dependent communities were worsened by inefficient administration and poor forest management by the local government. The focus on short-term financial gains led to neglect in addressing villager's needs. The experts are hopeful that the more current analysis of data gathered during the Roadshows, and the collection of a new set of proposals to present to the government, will contribute to the improvement of the conditions faced by these communities.

After Roadshows: IUCN-FLEG activity, Citizen Monitoring

A new "Citizen Monitoring" activity evolved from Roadshows in Armenia. According to Balyan, this new activity represents a progression from recommendations regarding improved forest governance that came out of phase I of Roadshows. Specifically, the Citizen Monitoring activity seeks to leverage community engagement and satellite technology to track and record illegal forest activity. With the help of GeoInfo, a well respected mapping GIS company in Armenia, the IUCN-FLEG team was able to use the data imagery to compare forest cover over time. This tool was useful to visualize which forest cover areas were decreasing outside of the legal logging areas. To encourage public engagement, this tool was uploaded to a website which

allows submissions of suspicious observations around illegal activities as well as natural phenomenon (such as earthquakes, flooding, erosion, and forest fires). Instructions and tutorials are available to the public on how to document the specific location, activity, and impacts in the field to improve accurate reporting of the events.

The main objectives of the Citizen Monitoring were to:

- Foster forest ownership by local community members
- Involve locals in monitoring unsanctioned activities in the forests (such as logging, pollution, and mining)
- Fight apathy and indifference towards forest management by local community members as a response of government centralization of all governance activities
- Activate the media to establish a communication channel between the people and their government through the use of media and illegal logging reports

According to Balyan, illegal logging activity in Armenia is difficult to record and manage because most people in managerial positions are enabling the illegal activity (personal communication, July 13, 2015). Lower-level forestry officials unfairly remain at a high risk of being caught by Armenia's law enforcement mechanisms. If a local ranger is spotted at the scene of an illegal activity, they are often held accountable for it. The Citizen Monitoring activity seeks to address this issue by increasing the cost incurred by forestry officials for enabling illegal logging.

D. Lessons Learned

The community-based approach and collaborative process was instrumental to the success of Roadshows. Roadshows was an experimental approach to bridge the gap of communication between rural forest-dependent communities and the government. A number of lessons can be learned from Roadshows, including the importance of acknowledging distrust and slowly building trusted relationships; how a flexible and adaptive approach enables opportunities to be seized and program modifications to be made; ways to demonstrate long term commitment and sustain change; and, the critical value of a bridge-building and facilitative role.

1. Acknowledging the long-standing distrust: Recognizing skepticism of outsiders and government that is ingrained in rural communities was essential to developing a program that could slowly shift attention to pressing issues and begin empowering communities. While IUCN-FLEG is trying to empower rural communities through knowledge and access to government officials and processes, the fact remains that from the communities' perspective IUCN-FLEG is yet another outsider that is not to be trusted. Good ideas and helping hands may not be seized if those offering the assistance are not trusted. IUCN-FLEG recognized these realities and approached Roadshows in a manner that enabled engagement in a non-threatening and open manner. They adopted an innovative array of communication strategies through which to gain community attention and engagement. The fact that the open discussions were happening in and around people's homes made the issues more real and urgent, providing a focus on the problems to be addressed rather than

distrust. Employing a CPC who was native to Armenia and was sensitive to local culture and perceptions helped to instill trust, as did visiting communities on their home turf and having open dialogues in which free and honest exchange of ideas and concerns could occur. Such activities take a level of patience and humility that are often lacking in development initiatives, but that clearly facilitated the effectiveness of this activity.

2. Adopting a flexible and adaptive approach: Having a certain level of open-mindedness enabled the IUCN-FLEG team to seize opportunities as they arose and modify the program as they observed unforeseen challenges and identified particularly effective strategies. Engaging with more outspoken and respected community members in the dialogues created a ripple effect that encouraged greater participation by others. Similarly, tailoring the program to individual community needs enabled broader involvement and instilled some level of community ownership in the activity. For example, the gender balance issue emerged through simple conversation about dialogue timing with community members. The IUCN-FLEG team learned which months were better and less burdensome for engaging women, and adapted the program accordingly.
3. Engaging community members after FLEG left: For Roadshows to leave an impact, it was important to find ways to demonstrate long-term commitment and, moreover, sustain the change that has been set in motion. The informational leaflets were a simple but potentially powerful way to build a bridge between communities and government. While a phone number and contact name in the abstract may be a weak link, by bringing government officials, journalists, scientists and other NGOs to the communities, the government process became more understandable and less mysterious, increasing the likelihood that community members might make use of the leaflet contact information as warranted. Revisiting the communities at later times demonstrated IUCN-FLEG commitment and helped to sustain community attention and action on forestry issues.
4. Linking community concerns with governmental level decision-making: Perhaps the most notable lesson learned is the critical value of the bridge-building and facilitative role adopted by IUCN-FLEG. While the dominant strategy of many international conservation and development agencies is to enter communities as experts with the answers-in-hand, IUCN-FLEG approached communities in a far more open manner, seeking to better understand forest issues and concerns from the communities' perspectives and, with that knowledge, begin developing proposals for government reform and tools for community action. The involvement of NGOs and government officials in many of the dialogues facilitated needed connections and set the stage for future community engagement.

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Case Study 3: Forest Dependence Study, Belarus

Prepared by: Nadia Vandergriff

A. Activity Highlights

While methods of forest management and sustainable forest resource use are widely understood and respected within the forest governance structure of Belarus, sustainable forest management and the extent to which rural communities in the country rely on their forests have not been thoroughly examined or analyzed. Improved knowledge of the true value of these forests allows for a more complex understanding of the degree to which rural communities are dependent on their forests. This improved understanding has the potential to reveal regional characteristics of forest resource use, improve forest management, raise awareness of sustainable forest management practices, in turn improving forest governance mechanisms.

Belarus has a forest cover of 39.3% (Lazarava, 2014) and many areas of Belarus are highly reliant on forests for resources. However, while research has been done on various aspects of forest management in Belarus, little has been formally investigated on the forest dependence. Thus, IUCN-FLEG undertook a study of four communities in the Gomel Region of Belarus, due to the region's high forest cover (Lazarava, 2014), to investigate the characteristics of forest resource use by rural communities and determine the communities' degree of forest dependence. The study, which was part of a region-wide forest dependence study, sought to answer questions such as:

- What types of forest products are gathered by rural communities in the different regions of the country?
- Do community members' income levels affect what types of products are collected?
- How much of the forest resources collected are sold for cash and how much are used for household subsistence?
- What share of rural households' total income is forest-related?

The results of the forest dependence study showed that the use of forest products across communities in Belarus varies considerably. Furthermore, the study found that the level of forest dependence of the population is more than four times higher in communities situated far from big cities and surrounded on all sides by forest than in communities near urban areas. Community dependence on forest products is an important factor to consider in the management of these forests. The second phase of IUCN-FLEG's forest dependence study covers the period from November 2015 through July 2016, and will analyze more communities in different parts of Belarus to provide a more holistic understanding of forest dependence in the country.

B. Background

Belarus is traditionally very reliant on its forests and the use of forest products is an important part of Belarusian culture and society, especially in rural communities. Belarus has a large forested area and many non-timber forest resources such as mushrooms and berries are often used in traditional cuisine and in the household. Climatic and topographical conditions in Belarus are mostly unfavorable for the development of agriculture, but due to recent changes in technology, agriculture has become more viable. Despite these technological improvements, rural communities maintain their dependence on forests and rely heavily on their surrounding forests for various resources and products.

Forest management policies in Belarus seek to uphold the principles of sustainability, inexhaustibility, and balanced use of forest resources (both timber and non-timber products) (Lazarava, 2014). The right to manage forests is determined by the President, the Government, and the Ministry of Forestry of the Republic of Belarus. The Ministry of Forestry is a specially authorized governmental body that operates under the jurisdiction of the Forest Code, which is the primary legislative act of the forest sector and is intended to ensure a complete and systematic regulation of the management, protection and conservation of the forest (Lazarava, 2014). The Ministry is in charge of the use, conservation, and protection of forests. The Ministry develops the legal framework for forest management in Belarus and monitors the use of forest resources. Further, the Ministry of Forestry coordinates the activities of other government authorities such as local regulatory bodies and legal entities, which include local forestry units that are in charge of implementing national forest law and management at the community level. While the forest legislation of Belarus allows leasing land that is part of the forest fund (a mechanism that ensures that some portion of national revenues is set aside for forestry purposes), this is not a common practice. Under forest legislation, the collection of non-timber forest products is permitted but the allowable amount and the method of collection is regulated by the Ministry of Forestry to deter the depletion of non-timber forest products or any other threat to forest biodiversity (Lazarava, 2014).



Picture 1: Consultant M.S.Lazareva with couple in Belarus. Photo by: M.S. Lazareva, IUCN

Need

In many countries in the ENPI region, illegal logging is often the primary threat to forest resources and the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities. According to Marina Belous, the IUCN-FLEG Country Program Coordinator for Belarus, illegal logging often persists in many ENPI countries because people living in rural communities are either not allotted enough wood for fuel for heating and cooking or the price of wood is too expensive to purchase (personal

communication, July 20, 2015). As a result, the illegal harvesting of wood becomes a means to fill this resource gap. This does not occur in Belarus for two reasons. First, the government and the local forestry unit provide very affordable wood to rural communities. According to Belous, the wood is sometimes even sold on a sliding scale depending on the need and income level of the buyer (personal communication, July 20, 2015). Second, as Belous explains, Belarusians have an inherently strong connection to their environment “because the people have been reliant on their forests for centuries, and have a uniquely positive attitude toward nature and trees” (personal communication, July 20, 2015).

Environmental awareness heightened in Belarus in the wake of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. As a result of the detrimental effects of the Chernobyl disaster on Belarus’s forests, Belarus developed highly specialized and sophisticated radiation and environmental monitoring systems. Furthermore, the people of Belarus have developed a very cautious and caring attitude toward the environment since the disaster, and generally tend to be very attentive to the environment.

The intention of the initial IUCN-FLEG forest dependence study in Belarus in 2014 was to examine how and to what extent rural communities are dependent on forests. The forest landscape is a part of Belarusian identity, as well as a key element of the national culture and philosophy. According to Belous, most Belarusian people have hobbies and pastimes related to forests, such as collecting mushrooms and berries, handcrafting, hunting and fishing, bird watching and hiking, and if forests are cut down people will lose a crucial part of their everyday life (personal communication, July 20, 2015). As Belous says,

The government must be aware of peoples’ interests in preserving the forest. For example, the local authorities might suggest building a processing plant for the forest products but people in communities may prefer to be entrepreneurs or develop ecotourism than working at a plant. In such situations the authorities need to have more information on the extent to which people value the forest and are dependent on it (personal communication, July 21, 2015).

Activity Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Belarus forest dependence study was to investigate the patterns of forest resource use by rural communities in order to determine and understand the degree to which these communities are dependent on their forest resource base. The initial objectives of the study were to:

- Document factors and reasons that may determine sustainability between communities and their forest base
- Measure the true value of fully functioning forests for rural communities
- Provide quantifiable information for use by decision-makers in order to improve governance (Lazarava, 2014).

According to Belous, the main goal for the activity was to influence changes in forest management planning practices in rural areas and provide reasoning for the improved governance

of resources, specifically with regard to the use of non-timber forest resources in rural areas (personal communication, July 20, 2015). The new Forest Code, which is to be adopted in Fall of 2015, presupposes amendments to the relevant regulatory documents in order to make the use of forest resources more profitable for community members while addressing the conservation of biodiversity of forest ecosystems. However, Belous believes that the current regulations should be adjusted to the needs of rural communities. “There should also be more flexibility in regulations to allow better and more efficient use of forest products by the local people. That is one of the conclusions that was made after the first stage of the study by the consultants and is a part of the new Forest Code of the Republic of Belarus. Measures should also be in place to allow local people to be more actively involved in forest management and be able to influence decision-making on the local level. The Ministry of Forestry of Belarus relies on the input of FLEG Program on the development of the legislation to improve the use and management of forest resources...” (personal communication, July 20, 2015).

Implementation

Obtaining Permission and Assembling the Research Team

Implementing the forest dependence study involved obtaining approval from the Ministry of Forestry to conduct the study in the rural communities. Belous accomplished this through meetings with officials at the Ministry of Forestry. Once the Ministry approved the study, it was included in the Country Work Plan, which outlines all FLEG activities to be implemented by all of the Implementing Organizations in the country.

The forest dependence study in Belarus was part of a regional study conducted in all seven ENPI-FLEG program countries using the same methodology designed by the FLEG Regional Consultant for regional study, Riyong Kim Bakkegaard along with all of the FLEG field consultants. The regional study’s field consultant for Belarus, Maryna Lazarava, selected the communities to conduct the study in Belarus and decided to undertake household surveys in four communities in the Gomel Region. The Gomel Region of Belarus is the most forested area in the country with 45.8% forest cover (the highest percentage of the six regions in the country (Lazarava), therefore it was selected as a model area for the study.

The next step was to assemble a field survey team. Lazarava, who is also a professor from Gomel State University, a regional university that is highly regarded for its research on forest management, was hired by IUCN-FLEG to help conduct interviews and fieldwork and to carry out data analysis. Lazarava employed the help of her Masters students to help conduct the fieldwork for the forest dependence study.

Interviewing Village Officials

Lazarava and her team interviewed the village council officials in each community surveyed for the forest dependence study. This was in line with the methodology developed for the regional forest dependence study conducted across the ENPI region, and was intended to gather baseline information on the communities and open communication channels with the local officials. These interviews were important because they allowed the field team to communicate to

the local officials that the activity was official and being undertaken within the framework of a program financed and supported by international organizations but coordinated on a national level by the Belarusian Ministry of Forestry. These interviews were also important to introduce the field personnel who were conducting the surveys in the communities. The team was also able to gather preliminary information about the community from talking to the officials.

For every studied community, data on the history and traditional development, as well as current social, economic, and demographic data was gathered. The survey team along with Belous relied on official government sources for preliminary data on the communities. The information they received from the local officials through these interviews was important because it was the most up-to-date, impartial, and accurate data available. It was also necessary to obtain preliminary data on households that were not available in official data sources (for example some houses in the communities are abandoned, which the official data sometimes contradicts). This information helped Lazarava effectively schedule household surveys and facilitated the selection of the households to survey.

Through the interviews, the field survey team was also able to ask the officials questions from the household survey that was used to gather household data. These interviews also allowed the field team to get a baseline understanding of what kinds of answers to expect from the households and to understand what aspects of the survey should be highlighted. As Belous explained, “Talking to officials was an important step in getting the opinion of people who have knowledge about the community. The general information obtained from these interviews with officials could be used to highlight certain questions to ask households as well and provide insights on the general characteristics and situation in the community” (personal communication, July 22, 2015).



Picture 2: Belarus forest dependency study interview. Source: ENPI FLEG

Conducting the Community Survey

Following the interviews with local officials, the field survey team conducted the household surveys in the four selected communities (Milashevichi, Gomel, Buda-Koshelevo, and Rudnya Viktorinskaya). 200 total household surveys were conducted in randomly selected households in the four selected communities, with the goal of investigating household forest resource use to estimate the share of each community’s income that is derived from the forest.

Further surveys

The forest dependence survey is currently in its second phase. Two community-level surveys and 150-170 household level surveys are being implemented in Rossony (in Rossony district of the Vitebsk region) and Berezino (in the Minsk region) of Belarus. The results of these

surveys are expected to be published in the spring and summer of 2016. This extension of the first phase of the survey is being conducted with the hope that the results will broaden the perspective and provide a snapshot of forest dependence dynamics nationally.

C. Analysis

Facilitating Factors

A trusted and professionally well-respected CPC

The positive and trusting relationship Belous established with the Ministry of Forestry throughout the development and implementation of the forest dependence study greatly contributed to its effectiveness. Belous joined IUCN-FLEG in its second phase, after Belarus' IUCN-FLEG CPC for FLEG I transitioned out of the position. Belous did not have a pre-existing relationship with the Ministry of Forestry, but had experience working for several years as a consultant for the Ministry of Environment before joining the IUCN-FLEG team, which helped establish her credibility with the Ministry of Forestry. Prior to Belous' involvement, IUCN's FLEG activities in Belarus were not very impactful, yet Belous quickly established a positive relationship with the Ministry of Forestry and gained their trust enough to be able to carry out the forest dependence study.

The positive relationship between Belous and the Ministry of Forestry also led to an unexpected positive outcome. Given that the forest dependence study was the first IUCN-FLEG activity to be effectively implemented in Belarus, it is noteworthy that the ministry officials had enough professional trust for the IUCN-FLEG team to let IUCN-FLEG implement the forest dependence study. From the introduction of the study to the end point, the IUCN-FLEG team did not expect to see the results they did, namely, the fact that the level of forest dependence of the local population is more than four times higher in the communities situated far from big cities and surrounded on all sides by forest than in urban areas. Further, the IUCN-FLEG team was surprised at the results and the subsequent support from the Belarusian Focal Point (The First Deputy Minister of Forestry). According to Belous, ministry officials seemed quite pleased with the findings of the study and fully supported the implementation of a second phase of the forest dependence study in Belarus (personal communication, July 20, 2015).

Open communication to allow for brainstorming and discussion

This trust also facilitated open brainstorming and discussion between Belous and officials at the Ministry of Forestry. According to Belous, while the trust she developed with the Ministry was important in fostering open discussions between her and ministry officials, the key to getting the forest dependence study approved for the Country Work Plan was due to the effectiveness of the brainstorming and discussion process between Belous, ministry officials, and the Belarusian Focal Point before the study was agreed upon (personal communication, July 21, 2015). One-on-one conversation and in-person discussion were key, as the ability to speak openly and make efficient use of time at in-person meetings was more efficient and allowed for richer and more substantive discussions than formal letters or email. This efficient and substantive communication was only possible as a result of the trust built between Belous and the Ministry. This process

garnered ideas, helped to inform the forest dependence study's focus, and approach while instilling a sense of ownership of the study within the Ministry of Forestry.

A transparent process

The open discussion between Belous and the Ministry of Forestry officials allowed for transparency in the process of planning and implementing the forest dependence study and built trust between IUCN-FLEG and the Ministry. A transparent process in which Belous kept key officials and stakeholders informed of the activity in a timely manner ensured support for the study and reduced skepticism amongst Ministry officials.

A clearly and well-defined task

Having a clearly and well-defined task contributed to the success of the activity. More specifically, the well-defined Terms of Reference (TOR) and the clear methodology were very helpful in that they provided a focus that kept the activity on track and alleviated the skepticism of initially hesitant parties. As it was the first time implementing the study in Belarus, this was new terrain for the team, so precise instructions were needed. The team closely followed the TOR, ensuring that everything was done as intended.

Leveraging expert knowledge

According to Belous, the involvement of field consultant Lazarava was essential to the effectiveness of the forest dependence study (personal communication, July 20, 2015). Not only did Lazarava bring her expert knowledge (as a researcher on forest management) to the process, her pre-existing relationships with many of the local forestry units in the surveyed communities through her research and work on forest management in the studied region proved invaluable to the ease of the implementation process.

Leveraging established local connections

Lazarava's established connections to the local forestry units in the Gomel region through the research she conducted on forestry in Belarus also facilitated the effectiveness of the forest dependence study. Lazarava is a well-known expert in her field and has existing and positive relationships and contacts within the territorial branches of the Ministry of Forestry, Belarusian State Forestry institutions involved in forest management planning, and the National Academy of Sciences institute researchers. As a result of these connections, Lazarava was able to easily organize meetings and interviews with village officials. Because of Lazarava's connections, the field team also did not have to make phone calls or write to the local forestry units to establish a relationship and gather support, which saved time and effort. Only one official letter related to this activity was needed, which was sent to the Ministry of Forestry before the study methodology was completed on behalf of Richard Aishton', ENPI FLEG Project Coordinator, explaining what the study entailed and what kind of support was expected from the ministry and its territorial branches.

Collaboration with the IUCN-FLEG team across the ENPI region

Collaboration with other members of the IUCN-FLEG team across the ENPI region throughout the study was essential. According to Belous, “The support from Richard [Aishton], CPCs from other FLEG countries, and consultants who had experience working on this was very important because, although I was alone in the meetings [with the Ministry of Forestry], I was not ‘alone’ in my arguments and ideas” (personal communication, July 20, 2015). The cooperation and support among the IUCN-FLEG team contributed to the effectiveness of the study and will also be needed to move forward on the next stage of the study.

Creating Community Buy-in

Not only did the initial interviews conducted with community officials allow the team to obtain baseline information about the villages, they also helped establish a relationship and open communication between the survey team and the community, thus creating buy-in, which facilitated more responsiveness among the community.

Challenges

Doubt of the usefulness of the study

The first challenge encountered in implementing the study was the initial doubts of the Ministry of Forestry, who were uninterested in pursuing the activity because they were skeptical whether the results of the forest dependence study would be useful to them. Another reason for this initial hesitation was that it was the first time such a study was being conducted in Belarus. According to Belous, the Ministry of Forestry typically focuses on supporting and carrying out projects that have clear economic implications at a national level, and this activity did not seem to them to fall under this category (personal communication, July 20, 2015).

The turning point from hesitation to eventual support came from Ministry officials’ discussions with Belous. Belous investigated the broader context of the forest dependence study and was able to show the Ministry that the results of the study could offer an opportunity to investigate forest dependence in a practical manner. In order to effectively govern forest resources, the Ministry of Forestry needs tangible data on forest resource use. Once this data is acquired, and an understanding of the true value of the forest is developed, an incentive to better guard and govern the resource seems possible. These discussions helped the Ministry staff see the value of the activity and the overall impact of the study. After many of these discussions, they changed their opinions and the Focal Point agreed that the activity was worth pursuing.

Unexpected changes in Ministry administration

A further challenge was abrupt changes in the Ministry’ administration. Partway into Phase II of FLEG, the First Deputy Minister of Forestry, also the FLEG Focal Point, was dismissed from his post for reasons unrelated to FLEG and replaced by Alexander Kulik. Kulik was not from the Ministry and had previously been the director of a regional forest sector. In addition, the Head of the Forest Management Department was offered another position and left his position at the

Ministry soon after the change of the Focal Point, and the position of Deputy Head of the Forestry Department also changed around the same time. Belous and the IUCN-FLEG team anticipated challenges related to this dramatic administrative shift because the forest dependence study and its related agreements and discussions were approved by the previous administration; they worried that the new administration could have contrasting opinions or ideas on the implementation of the activity. Luckily, this was not the case and no new negotiations were needed. In Belous' opinion, the smooth turnover was due to the fact that the new administration that took over the Forest Management Department was made up of young professionals who are ambitious in the forestry sector and have unconventional views on forest management.

Accomplishments

The results of the forest dependence study showed that the use of forest products across communities in Belarus varies considerably and found that the level of forest dependence is more than four times higher in communities situated far from big cities and surrounded on all sides by forest than in urban areas. Community dependence on forest products is an important factor to consider in the management of forests. Further, the forest dependence study helped determine the dependency of rural communities on their local forests, and will ideally provide more clarity on forest dependence dynamics. The study raised awareness amongst key decision makers and researchers of how forest dependence varies from community to community and how this variance should be considered when making forest management and governance decisions.



Picture 3: Forest in Belarus. ©Vladimir Usenia. Source: ENPI FLEG

Further, the involvement of Aliaksandr Niaverau, a professor from the Belarusian State Technological University, in the next phase of the study will be very beneficial to the results of the study as it will help to institutionalize the results. Before the forest dependence study began, the World Bank conducted a FLEG activity in Belarus dedicated to designing a Forest Management strategy plan. Approximately 40 consultants and experts, including Niaverau, wrote chapters of the strategy plan. The World Bank also had several roundtable discussions regarding the preliminary results of their Forest Management strategy plan. Belous was invited to one of these discussions at which Niaverau spoke and presented his work on economic issues related to regulation and institutional development in forest management, and Belous realized that Niaverau's research could be closely related to the forest dependence study on a level that IUCN-FLEG had not considered. Further, she felt Niaverau's input could offer a new perspective to the study and potentially bring forest management in Belarus to a level where the environmental, economic, and social functions of forests are valued equally.

When the preliminary results of the forest dependence study were released in September 2014, Belous and Lazarava held a presentation to present the results. Niaverau was invited to attend and afterwards, expressed to Belous and Lazarava that he thought the study related strongly to his

own work and expressed interest in becoming involved. Niaverau will be involved together with Lazarava as a field consultant in the next phase of the forest dependence study in Belarus from November 2015 – July 2016. As Belous commented, “[Niaverau’s] involvement will help institutionalize the results and bring them to a high level of national policy-making” (personal communication, July 22, 2015).

Niaverau represents the Belarusian State Technological University in Minsk and is an economist working in the field of forest management. Niaverau also works on various consultant projects for the Ministry of Forestry, meaning he is a well-respected professional in the forestry sector as well. The involvement of Niaverau as a consultant for the next phase of the study has the potential to produce results that are more robust and respected across many sectors. Having Lazarava and Niaverau, both highly respected by the Ministry of Forestry in Belarus, work together as consultants on the team and incorporate their perspectives from the forest management and economic sectors in the next phase of the activity will offer diverse perspectives and lead to wider applications of the results of the study.

Spinoff activities

While there has not been any direct replication of the forest dependence study, other activities were inspired by the results of the Belarus study. Belous is currently assisting a Belarusian NGO to develop a framework for a “Green Economy Contest” project. This contest, sponsored by the EU and implemented through the UNDP, offers grants up to 110,000 Euros for local initiatives and developments. The NGO asked Belous to use the forest dependence study results in Buda Koshelevo, a community found to be one of the most forest dependent according to the Forest Dependency study, to serve as a baseline for a project to establish infrastructure to facilitate the collection of berries and mushrooms from the forest by community members.

Additionally, because of the forest dependence study, the Belarus Ministry of Environment is now interested in also working with IUCN-FLEG. While the Ministry of Forestry is the direct beneficiary of IUCN-FLEG’s work in Belarus thus far, Belous also has a pre-existing relationship with the Ministry of Environment and shared information about the forest dependence study and its results with them. Belous spoke with Natalya Minchenko, the Head of the Biological and Landscape Diversity Department of the Ministry of Environment, about the study, and as a result Minchenko became very interested in collaborating with IUCN-FLEG.

The Ministry of Environment of Belarus is also active in the implementation of Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects and could potentially develop a project with IUCN using GEF funds. The GEF Small Grants Programme coordinator in Belarus also heard about the study at the workshop where the results of the study were presented. This sparked a discussion with the Head of the GEF Small Grants Program who has offered cooperation on the development of some projects based on the information from the communities surveyed.

D. Lessons Learned

1. Recognizing a compelling need: The forest dependence study was rooted in a recognized compelling need that ensured broad-based interest and support. In order to effectively govern natural resources, governments need tangible data that provides clear facts on how forest resource are being used in rural communities, which also provides an incentive to govern these resources more effectively. The Ministry of Forestry recognized this need and hence supported the IUCN-FLEG activity.
2. Leveraging professional connections: The professional connections that Belous established through her work as a consultant for the Ministry of Environment prior to being involved in IUCN-FLEG facilitated her positive and successful professional relationship with the Ministry of Forestry. Similarly, Lazarava's established connections with local forestry units helped facilitate a positive relationship and trust between the field personnel and the communities in which the study was conducted. Furthermore, collaboration with various experts, including Niaverau, enhanced the thoroughness and credibility of the study's results.
3. Clear understanding of the need: A clear understanding of the need for the forest dependence study and ensuring that the beneficiaries of the study, especially the Ministry of Forestry, were in agreement about the need for the study and approved of its methodology, facilitated the efficiency and effectiveness of this IUCN-FLEG activity. This was accomplished through open discussions between Belous and the Ministry of Forestry.
4. Incorporating diverse perspectives: The involvement of people from various sectors and regions made the results more robust and respected across a number of diverse sectors and facilitated more balanced decision-making. More specifically, the involvement of Professor Niaverau will bring economic issues related to regulation and institutional development in forest management to light.
5. Being able to draw on regional expertise: Furthermore, because the Belarus forest dependence study was part of the ENPI regional study, both the country program coordinator, Belous, and the field consultant, Lazarava, were able to benefit from the regional training and experience exchange among other consultants carrying out the same survey in their respective ENPI-FLEG countries. In addition, the regional scale of the activity made it possible to use the unified database for data analysis and to take advantage of the expertise of the regional consultant.

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Case Study 4. Pest and Disease Management, Georgia

Prepared by: Xi Chen

A. Activity Highlights

While most IUCN-FLEG activities were undertaken to directly advance sustainable forest management practices under the St. Petersburg Declaration, the forest pest and disease research described in this case study emerged in a unique manner and with a different purpose. Georgia was grappling with a forest pest and disease problem that required a level of careful assessment and technical expertise that the Georgia government did not have the capacity to provide. IUCN-FLEG perceived offering their assistance as an opportunity to build stronger relationships with the Georgia government that could translate into improved forest management activities in the country over time. This case study describes the process by which IUCN-FLEG assisted with forest pest and disease management in Georgia, and the lessons learned from this experience.

Given the extreme climate variability in Georgia from 2008-2010, the forests within Georgia's protected areas were facing the spread of different pests and diseases due to climate change. However, there was a lack of pathologists and entomologists in Georgia to study and address the issue. Further, Georgia's protected areas categorization follows the IUCN's Protected Areas Categories System, a system which classifies protected areas according to their management objectives. Several tree species affected by pests within Georgia's protected areas are on the IUCN Red List, a system designed to determine the relative global risk of species extinction. Thus, the Georgia government consulted IUCN-FLEG to assess and report on forest pests and diseases in three protected areas of the country: Mtirala National Park, Kintrishi Protected Areas, and Ajameti Managed Reserve. The assessment focused on the health condition of forests, and the identification of harmful pests and viruses in protected areas. Lost leaves, leaf spots, and discoloration of stems were observed as well as poor growth of branches and twigs. (Matsiakh, 2014)

As a result of this activity, IUCN-FLEG's study has been referenced in the Mtirala National Park management plan, which was approved by the Prime Minister of Georgia. The incorporation of IUCN-FLEG's study in Kintrishi Protected Areas and Ajameti Managed Reserve management plans is ongoing. As IUCN-FLEG's work is now highly valued by Georgia government, IUCN-FLEG is expanding its research to be carried out in more forests of Georgia using the same methodology.

B. Background

Science and Policy Background

Georgia is rich in forests, and nearly 40% the country's total territory is forested (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016). Forests in Georgia provide valuable ecosystem services, including timber, habitats for many endemic or relic species, soil erosion prevention, and regulation of runoff on steep mountain slopes (Konstantine & David, 2003).

Pest management in Georgian forests is complicated by both complex ecological relationships and protected species policies. Due to climate change, 2008 experienced a very dry summer, followed by a very rainy and wet spring in 2009. 2010 was then the driest year of the century (Matsiakh, 2014). This climate variability created an imbalanced host-parasite relationship in Georgia, as the low humidity benefited pests' reproduction and survival while the drought and heavy rain weakened the trees (Matsiakh, 2014). As a result, Georgia's forests have been suffering from various pests and diseases, creating a forest management issue that compelled attention.

The forest pest and disease outbreak was even more pressing because it affected rare and endangered endemic plants in Georgia. For example, *Buxus colchica*, an evergreen Tertiary period relic plant and a species of Boxwood with high genetic research values, has been in decline due to soil phytopathogens of *Phytophthora* genus (the plant-destroyer), *Calonectria pseudonaviculata* (causing boxwood blight), and *Volutella buxi* (causing Volutella blight). Another example was the dieback of a rare and relic plant Imeretian Oak, which was threatened by *Phytophthora* and a great Capricorn beetle (*Cerambyx cerdo*). However, the Imeretian Oak is a protected species on the Georgian Red List while the great Capricorn beetle is on the International Red List (IUCN, 1996), causing a challenging conflict to their management. Their conflicting protected status limited the options of conservation methods for Imeretian Oak, making the direct killing of the great Capricorn beetle infeasible (Matsiakh, 2014). In addition, many general measures of active pest management, like using biocides and pesticides, are restricted within Georgia's protected areas, depending on the classification of the protected area and the level of human interruption permitted in each classification.

Need for External Help

After Georgia regained its independence from Soviet Union in 1991, many socioeconomic changes occurred in the country. During the transition period to self-rule, Georgia experienced many economic and social stressors such as an overall decline of economic activities, severe budget constraints, high domestic and foreign debt, low GDP growth rate, and institutional weakness (Konstantine & David, 2003). Many qualified government foresters changed their profession because, due to poor economic conditions, the Georgia government lacked the resources to retain foresters. As a result, Georgia has since lacked professional capacity and expertise in forestry, including specialists in forest pathologies. For example, the Agency of Protected Areas (APA) and National Forestry Agency (NFA) each, at that time, had only one specialist who was dealing with forest pests and diseases.

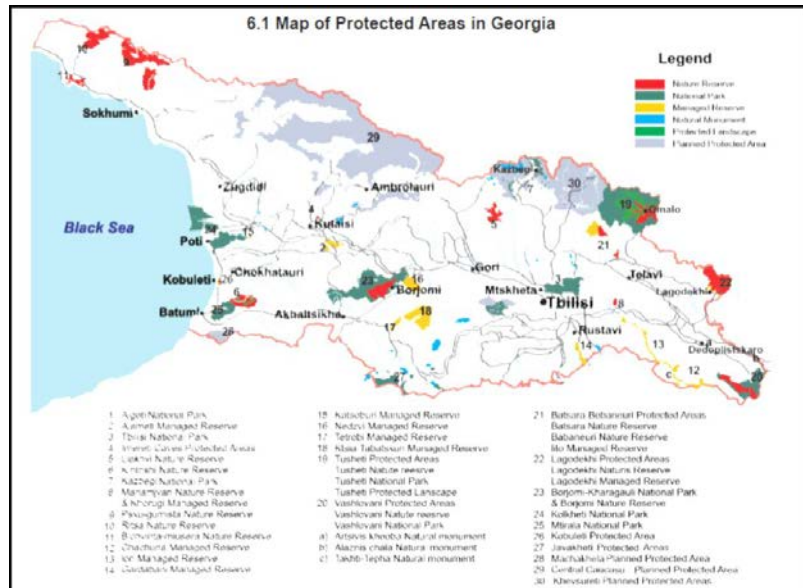
This lack of forestry expertise meant that Georgian agencies could not properly identify or address the forest pest and disease management issue that arose after 2010. For instance, very few previous studies performed by Georgian experts on the *Buxus* species identified the fungi nature of *Buxus* dieback, and further did not match IUCN's protected species definitions. The results of these studies lacked the basic quality required to make informed management decisions by the Georgia government.

Initially, the Georgia government did not know the magnitude of the Boxwood and Imeretian Oak decline problem because they lacked forestry experts with the scientific knowledge and skills in forest pathology and entomology needed to identify and address the forest pest and

disease outbreak. The need to determine the extent of the decline problem and what measures might be taken to begin addressing it was the purpose of IUCN-FLEG’s disease and pest study and its recommendations. At the time the Georgia government solicited IUCN-FLEG’s assistance, the Georgia government was also preparing management plans for the protected areas to be studied (Mtirala National Park, Kintrishi Protected Areas, and Ajameti Managed Reserve), and they needed the forest pest and disease assessments to be incorporated into the management plans.

Uniqueness

Unlike IUCN-FLEG’s usual activities in the ENPI region, this activity was initiated by the Georgia government rather than IUCN-FLEG. The Georgia government recognized that the forest pest and disease problem needed immediate attention that they were not able to provide, and thus sought IUCN-FLEG’s assistance in addressing the problem. Further, as the total area of Georgia’s protected areas had increased significantly, protected regions deserved special attention (National Environmental Action Programme of Georgia, 2012).



Map 1: Map of the distribution of protected territories in Georgia. Source: National Environmental Action Programme of Georgia 2012 –2016.

The Georgia government was very progressive to recognize their lack of professional capacity, and their decision to request help outside the country showed their commitment to forest management as well as respect for IUCN-FLEG as a trusted partner.

The Georgia government sought IUCN-FLEG’s assistance for several reasons. Georgian protected areas categorization system strictly follows the IUCN Protected Areas Categories System, and several species affected by pests, like *Buxus colchica*, are on the IUCN Red List. Due to this, the assessment of the health conditions and suggestions of specific treatment measures for pests not only required detailed analysis, but also had to establish a direct link to IUCN protected area categories and an action plan designed accordingly. Thus, IUCN-FLEG was asked to intervene and devise a strategy to address forest disease and pest management issue in Georgia’s protected areas. APA was identified as the main contact for IUCN-FLEG’s work to solicit IUCN-FLEG’s expertise in addressing the forest disease and pest management issue.

The Georgia government initiated this activity, and IUCN-FLEG offered mainly technical support. As a result, IUCN-FLEG faced no opposition from the government in their proposals for implementing the study, and the Georgia government endeavored to provide any help requested by IUCN-FLEG during the design and implementation phases of the studies. This greatly reduced

IUCN-FLEG's workload and work time, and also reduced the possibility of government pressure biasing IUCN-FLEG's work.

Activity Objectives and Goals

IUCN-FLEG's goals for this activity were to strengthen their relationships with Georgian forest managers and to help build the capacity of the Georgia government to undertake effective measures to address forest pests and diseases. Further, IUCN-FLEG wanted to give support to Georgia's protected areas managers in the management of protected forests, as the management of forests would be difficult and time-consuming with widespread forest disease. IUCN-FLEG's initial objectives were to conduct a study of the health conditions of the Boxwood and Imeretian Oak tree and give suggestions and a plan of action to protected areas managers to address the pest and disease problem, specifically how to treat pests and diseases without violating protected areas regulations.

Implementation

The implementation of the forest pest and disease study consisted of three parts: selecting a consultant to work with IUCN-FLEG to design and carry out the project, field research, and lab analysis.

Consultant Selection

IUCN-FLEG initially lacked the professional and technical resources needed to carry out the scientific research to assess forest pests and diseases in Georgia's protected areas, so their first step was the selection of a competent consultant to provide these skills. During the consultant selection process, the FLEG II Country Program Coordinator for IUCN in Georgia, Marika Kavtarishvili, worked as a connection between the Georgia government and IUCN-FLEG to help enhance a relationship between these two entities and select an appropriate consultant.

The consultant selected was Dr. Iryna Matsiakh, an entomologist at the Forestry Department of Ukrainian National Forestry University (Lviv). During the wide-ranging selection process, her application received the highest score when the scores from Kavtarishvili and the ENPI FLEG Program Coordinator, Richard Aishton, and Program Officer, Ekaterine Otarashvili, were combined. She thus contracted with IUCN-FLEG to design and carry out the forest pest and disease research to fulfill the Georgia government's needs.

Field Research

The APA helped IUCN-FLEG identify the protected areas in Georgia where the forest disease and infestation was most problematic. After consultations with the APA, IUCN-FLEG selected Mtirala National Park, Kintrishi Protected Areas, and Ajameti Managed Reserve for their research. The APA then provided active support in every component of study's implementation, including providing necessary information on the protected areas and engaging their administrations of each of the selected protected areas.

Dr. Matsiakh, in close cooperation with the APA's entomologist, conducted field research in June and October 2014 in Mtirala National Park, Kintrishi Protected Areas, and Ajameti Managed Reserve, to carry out a sanitary assessment of the state of pathogen infection of the affected forests. Samples of soil, tree tissues, and pathogens were collected to be later analyzed in lab to identify pathogens (Matsiakh, 2014). APA administrations of each of the studied protected areas accompanied IUCN-FLEG experts during the field trips to help the experts reach study sites and gather the samples to be studied in the lab.

This research was carried out using accepted scientific methods. Specifically, the sanitary assessment of forest was conducted using a forest-pathological examination (Vorontsov et al., 1991). The samples of damaged tree tissues, and adults or larvae of pathogens were collected and identified using the special literature and atlases (Bondartseva and Parmasto, 1986; Bondartseva, 1998; Łakomy and Kwaśna, 2008; Hartmann et al., 2009; Kolk and Starzyk, 2009). Tree diameters and other morphological characteristics were measured using IUFRO tree classification metrics (Leibundgut, 1958, Matsiakh, 2014).

Lab Analysis

While designing the study with the APA, IUCN-FLEG and the Georgia government realized that Georgia lacked the professional and technical resources to do the necessary sample analysis within the country. Thus, the head of the APA provided a letter to be presented to the Georgian border police to allow the experts to take the samples out of Georgia to be processed and analyzed. The Laboratory of Forest Protection of Forestry University of Ukraine performed the processing and preparation of collected samples, and the soil and infected tissue samples were analyzed at labs in Italy and in Poland where Matsiakh had professional connections. The soil and tissues samples of symptomatic *Buxus* and Imeretian Oak were analyzed in Italy at the DIBAF University of Tuscia, Viterbo, and in Poland at the Forest Research institute, Warsaw (Matsiakh, 2014).

The fungi obtained from symptomatic tree tissues were identified based on the morphological characteristics of their micro and macro structures and their growth rates at different temperatures, as well as through molecular identification. The fungi samples from soil were isolated using a baiting technique to isolate fungi types based on their responses to different nutrients, and their DNA was isolated and amplified in order to identify the fungi. (Matsiakh, 2014)

Results

With the research results of Dr. Matsiakh's research team, IUCN-FLEG provided the Georgia government with credible information on the magnitude of and reasons for *Buxus* dieback and Imeretian Oak decline. The study confirmed that approximately 90% of all boxwood trees lost their leaves in Kintrishi Protected Areas. Leaf spots, discoloration of stems, and poor growth of branches and twigs were also observed (Matsiakh, 2014). The field work also helped identify specific forest pests and diseases that were present in the protected areas, information which was not known before by the Georgia government. Further, the laboratory work helped identify specific fungi that affected forests, information which was also not fully known before IUCN-FLEG's research.

Using the findings from their assessment of forest pests and diseases, IUCN-FLEG also provided recommendations on conservation activities for forests in the Mtirala National Park, Kintrishi Protected Areas, and Ajameti Managed Reserve. These recommendations included strategies such as protection of best-preserved areas, restoration activities, as well as environmental education, recreation, and tourism (Matsiakh, 2014).

IUCN-FLEG's work in Georgia has been referenced in the Mtirala National Park management plan by EU Twinning (specifically in the chapters addressing forest pathologies) and the plan has also been approved by the Prime Minister of Georgia. The Georgia government's work on incorporating IUCN-FLEG's study in Kintrishi Protected Areas and Ajameti Managed Reserve management plans is ongoing.

C. Analysis

Facilitating Factors

Support from EU Twinning

EU Twinning is a European Union instrument for institutional cooperation between Public Administrations of European Union Member States and of beneficiary countries, in this case Georgia and its Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection and Agency of Protected Areas (Twinning (n.d.)). EU Twinning's goals are to improve management of protected areas by developing and adopting management plans, and to strengthen capacity within the protected areas system (Twinning (n.d.)). The EU Twinning project lent support to Georgia's Ministry of Environment and Natural



Picture 1: Boxwood decline in the natural boundary in Mtirala National Park. Photo by I. Matsiakh.

Resources Protection and Agency of Protected Areas for the development of the management plan for Mtirala National Park. The EU Twinning project also participated in presentation of IUCN-FLEG activity results to the APA and the wider public, and put a reference to the IUCN-FLEG study in the Mtirala National Park management plan to specify IUCN-FLEG's role in conducting the forest pest and disease study and emphasize that studies such as this should be considered while managing protected areas.

Collaboration with Buxus Survival Committee and the APA

The Buxus Survival Committee is an informal body established by Georgia's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection for solving the problem related to *Buxus colchica*.

The Committee consists of the representatives from the National Forestry Agency of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, the Forest Policy Service of the same Ministry, Caucasus Environmental NGO Network, and IUCN-FLEG. This Committee is a platform where plans to address the existing Boxwood problem were being discussed, and a concrete action plan was being designed. The Committee identified the steps to be taken, with priority on a detailed assessment of the root causes of the Boxwood decline, which aligned with the primary goal of IUCN-FLEG's research. (M. Kavtarishvili, personal communication, February, 2016)

Georgia's APA was the main contact for IUCN-FLEG's research. First, the APA helped identify the protected areas where the forest disease and infestation was most problematic. After consultations with APA, three protected areas were selected. Further, APA provided active support in every component of activity implementation, starting from providing all the necessary information, to involving their administrations of each of the selected protected areas. The local Protected Areas administrators accompanied IUCN-FLEG experts



Picture 2: Field trip of research team. Photo by I. Matsiakh.

during the whole field trips and helped them to reach the study sites and gather the samples to be studied in the laboratory. When APA reviewed the study done by IUCN-FLEG experts, because the field research was carried out based on solid scientific methods and the results were given after very detailed laboratory analysis in competent labs in Poland and Italy, they thought the experts' statements were highly justified and the methodology convincing. As a result, the credibility of the study results was never questioned by them. Finally, APA facilitated the process of including the results of the IUCN-FLEG work in the management plans of the protected areas.

Diplomatic Approach of Country Program Coordinator

To guarantee that the Georgia government found IUCN-FLEG's work credible, Kavtarishvili cooperated with the APA's entomologist and with the team leader of EU Twinning. Kavtarishvili communicated about the study with the EU Delegation FLEG focal point in Georgia and informed him of EU Twinning's cooperation with IUCN-FLEG. Moreover, in recent steps, Kavtarishvili recognized the expertise of the NFA's expert and involved him in the follow-up study. Although this involvement was not planned from the very beginning, the expert chose to participate quite actively due to Kavtarishvili's encouragement. To illustrate, the forest entomologist from the NFA accompanied and worked with IUCN-FLEG experts during both field trips in July and October 2015. Overall, Kavtarishvili had strong professional relationships with many of these contacts, and understood their objectives in seeking assistance from IUCN-FLEG.

Therefore, she understood how best to motivate and convince these contacts to be involved in IUCN-FLEG's work (M. Kavtarishvili, personal communication, July, 2015).

Kavtarishvili's effectiveness in involving a wide range of Georgian experts shows the benefit of her native identity to IUCN-FLEG's work with the Georgia government. Kavtarishvili's native expertise gave her a strong understanding of Georgia's political, social, cultural, and economic aspects, and the ability to communicate more efficiently with all parties. IUCN-FLEG Program Coordinator Aishton thus gave Kavtarishvili greater responsibility and decision-making power to carry out the study because, according to Aishton, "[Kavtarishvili] knows the people there, she speaks their own language, and she is from this country" (personal communication, July, 2015).

IUCN-FLEG's Clarity about Roles and Responsibilities to the Georgia Government

Kavtarishvili always took care to be honest and forthcoming about what she and IUCN-FLEG could or could not do while assisting the Georgia government with this project (R. Aishton, personal communication, July, 2015). For example, the Georgia Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection did not have laboratory with capacity to undertake this study. There were private labs specializing in forestry within the country, but it was costly for the Ministry to contract with private labs for this analysis. For this reason, IUCN-FLEG strongly recommended having a lab within the Ministry, to which the Ministry should provide all the necessary resources. The Ministry asked IUCN-FLEG to fund the new laboratory, however, IUCN-FLEG clearly stated that this was something they could not do and suggested the government seek funding from another donor that could support the lab-related expenses. The Ministry agreed with this solution given IUCN-FLEG's insistence and ability to create an alternative plan. Thus, IUCN-FLEG set boundaries and negotiated, rather than trying to fulfill the government's requirements beyond IUCN-FLEG's responsibilities.

Challenges

Justification for Taking on the Activity

Initially, IUCN-FLEG Program Coordinators and the FLEG Steering Committee were not convinced of the activity's potential benefits or that it was in line with FLEG objectives. When Kavtarishvili first discussed this proposed activity with Aishton, he thought that IUCN-FLEG would not do this level of technical work, given the FLEG program's main focus on governance issues. He considered going into very technical work such as this study would stray from the program objectives.

Before Kavtarishvili proposed this activity a second time to Aishton, she consulted with one of important stakeholders in Georgia, the head of the APA. He explained that this activity was necessary not only to solve one particular problem but, more generally, to prepare the protected areas management plans and attract funding from donors. Kavtarishvili explained these benefits to Aishton; because there was the important link between this pest activity and the Georgia government's greater protected areas management goals and this was not solely a narrow technical project, IUCN-FLEG agreed to support it.

From the Georgia government's perspective, a reliable study such as this could assure funding from international donors for protected areas. From IUCN-FLEG's perspective, taking on this activity was a part of the strategy to build the relationship with the government and to show IUCN-FLEG as flexible and collaborative, in order to position IUCN-FLEG as a trusted and reliable partner to the Georgia government. While it was a valuable opportunity to seize, it also needed to be carefully conducted to try not to make the connecting person Kavtarishvili look bad in the Georgia government. Overall, according to Aishton, without Kavtarishvili explaining these nuances and without her knowledge of how the Georgia government hoped to use this research, this pest management activity would have never been implemented (R. Aishton, personal communication, July, 2015).

Resource and Capacity Limitation

Some operational challenges were also encountered in terms of the access to labs that could do necessary molecular research in Georgia, and an inability to take forest samples outside of Georgia. The head of the APA provided a letter to be presented to the border police to allow the experts to take the samples out of Georgia to Poland and Italy for laboratory analysis, allowing the samples to be processed and analyzed.

Impacts and Accomplishments

IUCN-FLEG's forest disease and pest study was of utmost importance for the Georgia government. While the scientific evidence from this study informed the management plans for Mtirala National Park, Kintrishi Protected Areas, and Ajameti Managed Reserve, IUCN-FLEG's research on behalf of the Georgia government was also seen as a successful way of fostering scientifically-based governance. Scientifically-based governance in this case meant that the forest disease and pest study created a scientific basis for the Georgia government's decision-making on forest pests and diseases. IUCN-FLEG provided science-based support in making decision on how to address the problem regarding forest pests and diseases, to then be addressed by specific management activities. Additionally, the study helped attract additional funding from international donors and sponsors.

This pest and disease activity also boosted the credibility of and respect for IUCN-FLEG in Georgia. This activity, along with the other work objectives of IUCN-FLEG in Georgia, such as education, information and public participation, forest dependency, problems related to firewood supply to local population, and local forest governance, built up IUCN-FLEG's credibility with the Georgia government and has provided IUCN-FLEG with greater access to the government's decision-making processes that concern IUCN-FLEG's other areas of interest. For example, Kavtarishvili is now invited to all forestry-related meetings with the Georgia government. IUCN-FLEG also has stronger relationships and is more directly engaged with high-level forestry decision-makers in Georgia, including the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia. In addition, the success of this work instilled IUCN-FLEG as a trust partner of the Georgia government, giving IUCN-FLEG the credibility to better implement future activities in Georgia with the increased support of the Georgia government.

Finally, the results of IUCN-FLEG's forest pest and disease study in Georgia's protected areas were presented at several international scientific conferences, including "Challenges of the XXI century and their settlement in the forestry sector and the environment" in Kiev, Ukraine, in 2015, "SCIENCE - innovative development of forestry" in Gomel, Belarus, in 2015, and "Integrated plant protection and plant quarantine. Prospects for the development in the XXI century" in Kiev, Ukraine, in 2015.

Next Steps

As the research conducted by IUCN-FLEG proved successful, the FLEG focal point in Georgia, who is also the head of the NFA, officially requested IUCN-FLEG to extend the study to cover five regions of the NFA forests. In Georgia, the forests designated as protected areas are managed by the APA, and forests without protected areas designation are managed by the NFA. While IUCN-FLEG's research was conducted in protected areas managed by the APA, the NFA have since asked IUCN-FLEG to do the same study in five regions outside protected areas. From July 19th to August 4th, and then from October 25th to November 7th, 2015, the same IUCN-FLEG experts continued the study in the NFA's forests using the same methodology they used for previous studies.

The results of this follow-up study created a solid base for development of national plan for addressing the problems of pests and diseases. The plan includes specific actions to be taken within the current and future years by all responsible institutions (the NFA, the APA, Forestry Agency of Ajara Autonomous Republic, the Department of Agriculture, Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Abkhazia Autonomous Republic, and local self-governments) and will be submitted to the Georgia government for approval in the near future.

Based on the study results of IUCN-FLEG, each of these institutions developed action plans for 2016. In these action plans, the areas for special treatment and treatment medications and tools have been identified, giving the priority to biological preparations. The NFA has started procurement procedures for buying the preparations, and practical treatment measures will take place starting in April 2016. The NFA plans to start testing of different types of medications and their effects on the diseases and pests, as defined in the study.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, based on the suggestions provided in IUCN-FLEG study, have started negotiations with the donor organizations to seek funding for establishment of a Ministry-owned lab. Other suggestions included in IUCN-FLEG study will be included as parts of the mid-term and long-term action plans of the above listed institutions.

D. Lessons Learned

1. Seizing opportunities to promote credibility and respect: In this case, seizing an opportunity to help the Georgia government on a technical project that was not directly within IUCN-FLEG's scope or expertise nonetheless instilled a productive working relationship with the Georgia government that built on familiarity and trust. This relationship will be helpful for IUCN-FLEG to implement future activities in Georgia, as this activity boosted the

credibility of and respect for IUCN-FLEG in Georgia. It has also elevated IUCN-FLEG's involvement and prominence in high-level forest management discussions in Georgia.

2. Ensuring clarity on roles and responsibilities with government partners: The Georgia government's request for IUCN-FLEG's assistance was in part due to IUCN-FLEG's reputation on always being honest and forthcoming with what they can and cannot do to assist governments in their work. This helps resolve possible conflicts about governments' expectations and actual results for IUCN-FLEG's involvement. Thus, IUCN-FLEG is capable of realizing set or adjusted objectives, while governments can be confident about outcomes they can expect while working with IUCN-FLEG.
3. Attention to careful and credible methodology: IUCN-FLEG paid attention to implementing a careful and credible methodology, so their results would be accepted by government partners. In IUCN-FLEG's report, all methods used in field trips or lab analysis were based on tested scientific papers, so that the justification of the IUCN-FLEG experts' statements was high and the methodology convincing. The results of the study were considered credible by government partners, and thus highly valued and used by several other organizations.
4. Fostering key partnerships to enhance credibility: Key partnerships in this study ensured broad understanding, a strong knowledge base, credibility, and support. For example, the APA, the main government contact for this activity, supported IUCN-FLEG's experts in the field trips by giving access and guides, so the experts had opportunities to see the locations and to take samples. At the end of this study, the APA trusted IUCN-FLEG's results because the study was done by expert forest entomologists and pathologists recognized by the APA, and the analysis was carried out in a highly-qualified lab in Poland.

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Case Study 5: Tusheti Protected Landscape Community Management, Georgia

Prepared by: Allegra Wrocklage

A. Activity Highlights

Established in 2003 by the Georgian national government, the Tusheti Protected Landscape is a unique case of local governance of a protected area. The Tusheti Protected Landscape is over 300 square kilometers, located in Akhmeta municipality in northeastern Georgia, and is categorized as an IUCN Category V protected area due to its intertwined cultural and ecological value (ENPI FLEG, 2015). Due to the independent and self-reliant nature of Tushetian culture and the motivation of local Tushetians to sustainably manage the region's forest resources, in 2003 the Georgian government decided that by law, the Landscape needed to be managed by Akhmeta municipality. Further, the Georgia Agency of Protected Areas, responsible for managing protected areas in Georgia, felt that it was not mandated to manage the socio-economic needs of the local population relying on the Landscape's resources.

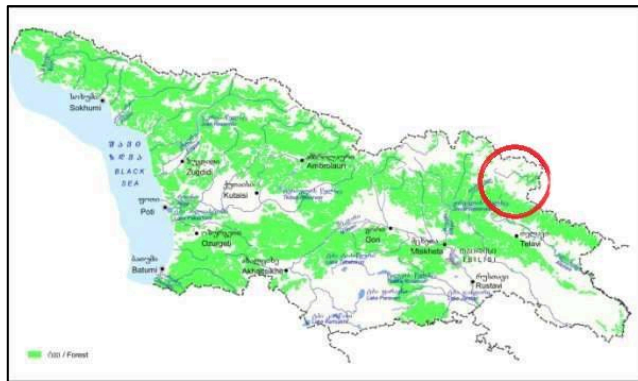
Due to the lack of the institutional capacity in Akhmeta municipality, practical management of the Landscape remained under the Georgia Agency of Protected Areas until 2006, when the Georgian national government decided to delegate management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape to the municipal level. However, full transfer of management to the municipal level was not completed until 2014. The management transfer represented the first attempt by the Georgia national government to delegate management responsibility of a protected area to the municipal level. It also represented the Tushetian people's first opportunity to govern their local natural resources in a way that effectively met their own subsistence needs and social customs since before the Soviet era. Yet this shift to communal governance presented many challenges, including properly defining the municipality's management responsibilities and building necessary forestry expertise and administrative capacity at the municipal level.

This case study will explore how IUCN-FLEG identified the policy gaps that led to ineffective management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape, and then collaborated with a network of municipal government officials and forestry practitioners in Tusheti to ensure more effective implementation of management policies and activities in the Landscape. This IUCN-FLEG activity provides an example for Georgia and the international community of how local culture and expertise can be leveraged to effectively implement communal management that is responsive to local resource needs and cultural perspectives.

B. Background

Shifting to Local Management

The mountainous and remote Tusheti region is located in the Akhmeta municipality in the northeast of Georgia, on the northern slopes of the Caucasus Mountains. Local control of the region initially ended in 1921, with the Soviet invasion of Georgia and subsequent Communist rule. Georgia achieved independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, at which point the Tusheti region came under control of the national Georgian government (ENPI FLEG, 2014).



Map 1: Location of Tusheti region in Georgia. Photo by National Environmental Action Programme of Georgia 2012-2016).

conservation objectives,” (Agency of Protected Areas, 2014a). The unique status of Protected Landscapes results in many ambiguities in management regarding what forest products can be removed from the Landscape as compared to Georgia’s Strict Nature Reserves, which prohibit the removal of any natural resource products (Agency of Protected Areas, 2014b).

In 2006, the Georgia Agency of Protected Areas shifted control of the Tusheti Protected Landscape to the Akhmeta municipality, within which the Tusheti Protected Landscape is located. The Georgia Agency of Protected Areas felt that because Tusheti contained many human settlements, its management necessitated an awareness of and capacity for managing socio-economic issues. Thus, managing the landscape was beyond the Georgia Agency of Protected Areas’ official mandate. This was the first time that the Georgia government transferred control of a protected area from the national to local level.

In 2011, Akhmeta Municipality created the Tusheti Protected Landscape Administration (TPLA), a “non-commercial legal entity” within the structure of the municipal government with the responsibility for protecting and restoring the ecosystems of the Tusheti Protected Landscape. The TPLA consists of nine members, seven of whom are Tushetians, responsible for the management decisions regarding the forests within the Tusheti Protected Landscape. The TPLA is the primary managing and decision-making agency of the Tusheti Protected Landscape (ENPI FLEG, 2014).

Need for Activity

While management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape had been placed under control of the municipality by law, it took time for the transfer of management responsibilities to be implemented in practice. In particular, gaps in policy and implementation needed to be addressed to ensure that Akhmeta municipality and the TPLA were aware of and legally able to carry out their management responsibilities. Further, the terms of local access to forest resources needed to be clarified so that local Tushetians could legally access the forest resources needed to meet their subsistence needs.

Gap in Policy and Implementation

While the management transfer of the Landscape to Akhmeta municipality was written into Georgian law, no specific procedures to transfer the management responsibilities and decision-making powers had been defined. As of 2006, when management responsibilities of the Tusheti Protected Landscape were transferred from the Georgia Agency of Protected Areas to the Akhmeta municipality, the municipality lacked the institutional structures to properly manage the Landscape. Even when the TPLA was established in 2011 to help define institutional structures that would govern the protected area, there was still confusion over what governing entity had the legal right to manage the Landscape.

Due to the Tusheti Protected Landscape's status as a Protected Landscape, Georgia's National Forestry Agency, which manages the State Forest Fund, technically had the resources to manage the Landscape. However, as Protected Areas are managed by the Agency of Protected Areas of Georgia, the National Forestry Agency claimed it did not bear responsibility for managing the Landscape. Management of the Landscape still had not been officially transferred to the TPLA, despite the fact that the TPLA was meant to be the legal, decision-making body governing use of forest resources. This disconnect in policy, law, and administration meant that Akhmeta municipality lacked the legal basis, resources, and expertise to interpret and implement its new management responsibilities, and the Tusheti Protected Landscape was effectively without forestry management for over a decade.



Picture 1: Tusheti Protected Landscape in northeastern Georgia.
Photo by ENPI FLEG II.

Unmonitored Forest Resource Use

The gap between policy and implementation also led to a lack of understanding about responsibilities for monitoring resource use and illegal activities. With no clear responsibilities defined for who was to monitor illegal activities in the Tusheti Protected Landscape, illegal logging in the region rose. The TPLA felt pressure from Tushetians to define the jurisdiction for addressing

these illegal activities, as the TPLA was defined by law as the sole decision-making and managing body of the Landscape.

Further, local communities were uncertain about what forest use activities were legal or not under the Protected Landscape designation. In Protected Landscapes, wood removal is allowed by residents for personal use only. However, Tushetian community members were unclear about how to receive permission to legally gather forest products, especially firewood, for their subsistence needs. Gathering firewood is important for Tushetians throughout the year, but especially during winter months when their mountainous communities are isolated by snow. Without a clear administrative management regime for the Tusheti Protected Landscape, elected officials in Akhmeta municipality were unable to answer local Tushetians' questions about gaining permission to take wood resources from the forest. Tushetians were unclear on their legal rights to take forest resources from the Landscape to meet their subsistence needs, and complained significantly to their local government representatives. Clearly, action needed to be taken to clarify local management roles and effectively implement management of the protected area.



Picture 2: Matchavariani (right), discusses forest management in the Tusheti Protected Landscape with a ranger from the Sachagmo gorge in Tusheti (at left) and Lagazidze (center). Photo by M. Kavtarishvili.

Activity Goals and Objectives

The initial objectives of this IUCN-FLEG activity were twofold:

1. To clarify who was responsible for the management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape, and to assess its current state of management and the current laws and practices in place.
2. To ensure that management responsibilities and the resources needed for implementation were properly designated and assigned to Akhmeta municipality, and to develop guidelines, methodologies, and tools to raise awareness for how to move local management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape into practice.

Overall, the activity sought to create both an institutional and practical knowledge of forest management at the communal level.

Implementation

Defining Policy Gap and Management Options

IUCN-FLEG initially examined current management practices of the Tusheti Protected Landscape, which were largely lacking, in order to clarify where the implementation gap existed and how IUCN-FLEG's involvement would be most beneficial. Marika Kavtarishvili, the FLEG

II Country Program Coordinator for IUCN in Georgia, researched the national legislation regarding management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape, starting from establishment of the Landscape and including the shift of the management of the Landscape to the Akhmeta municipality, in order to gain an understanding of the law and why it seemed to not be implemented. Kavtarishvili is a trained environmental lawyer as well as a native Tushetian, giving her first-hand knowledge of the forest resource needs of communities in Tusheti. Kavtarishvili supplemented her research through meetings with officials in the National Forestry Agency of Georgia, to gain further understanding of the law's shortcomings.



Picture 3: Matchavariani measures a tree in the Tusheti Protected Landscape. Photo by M. Kavtarishvili.

Kavtarishvili's research and meetings revealed that there was no procedure written into the 2006 law to transfer and establish forest management and administration of the Tusheti Protected Landscape to the municipal level. Once this policy implementation gap was identified, Kavtarishvili facilitated discussions with government authorities in Akhmeta municipality on the benefits of communal forestry with the Akhmeta municipal government. The goal of these meetings was to identify the management activities and expertise that best suited the Tusheti Protected Landscape. Further, IUCN-FLEG sought to identify how they could assist in

providing this expertise to the municipal government, while also addressing the policy gap through legally ensuring and defining communal forest management in the Tusheti region.

A key strategy in IUCN-FLEG's approach were face-to-face meetings with the director of the TPLA, Eristo Lagazidze, who Kavtarishvili knew from personal connections. Kavtarishvili and IUCN-FLEG used these meetings with Lagazidze to discuss the benefits of communal forest management and propose concrete options for IUCN-FLEG's work in improving management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape. As a result, IUCN-FLEG's National Forestry Consultant in Georgia, Merab Matchavariani, took on responsibility for providing consultations to the TPLA on different aspects of communal forestry and for development of a strategic document which would help to move towards communal forestry in the Tusheti Protected Landscape.

Implementing Management Options

Matchavariani developed recommendations for forest management in the Tusheti Protected Landscape based on Kavtarishvili and IUCN-FLEG's meetings with Lagazidze and Akhmeta municipality officials. These strategies built off of the opportunities and challenges facing forest management in the Landscape that were identified in the assessment meetings with municipal and TPLA officials, led by Kavtarishvili. The recommendations, completed in

December 2014, created the concrete forest management steps and methodology to be ultimately implemented by those managing the Tusheti Protected Landscape. The recommendations also defined two key strategies for the national government to take action on that would confirm that Akhmeta Municipality would be legally ensured of full management responsibility for Tusheti Protected Landscape. The first strategy was to define the Landscape as the forest of local importance and register it officially under the ownership of the municipality. The second was to amend national forestry laws and define Akhmeta municipality as the manager of the Landscape.

In addition, through Matchavariani's role with IUCN-FLEG, he built contacts that after the end of the project helped him be appointed as the deputy-head of the National Forestry Agency of Georgia. Due to the professional relationship Matchavariani and Lagazidze formed through IUCN-FLEG's work in Tusheti, Lagazidze can directly contact National Forestry Agency decision makers via his connection with Matchavariani in case of questions emerge regarding management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape.

Results

Legislated Transfer of Management

From 2011-2012 the TPLA made the official request to fully transfer management of the Tusheti Protected Area to Akhmeta municipality. As a result of this request, IUCN-FLEG's policy recommendations to the TPLA, and subsequent negotiations amongst relevant government agencies, in September 2014 two key forestry laws were amended by the Georgia legislature. These amendments allowed the Tusheti Protected Landscape to remain within the government owned forest system, called the State Forest Fund, but the Landscape is now officially under the sole management of the Akhmeta municipality with the TPLA as the managing agency (ENPI FLEG, 2014).

Today, Akhmeta municipality is the only self-governing municipality in Georgia that has the authority to manage a protected area (Kavtarishvili, 2015). The passage of these laws marked the official completion of the management transfer of the Tusheti Protected Landscape to Akhmeta municipality that was begun over a decade earlier, in 2003.

Clearly Defined Management Roles and Responsibilities

Through their work in the Tusheti region, IUCN-FLEG facilitated the creation of a network of support amongst organizations and experts to help Akhmeta municipal authorities gain knowledge to implement their management activities for the Landscape. With the legal transfer of management authority now in place, local Tushetian people who have local and cultural knowledge of the landscape comprise the rangers working in the Landscape and managers in the TPLA. The TPLA can enhance forestry personnel, undertake forest inventory, elaborate a forest management plan, and establish a transparent and sustainable system of harvesting and supply of forest products to meet local needs. The TPLA is also now clearly responsible for undertaking all "necessary measures in consideration of its Protected Area status", which explicitly include forest fire control and proper management of pests and diseases (ENPI FLEG, 2014).

C. Analysis

Country Context

Tusheti Geography and Climate

The Tusheti region is unique and ecologically valuable both within Georgia and internationally. The Caucasus Mountains (which the Tusheti region is within) are recognized as one of the world's Biodiversity Hotspots, and the Tusheti Protected Landscape contains a wide range of rare plant and animal species (Kavtarishvili, 2015). The Tusheti region is also identified by the IUCN as a Category V Protected Area, a landscape where “the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value” (IUCN, 2012). The Tusheti region is characterized by steep, high slopes and deep gorges. Forest cover in the region is relatively sparse, covering only about 10% of the Tusheti Protected Landscape. Due to the steep topography of the region, these forests play a critical role in preventing erosion and improving soil water retention by mitigating flood risk (NCA CR & KNPA, 2013).

Tushetian Economy

The Tushetian people are semi-nomadic and number around 10,000. Tushetians primarily live in 3 villages near the foot of the Caucas Mountains, and spend their summers higher on the slopes tending sheep as their ancestors have done for centuries (ENPI FLEG, 2014). Sheep farming and tourism are two of the largest economic activities for Tushetians (Kavtarishvili, 2015). The Tusheti region is highly isolated, and almost completely inaccessible during the winter months. As a result, Tushetians are highly dependent on the local landscape to meet their subsistence needs during the isolated winter months.



Picture 4: Traditional sheep farming in high mountainous Tusheti. Photo by S. Idoidze.

Most importantly, Tushetians need to use wood products from local forests for firewood and construction material. Gasification has yet to occur in the Tusheti region, and firewood plays a crucial role for heat in the winter.

Tushetian Culture

The influence of the local Tushetian culture on the desire and need to responsibly and sustainably manage the forest resources played an important role in IUCN-FLEG's work. Tushetians have a strong sense of tradition, which according to Kavtarishvili influences their feelings of ownership of the region and its resources (M. Kavtarishvili, personal communication, July 14, 2015). Thus, the Georgian government recognizes that compliance from the local people

is often necessary to implement changes in the region. For example, when the three different Tusheti protected areas (Strict Nature Reserve, National Park, and Protected Landscape) were originally established, the new status of the areas, their limitations and benefits for the local population, and borders among the three categories of the protected areas needed to be communicated and agreed upon by the Tushetian people before they were finally confirmed. This agreement was needed because there was initially intense opposition from Tushetians against the establishment of these protected areas. Tushetians were concerned that the establishment of protected areas would infringe upon their traditional rights and lifestyle, their access to forest resources, and access to historical places. The national government had to invest in educational and awareness-raising activities to help convince Tushetians of the value of establishing protected areas. Ultimately, Tushetians became very positive towards the protected areas, especially due to the tourism benefits they provided.

Further, Tushetians have a strong sense of tradition, which according to Kavtarishvili influences their feelings of ownership of the region and its resources (M. Kavtarishvili, personal communication, July 14, 2015). Especially due to the region's isolation, the Tushetian culture and traditional practices have remained similar, even almost unchanged, for centuries. According to Kavtarishvili, outsiders to Tushetian communities will almost always have a difficult time gaining the trust of Tushetians without having worked closely and extensively within Tushetian communities.

Facilitating Factors

Engaging Native Consultants Who Can Engage Community Networks

Engaging Tushetians with knowledge of the local culture and the ability to access the region's social and professional networks was a key factor that enabled IUCN-FLEG's work with the Tusheti Protected Landscape, in order to activate the expertise of local networks and build the trust needed in local communities. For example, it was key that IUCN-FLEG was able to engage with Lagazidze, the director of the TPLA, who began his position around the beginning of IUCN-FLEG's work on this activity. Lagazidze was a Tusheti local, and thus had strong personal and professional ties in the region.



Picture 5: Traditional Tushetian architecture in Dartlo Village in the Tusheti Region.
Photo by S. Idoidze.

Kavtarishvili emphasized that Lagazidze was not an environmentalist in the traditional sense, nor did he have significant experience in project management. Rather, Lagazidze had a strong understanding of local problems, was successful at quickly learning about the activity and understanding its importance to Tushetians, and had a willingness to take action with the help of IUCN-FLEG.

Further, Kavtarishvili is a Tusheti native with a strong understanding of local customs and needs, and professional networks in the region. Kavtarishvili's personal connection with Lagazidze was key in facilitating IUCN-FLEG's ability to engage with Lagazidze and the TPLA to promote the need for local governance, and to provide Lagazidze with concrete ideas and options for IUCN-FLEG's involvement and support for better management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape. Given the strong role of Tushetian culture in shaping social, political, and economic activities in the region, as a Tushetian native Kavtarishvili played an essential role in building trust and inspiring action in the Tushetian communities to support and implement this IUCN-FLEG activity.

Identifying Key Points of Intervention

One facilitating factor for IUCN-FLEG's work with the Tusheti Protected Landscape was Kavtarishvili and IUCN-FLEG's ability to recognize key points of inertia and inaction that inhibited the successful management of the Landscape. Several issues pointed to the lack of management of the forest as a problem that needed to be addressed. However, rather than attempting to address the overarching issue of poor forest management, Kavtarishvili and IUCN-FLEG sought to identify the key implementation gaps in the policies for forest management that governed the Landscape. Once Kavtarishvili and IUCN-FLEG understood these policy gaps, they collaborated with Tushetians to form strategies for improving forest management while also working with municipal officials to facilitate the request for official management transfer of the Landscape from the national to municipal government level.

Frequent Communication with Implementing Partners

Kavtarishvili emphasized the importance of frequent communication with the TPLA, IUCN-FLEG's key implementing partner in their work in Tusheti, to ensure that IUCN-FLEG and the TPLA's interests and agendas were aligned and that TPLA had a good understanding of how to implement its and IUCN-FLEG's ideas (M. Kavtarishvili, personal communication, July 14, 2015). Kavtarishvili and Matchavariani had several meetings with Lagazidze to continually discuss how the TPLA could successfully carry out the transfer process and implement local management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape. Kavtarishvili emphasized that the more options they could present to Lagazidze through these meetings for concrete actions the TPLA could pursue, regarding both pursuing the policy change and management planning, the greater the likelihood that the TPLA would work with IUCN-FLEG and progress would be made. The ability of Kavtarishvili to meet frequently with Lagazidze to present and discuss management options was key in addressing uncertainty and inertia in moving IUCN-FLEG's ideas and work forward in conjunction with the TPLA's interests.

Tushetian Cultural Knowledge of Sustainable Forest Management

Tushetians' strong cultural regard for sustainably managing forest resources was also a facilitating factor in Tushetians seeking the goal of communal forest management, and thus the ability of Kavtarishvili and IUNC-FLEG to work with Tushetians. According to Kavtarishvili, Tushetian cultural knowledge extends to a strong understanding of the ecosystem services that the forests provide to Tushetians. For example, according to Kavtarishvili, Tushetians have a cultural concept of "sacred" forests, untouched areas that Tushetians are not allowed to cut down or

sometimes even enter (M. Kavtarishvili, personal communication, July 14, 2015). While these sacred and untouched forests have a strong cultural significance, these specific areas of forest are also key for mitigating flooding and erosion on the steep slopes above Tushetian villages. Often, the drinking water for these villages also originates from these forested areas (Kavtarishvili 2015). Overall, there are strong links between the Tushetians' cultural traditions and their knowledge of the benefits and ecosystem services the forest provides them by leaving certain forested areas intact. This cultural regard was key in motivating the Tushetians to have an interest in managing the Tusheti Protected Landscape for their own resource needs, to work with Kavtarishvili to achieve their goals of communal management.

Building a Network of Expertise to Sustain Management Capacity

Another facilitating factor was a focus on planning for the involvement of forest management experts to be sustainable after the involvement and support of IUCN-FLEG in the Tusheti region came to an end. IUCN-FLEG solicited the involvement of different governance levels in their work in Tusheti to build greater institutional understanding in the TPLA and Akhmeta municipality on implementation strategies for communal forest management. In part due to his involvement with IUCN-FLEG's work in Tusheti, Matchavariani is now the deputy head of the National Forestry Agency, and is continuously assisting the TPLA in its practical implementation steps. Further, IUCN-FLEG representatives knew that the current Georgian government, recently elected in 2013, was planning on decentralizing forest management as one of their main activities. Therefore, the information from this IUCN-FLEG activity would be very helpful to the government's goals, and ensure the information would be used in the future.

Aligning Goals with Agendas of Prominent Aid Organizations

Enlisting the support of international aid agencies brought needed expertise and resources to IUCN-FLEG's work in the Tusheti region. From 2012-2013 the Czech Development Agency, which has a strong donor presence in the Tusheti region, prepared a management plan for the Tusheti Protected Landscape in cooperation with the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (Czech Development Agency, 2009). The Czech Development Agency has a strong interest in further implementing projects in the region, especially regarding forestry management and erosion control. IUCN-FLEG's work on clarifying the local management rights and responsibilities in the Tusheti Protected Landscape could provide a basis for the Agency to implement its work. This motivated Akhmeta municipality to pursue IUCN-FLEG's assistance, given the promised benefits of sustained donor investment in the Tusheti region if the Landscape's management rights were clarified.

Challenges

Lack of Clarity on Forest Management Responsibilities

Kavtarishvili discovered through her research into the legislation that transferred management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape from the Georgia Agency of Protected Areas to Akhmeta municipality that, although in 2003 national agencies understood that Akhmeta municipality was the only responsible governing body for the Landscape, the municipality itself

did not understand who was currently responsible for managing the Tusheti Protected Landscape and what proper management duties included. Through discussing the issue with a local lawyer representing Akhmeta municipality's locally elected council, Kavtarishvili discovered that the municipality was waiting for the national government to transfer the management rights of the Landscape. However, through Kavtarishvili's research she discovered that it was Akhmeta municipality's responsibility to formally request these rights themselves (M. Kavtarishvili, personal communication, July 14, 2015). It seemed that this responsibility had never been communicated to the Akhmeta municipality government.

Due to this misunderstanding, Akhmeta municipality had not been doing active management of the Landscape. It became clear that local authorities were often unaware of their forest management responsibilities. If they were aware of their responsibilities, they often did not know how to implement them or properly manage the Landscape due to the lack of administrative and management capacity for Akhmeta municipality written into the law. Thus, the Tusheti Protected Landscape was essentially without practical forestry management since its designation in 2003.

Uncertainty of Government Commitment

Another significant challenge to IUCN-FLEG's work was that, according to Kavtarishvili, Georgia's national government could have chosen to significantly delay or prevent the legislative process that would officially transfer management rights during IUCN-FLEG's work in the region (M. Kavtarishvili, personal communication, July 14, 2015). It took three years, from when the TPLA was officially established in 2011 until 2014, for local management to be approved. Further delays from the government were especially worrisome, especially if they caused the implementation time of the activity to surpass the IUCN-FLEG program's involvement in Georgia.

The Georgian national government's hesitancy to transfer management rights was, according to Kavtarishvili, partially related to their previous experience with transferring management of the urban Tbilisi forest to the local level (M. Kavtarishvili, personal communication, July 14, 2015). In the past the Georgian national government sought to bring the urban forests in Tbilisi under local control, and gave complete ownership and management control of the urban forest to the city council of Tbilisi. However, the national government felt that this transfer resulted in a loss of too much control, giving the city council considerable power to change the laws governing the Tbilisi forest and its use. Due to this experience, the Georgian national legislature chose to amend the forestry laws to only transfer management control of the Tusheti Protected Area to the Akhmeta municipality rather than complete ownership. Before this solution was reached, there was significant concern that the government would choose not to go forward with the process of transferring control to Akhmeta municipality.

Building Necessary Professional Capacity

One unanticipated challenge of IUCN-FLEG's work was building the professional capacity necessary to implement the management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape, from both a forestry expertise and administrative perspective. According the Kavtarishvili, a wide range of tasks related to management need to be standardized, especially after the past decade of ineffective

management. For example, even paperwork processes, such as issuing forest use tickets, need to be standardized so that official forms are used consistently and properly monitored. Although tools to monitor and record forest use were planned and began to be implemented through the IUCN-FLEG activity, it is too early to observe if capacity building has been effective.

Next Steps

As IUCN-FLEG continues its involvement in the Tusheti region, it will continue its efforts to enhance local networks of expertise and build knowledge and skills to implement the management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape. IUCN-FLEG's involvement has also led to new developments at the national and international level.

Promoting Protected Areas Across Georgia

The Georgian government now considers the Tusheti Protected Landscape a showcase for the management of other protected areas in the country. Recently, locals in the Kazbegi region of Georgia became concerned that the Georgian government's plan to change the status of Kazbegi Strict Nature Reserve to a National Park would block their access to critical subsistence resources. The Tusheti Protected Landscape was thus provided as an example of how a Protected Area could still provide for local communities' subsistence needs. Kazbegi community members were given the opportunity to visit Tusheti and discuss the benefits of local management, especially tourism benefits, with Tushetians. In part due to these conversations, the Kazbegi community members agreed to support changing the designation of Kazbegi's protected area.

The Georgian national government hopes the effectiveness of the Tusheti Protected Landscape can be further showcased in other regions where there is interest in establishing protected areas, including the historical regions of Javakheti, in southern Georgia, and the Khevsureti, in northeastern Georgia on the slopes of the Caucasus Mountains.

An International Example

Kavtarishvili also worked to increase visibility of the Tusheti activity amongst forestry professionals within Georgia and internationally. She was selected to participate in the Klaus Toepfer Fellowship program in Germany, a fellowship to develop the professional capacity of early-career environmentalists in Central and Eastern Europe, and the Caucasus and Central Asia (German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, n.d.). Kavtarishvili used this fellowship as an opportunity to share IUCN-FLEG's work in Tusheti with other fellows in the program, raising awareness for IUCN-FLEG's work on an international level.

Kavtarishvili was also approached by *eco.mont – Journal on Protected Mountains Areas Research and Management*, a publication which produces peer-reviewed articles on research within protected mountain areas and its potential interest for protected area management that was interested in IUCN-FLEG's work in Tusheti (eco.mont, 2014). In July 2015, *eco.mont* published an article written by Kavtarishvili profiling the Tusheti case, spotlighting IUCN-FLEG's work and ensuring the activity and its results were accessible to the international community (Kavtarishvili, 2015).

D. Lessons Learned

1. Engaging cultural knowledge and motivations: The Tushetian peoples' sense of ownership of the region and dependency on the landscape added to the effectiveness of IUCN-FLEG's work in the Tusheti region. In understanding the strong cultural sense of ownership Tushetians feel for their landscape and examining how past activities on the Tusheti landscape were resolved by involving the considerations of Tushetians, it is clear that the Tusheti culture presented a unique opportunity for IUCN-FLEG's work to be effective and for local management of the Protected Landscape to benefit Tushetians given their natural resource needs. A similar strategy may not have been as effective in another region that lacks these local cultural needs or considerations.
2. Building on pre-existing relationships and networks: IUCN-FLEG's work also relied heavily on engaging individuals and organizations who had strong community social connections and trust from community members. Kavtarishvili was a Tushetian native, and she also had strong professional and personal connections that she was able to identify and leverage very effectively in implementing IUCN-FLEG's work. These existing networks and relationships were especially helpful in fostering greater communication and understanding with implementing partners such as the TPLA, and to ensure IUCN-FLEG's agenda was being implemented efficiently with their partners.
3. Defining the need for the activity in conjunction with the community: Before making significant investments in activity design and implementation, Kavtarishvili and IUCN-FLEG targeted three specific problems the Tushetian communities were facing that could be translated into concrete needs for IUCN-FLEG to address: the policy and resource gaps in forestry management implementation, the rise in illegal cuttings from the forests, and the need for Tushetians to legally obtain forest use permits to take wood for personal use, such as firewood and construction. IUCN-FLEG used their connections with Tushetian communities to understand the Tushetian way of life and connection with the landscape to identify and target these specific needs. Without connecting with Tushetian communities to identify needs, IUCN-FLEG's work would have been designed to be far less targeted and likely less effective.
4. Identifying underlying needs and motivations: IUCN-FLEG also worked to identify the motivations of different groups seeking to assist in managing the Tusheti Protected Landscape, and how these motivations aligned with IUCN-FLEG's work. For example, Kavtarishvili and IUCN-FLEG identified key motivations of the Czech Development Agency, who were seeking to continue further funding projects in the Tusheti region. For the funding process, clarification of local management rights was essential. This was important for giving the TPLA the municipal officials motivation to act on clarifying local management rights, in order to gain access to further funding. Also, IUCN-FLEG representatives identified that local elected officials in the Tusheti region also had strong motivations to act on clarifying local management rights, since they needed to be able to respond to their constituents on if and when they would be able to issue forest use permits. By identifying and unifying the needs of these groups, IUCN-FLEG was able to build a strong case to Lagazidze and the TPLA for taking action to clarify local management authorities. On the other hand, through research and conversations with government representatives, IUCN-FLEG identified that neither the TPLA nor the Georgia National

Forestry Agency and the Agency of Protected Areas were actively ignoring their management duties. Rather, the TPLA did not understand their responsibilities or have the capacity to implement them, while the Georgia National Forestry Agency was not legally responsible for the Tusheti Protected Landscape, and the Agency of Protected Areas was only responsible for providing technical expertise on biodiversity related aspects. This understanding led IUCN-FLEG to advocate for a policy-based solution to clarify management rights.

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Case Study 5. Tusheti Protected Landscape Community Management, Georgia

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Case Study 6. Agency Moldsilva's Communication Strategy

Prepared by: Stefania Almazán

A. Activity highlights:

In recent years, Moldovan society has requested greater transparency and accountability from their political class and public institutions as a response to widespread corruption and the country's poor economic performance. In response to this, the Government of Moldova (GoM) established several initiatives to address public concerns. For instance, it joined an Open Government Partnership in 2012, a partnership of over 50 countries that “champion the principles of transparency, accountability and public participation in governmental processes” (Nicolas et.al., 2013). They also deployed an Open Data Initiative to increase the general public's access to government information and committed to establishing mechanisms to boost citizen engagement in decision making processes (Nicolas et.al., 2013).

In the case of Moldova's Forestry Authority (i.e. Agency Moldsilva), demands for transparency presented an opportunity to transform Moldsilva's structure and institutional culture as part of the government's commitment to increasing social accountability. This process laid the groundwork for Moldsilva redesigning their entire communication strategy and, in particular, a thorough redesign of their main information outlet: Agency Moldsilva's website. The initiative also established communication avenues between Moldsilva, the general public, other forestry agencies, NGOs, mass-media institutions and others, including private companies and individuals.

Taking advantage of these circumstances, Moldsilva reached out to the IUCN based on their recognized expertise, good performance under the FLEG Program and the opportunity to work with a former colleague, Aurel Lozan (IUCN-FLEG Moldova Country Program Coordinator), who understood Moldsilva's needs. They requested the IUCN's advice in order to design and implement an effective communication strategy for the Agency. As Lozan puts it:

Moldsilva reached out to me in order to help them improve the image of forests and people engaged in the sector, improve communication and cooperation with international audiences (including potential partners), increase transparency about what Moldsilva does for society, and to contribute to better management of forest ecosystems and their biodiversity (A. Lozan, personal communication, August 6 2015).

The changes experienced by Moldsilva are remarkable and worthy of mention as they can serve as an example to other institutions. In terms of institutional change, as proof of their outstanding commitment to the process of transparency, they created the **Department of Information and Public Communication** specifically dedicated to handling all communication aspects within Moldsilva. This division, led by a press officer and its staff, is in charge of handling the recently renovated website, updating available data and operating Moldsilva's “hot line”

through which the public can report forest related incidents. Similarly, the division is in charge of engaging with other actors in the Moldovan forestry sector as well as the European Commission.

Changes in Moldsilva have faced many challenges. Overcoming them has required perseverance and commitment to change by Moldsilva's personnel. To do so, they have counted on the support and assistance from the IUCN (through Lozan) and media Agency Amedia (www.amedia.md). This case study will describe how Moldsilva rose to the challenge presented by having to adjust quickly to a more active Moldovan society.

B. Background

Increasing transparency in Moldova's forestry sector

In the past few years, Moldovan society has experienced a democratic process that has increased the public's engagement in monitoring their Institution's behavior, demanding more



Picture 1. Central hills of Moldova (Codril). Agency Moldsilva manages 85% of forests in Moldova.
Source: FLEG - EPA EU ENPI Information Centre

transparency and accountability (European Politics and Policy, 2015), (Serebrian, 2015), (Moldovan Politics, 2015). At the same time, international agreements signed by the Moldovan government, such as the EU-Moldova Association Agreement ratified by Moldova on July 2 2015 (European Commission, 2014), also emphasize the need to address issues of transparency, corruption and reform (including institutions responsible for the protection of the environment). In the particular case of the forestry sector, the Saint Petersburg Declaration signed in 2005 stipulate that the government, including the Moldovan government, will take action in increasing transparency. Under this

framework, the EU funded the FLEG program constitutes an important resource for the Moldovan government by being able to collaborate with institutions such as the World Bank, World Wildlife Fund and the IUCN and implement programs that address these issues.

As a result of this avenue for collaboration between Eastern European governments and the aforementioned International Organizations, the IUCN has implemented a series of activities in various Eastern European countries and Russia that focus on increasing transparency and fostering a dialogue between forestry institutions and the general public. Agency Moldsilva (www.moldsilva.gov.md) is the government authority in charge of implementing policy and undertaking management relating to forestry and hunting in Moldova. Their responsibilities span implementing constitutional decrees and international agreements ratified by the Moldovan government on topics of sustainable forestry, rural development, sustainable development, forestry and wildlife protection, among others.

The idea of redesigning Moldsilva's website in 2012/2013 had started years before as part of the GoM's initiative to increase social accountability of government institutions and was actively supported by Moldsilva officials like Dumitry Galupa and Valeriu Caisan, Petru Rotaru (Moldsilva's FLEG focal point), among others. The process also benefited from great

contributions from the Forest Research and Management Institute (ICAS). In the end, the FLEG Program was the platform that enabled Moldsilva's transformative process to take place.

C. Analysis

Activity purpose and objectives

In 2011, Moldsilva approached FLEG and the IUCN and asked for their assistance on improving communication and revitalize the image of forestry (including people engaged in the sector) as well as redesigning the agency's website as a way of addressing the need for transparency in the Moldovan forestry sector. The activity, eventually implemented by the IUCN, went beyond this primary objective and included aspects of multi-functional forest management (what forests are, what they do and how they can be sustained to do so), creating a far-reaching communication strategy for Moldsilva. In general terms, the activity had three main objectives:

1. Increase the information flow between Moldsilva and the general public as a mechanism to increase the Agency's accountability and communicate the valuable services they provide for Moldovan citizens.
2. Redesign Moldsilva's existing website to create a user friendly communication channel between Moldsilva and the general public.
3. Foster self-awareness within the forestry sector of the work being done by Moldsilva and set an example of how to communicate that work both with other forestry sector actors and the public.

In order to fulfill these objectives Moldsilva, following the recommendation of the IUCN, created the Department of Information and Public Communication as well as hired a press-officer in 2011. This division, led by a communications (press-) officer, would be in charge of administering the new website and handling the content and flow of information between the Agency, the public and other actors in the forestry sector.

Another purpose of the website was to communicate the investments and services that Moldsilva provides to the public. The overarching objective was to create a space where credible information about Moldsilva's activities could be found. This information covers not only forest and economic expenditures of the agency (i.e. economic transparency) but also what the different forestry units throughout the country (i.e. Moldsilva's network of forestry units) are doing. Illegal logging in Moldova is recognized as one of the main problems faced by the forestry sector. One of the main drivers for illegal logging is citizens' need of firewood for heating, cooking and construction. Therefore illegal logging in Moldova is not primarily or exclusively associated with illegal timber harvesting and exports but rather to unsustainable forest use for survival purposes with compliance from forestry personnel.

Not unlike many other forestry agencies in Eastern Europe, Moldsilva receives considerable criticism about the transparency and legitimacy of its operations. Corruption and unsustainable exploitation of forest resources are a serious problem in Moldova, along with a recent phenomenon – an increasingly politicized sector that bets more on political loyalty and less on professionals or experience. In addition to the incentives for unsustainable forest use and

underreporting of wood consumption, monitoring of illegal activities by citizens and its reporting is difficult due to the remoteness of forested areas and challenges in discerning illegal extraction of resources from legal one by laymen and women.

Moldsilva does, however, provide valuable services for the Moldovan population that positively impact their well-being – a fact that was poorly publicized and made available for the larger Moldovan audience. Aside from being in charge of protecting the Moldovan forests, Moldsilva manages them and provides firewood, timber and other products (e.g. berries, plants, recreation, hunting etc.) for the population, for example, wood for schools. The fact that illegal logging in Moldova is mostly driven by citizens' consumption needs implies that efforts to increase citizen participation in forestry management and decision making processes (increasing social accountability) have great potential to address the issue in an effective manner. In the end, this website activity addressed Moldsilva's desire to establish a transparent dialogue that would enable the public to be informed about what the Agency was doing as well as to receive the feedback (including criticism or other constructive suggestions) and communicate impressions back to the Agency.

The IUCN's role in redesigning Moldsilva's website

Helping redesign Moldsilva's website was integrated with the IUCN's activities that focus on reducing pressure on forests by raising awareness and communication with the general public about forestry issues. In this sense, the activity was more than simply transforming the face of the website; it meant rethinking and expanding its content. With the assistance of Amedia, the IUCN and Moldsilva reconfigured the website. In particular, the IUCN wanted to take advantage of the opportunity presented by this activity to engage people with the Moldovan forestry sector. The IUCN believes that engaging and empowering people with knowledge of what is happening in the forestry sector is one of the most important mechanisms through which societies can foster more sustainable use of forest resources. The target of this information was not just the general public or final users of forest products, but also those working in organizations in the forestry sector, such as NGO's, government agencies or the private sector.

In the particular case of Moldova, this activity sought to engage and empower people in the forestry sector by allowing them to have more knowledge of current forest situation in Moldova and more self-awareness of what the sector is doing as a whole. The activity also aimed to provide the space for the public to take a more active role in the forest management decision making process. As Lozan, the IUCN Country Program Coordinator, put it, *“let them judge, provide suggestions and be part of the decision making process. Forests are not yours, mine nor of Moldsilva – they belong to all and they should serve all”*.

Redesigning Moldsilva's website

Redesigning the Agency's website, www.moldsilva.gov.md/?l=en, went beyond changing the current user interface and updating existing databases. The process included getting input from other NGOs, government institutions and the public in order to design a communication interface that would effectively establish dialogue with the different members of Moldovan society interested in the forestry sector. Input by all these different agents was incorporated in the proposal

of a new website. The final approval of the website design rested on Moldsilva itself, so based on the FLEG / IUCN's input and assistance Moldsilva did the change of its own website and communication approach. The implementation of changes required financial investments from both the IUCN and Moldsilva. The IUCN hired Amedia, a local media company with expertise in communication, marketing and logistics, and together with CPC, Lozan, assisted Moldsilva in redesigning the website.

After the changes, Moldsilva's website has two kinds of information available to the public: static and mobile information. Mobile information refers to data that is constantly updated, for example the rubrics of news or events. In order to maximize access to information through the new Moldsilva website, static data is available in Romanian, Russian and English. Meanwhile, mobile information is available only in Romanian, at least for the time being. Similarly, there has been an increase in the rubrics, indicators and time series available to the public. New information provided includes more diversified information about forests, resources stocks, economic-financial data, program expenditures, budget accountability and forest resource information.

In addition to the information available through the website, and with the objective of increasing the dialogue with the general public, Moldsilva continues to work under their new communication strategy and the yearly endorsed "Knowledge and Communication Plans". Though Moldsilva still collaborates with FLEG (including Amedia), they now mostly work on their own and the ultimate objective is that they are will be able to do so in the future without FLEG's (i.e. the IUCN and Amedia) assistance.

Given the objective of establishing a dialogue between the general public and the forestry sector, it is worth highlighting the interactive aspects of Moldsilva's new website. The website is now structured in a manner that users can voice their opinions, concerns and feedback (including criticism) of the Agency. This was done by establishing an inbox directed at the Agency. Moldsilva also employed social media, establishing a Facebook account and a "red line" phone line where anyone can call to make suggestions or provide anonymous reports of forest related incidents or illegal events.

The interactive nature of Moldsilva's new communication strategy is important from two perspectives. First, it contributes to changes in Moldsilva's institutional culture by illuminating the public's response and engagement with Agency activities. Second, the communication strategy helps solidify the role of the Department of Information and Public Communication who handles, reviews and tends to the website and citizens' concerns. Though use of the website and other resources is still modest, it is establishing solid communication avenues between the Agency and the public.

Facilitating factors

Fostering institutional change can be a very complicated and slow process. In the case of Moldsilva website, the viability of the IUCN's collaboration with Moldsilva depended on the trust established between Moldsilva officials and the IUCN consultants. It also benefited from the availability of highly qualified local professionals both in the forestry sector and the communication and media sectors.

A trusted and well respected IUCN expert

In general, Moldovan government institutions are open to working with people and institutions outside of their own agencies and international organizations as well (including ENPI FLEG's IOs - the WB, WWF and the IUCN). However, there is still progress to be made in terms of cooperation between agencies and institutions in Moldova to promote sustainable management and conservation of natural resources. The main reason behind this is that, as Lozan puts it – “government agencies are open to work with everyone, but they don't seem to trust everyone, especially with respect to various kinds of assistance; however, there's still a certain level of bureaucracy that enables collaborations to happen”. Distrust is derived from the fact that most agencies have not had a chance to verify and trust the professional capabilities of people from outside their institutions. Therefore, counting on the expertise of a former member of Moldsilva (Lozan) was a crucial factor that enabled the IUCN to establish a working relationship with them. His qualifications as an environmentalist, a forester and a researcher proved invaluable in earning the trust of Moldsilva officials who were receptive to his advice and collaboration. In this sense, it is also worthwhile mentioning the vision and ability of the IUCN personnel leading the FLEG program in recruiting such a reputable professional to work for the IUCN.



Picture 2. Aurel Lozan collaborating with Agency Moldsilva officials in the field.

Source: ENPI-FLEG II <http://www.enpi-fleg.org/>

Using local experts for technical assistance

Redesigning Moldsilva's website and implementing a new communications strategy for the Agency would not have been as successful without the input of non-forestry experts. Amedia, the media company that had been a partner with the IUCN since FLEG I, provided key insights from the communication's perspective on how the website should look like, how communication should take place from their point of view and how it could better work with various audiences (e.g. children, schools, private media, journalists etc.). Their advice contributed to an expansion of the website's potential because Moldsilva's staff was able to see things from another perspective (not just from the technical forester perspective).

Collaboration, commitment and perseverance

Perhaps the most important aspect of this activity is its collaborative nature. Moldsilva's staff has shown a remarkable disposition to explore and develop new ways to communicate their activities to the public. Their openness to work with FLEG and Amedia, facilitated by their trust in Lozan's expert advice, is a true testament of Moldsilva's commitment to improve their institutional culture. Unsurprisingly, this process faced several challenges. The trust established between Moldsilva personnel and the IUCN experts (including Amedia as part of local team) proved vital in allowing the activity to overcome initial suspicions surrounding its accountability

aspects. Being able to show Moldsilva that the objective of the activity was not to place blame or scrutinize the actions of any division within the Agency dissipated Moldsilva's reservations around the activity and reinforced their level of commitment to make sure it became a successful endeavor.

It is worth mentioning the crucial role that Moldsilva's Chief of Division of Forestry, Hunting and Protected Areas and FLEG Focal Point, Petru Rotaru, played in giving continuity to the efforts of redesigning Moldsilva's communication strategy and increasing transparency. A former colleague of Lozan between 1999 and 2001 when they both worked for the State Forest Service, Mr. Rotaru provided the process with an invaluable dose of continuity by performing his role as FLEG Focal Point during FLEG I and FLEG II (a time period that saw 6 changes in Moldsilva's high ranking officers). In spite of sometimes having disagreements with the IUCN experts on particular aspects of policy and technical issues relevant to Moldsilva, Mr. Rotaru always maintained an open disposition to discuss and negotiate on these topics, making him an invaluable contributor to the process.

Challenges

The main challenges faced by this activity stem from the political nature of high ranking ministry positions in Moldova as well as institutional inertia relating to information disclosure to the general public. Though at a first glance these challenges may sound insurmountable, the commitment and perseverance by both Moldsilva officials and the IUCN consultants managed to push the activity forward.

Changing institutional culture relating to information disclosure

Redesigning Moldsilva's website and increasing the amount of information disclosed to the public received considerable institutional pushback. Some members of Moldsilva, though not the majority, were very resistant to increasing the amount of certain information divulged to the public (e.g. financial, economic or public procurement data related to some activities). There are two main reasons for this resistance. First, this represents a big change in the organization's culture and its perception towards the benefit of outside accountability and transparency. Second, it provides the public with the means to detect and denounce evidence of corruption within the forestry sector. Perhaps the most sensitive information that some Moldsilva officials were unwilling to disclose was the Agency's financial information and investments. Some information is still not made publicly available or its placement still faces resistance from some officials. However, things are changing and Moldsilva is now under increased monitoring from the civil society (e.g. NGOs, media institutions).

Part of the institutional resistance to increasing the level of information shared with the public came in the form of opposition to the new communications officer's activities. In this case, the IUCN consultant Lozan used his mediation skills to address the issue with Moldsilva officials. The IUCN emphasized that the objective of Moldsilva's new communication strategy was to increase dialogue between the Agency and the at-large public, and as it was not a policing or monitoring endeavor. The IUCN encouraged different Divisions within Moldsilva to evaluate and confront the reasons for not supporting the Communications officers' activities. In so doing, they redirected the conversation from a focus on the Communications officer to one where Moldsilva

could evaluate its own institutional culture relating to sharing information. This dialogue will not only set the groundwork for more transparency within the agency but also increase awareness and involvement by the public on Moldsilva's efforts to protect their forest resources and how the public can participate in these efforts.

Dealing with constant changes in Moldsilva's leadership

Perhaps the main challenge experienced by the IUCN consultants during this activity was the frequent change in Moldsilva's staff, particularly those in high ranking positions within the institution (i.e. General Directors and/or Deputy DG, which are almost always politically-bound to certain party in the Government). Like many institutions in the developing world, Moldsilva's leadership positions are political appointments (rather than being based on professionalism or experience) and are therefore subject to constant change. This leadership turnover presented several challenges for the website redesign as well as other the IUCN activities with Moldsilva. The IUCN's activities depend on Moldsilva's cooperation and willingness to establish partnerships. The high level of trust and cooperation between the IUCN and Moldsilva resulted from both Lozan's legitimacy as a professional as well as the trust and relationships he has established with Moldsilva officials throughout the years. A change in Moldsilva management jeopardizes existing working relationships and the viability of each activity. Similarly, it sets back the execution of ongoing activities due to the need to bring new Moldsilva management up to speed in the nature, content and objective of the activities.

The challenges presented by constant change in high level management of any institution, in this case Moldsilva, is to some extent mitigated by the presence of a more stable middle management workforce that is highly professional. It is these professionals that keep the Agency going and provide continuity to its programs and activities. As Richard Aishton, the IUCN ENPI-FLEG Program Coordinator commented, "They care about forest because they are professionals. It doesn't matter who is heading Moldsilva, they will always do what is best for the forests."

Accomplishments

Even though changes in Moldsilva's institutional structure are fairly recent and their website is still a work in progress, there are signs that the strides taken towards higher transparency in the sector are beginning to be noticed by people in Moldova. In particular, the Ecological Movement of Moldova (a well-known NGO with 14 branches throughout the country) through its chairperson, Mr. Alecu Renita, noted that in the recent years more information was made available on forests and the forestry sector, and part of it is attributed to the FLEG process in the country.

Institutional change within Moldsilva

The Department of Information and Public Communication is now fully established and working on advancing the Agency's transparency and communications strategy, and this is supported by the FLEG Focal Point, Mr. Petru Rotaru. It is worth emphasizing the collaborative nature of the process that lead to the creation and staffing of this new Division. Lozan was invited to provide his opinion on the hiring process for the communication's officer at Moldsilva and on projecting strategic views on communication and public relations. This gesture is nothing short of

remarkable. Agency Moldsilva, like many government organizations in Moldova, is a semi-military institution with a vertical discipline among its 25 forestry enterprises (including 82 forest units with about 5000 employment), and it is very zealous about protecting their jurisdiction and processes. The fact that the IUCN consultant was invited to participate in some way in an internal decision making process by Moldsilva shows the level of trust between the IUCN and Moldsilva.

Evaluating the website's reception by the public

In order to assess the benefits of redesigning their website, Moldsilva is currently working with Amedia to monitor and analyze the number of visits to the website. In 2014, Amedia (Mr. Andrey Galeliuk) together with Moldsilva's press-officer (Ms. Viorica Caciuc) analyzed the website's visit data before and after redesigning it. Before Moldsilva and the IUCN's collaboration, the website received over 300,000 visits between the years 2009-2011. After the changes, the number of visits tripled to around 1.3 million between 2012 and 2014. The increase in website traffic is a truly remarkable sign of the interest Moldovans have in their forestry sector and highlights the importance of continuing to improve the content and availability of information.



Picture 3. Students from Orfelinat-Straseni School after participation in a workshop titled "Discover your Forests". The workshop was organized by Agency Moldsilva in coordination with FLEG II and Antis-Media in autumn 2014. Source: ENPI FLEG II <http://www.enpi-fleg.org/>

A comment from Ms. Lucia Taut, coordinator of TV M1 channel program "Nature on camera", about Moldsilva's webpage, highlights these changes: "For my work I use a number of sources as directly from persons as online. The webpage of Agency Moldsilva became one of those sources during the last years. Comparing to previous years, information placed on this website become more and more useful, and it keeps you working on it".

Expectations and next steps

Though progress has been made in the design and amount of information shared through Moldsilva's website, there is still room for improvement. Future updates will focus on continuing to make the website more user-friendly, a task for which Amedia has been hired for assistance. Another next step for the IUCN consists of achieving a certain level of success with Moldsilva that other forestry sector actors will be inclined to implement similar initiatives. In particular, the IUCN under the FLEG program, want to keep working towards engaging the large audience, including all interested stakeholders, and such as privates and communities, and civil society (namely NGOs) in participating in the decision making process and activities undertaken by Moldsilva. Methodologically, this can be done by providing stakeholders, including Moldsilva, with the results that FLEG through the IUCN is going to develop for the country (e.g. monetary evaluation of forest services, human dependency on forests, comparative legal analysis).

D. Lessons learned

1. Hiring a local expert with ample experience in the forestry sector: In this case having someone who had previously worked for Moldsilva proved of utmost importance to break the resistance of a guarded institution. The fact that Lozan was once part of Moldsilva allowed the IUCN to establish working relationships with Moldsilva officials based on trust and cooperation without the fear of having an international institution trying to advance its agenda at the expense of Moldovan interests. Similarly, it allowed for a dialogue to be established between the IUCN and Moldsilva where both organizations were working together towards the common goal of higher transparency. Instead of feeling persecuted by an international organization, Moldova felt it had expert advice and resources at its disposal to deal with a problem affecting its credibility as an institution.
2. Hiring local communications and media experts outside the forestry sector: Having this experts skilled in media/communication proved vital in professionalizing Moldsilva's website. Being able to collaborate with Amedia allowed Moldsilva to transcend the purely technical nature of their website and communication strategy. Therefore, their ability to effectively communicate with a broad range of audiences increased significantly.
3. Maintaining a collaborative and supportive neutral role: The IUCN respecting Moldsilva's internal process and decision making capabilities was also a fundamental factor that enabled success. The IUCN consultants have consistently made an effort to convey the message that they were not interested in blaming or interfering with Moldsilva's activities and jurisdiction. The IUCN was content to provide advice when requested and work together to solve problems. This approach can be seen in how the IUCN mediated conflict between the newly created Department of Information and Public Communication and other sections of Moldsilva. Instead of endorsing the communications officer, they turned the discussion into one about the merits of sharing information with the public. In so doing, they were able to remain neutral in the eyes of the Moldsilva and, at the same time, redirect attention to where it was needed: examining the reasons behind opposing or endorsing information sharing with the general public.
4. Proving that cooperation between government agencies and the private sector is possible: This IUCN activity has become an example of how Moldsilva can cooperate with a media/communication private agency (in this case Amedia). The hope is that this example can encourage other agencies, not only in Moldova, to be more open to engage in cooperation schemes. Locally, it is hoped that this example will contribute to a better image of the forestry sector and will lead to more openness with the general public. The fact that the IUCN, through Amedia and its consultants, helped Moldsilva launch a new form of planning communication, their "Knowledge and Communication Plan" and "Moldsilva's Communication Strategy", is just an example of how things can work and how the dialogue with the general public could be done. This activity has shown that more audiences can be constructively engaged, such as including children from orphanages, in ways that can become future sources of interests/jobs dedicated to the forestry sector and schools.

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Case Study 7. Bezhanitsy Eco-Tourism Development Alliance, Russia

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A. Activity highlights

Like many regions in the world, conflict arose in the Bezhanitsy *rayon* (municipal district) in North-Western Russia when people in communities surrounding the Polistovsky Nature Reserve, established in 1994, were prohibited from entering the protected area and harvest non-timber resources as their ancestors had done before them. Conflict was fierce, particularly in the Tsevlo community, where citizens would regularly enter the Reserve to gather cranberries, mushrooms and other resources. In 2006, conflict was exacerbated by changes in the Russian forest regulatory framework that created ambiguity as to how forest resources could be used. Unlike many regions in the world, however, this conflict was resolved in a novel collaborative process between Polistovsky Nature Reserve and Tsevlo community members.

With the help of IUCN consultants, the Director of Polistovsky Nature Reserve, local government officials and engaged community members formed a working group to find a solution to the problem. Together, they identified the opportunity to start an eco-tourism development alliance in the Nature Reserve that would allow Tsevlo to boost its economy by redirecting it to the tourist service and catering sector. Tourists would visit the Nature Reserve and hike through different eco-trails. Meanwhile, Tsevlo citizens would provide lodging, catering services and sell non-timber forest resource products to tourists.

Since mid-2010, the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism civic development alliance has received an ever increasing number of visitors, spread out during the high season (summer) and the low season (fall and spring). However, it has gone far beyond bringing tourists to see the Reserve and provide basic services during their stay. A series of workshops (called “Master Classes”) organized by the Polistovsky Nature Reserve with cooperation from the IUCN started teaching community members how to make wooden handicrafts and herbal teas among other products.

Now, these Master Classes have become a platform to launch business ideas designed by Tsevlo citizens and a way to diversify their tourist attractions. Similarly, two community members have established their own tourist attractions. The local school’s former principal established a small history museum in Tsevlo while another community member rehabilitated the rails to an old peat fuel extraction site and offers tours from Tsevlo to the site.

The project has gained the attention and approval from high ranking Russian government officials as well as members from the FLEG Program. It has ongoing plans to expand the number of workshops provided to Tsevlo community members in order to increase the number of people who benefit from tourism. The development alliance has been so successful that not only are younger members of the community thinking of relocating to Tsevlo permanently to take care of the business established by their grandparents, but many community members are now actively

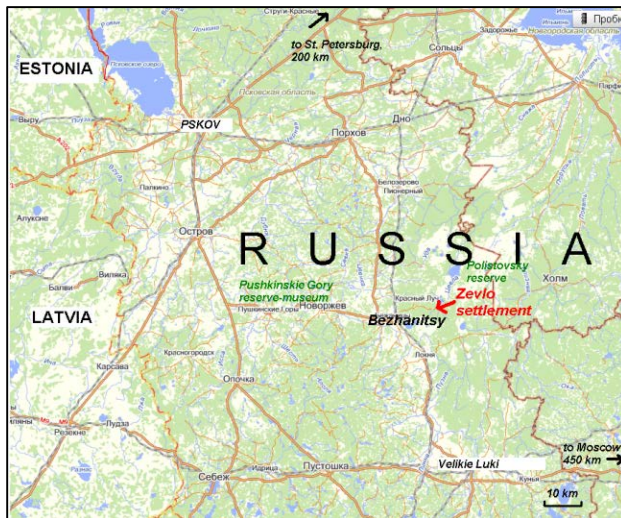
engaged in protecting the forests surrounding their community and report any suspicious activity to Nature Preserve rangers.

This turnaround of a tense conflict between Tsevlo and the Polistovsky Nature Reserve is nothing short of remarkable. What enabled such a dramatic transformation to occur in such a short period of time? This case describes the notable features of Tsevlo community, the key factors that appear to have facilitated its progress, the major challenges encountered and how they were addressed.

B. Background

Tsevlo: the story of a dying community

Tsevlo is a small rural community approximately 400 years old set on the shores of Lake Tsevlo. It is located 28 kilometers east of Bezhanitsy town in the Western part of Polistovo-Lovatskaya bog system near the Russian border with the EU Member-states Latvia and Estonia.



Map1. Bezhanitsy municipality and location of Tsevlo community.
Source: Zaytsev 2012.

The forests of the region are mainly spruce and pine, highly productive in berries and mushrooms but not adequate for timber harvesting. Firewood is used for subsistence uses like heating and construction. It is mainly collected from abandoned agricultural fields that have been naturally reforested, though some of it is collected illegally and has been a point of tension between the community and local authorities.

Like many rural communities in Russia, Tsevlo suffered from a considerable economic downturn in the post-soviet era after forest related industries were abandoned. The peat extraction facility surrounding the village collapsed in the 1980s and, along with it, the

biggest economic activity in the community. Currently, most young people tend to migrate to urban centers, seeking out better economic opportunities. Community infrastructure is limited. There is no school left in Tsevlo, children go to classes in the nearest large settlement (Bezhanitsy) and the roads leading there are mostly unpaved yet maintained. There is no health clinic in the community, 2 stores are occasionally open offering basic commodities, there is a post office that opens some hours a week and a village club that opens several hours a couple of days a week (Zaytsev, 2012).

As of 2012, Tsevlo had a total population of around 700 people, most of the which were 50 years old or older (approximately 40%), 30% were between the age of 36 and 50 years old and only 30% of the population was under 35 years of age (with 20% being 18 years old or younger). Most households in the community (60%) could be categorized as poor, earning between 100 and 200 USD per capita per month or extremely poor (18%), earning less than 100 USD per capita per

month. Extremely poor citizens are often unemployed single mothers or single alcohol-addicted males. Sometimes, particularly in poor households, the sole source of family income is the senior citizen pension granted for women over 55 years of age and men over 60 years of age (Zaytsev, 2012).

Agriculture in the community is limited, mainly gardens and household yards, and is focused on potatoes, cabbages, onions and cherry or apple trees. Community members also collect non-timber forest resources like berries (particularly cranberries), dedicate themselves to some animal husbandry like poultry and pigs (occasionally goats or cows) along with fishing and hunting of local animals. Out of these products, however, only cranberries are sold while the rest are used for self-consumption (Zaytsev, 2012). Before the eco-tourism development alliance, there were virtually no economic alternatives to prevent the continued demise of the community. A case in point is Andrey Zaytsev's, IUCN-FLEG Country Program Coordinator in Russia, first impression of the community.



Map 2. Polistovskiy Nature Preserve and surrounding communities.
For virtual tours of the site visit <http://www.polistovskiy.ru/en/medial/virtual-tours>
Source> <http://www.polistovskiy.ru/>.

When I was first visiting Tsevlo I promised myself I would never come again to this village, because it was so desperate. People were initially quite suspicious and unfriendly and I really didn't think I would work there. There were 2 things that changed my mind. First was the Polistovskiy Nature Reserve staff, they were really fighting their way through all these problems and disrupted community. Then, there was the meeting with the head of the administration. I saw that, as me, he was desperate to invent something – (A. Zaytsev, personal communication, August 5 2015).

Adjusting to changes in legal framework

Considering Tsevlo's high dependence on non-timber forest resources for survival, there are 2 events that caused severe tension between community members and local authorities: i) the creation of a strict nature reserve (a natural area without human interference) in Bezhanitsy in 1994 and ii) changes to Russian forest regulatory framework in 2006.

Conflict between the inhabitants of communities like Tsevlo in the Bezhanitsy municipality started when the Polistovskiy Nature Reserve was created. The main point of contention between local communities and the Nature Reserve was the newfound restriction to enter the forest to gather non-timber resources like cranberries or mushrooms in the same way their forefathers had done. Though Tsevlo citizens never incurred into Polistovskiy Nature Reserve at a highly organized or

damaging level, they did resort to similar strategies as those commonly used in these situations to enter the forest and collect these resources.

[...] in some Reserves, the local people, they self-organize and create a fire in a certain part of the Nature Reserve. Then, they all run to the other side of the Reserve to collect non-timber resources. In this way, while rangers are distracted putting out the fire on one edge of the territory, the local population has half a day to collect berries, mushrooms and other non-timber resources. – (A. Zaytsev, personal communication, August 5 2015)

Almost a decade later, in 2006, Russia introduced a new Forest Code that made significant changes to the legal framework under which timber and non-timber forest resources are regulated. While article 30 and of the Forest Code enshrine the right of people to harvest wood and collect non-timber forest resources for their subsistence needs (World Bank, 2006), respectively. The new Forest Code established a legal framework in which, at times, it was at odds with other legal documents such as the Civic Code and the Tax Code in terms of the legal use of non-timber forest resources. As a result, the right of people and small businesses to use non-timber forest resources was left in a legal grey area, at times making it effectively illegal to use forest resources in any way.

The new Forest Code also delegated the responsibility of creating the mechanisms to enforce new regulation to Regional authorities. In some regions, devolving the responsibility to legislate and regulate the forest sector to Regional authorities resulted in a better forest management structure. In others, however, the change did not succeed in improving forest governance structures.

Unfortunately, the legislative process that produced the Forest Code failed to take into account what was prescribed in previous legislation as well as comments on the draft made by other stakeholders. Furthermore, at the time of restructuring, some Regional authorities lacked the necessary experience and manpower to perform the new tasks allocated to them because most local professional foresters were laid off during the process and no trained personnel from the Federal level was sent to replace them. Other times, Regional authorities were experiencing difficulties adjusting to a less centralized decision-making system: during the Soviet period Regional authorities were accustomed to receiving orders from the Federal level (Yaroshenko, Komarova & Kreyndlin, 2009). In this context, conflict was exacerbated between local populations like Tsevlo and Regional authorities regarding access to non-timber forest resources.

Activity purpose and origins

In specific terms, the activity consisted on helping the Polistovsky Nature Reserve and the Tsevlo community to establish an eco-tourism development alliance that would help preserve the integrity of the Nature Reserve and provide Tsevlo community members with alternative livelihoods to unsustainable use of non-timber forest resources, mainly cranberries and mushrooms, by using the resources available in the areas surrounding the Nature Reserve called buffer zones.

A buffer zone, is an area where you are allowed to make low profile agriculture, hunting and non-timber resource use activities. The general rule is that you can do whatever you want but either in a non-commercial way, that is, without the help of any kind of machinery or what is historically maintaining your livelihood. – (A. Zaytsev, personal communication, August 5 2015)

The eco-tourism activity in Bezhanitsy was not the first activity implemented by the IUCN in Tsevlo. Between 2003 and 2007, the IUCN Moscow office worked with local authorities and Tsevlo's citizens, particularly women. This activity focused on assisting regional and local authorities cope and resolve conflict with local populations after the Nature Reserve was created while at the same time improve forest conservation and management. During these years, some of Tsevlo's community members participated in workshops that taught them how to manufacture non-timber forest products like herbal soaps and teas.

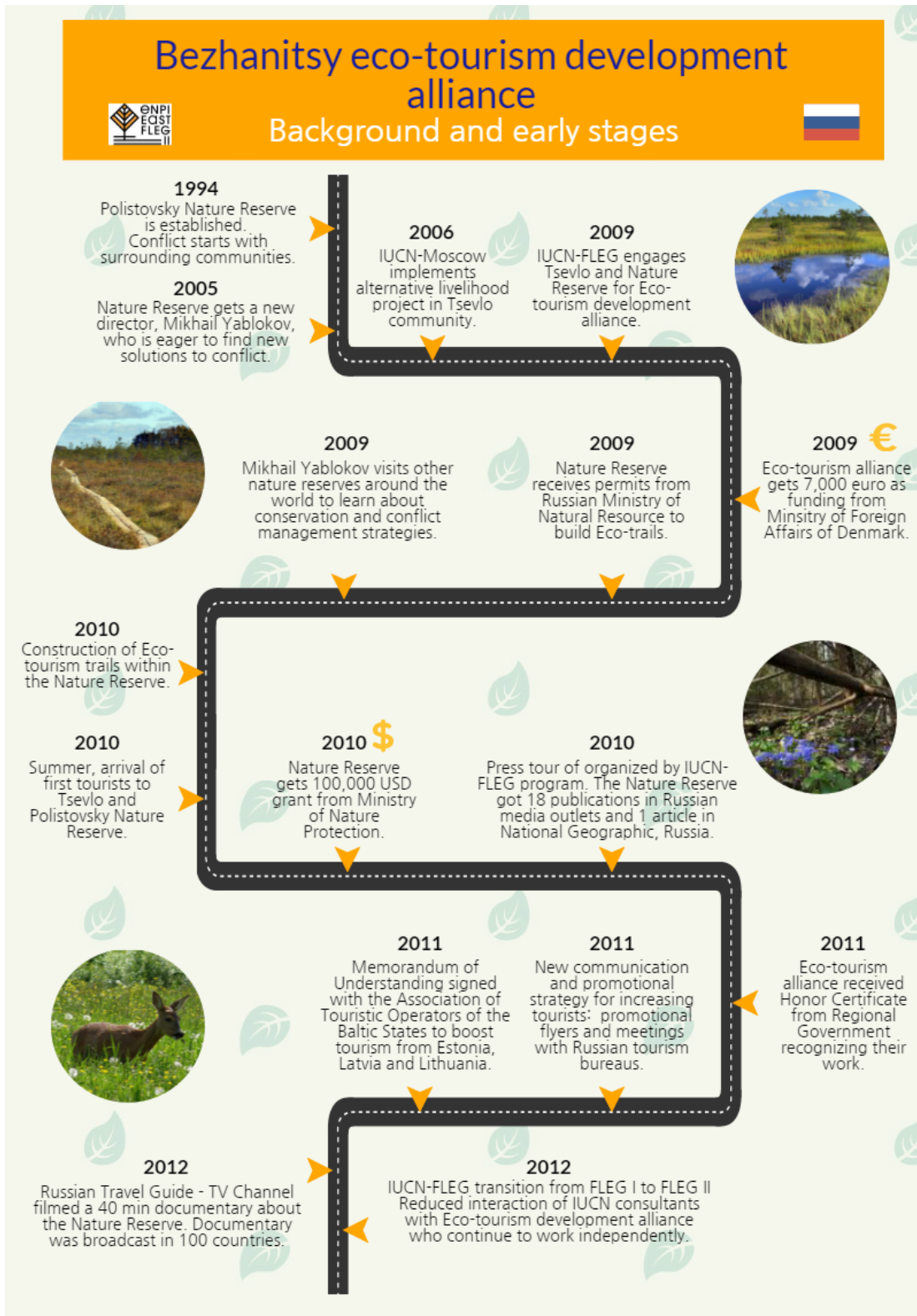
The activity sought to reduce Tsevlo community members' incursions into the Nature Reserve and limit their extraction of resources to the buffer zones in a way that would be both sustainable and profitable. Unfortunately, even though community members actively participated in those first workshops, they were unable to sell their products due to a lack of roads and vehicles to reach the nearest market (approximately 30km away). As a result of these challenges, community members were unable to turn their newly acquired skills into self-sustaining businesses and eventually lost interest in pursuing said activities.

In 2006, the activity was revived by the enthusiasm of the Polistovsky Nature Reserve's new Director. Unlike his predecessors, Mikhail Yablokov, a scientist and a "very ambitious and qualified young man" as Zaytsev described him, was the first to invite scientists and conservationists to work in the Nature Reserve. He was also eager to find a different solution to the Reserve's conflicts with Tsevlo. IUCN's previous involvement with the community turned out to be quite beneficial because, upon their return in 2009, the community was already familiar with the IUCN and they trusted them. According to Zaytsev, traditionally, rural communities in Russia are very distrusting of outsiders. It is not uncommon to be asked whether outsiders, particularly foreigners, are spies and question their motives to be in the community in first place.

Bezhanitsy eco-tourism timeline

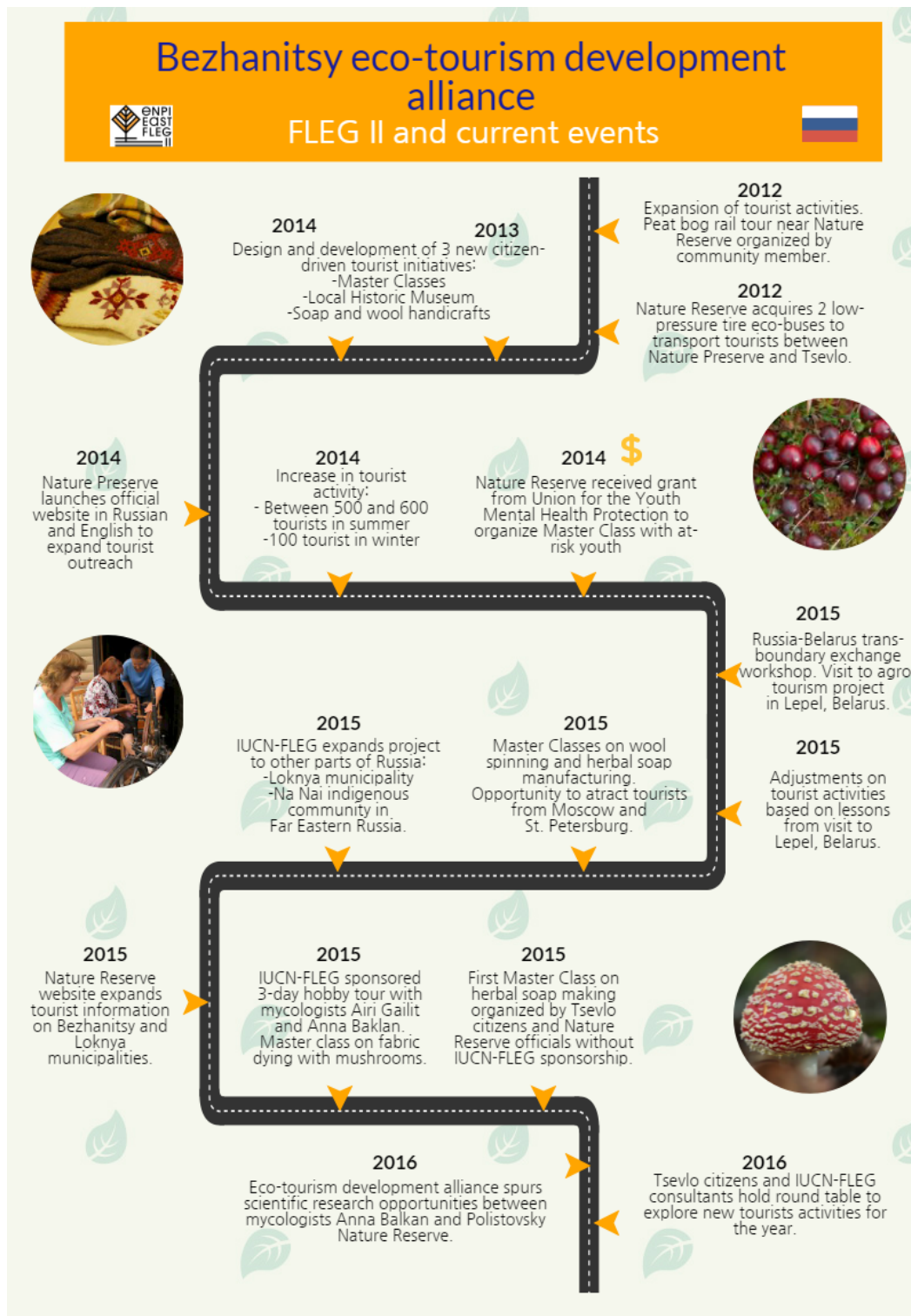
In reality, successful implementation of the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism development alliance was the result of a combination of dedicated efforts by Polistovsky Nature Reserve staff, the enthusiasm and hard work of Tsevlo citizens, support from local and regional Russian authorities as well as the creativity of FLEG partners involved in the process. It was, and continues to be, the result of a trusting relationship built between all parties involved throughout almost a decade. **Diagram 1** and **Diagram 2** present the timeline with the alliance's most relevant milestones and opportunities that characterize Bezhanitsy eco-tourism development alliance's traverse into a successful project.

Diagram 1. Bezhanitsy eco-tourism development alliance timeline, events up to the end of FLEG I



Source: A. Zatysev, personal communication August 5th 2015 and ENPI FLEG.
Photos from ENPI FLEG <http://www.enpi-fleg.org/> and Polistovsky Nature Reserve <http://www.polistovsky.ru>

Diagram 2. Bezhanitsy eco-tourism development alliance timeline, events during FLEG II



Source: A. Zatysev, personal communication August 5th 2015 and ENPI FLEG.
Photos from ENPI FLEG <http://www.enpi-fleg.org/> and Polistovsky Nature Reserve <http://www.polistovsky.ru>

C. Analysis

IUCN's role in the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism development alliance

IUCN has served two main roles during the execution of this activity. The first role was to facilitate the process by which Nature Reserve officials, local authorities and community members would explore the alternatives to solve the conflict between the Reserve and Tsevlo. The second one has been to provide expert advice in developing a road map for the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism development alliance as a whole and assist community members in developing their own business plans for specific tourist attractions or handicrafts. IUCN also helped identify potential win-win scenarios with local and regional authorities based on their respective mandates for fostering economic development in the region.

Consistent with IUCN's approach to collaboration with communities in a way that empowers them instead of creating dependency, IUCN did not provide funding for the implementation of the project such as infrastructure investments, equipment purchases or large scale promotional campaigns. They did, however, provide funding for the initial phases of community engagement and the first handicraft workshops called Master Classes. IUCN constantly encouraged the Polistovsky Nature Reserve, local government and Tsevlo community members to seek for external funding to implement the activity and provided their expertise in reviewing and making comments on grant applications. This was a very successful approach since the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism enterprise managed to obtain funding from several sources and has become self-sustaining.

Bezhanitsy eco-tourism business model

Bezhanitsy eco-tourism development alliance offers tourists the opportunity to visit the Polistovsky Nature Reserve and stay overnight in Tsevlo where they can find other tourist attractions, buy a wide array of handicrafts produced by local community members and take workshops in how to make these handicrafts. The main attraction within Polistovsky Nature Reserve consists of hiking a series of eco-trails and commuting from Tsevlo community on an eco-bus. The products sold in Tsevlo include cranberry food items, home-made liquor, herbal teas, soap, wool articles, traditional Russian dinners and wooden handicrafts.

Likewise, there is a history museum operated by the former local school's principal. The museum collected a series of historical artifacts found in the community and that date back, at least, to the late 19th century and early 20th century. Another tourist attraction that was added is a tour of the abandoned peat fuel extraction site near Tsevlo. A male community member rehabilitated the rail tracks leading to the site and takes tourists on an old rail cart. Zaytsev noted that having a male citizen involved was a breaking point for the activity as it was an indication that a business endeavor is now perceived as a good investment rather than a high risk enterprise. This is due to the fact that, traditionally, Russian women are more entrepreneurial members of society because they do not face as much social pressure to act as a family's "bread earner" and are less prone to suffer from alcohol abuse. It is worth highlighting that Bezhanitsy eco-tourism's business model fosters an extremely active involvement by Tsevlo citizens. They are the ones responsible for tending to tourists and therefore obtain the most revenues from these activities.

Funding and income sources

The amount of funding the Bezhanitsy eco-development alliance obtained is truly remarkable. It is the result of the hard work and commitment of Tsevlo community members, Polistovsky Nature Reserve staff and local government officials. Either by working together or by targeting resource pools specifically available to any of them, they raised the funds necessary to make critical infrastructure investments and develop sound tourist oriented businesses. In order to guide their funding efforts, all parties involved in the Bezhanitsy development alliance used a project “roadmap” developed with the help with IUCN consultant Andrey Zaytsev and Natalia Milovidova.

The roadmap consisted of a written and oral agreement between development alliance members where the sequence of projects to boost economic development in Tsevlo was detailed. Zaytsev’s role was to moderate negotiations between the parties, make sure that the proposed ideas and plans were feasible and provide advice on potential funding sources for each step of the activity. Some of the major milestones included in the roadmap were the following:

1. Define which of the parties from the development alliance should be involved in each activity and who could take the lead in implementing it.
2. Make a prioritized list of activities defined in the early stages of the process, which may provide immediate revenues at minimum investments.
3. Establish fundraising mechanisms for implementing larger-scale activities and infrastructure development.
4. Agree on cooperation and coordination between different activities to avoid business conflicts and unnecessary competition between development alliance members.

In terms of obtaining external funding for initial investments, Polistovsky Nature Reserve staff members, local administration officials and Tsevlo citizens collaborated in a grant proposal from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. They obtained a 7 thousand Euro grant in 2010. These funds were used to create a plan of ecotourism development in the municipal district and the Reserve and form a network of interested parties. Having such a plan was vital for further application to any kind of private or public large-scale funding. Overall, obtaining this grant was not only vital for the project because it provided financial resources but it also motivated Tsevlo community members and Polistovsky Nature Reserve to continue with the project.

Based on this initial success, the Polistovsky Nature Reserve got permission from the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources to build Eco-trails not only in the buffer zone, but also within the Reserve and a 100 thousand dollar grant from the Ministry of Nature Protection to build tourist infrastructure. Getting this funding was an incredible achievement by Nature Reserve officials because such a grant is not easy to obtain and the competition for such grants is strong.

The money from the Ministry of Nature Protection was used to finish the system of eco-trails within the reserve, purchase two “eco-buses” with low-pressure wheels to transport tourists from Tsevlo into the Nature Reserve and reconstruct a visiting-center and lodging facilities within the Reserve. At first an old 1960s tracked all-terrain vehicle weighing 3.5 metric tons and a diesel consumption of a gallon for every 3 miles was used to transport tourists between Tsevlo and the

Nature Reserve. Such logistics could be considered neither cost-effective, nor environmentally friendly due to tremendous damage to the roads and grass cover from the tracks. The existing hotel in the community was rehabilitated and its capacity doubled. A summer lodge capable of hosting groups of up to 26 people was also built and is used primarily during the low season to host students visiting the Reserve.



Picture 1. Before and after: Left image, 1960s all-terrain vehicle originally used to transport tourists from Tsevlo to Polistovsky Nature Reserve. Right image, low pressure wheels “eco-bus” currently used to transport tourists visiting the Nature Reserve. Source: IUCN-FLEG.

Like any other business, the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism enterprise requires a steady income flow to survive. However, in this case, achieving this steady income was also very important to prove to Tsevlo community members how much they could profit from preserving their forest. IUCN consultant Andrey Zaytsev highlighted the fact that in Russia, particularly in communities like Tsevlo, fostering natural resource conservation is highly dependent on showing communities how they can profit economically from these activities. Funding for starting small manufacturing businesses also came from grants offered by the Russian Federal Government as part of an enterprise incubator program (grants of up to 200 thousand dollars). Finally, citizens were able to obtain a grant from the Union for Conserving the Mental Health of the Youth to implement handicraft master classes with at risk youth.

In order to attract tourists, the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism enterprise first depended on word of mouth publicity. After the first tourist season in 2010, however, a more organized and professional strategy to promote the attraction was set in place. This strategy included establishing a working agreement with the Association of the Tourist Operators of the Baltic States and with the Russian Education Ministry. The first strategy targets international tourists, particularly from countries like located nearby Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania by promoting the Nature Reserve eco-tourism attraction through tourist agencies in those countries. Meanwhile, young domestic tourists are channeled to the Nature Reserve through the Russian Education Ministry which organizes school excursions during the fall season to different parts of Russia. They also invested a lot into updating Polistovsky Nature Reserve’s website along with a thematic website about the entire municipal region (polisto.ru).

In this way, Bezhanitsy eco-tourism enterprise receives high income international or domestic tourists (mainly Russian citizens from cities like Moscow) during the summer and more modest domestic tourists (students) during the fall. Being able to distribute the tourist load across the year not only balances the number of tourists received per year and therefore makes it easier

to provide quality services to all of them, but it also provides community members with a steady source of income (something they were not accustomed to).

Facilitating factors

The success of Bezhanitsy's eco-tourism enterprise is the result of the hard work of a passionate, engaged and committed group of people who managed to pool their skills and expertise into creating an alternative livelihood for Tsevlo that reduced conflict with Polistovsky Nature Reserve and increased well-being for community members. This section highlights some of the facilitating factors that allowed this process to take place.

The IUCN team as mediators and strategic advisers

Dr. Andrey Zaytsev is IUCN's country coordinator for the FLEG Program in Russia. He is IUCN's main point of contact with the different parties involved in the project. He was the person responsible for designing IUCN's engagement strategy with the Polistovsky Nature Reserve and Tsevlo restarting IUCN's involvement with the community after IUCN-Moscow office's activity in 2006. Along with his IUCN collaborator Natalia Milovidova, he provided expert advice to the aforementioned parties in terms of identifying key challenges for establishing an eco-tourism enterprise in the Nature Reserve, developing a road map for the project, identifying win-win opportunities with federal economic and development programs, reviewing business models for proposed tourist oriented activities and products, identifying funding opportunities and reviewing proposals, among others. To a great extent, Dr. Zaytsev's experience and proficiency as a mediator along with his expertise in performing these tasks was of utmost importance to the eco-tourism project's success. Throughout their engagement with Tsevlo citizens, Polistovsky Nature Reserve staff and local authorities, the IUCN team was able to maintain a position of advisers, rather than protagonists of the project, allowing Bezhanitsy eco-development alliance participants to make their own decisions regarding the direction and elements of the development alliance.

Strong leadership in Polistovsky Nature Reserve

Mikhail Yablokov, the director of the Polistovsky Nature Reserve since 2006 proved to be another key facilitator for the project. Dr. Yablokov is a highly qualified ornithologist with a great amount of vision and commitment to find creative alternatives to the conflict with Tsevlo community. His background as a scientist increased his credibility among community members and allowed him to earn their trust because he was different from what community members usually associate with Russian government officials¹. The fact that he is highly educated and is fluent in English are qualities that show Dr. Yablokov resourcefulness. He led the efforts to obtain the grant from the Ministry of Natural Resources. Also in close cooperation with the local municipal administration he was key to successfully filing the grant application from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (something that required fluency in English). Finally, he was also responsible for building a highly qualified team in the Nature Reserve that maintain constant

¹ Nature Reserve Directors are usually former police, military officers or career long public servants.

contact with community members and are in charge of the communication strategy promoting the eco-tourism enterprise.

[...] they had this proactive young director desperate to do something. And since he is very educated, he also had a clear vision of what kinds of activities should be developed. He figured out that if you just do the herbal teas it doesn't help. It has to come together. It has to have tourism, it must involve the government, the citizens, business development, sharing tasks. And that is why from his side we had his full support for these activities - (A. Zaytsev, personal communication, August 5 2015).

Finding engaged local leaders: fostering community buy-in

Zinaida Fevrileva: a very engaged senior citizen of Tsevlo that is a respected and active community member and has a history of civic engagement, she had been the Head of the municipality's Cultural Department when she was young. She has participated in the eco-tourism project since the beginning when IUCN consultants first met with Polistovsky Nature Reserve officials and Regional Forestry officials to discuss the project. She was the community member who piloted the tourist hosting part of the eco-tourism enterprise. She worked as a cook for the first tourists and was able to realize the income potential of performing this activity. After the first tourist season, and some convincing by IUCN staff, she decided to function as hostess during the second tourist season but hired additional community members to help her. This meant that not only did the first engaged community member continued with the project but that other community members were given the opportunity to profit from this activity, therefore showing them the potential economic benefits for them and enhancing the long term chances of success of the eco-tourism enterprise.

Creating win-win scenarios

Once a collaboration between Tsevlo community members and Polistovsky Nature Reserve was agreed upon, representatives from both these parties engaged the local Employment Agency and the Regional Natural Resources Ministry as a group to get endorsement for the project. The fact that they worked together increased the likelihood of success of the project because it showed officials that the conflict between the Nature Reserve and the community was being effectively addressed. This meant that endorsing the project represented little political risks for any of them due to unforeseen conflicts with the Tsevlo community.

Another key element that reduced the political risk of endorsing the project, and made the eco-tourism enterprise viable, was the fact that it was a project aligned with the current Russian economic development plan at a Federal level. The Russian Federal Government had recently issued its economic plans for the following years and one of the priority areas for economic development was tourism. In this way, both the Regional Employment Agency and the Regional Forest Authority had incentives to endorse the project since it would also contribute to their compliance with Federal plans.

Engaging the community – creating partnerships

Another fundamental aspect behind the success of this activity lies in IUCN's approach to community engagement. Rather than portraying themselves as experts and lecturing community members on how to improve their livelihoods, IUCN consultants make an emphasis on asking people what they think about a project and asking for their input. Therefore, community meetings were held on a monthly basis. Approximately every 3 months, IUCN experts would join the meetings. These interactions were used to clearly explain the ways in which IUCN could assist the community. Community members would then come up with ideas, questions and suggestions about which projects could be implemented. Afterwards, specific projects would be defined, potential sources of funding for them would be identified and IUCN's role in assisting the design and implementation of projects would be determined. In this way, community members feel empowered and are encouraged to take ownership of a project. They feel respected and therefore respect the expert advice IUCN consultants can provide. In this respect, the Bezhanitsy experience is a clear example of how the community engagement approach defined by IUCN under the FLEG Program is effective for creating trust and a mutually beneficial collaboration with community members.



Picture 2. Tsevlo citizens participating at a natural soap making Master Class using non-timber forest resources from buffer zones at Polistovsky Nature Reserve. Source: ENPI FLEG

Effective communication and promotional strategies

Also worth mentioning are the Deputy Head of Eco-Education and Tourism at the Polistovsky Nature Reserve, Nadeshda Nikolenko, a conservation scientist, and her husband Nikita, a highly qualified IT specialist who, as a couple, designed and implemented the communication strategy for the eco-tourism enterprise. Nikolenko has not only established a good working relationship with Tsevlo community members but has been in charge with dealing with the Russian Education Ministry (a source of domestic tourists during the low season). Meanwhile, her husband single handedly created and maintains the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism website that provides valuable information for potential tourists (both in Russian and partially in English). They were both partially responsible for reaching an agreement with community members and creating a "Polistovsky Reserve" brand for all products manufactures with non-timber resources coming from Polistovsky's buffer zones and manufactured in Tsevlo.

Accomplishments

From trespassers to conservationists: seeing the benefits of protecting natural resources

The Bezhanitsy eco-tourism development alliance succeeded in acquiring funding to be self-sustainable, both because it has a steady flow of tourists and because it managed to get funding

to front initial capital costs without the need to use IUCN funding². On a different level, community members have changed their perception of the forest and now engage actively in the conservation and protection of the forest and its resources. They now perceive the potential economic benefits that a healthy forest ecosystem has for them and therefore have an incentive to preserve it and report any suspicious activity happening in the forest. A clear example of this is how some young members of the community appear to be considering relocating back to Tsevlo and take care of the business ventures their grandparents have started within the framework of the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism enterprise.



Picture 3. Community members at Lepel, Belarus dressed in traditional outfits for celebration of Kupala Night, an Ancient Slavic fest, shown to visiting Tsevlo citizens. Source: ENPI FLEG

It is worth mentioning a cross-country collaboration between Lepel' in Belarus and Bezhanitsy that greatly helped community members visualize the economic benefits of properly managing their forests. In 2014, a workshop was organized where citizens from Bezhanitsy and Lepel' visited each other's communities to learn about the projects being developed. Bezhanitsy community members were impressed by the level of self-organization in Lepel' community and the advanced level of their tourist business model. They were able to talk to their Belarusian peers about the importance of pricing their products adequately and how innovative tourist attractions, like organizing traditional Slavic festivals, can become truly profitable endeavors.

Meanwhile, Lepel' community members were impressed by the level of collaboration between Bezhanitsy citizens and local authorities and how it contributed to establishing the success of Bezhanitsy' eco-tourism enterprise.

Thinking ahead

Similarly, the Polistovsky Nature Reserve and Tsevlo continue working on increasing the number of community members that participate in tourist oriented activities. New workshops or Master Classes are being implemented to teach community members how to manufacture products like herbal soaps or weave wool and dye fabrics using fresh mushrooms. So far, a Master Class that teaches people how to use mushrooms to dye different fabrics has been a success. It has attracted the interest of both local community members as well as tourists from large cities like Moscow (ENPI FLEG, December 2015), proving the economic potential of Master Classes. A workshop for both tourists and community members where they



Picture 4. Tsevlo citizens meeting with IUCN consultants to discuss plans for new eco-tourism development alliance projects to take place in collaboration with Polistovsky Nature Reserve during 2016. Source: ENPI FLEG

² At this time, Polistovsky Nature Reserve is using part of its 100 thousand dollar grant from the Ministry of Nature Resources to fund the project in Loknya municipality and has the financial capacity to maintain existing eco-trails and equipment in the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism enterprise.

learn how to operate a traditional Russian oven is also being planned. In sum, work is continuing on endorsing business ideas that have a potential to increase community participation and income. Most importantly, perhaps, is the change in community members' way of thinking about the future and their engagement with activities. They no longer think only of their immediate well-being but they have started thinking of their children and grandchildren's well-being: Tsevlo's citizens are finding ways of creating business opportunities that future generations could profit from. They have also gained ownership of the tourist activities themselves. Early 2016, IUCN-FLEG consultant Natalia Milavidova along with Tsevlo citizens and other IUCN consultants (Yulia Orlova and Valentina Ipatova) held a roundtable to analyze potential new Master Classes to be organized during the year.

Creating precedents for institutional change

The success in Bezhanitsy has served as an example for the authorities that change in degrading communities like Tsevlo is possible. This activity is a precedent for fostering institutional change in 2 ways. On one hand, it shows Russian officials the potential benefits of introducing what IUCN calls "locally controlled forests" as a powerful tool for effectively managing and protecting forests. On the other hand, it has an indirect effect on Russian forest legislation. It shows the authorities that there is a way of working with the current legal framework, but at the same time it shows there is room for improvement in a non-threatening way. So far, based to some extent on the experience in Bezhanitsy, several statements of the Regional legislation regarding ecotourism development, namely in the Pskov Regional Tourism Development Program were modified in part of support of local civic initiatives and creating local development alliances.

Challenges

Showing the benefit of conserving nature: a change of mentality

One of the main challenges faced by this activity was convincing community members that it could be profitable to develop alternative sources of income other than merely using the cranberries and mushrooms they collected in the forest for consumption or sale. At first, it was hard for community members to believe that catering to tourists and selling them sustainably harvested non-timber forest products would provide them with considerable economic benefits within a limited time frame. Given the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the community, many of Tsevlo inhabitants are senior citizens that lived through the Soviet Regime.

Distrust for the capital and the belief that anything that comes from Moscow would not work is deeply engrained in Russian rural communities. Overcoming this required Zaytsev to use his expertise and previous professional experience in order to build a constructive dialogue with community members. Likewise, concepts like market pricing for their products were hard to understand and adopt. Sometimes, they wanted to charge high prices for individual products that did not correspond to an appropriate market value for each product and would therefore not be bought by tourists (neither wealthy domestic or international tourists nor the more modest student tourists).

Ensuring economic viability of Bezhanitsy eco-tourism enterprise in the long term

Another challenge faced by the activity was to establish a mechanism to get a year round, steady flow of tourists to the Nature Reserve (while staying within the limits of total tourist per year allowed into the Reserve imposed by Russian regulation). The reason for this is that a viable alternative livelihood in this kind of communities had to provide enough resources for the harsh winter months while also being of a sufficient magnitude to divert community members from traditional non-timber forest resources extracting activities.

Similarly, some business ideas that were funded did not succeed (like adding horseback riding as a tourist activity). This required the IUCN to adjust the process by which they endorsed some business ideas (especially during the early stages of the project) to only endorse the more robust and sound business proposals that community members would then try to get funding for. Another challenge faced by the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism development alliance is being able to streamline participation of Tsevlo citizens in Master Classes due to classes' seasonal and short duration. In general, Master Classes take place during one or two days and interested citizens are not always able to attend them due to being preoccupied with other time-sensitive chores. Likewise, some citizens who have received training through Master Classes sometimes lack the confidence to show their abilities in their newly acquired skills in front of tourists. The IUCN hopes to address these issue by providing opportunities for citizens to showcase their abilities in front of less intimidating audiences, such as teenagers and children during workshops with them and by promoting the organization of informal master classes hosted by community members themselves.

Scaling up: engaging other communities across Russia

At this moment, due in part to the success of the activity of Bezhanitsy eco-tourism development alliance and in part to the funding restrictions consequence of the EU's economic sanctions imposed on Russia in 2014, IUCN's presence in Tsevlo has been reduced. However, the development of new activities in the community, motivated by community members and Polistovsky Nature Reserve staff, are still being pursued and IUCN offers advice as much as possible. To a large extent, the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism enterprise has gained momentum and is able to continue on its own. For instance, an herbal soap making Master Class was organized by Tsevlo citizens in coordination with Polistovsky Nature Reserve staff without the assistance of IUCN-FLEG experts at the end of 2015. What has happened in Tsevlo has gained recognition not only across the region but in all of Russia and similar development alliances are currently underway in different parts of the country (ENPI FLEG, March 2015).

After the success with the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism enterprise, the next step for the IUCN is to select communities where to replicate this activity. Currently IUCN is working with the Na Nai indigenous people in Far Eastern Russia and the Loknya municipality on the other end of the Polistovsky Nature Preserve as well as several communities across the border with Belarus. Their objective is to test the engagement model they developed in Tsevlo: assist these communities in establishing similar synergies with local and regional forest and employment or development agencies and help them obtain funds from the Russian government or perhaps even international sources. However, this process is experiencing minor problems as a result of funding restrictions

accompanying EU's sanction on Russia and the consequent scaling down of IUCN activities under FLEG program.

Another way in which IUCN is attempting to expand projects that foster better forest governance and community development is by creating an online database of best practices for legal and sustainable forest use by forest-dependent communities. The database contains example cases of communities across Russia that have been able to navigate the complex legislative Russian context and succeeded in giving a legal, economically feasible and sustainable use of their forests. The database seeks to make this cases and associated data available to several audiences like national and regional forestry agencies, municipalities, businesses and NGOs. It also seeks to be available to general audiences by actively linking the database to social media and main search engines like Google or Yahoo.

D. Lessons learned

1. Building trust with community members and other involved parties: Investing time and resources to build trust is of utmost importance to the success of a project like this one. In this case, a previous activity performed by IUCN's office in Moscow between 2003 and 2006 proved to be good investments in this respect because it helped build trust with community members, authorities and other actors. By the time Zaytsev and his team went to Tsevlo, community members were already familiar with the IUCN and their work. They had also received some training in using non-timber resources for producing goods such as herbal teas, reducing the "shock" of exploring alternative livelihoods.
2. Taking advantage of windows of opportunity: It is important to recognize and use institutional and to some extent circumstantial windows of opportunity such as Federal Development Plans that focus on tourism. In this case: using the convergence of interests form federal and regional economic plans on tourism helped turn the eco-tourism project in Polistovsky Nature Reserve into a win-win scenario for local and regional authorities as well as for the Nature Reserve and Tsevlo.
3. Identifying engaged and active community members to act as leaders: Obtaining buy-in for the project from proactive community members is key at its early stages. In this case Zinaida Fevraleva was this crucial community member. These community members are usually the first to speak in a crowd and are usually the last to leave meetings; sometimes, advice from the local administration is requested for suggestions. However, it is important to establish mechanisms to include the entire community (prevent benefits from being concentrated in few community leaders) in order to give it a better chance of becoming self-sustainable. For example, because Fevraleva was very busy during the summer months, she had to hire other people to assist in catering for tourists, thus providing a clear example for Tsevlo that reaping the benefits from these projects relies on the cooperation with other community members.
4. Setting up mechanisms for achieving projects' sustainability: It is important to have clearly defined and thought out business plans (that take into account the market structure surrounding each community) when attempting to convince people to change to alternative livelihoods and use of forest resources. In this case, collaboration with Tsevlo's citizens and Polistovsky Nature Reserve was of a support and advising nature, funding had to be

secured by participants themselves. This not only reduces the amount of funding wasted in unprofitable businesses but it also helps keep community members motivated. If they see their business plans fail, they risk losing faith in the entire project. For the same reason it is important to show other people's success (like Tsevlo community members seeing Zinaida's success or having workshops with farmers in Belarus), then give assistance to initiatives that come out of those exchanges but only to those that have a sound business plan and market potential.

5. Focusing on facilitating and advising a process rather than driving it: IUCN's approach as facilitators and providers of expert advice worked very well for them to become unbiased agents (neither agents advancing the government's agenda, in the eyes of community members; nor agents advancing their own agenda, in the eyes of the government) and therefore be able to mediate conflict. It also helped increase the chances of the project becoming self-sustaining and not dependent on IUCN's constant presence by increasing the sense of ownership of projects and conditioning the activity's advance to project members' constant efforts and ability to get their own funding.
6. Recognizing the need of a middle ground approach: IUCN recognizes that these projects are subject to dealing with existing regulation that not always facilitates project implementation. However, taking an approach of helping people navigate the current legal framework, instead of opposing it or pushing for its modification, allows them to be more effective when advising the different actors in these projects and mediate between them. They can help parties like the Nature Reserve deal with Tsevlo community members and at the same time gain the approval and support from local and regional government agencies.

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Case Study 8. Open Letter on Forest Reform Legislation, Ukraine

Prepared by: Xi Chen

A. Activity Highlights

In the past few years, Ukraine has been experiencing intense political instability, armed conflict and economic stagnation (Higgins, 2014; “Ukraine raises,” 2015). Ukraine continues to grapple with corruption and deep-rooted social and political unrest, problems that gained international attention after the beginning of the Euromaidan Revolution in November 2013. Unsurprisingly, the activities performed by the IUCN under the FLEG Program had to be adjusted to respond to Ukraine’s political context during the Revolution and its aftermath. It was so that the IUCN and two partner international organizations (IOs) became involved in the political process surrounding a proposed law that would significantly reform forestry activity in the country. Worried about the impact of these reforms on the health of the forestry sector and socioeconomic well-being of rural Ukrainian communities, the IUCN and others became engaged in a way that was unusual to the FLEG program.

The Open Letter activity is an example of how the IUCN, WWF and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), adapted their usual way of working under the FLEG Program to respond to proposed reforms to the Forestry Sector of Ukraine during the political turmoil period. The activity was a collaborative effort, with IUCN-FLEG playing an important part. It involved reaching out and engaging multiple parts of the Ukrainian society, even those who did not usually agree such as some environmental NGOs and Forestry Agency officials. The Open Letter to the Ukrainian Parliament summarized, in a clear and understandable way, the main potential dangers that enforcing several specific reforms on the forestry sector would bring. At times, coming up with a statement detailing the concerns from a broad range of interests surrounding forest use was a challenging process. However, all three organizations displayed a remarkable talent for navigating Ukraine’s social context and managed to come up with a clear message endorsed by most parties involved. In a remarkable turn of events, two of the three proposed reforms, which would negatively affect Ukraine, were dropped. It was considered a success by IUCN, WWF, and FSC. Moreover, on March 22, 2016, a new draft law was registered at the Parliament Secretariat aiming to cancel the timber export ban and establish transparent market timber trade rules.

B. Background

In March 2014, IUCN-FLEG Program Country Coordinator for Ukraine, Roman Volosyanchuk, learned about a working group that had been established by individual volunteers as a special initiative to foster change in Ukrainian society following the 2014 Revolution in Ukraine. Those involved brought a diverse set of expertise to the growing public movement to encourage quick change in the country.



Picture 1: Members of the Ukrainian media attend a presentation on anti-corruption in the forest sector. Source: ENPI FLEG.

Because Volosyanchuk knew some of the members of this working group, he was encouraged to talk to other group members interested in making the forest sector much more open, and to fight against corruption in the government. Volosyanchuk invited these individuals to attend events of the FLEG Program in order to familiarize them with the efforts being undertaken by the program in Ukraine as well as other parts of the world. After several meetings in which members of the working group participated, Volosyanchuk was hopeful that the reform process that might ensue would guide Ukraine to more effective forest governance.

In November 2014, several members of the working group were elected as Members of Parliament. The new Parliament began work on November 27th, and by December 10th, those new members of Parliament had drafted a law banning all round timber exports from Ukraine. This was an unexpected and troubling move from the perspective of IUCN, WWF, and FSC.

The proposed changes in forest legislation had 3 main policy objectives:

- To ban all timber exports from Ukraine.
- To allow the privatization of forest areas.
- To discontinue the issuance of new timber harvesting licenses.

IUCN, WWF, and FSC worried that the proposed reforms had the potential to significantly and negatively affect Ukraine, potentially leading to the economic collapse of the country's forestry sector. Reforms also presented political risks for Ukraine in the international arena as banning timber exports constituted a direct violation of World Trade Organization rules and the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Ukraine and the European Union. Additionally, IUCN, WWF, and FSC feared that the proposed reforms were in fact an attempt to advance the particular interests of the private timber industry. Consequently, IUCN, WWF, and FSC publicly opposed these proposed reforms. In order to explain their opposition, the three partners developed a joint document in which they detailed their concerns with the proposed law and why they disagreed with the proposed reforms. They referred to this document as their "Open Letter" and addressed it to the Parliament. The Open Letter was officially presented at a Parliament hearing and was also distributed publicly.

Some environmental groups were surprised by the position taken by IUCN, WWF, and FSC, perceiving that these three organizations were defending foresters. Historically, environmental groups in Ukraine had been a consistent source of criticism and oversight for the Ukrainian government foresters in topics surrounding conservation and sustainable use of Ukraine's forest resources. The most radical members of the environmental community consistently held a rather antagonistic position with respect to government foresters. In their view,

the 3 IOs, particularly IUCN, had always been their allies in pointing out the shortcomings of the Ukrainian Forestry Agency and hence they were shocked by what they perceived to be IUCN's support for Ukraine's current forest management in the "Open Letter".

Indeed, the IUCN, WWF and FSC, especially working under the FLEG Program, have a longstanding history in Ukraine of actively seeking to improve forest governance and introduce better management practices into the forestry sector with the collaboration of both environmental groups and Ukraine's forestry agencies. In order to address the environmental groups' concerns, in March 2015, the IUCN, WWF, and FSC held an open table dialogue with environmental groups in order to clarify their position: they were not defending foresters but rather were opposing certain private groups in the timber industry from appropriating rents generated by timber production, the violation of international agreements, and the possible collapse of the entire forestry sector in Ukraine. This roundtable discussion, though at moments challenging, was a success because, in the end, the environmental groups emerged with a unified position with IUCN, WWF, and FSC on this subject.

In a surprising and rewarding turn of events, in April 2015, two elements of the proposed reform package were dropped. The sections proposing the privatization of forest areas and the hold on issuance of new timber harvesting licenses were dropped from the proposed law. The IUCN, WWF, and FSC considered their intervention with the Open Letter to be a success because they were able to articulate their concerns with the proposed reforms and join the efforts of other stakeholders in the forestry sector to prevent the approval of the problematic reforms.

A Unique FLEG Activity

It is worth highlighting that the Open Letter activity was not like the other activities undertaken by the IUCN-FLEG Program in other countries and described in this report. To a large extent, it was simply a response to Ukraine's political context on an issue that they could not ignore or risk remaining on the sidelines. Their success was only possible because IUCN and WWF had been working in Ukraine for a long time, which gave them a unique chance to positively intervene in discussions about new legislation. It was a consequence of the work they had done in the country, and it was also a reaction to the quick changes in the country. The activity marks a milestone in their involvement in Ukraine as it was also the first time IUCN and WWF had tried to intervene or actively participate in a legal process and expressed an opinion during a public process.

C. Analysis

Activity Objectives and Goals

The ultimate goal of this activity was to provide expert opinion and expertise about the potential negative consequences of proposed forestry reforms on Ukraine's forest industry sector. One of the reforms sought to permit the privatization of state forestry units. A second reform would ban timber exports, and the third reform was intended to push the government to stop issuing licenses for timber harvesting. Basically, some members of Parliament wanted to block the work of the forestry units in order to stop the logging industry completely. The IUCN, WWF, and FSC

opposed the proposed reforms, fearing their negative economic and forest management effects on Ukraine, as well as causing Ukraine to violate ratified International Agreements.

Potential for Industry Crash

Events in Ukraine were moving in the direction of open markets and democratic change. The establishment of any bans was counter to these open economy and democratic changes. At the same time, the proposed reforms would have a deep and long-lasting effect on Ukraine's internal timber markets. The ban around timber exports meant that the internal price for the timber would drop and the people in the timber processing industry (such as the construction material industry, paper industry and furniture industry) would profit. Therefore, IUCN and its partner organizations perceived the reforms to be a deliberate attempt by the timber processing industry to squeeze profits from the market. The IUCN, WWF, and FSC judged that the reforms, if passed, would cause the timber industry in Ukraine to crash as these sectors combined were not comparable in size and revenue generation as that of timber exports. If reforms were implemented, reductions in timber export revenues combined with the reduction in timber's internal price would not have been compensated by the alleged increase in internal market consumption of timber and manufactured wood products. This would have caused total revenues from the forestry sector in Ukraine to plummet and trigger a subsequent collapse of the entire sector.

Impact on Rural and Vulnerable Communities

The proposed reforms would also have a negative effect on rural and vulnerable communities and sectors of society. Women, for instance, would be more affected than men because women were usually employed in forest nurseries rather than logging. If the industry began to shrink, they would be the first to lose their jobs. In addition, loss of jobs due to reduced forestry activities would have a severe negative impact on forest-dependent communities which would effectively lose their primary source of income.

Violation of International Agreements

IUCN, WWF, and FSC tried to talk with their contacts in the government, opposing this ban very clearly because it went against the rules of the WTO, and against the agreement with the European Union under their FTA. While at the time the FTA between Ukraine and the European Community was not fully operational, the agreement was expected to be enforced at 100% starting January 1, 2016. The European Union had already opened all its markets in 2014, but Ukraine remained closed to some extent.

How the Open Letter Came into Being

Initially, IUCN, WWF and FSC expressed their concerns directly to the members of Parliament but this approach was not successful at stopping consideration of the proposed reforms. After some discussions among colleagues, the three organizations produced a significant and well-developed compilation of their concerns, a document which also incorporated local population rights and environmental issues. They worked openly, invited public opinions, and in so doing prepared this Open Letter.

Drafting the Open Letter was a complex process. It addressed not only the timber export ban reform, as the other two drafted reforms were also considered contrary to Ukraine's best interests. As Volosyanchuk put it, "the reform package was developed in a very chaotic post-revolutionary situation, in which many people were very emotional and spoke very strongly against corruption. People wanted to do something immediately." (Volosyanchuk, personal communication, August 4, 2015) As a result of this political situation, the Ukraine Parliament was producing a number of laws and policies that appeared to be biased, seemingly driven by private interests.

Consequently, IUCN-FLEG published the Open Letter to address the three reforms drafted by the members of Parliament. The first reform they addressed was the privatization of forestry units. In their opinion, this proposal was not wise for the forestry industry because it was not efficient to produce at smaller scales since growing forest trees entails a very long term production cycle. The ban on timber exports was of concern to IUCN-FLEG, too, because analysis of countries that banned exports years ago, like Russia and Belarus, demonstrated that it had negative effects on the forestry industry in these countries. Finally, ceasing to grant harvest licenses would mean that the forestry sector would shut down. As a result, there would be a considerable shortage of jobs, especially in remote rural areas. This might lead to illegal harvesting as rural communities would be unable to make a living in a legal way.

Initial Problems and Challenges

The FLEG program has been dealing with forestry issues in Ukraine for a long time. At first, foresters in Ukraine had a poor reputation, especially among some environmental groups. There used to be a lot of acrimony between foresters and environmentalists. The environmentalists were blamed for not understanding forest management, and the foresters were blamed for endangering forests. Both positions were very extreme.



Picture 2: Carpathian Forest, Ukraine. Source: ENPI FLEG.

In the last few years, however, several FLEG activities contributed at least to the mitigation of this image. Following FLEG's round tables and participating in FLEG's workshops, some environmental NGOs that used to have more extreme perspectives began providing their suggestions and comments through FLEG recommendations, which was in a more constructive manner. The presence of the IOs acted as mediators for different groups within Ukraine to start a dialogue.

Similarly, Ukraine suffered from a problem of deep-rooted corruption in the forestry sector, corruption that reached even the highest levels of the sector, for example, in timber allocation contracts. Sometimes a buyer would be unable to get a contract to buy good timber without paying a side company for consultation services. Officially, the director of a forestry unit was in charge of determining timber allocation contracts. The director acted as an independent forestry official and nobody was able to legally compel him to choose one buyer over any other. However, a

director's position was not fixed and the terms of his or her contracts were subject to change. Consequently, the State Forestry Agency changed their management to one-year contracts for directors. In so doing, they ensured that the Agency would maintain control over unit level timber decisions. Directors had incentive to follow informal orders from higher level officials in the Forestry Agency about who should get timber contracts. This strategy preserved the directors' jobs, and timber decisions taken in this manner were not officially documented. As a result, corruption was deeply embedded in the system.

Situations like this one are a consequence of how the entire forestry system in Ukraine is structured. The Forestry Agency is highly organized with big regional branches and local enterprises which are the forestry units. It is a rather vertical, hierarchical institution that to a large extent functions as a monopoly fulfilling two tasks at the same time: i) managing forests as a timber production unit and ii) regulating forestry activity in order to protect and preserve forests. Aside from the intrinsic conflict of interest derived from having to fulfill two, at times opposed tasks, there were not many oversight structures set in place within the State Forestry Agency to ensure that both objectives were fulfilled. Before the proposed reforms in 2014, the Forestry Agency managed about 72% of the country's forests. This fact made it an influential player that could set rules on the market.

The timber processing industry was furious at what they perceived to be obvious corruption. While foreclosing corrupt practices was perhaps the spirit behind the proposed reforms, to change the forestry system by banning timber exports, for instance, would have numerous unintended consequences.

Being aware of the challenges faced by the forestry sector in Ukraine, the FLEG project had performed considerable analysis and proposals as to how to change the timber trade and the auction and allocation systems. Several reports were already available on the FLEG website from FLEG I and FLEG II that talked about this, both by the World Bank and the WWF. FLEG's analysis of the socio-economic effects of various variants of forest development was also provided, which the members in the Parliament could easily consult.

During the same time, IUCN-FLEG's work with the Forestry Agency had tried to improve the negative perceptions as well as how they governed the forest by workshops and through their website. IUCN-FLEG also helped to create the ecomap.org website for people to report forest incidents and they wanted to connect this to FSC so that any irregular activity was directly monitored by the timber certifiers.

Relationship Built and Collaboration

Volosyanchuk was very clear that IUCN-FLEG was not the only organization involved in this process of preventing poorly-conceived reforms to be enacted and that they were not solely responsible for the successful outcome. It was a process involving many people from different sides of the forestry sector.

It is worth highlighting how these organizations were able to garner support from environmental organizations. As mentioned before, some environmental organizations were

surprised by the position taken by IUCN, WWF, and FSC, perceiving that they were defending foresters. IUCN, WWF and FSC's opposition to the reforms gave environmental groups the perception that the three partner organizations wanted to promote cutting and harvesting the forests, a troubling perception for the seemingly-aligned conservation groups. However, because the FLEG Program CPCs of IUCN, WWF, and FSC had known members of the environmental groups personally after so many years of working in Ukraine on various environmental issues, they were able to engage the environmental groups in constructive dialogue. The roundtable resulted in a common understanding and position between all of the groups. A petition was prepared by IUCN, WWF, and FSC to demonstrate support for the Open Letter and it received around 380 signatures, mostly from those environmentalists.

The process, in hindsight, could have benefited from a more professional design and formulation of the formal petition to Parliament, and they could have perhaps involved some communication specialists. However, they had a very short time to prepare it and the process was developing very quickly.

FLEG partners were not the only ones opposing those reforms. The State Agency of Forestry, as well as numerous environmental organizations, were also working to change this legal process. Other parties in addition to IUCN, WWF, and FSC who were concerned about the proposed reforms were working internally to try to modify them. There was another partner, who joined the timber processors and tried to help them to modify their draft law for timber export ban. These parties, some from the former forestry system, managed to modify the draft in such a way that it would no longer be possible to implement it, even if the reforms were approved. They introduced just a few sentences that established an internal contradiction in the law: a Certificate of Timber Origin, necessary for export operations even with processed timber (e.g. boards, plywood, etc.), has to be issued by a forestry enterprise, according to the new rule. That was absolutely okay for production processed (sawn) by the forestry unit themselves. But for other timber processing, it was not possible to obtain the Certificate: one legal economic body may not issue any certificate to another similar body of the same level because it has no inspection rights. Thus a huge scandal occurred when the newly adopted law started getting into force. For the moment, the collision is temporarily solved by a Government Decree (can work for not more than 1 year) restoring previous scheme for issuing the Certificate of Timber Origin, where it is issued by the Regional Forestry Administration. These were simple words that turned out to be very important.

Impacts and Accomplishments

In the middle of January 2015, the Parliament had the first reading of the timber export ban proposal. The two other reforms had been withdrawn from the overall reform process, both the privatization of forestry units and the stopping of issuing new licenses. But these reforms were not entirely cancelled, they were just postponed. Still there was a chance that they could be reconsidered, but the most recent changes within the Parliament and the new expertise and perspectives represented in its membership made this review unlikely. In April 2015, two elements of the proposed reform package were dropped. The sections proposing the privatization of forest areas and the hold on issuance of new timber harvesting licenses were dropped from the proposed law. But the law in the timber export ban was approved by the Parliament in April 2015 and began

to go into force in November 2015. The full application of the round timber export ban will be in place January 1, 2017. At the same time, on March 22, 2016, a new draft law was registered at the Parliament Secretariat aiming to cancel the timber export ban and establish transparent market timber trade rules.

D. Lessons Learned

1. Pre-existing relationships help to get early information, set up communication channels, and gain trust. In this activity, pre-existing relationships mattered in various ways. First, Volosyanchuk's friendship with some of the members of the working group (some of whom later became members of Parliament) helped get early and first-hand information on the proposed reforms. Then, as CPCs of IUCN, WWF, and FSC had known many of the concerned environmentalists personally after so many years of working in the country on these kinds of forestry issues, they were able to have a constructive dialogue with the environmentalists about the position taken by IUCN, WWF, and FSC, which, at first glance, seemed to support the foresters. Last, FLEG program had been dealing with forestry issues in Ukraine for a long time. They had tried to improve how the Agency governed the forest, through workshops and through their website. They were already trusted in Ukraine to a very large extent.
2. Key partnerships in opposing the proposed reforms. FLEG partners were not the only ones opposing the proposed reforms. The State Agency of Forestry was also working on their side to stop these reforms. Numerous environmental organizations were also opposing the reforms. Also, having someone from the former forestry system work on this activity was quite helpful in seizing the pivotal holes in the law. This meant that all these different stakeholders, by focusing on their own areas of expertise, were able to work in parallel and contribute to preventing a major setback for the Ukrainian forestry sector.
3. Open discussions to gain trust and resolve conflict. FLEG always held discussions with various partners and were quite open about what they were doing, as well as the rationale and scientific reasons. Their recommendations were based on solid analysis. Their consistent transparency and dedication was vital in order to gain the trust from environmental organizations and also helped resolve the possible conflicts among different parties.

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Case Study 9: Regional Forest Dependence Study

Prepared by: Nadia Vandergriff

A. Activity Highlights

In 2010, with the support of funding from a German development agency - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), IUCN-FLEG carried out a pilot study in the South Caucasus to investigate “forest functionality” and assess whether the forests of the rural communities of the region were “fully functioning.” As defined by IUCN, the “fully functioning” means “gaining the optimal quantity and quality of forest resources necessary for improving and maintaining people’s well-being and ecological integrity” (IUCN, 2005). The results of this pilot study revealed significant levels of forest dependence in Armenia, subsequently spurring the implementation of the study in all seven countries in the ENPI region. This is the first time such a study on forest dependence was conducted in the Boreal and Northern Temperate forest region.

The results of the regional forest dependence study revealed that regionally, forest income makes up 10.3% of total household income (with a national variation of 5%-17%, on average) (Bakkegaard, 2014). Fuelwood remains an important resource in these communities despite improved access to gas and berries and mushrooms were shown to contribute greatly to cash income. (Bakkegaard, 2014). These results provide distinct evidence on the level of dependence of inhabitants of rural communities on local forest resources. Understanding the extent to which these rural communities rely on forest resources raises awareness on two levels; on the national governmental level, this knowledge can lead to more effective forest resource governance and policymaking, while on the community level it increases incentives to protect forest resources.

Background

Forest Dependency in the Livelihoods of Rural Communities

The countries of the ENPI East region and Russia have a wealth of natural resources. Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia belong to the Southern Caucasus, a region that makes up one of the world’s richest biodiversity hotspots (Bakkegaard, 2014). Further, the ENPI East region and Russia contain 20% of the world’s forest cover (Bakkegaard, 2014). The forests of Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova provide a rich variety of products upon which rural communities depend (Forest Europe, 2011).

The ENPI East region and Russia are also uniquely characterized by recent socio-political transformation following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Various policies instituted in the region in the wake of the collapse such as market reforms, decentralized decision-making, and privatization of previously state-owned lands (Bakkegaard, 2014) have led to recession, high unemployment and high poverty, especially in rural areas (Tikkanen et al, 2003), which in turn led to high dependence on forest resources in these rural areas.

In many transitional economies, the collection and use of forest resources (timber and non-timber forest products) is loosely regulated (Neumann and Hirsch, 2000; Angelsen and Wunder, 2003) and even more loosely enforced. Consequently, the full economic and social value of forests to rural communities is not understood or considered in government decision-making, which leads to degradation and deforestation. When forests' contribution to climate change mitigation, water catchment, biodiversity, rural livelihood development, and economic or small market development are factored into the total value of the forests, a higher economic price associated with forest-use activities is revealed. Furthermore, by factoring in the value of ecotourism, protected areas, and the harvesting of non-timber forest products, the total economic and social value of rural communities are raised.

An estimated 1.6 billion people worldwide depend on forests to support their livelihoods, of which 350 million are directly and highly reliant on forest products to support their subsistence or income (World Bank, 2004). Because forest products are often quite accessible and weakly regulated in remote rural areas (Angelsen and Wunder, 2003), they are attractive to poorer segments of the population who rely on the forest to provide a dependable source of subsistence food and fiber, as well as a means of filling their income gaps.

Need to Understand Forest dependence in the ENPI Region

During FLEG I, a social-economic impact study was conducted in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine to study and assess the economic and social impact of inefficient and unsustainable forest practices and illegal logging on rural communities. This study included an assessment of the socio-economic state of the communities as well as an assessment of the volume of wood lost to unsustainable activities and illegal logging. The results of the social-economic impact study revealed the disparity between what communities could potentially gain from forest resources in comparison to what was lost due to destructive and illegal uses. Equipped with this information, IUCN-FLEG agreed that during FLEG II a full-scale forest dependence study with using a unified methodology should be undertaken to analyze forest dependence throughout the ENPI East region and Russia.



Picture 1: Pensioners in South Eastern Armenia. Source: ENPI FLEG

Activity Goals and Objectives

The objective of the present study across the ENPI East region and Russia was to quantify the relationship between rural communities and their natural resource base, to determine what income these communities received from the forest. The goal was to measure the true value of a fully functioning forest to rural communities, and generate quantitative results that could be used

by policy makers to improve forest governance and develop appropriate forest resource policy that encompasses the needs of rural communities (Bakkegaard, 2014). The study aimed to find out exactly how much dependence these rural communities had on forest resources. As Richard Aishton, Project Coordinator for IUCN-FLEG, explained,

[Data on forest dependence] has implications on the use of forest products as well as on illegal logging and the harvest of resources. These [rural] communities need firewood, and other resources from the forest. [The IUCN-FLEG team] wanted to identify the real quantifiable relationships between the rural communities and their forest resource base (personal communication, July 6, 2015).

Another goal of the study was to replicate this survey in other regions of the world with rural, forest-dependent communities.

We are trying to create a model so practitioners can assess communities in different areas. The point is to show that the [forest] services that people are relying on are just as valuable as the wood fiber. If you can apply this valuation, then there is a concrete value of the forest to present. If the forest were managed more effectively, it would slow the downward spiral that unsustainable resource use creates (R. Aishton, personal communication, July 6, 2015).

Implementation

Defining the Study Methodology

Compared to other forest dependence studies that have been conducted, the regional forest dependence study is quite unique in its combination of methodology and region. In developing the study methodology, IUCN-FLEG consulted The Forest Poverty Toolkit (FPT) and the Poverty Environment Network (PEN). The FPT is an instrument developed by IUCN for its “Livelihoods and Landscapes Study” in Africa and Central America, with the goal to “provide evidence of the value of forests and the need to take these multifunctional assets into account in national and local policymaking” (IUCN, 2015). The FPT is more qualitative than the PEN methodology and deals with the subjectivity of the interviewee and looks at the relationships between rural communities and the forest. In contrast, the PEN methodology, developed by Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), is more quantitative. According to CIFOR, “the core of PEN is comparative, detailed socio-economic data that was collected quarterly at the household and village level by 50+ research partners using standardized definitions, questionnaires and methods.” The FPT is a quick assessment and takes a broad-brush approach, while PEN is a more systematic survey that tends to take more time and extract more detail. The IUCN-FLEG team wanted a more quantitative study and adapted the PEN methodology.

The IUCN-FLEG consultant for the regional forest dependence study, Riyong Kim Bakkegaard, previously worked with CIFOR and implemented the PEN methodology in Indonesia and Africa. When Bakkegaard was hired as the consultant for the regional forest dependence study, field consultants were selected for each ENPI country and held a four-day workshop to retool the PEN methodology to fit Eastern Europe and be more applicable to the Boreal Forest context. PEN

methodology questions about fuel consumption were adjusted to the Boreal Forest context, as fuelwood is consumed mostly for warmth in the Northern Boreal region while in the tropics is more often consumed for cooking. Furthermore, it was important that the questions posed by the survey were tailored to each individual country context. As Aishton explained, “The same question asked in seven different contexts has two or three variations, which factored into the development of the questionnaire with the field consultant. Each of the questions asked was adapted to be similar enough that the answers could be used in the same overall database” (personal communication, July 6, 2015).

Implementing the Study

IUCN-FLEG implemented the survey in the seven ENPI FLEG countries over a nine-month period. 150-200 households on average were surveyed in each country in communities located in the forested regions of the countries, making a total of 1256 household surveys in 36 selected rural communities across the ENPI region. In each community, one community survey was implemented together with a key informant and/or village focus group discussion. Detailed information about the communities’ forest dependence was gathered using focus group discussions at the village level and questionnaires at the household level. The information gathered from the household surveys included control information, basic information on members of the household, an identification of the principal informant, information on household assets, income from various sources (forest, agriculture, livestock, wage, business, etc.), and fuelwood consumption (quantity consumed and price per unit) (Bakkegaard, 2014).

Initial Findings

Before the regional forest dependency study was conducted across the entire ENPI region, GIZ provided funding to support it in each of the three South Caucasus countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The survey methodology for this preliminary study was modified from the IUCN’s Forest Poverty Toolkit methodology (which is designed for a tropical context) and adjusted by Aishton and the IUCN-FLEG team to suit the Eastern European context.

When the results of these forest dependency studies in the South Caucasus were released, the results from Georgia and Azerbaijan showed some indications of forest dependency, but the study results from Armenia showed profound results, revealing that 20-35% of rural communities’ total income was derived from the forest. According to Aishton, the difference in the results found in Georgia and Azerbaijan and those from the study in Armenia can be attributed to the Armenian field consultant’s experience with implementing survey methodologies and interpreting their results (personal communication, January 22, 2016). As opposed to the field consultants in Georgia and Azerbaijan, who focused most of their efforts on adjusting the methodology, the Armenian consultant took the information received from the survey and adjusted the methods of interpreting the results. Based on these results, it was understood that forest resources play a highly significant role in filling the income gap in these communities.

Not only did this study satisfy elements of the St. Petersburg Declaration, it also analyzed illegal logging issues and brought awareness to the level of forest dependence of rural communities in the ENPI region. “The study had real implications that were critical to filling information gaps

about these countries and the communities,” commented Aishton (personal communication, August 4, 2015).

IUCN-FLEG shared the results of the forest dependence study in Armenia with FLEG Focal Points in other ENPI FLEG countries, and asked whether they might be interested in conducting such a study in their own countries. All the Focal Points responded favorably, noting the information was very useful for them because the data on forest dependence had the potential to provide governments with clear facts on how resources are being used in rural communities, providing incentive to govern these resources more effectively. Quantitatively-derived from the forest dependence surveys shows a definite mathematical and comparative methodology. Furthermore, according to Aishton, people in government roles are much more comfortable asking for funds from state budgets when they have information that has been mathematically generated or at least systematically collected through survey methodology rather than based on inference (personal communication, July 6, 2015).

Region-Wide Implementation

In order to implement the activity region-wide, the CPCs first agreed as a team to implement the activity across the ENPI East region and Russia. Following the agreement among the CPCs, the National Program Advisory Committee (NPAC) agreed to the activity. For the regional forest dependence study seven national studies were implemented, each of which had to be incorporated into each of the ENPI country work plans. Each country work plan was formally presented by the country CPC and approved at the Steering Committee Meeting by the NPAC.

The implementation of the regional forest dependence study involved carrying out the surveys by each of the seven selected and specifically trained field consultants in each ENPI country. When the field surveys were completed, the data received from each national survey was compiled into a database created specifically for the purposes of the regional forest dependence study. The data was further analyzed in seven national reports (written by each CPC and their respective field consultant) and in a regional report (written by the consultant for the regional forest dependence study), which reflected the aggregate of the national data collected from these surveys across all seven ENPI FLEG countries.



Picture 2: Consultant conducts interview in the Zakataly district in northwest Azerbaijan. Source: ENPI FLEG

Results

When the initial study was completed in Armenia, the Armenian field consultant and the Armenia CPC, Luba Balyan, met with the head of the State Forest Association of Armenia, Armenia’s FLEG Focal Point, to present their findings. The Focal Point expressed that IUCN-FLEG’s work was one of the most important and valuable studies on forest dependence he had seen, and that it provides the clear quantitative data needed to go to Parliament and effectively

lobby for the needs of rural communities. Aishton was pleased with this reaction, commenting, “it is pretty profound that such a high level official says he needs this information and will take it to meetings with the Parliament. The other focal points have stated the same things” (personal communication, August 4, 2015). While the regional forest dependence study has not yet led to institutional change, Aishton believes that it has the potential to do so.



Picture 3: Village in the Lori province of Armenia. Source: ENPI FLEG

The results of the regional forest dependence study, which has made significant progress on demonstrating the full economic value of the forest resources, sparked interest amongst governments in ENPI in understanding the economic benefit of protecting forest resources. As a result of the effectiveness of the study and the ensuing support from the country focal points, a second phase of forest dependence studies will continue in Belarus, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia and will be expanded to include more communities.

B. Analysis

Facilitating Factors

Involvement of Respected Individuals, Native to the Country

The involvement of IUCN-FLEG CPCs, government officials, and survey team members who were each native to their country of work and spoke the native language was key to the effectiveness of the regional forest dependence study. These qualities brought trust and credibility to the project, as community members who were interviewed were more likely to talk to the interviewers on the survey team and answer questions truthfully because they could relate to the interviewers.

Widely Perceived Need and Support for the Study

Recognition of the importance of the regional forest dependence study and support from government officials established credibility for the study. According to Aishton, all of the government officials involved from each ENPI country were very supportive of the study, and consequently, there was not much political pushback (personal communication, July 6, 2015). During the initial stages of formulating the study, the IUCN-FLEG team was hesitant to announce the intention to conduct the study, even though they knew of its importance because they were worried that one country official might disagree with the study’s necessity, which would delay the work. According to Aishton, “For example Russia, because the Russian focal point is a very high level and influential political figure, if he didn’t like the activity or it was presented to him poorly

or at the wrong time, he might not have agreed to it and it would be over” (personal communication, August 4, 2015). However, IUCN-FLEG was surprised to find that government officials in the ENPI region were very much in favor of the study. Aishton emphasized that the focal points especially thought the data the study would provide was uniquely important and useful because the focal points did not have any similar data, but only have estimates (personal communication, July 6, 2015).

Because these data from the forest dependence study offer opportunities for national and community-level development, ENPI region governments were supportive when they were presented with the results from the Armenia study, recognizing the value in understanding the level of forest dependence in rural communities. With this support, the next phase of the activity (regional analysis) was able to progress. To Aishton, this overwhelming support was surprising (personal communication, July 6, 2015).

Highly Qualified and Enthusiastic Implementing Partners

The field consultants were highly qualified and very enthusiastic partners in the development and implementation of the regional forest dependence study. According to Aishton, the curiosity of the field consultants and their ability to find their own interests within the study was helpful (personal communication, July 6, 2015).

The involvement of Bakkegaard, the regional field consultant, was also key to the effectiveness of the study due to her experience working with CIFOR using the PEN methodology in Indonesia and Africa. With her knowledge and experience, Bakkegaard created consistency and continuity within the regional forest dependence study’s methodology and facilitated the re-tooling process and the training of the field consultants and CPCs.

IUCN and FLEG’s Reputation

The effectiveness of IUCN-FLEG’s work in the ENPI region as well as the trust that has developed between the IUCN-FLEG team and the Focal Points as a result of the progress made in ENPI countries through the FLEG program over the course of FLEG, facilitated the effectiveness of the regional forest dependence study as well. This trust allowed the activity to move forward smoothly because the governments knew that the results would provide valuable and trustworthy data that they could use to improve forest management.

A Flexible Methodology

The development of a survey methodology that could be tailored to each ENPI country was a critical factor. By designing a survey methodology through working across the IUCN-FLEG team to adjust the survey to each ENPI country context, IUCN-FLEG was able to gather clear and reliable information that could be interpreted from each country and still be applied to a single database.

Challenges

Capacity Limitations

Several challenges were related to overcoming the biases that were built into the project design of implementing the survey. Because IUCN-FLEG experiences budget and time constraints they could not include a “control” area (such as the steppe or agricultural areas) in their analysis to more accurately assess forest use across topographical regions. However, having surveyed the forested areas with the 1256 surveys provided a solid base of surveys and results that can still be a wealth of information.

Survey design

In designing the survey, IUCN-FLEG encountered challenges in determining how to adequately frame questions in a way to solicit answers that would indicate important differences in the communities, and then in being able to effectively evaluate how the results would be portrayed.

Distrust and Resistance from Households

Resistance from the households that were interviewed proved challenging at times. Community members were often skeptical of the surveyors, believing they were working for banks or other financial institutions. As Zaytsev recalled, “Some [community members] lie...and tend to hide information to avoid jealousy problems with neighbors, problems with the tax office and to hide illegal activities” (personal communication, August 4, 2015). In some cases, parts of the data sets needed to be excluded from analysis because the data was unreliable as a result of these concerns. In some cases, such as the use of firewood, IUCN-FLEG knew that the figures they obtained from the surveys were the absolute lowest they could expect because the communities would not reveal any illegal activities. If the data shows 15-18% of the community’s resources came from the forest, IUCN-FLEG knew that the data was at the low end of the spectrum because the data could be as high as 35% (as in the case of Armenia). It should be noted that the integrity of the information gathered is a function of the skill of the interviewer. A realistic and informed interpretation of this data requires that the interviewer and the CPCs understand the broader implications of the data. Furthermore, the accuracy of the end product is a function of the interviewer and field team having a deeper understanding the context in which the data is gathered.

Ensuring Accuracy of Data Collected

Following implementation of the study, the CPCs and the field personnel met to reflect on the study and the process. One of the main observations shared among the team was that while the questions were clear and well-structured, sometimes people were hesitant to answer questions accurately for fear of potentially being implicated for using the black market of illegally gathered forest products. The surveyors knew that the community members would be hesitant to share information that might reveal their involvement in the black market, which they took into account when analyzing the results. Furthermore, cultural household rules such as that the head of the household, usually a man, had to answer the survey questions factored into the results as well

because this could potentially result in a bias. The IUCN-FLEG team concluded that it is important to return to the communities to reiterate their goals for the study, present the results, and describe to the community the next steps for the study and solicit their suggestions.

Outgrowth

A major outgrowth of the regional forest dependence study is the Forest Community Fingerprint (FCF) concept. FCF is a tool that synthesizes ground-based survey data from the forest dependence study and satellite imagery to analyze community dependence and depict vulnerable communities. It can be used to identify potential points of intervention in rural community development, define priorities in community development, and inform targeted forest policy and management strategies. The FCF offers a means to understand resource use and the relative resilience of forest-dependent communities without having to conduct costly and time-intensive field surveys. It has the potential to assess forest dependence in communities across the ENPI FLEG region that may be inaccessible for a number of reasons. As such, it enables far more communities to be assessed in a timely manner. FCF enables a more accurate prediction of “at-risk” communities and improves the ability to make informed assumptions about resilience and other conditions.

Up to this point, the FCF methodology has successfully been tested across sample areas in northern temperate and boreal forest ecosystems. Although it is a broad-based approach that cannot account for all possible factors that are essential to community livelihoods, it is a highly adaptive methodology that has the potential to help identify communities at risk and shed light on socio-economic conditions of forest use. In the next phases of development, the same assessment will be performed on a larger sample of forest-dependent rural communities, and the FCF will be reconstructed for communities that have not had an initial field assessment. The concept will also be tested to see if it can be applied in other forest ecosystems (e.g. tropical rainforests).

C. Lessons Learned

1. Leveraging personal connections and building new relationships: The working relationships that the CPCs have established with the focal points and government officials based on trust and cooperation have helped the IUCN-FLEG team implement activities such as the forest dependence study. Further, because of these relationships, the governments know that the IUCN is not an international organization that is only trying to advance its own agenda.
2. Involvement of native experts: Having expert CPCs that are native to the country and can speak the language helps develop positive relationships with the both government officials and the community members. The involvement of a native, local expert³ brings trust and credibility to a project. Further, it allows the community members to feel more comfortable and thus they are more likely to talk to the researchers and answer the questions truthfully.
3. A clear and well-defined task: Having a framework that clearly outlined the goals of the activity and the details of its implementation contributed to the effectiveness of the activity.

³ The FLEG program has put a premium on using local talent and is committed to building capacity throughout the ENPI East Countries and Russia.

Because the forest dependence study was unique in its methodology and application, having a defined structure and clear focus was necessary in facilitating activity implementation.

4. Identifying a compelling need: A project rooted in a compelling need ensured broad-based interest and support. In order to effectively govern natural resources, governments need tangible data that provides clear facts on how resources are being used in rural communities which provides an incentive to govern these resources more effectively. In the case of this activity, government officials recognized that they need this data in order to effectively facilitate sustainable development and build an understanding of how conserving resources provides social and economic benefits.
5. IUCN as an external oversight body: By acting as objective, unbiased actors, and hiring native people to develop and implement the project, the IUCN was able to successfully facilitate this activity as an external oversight body. Furthermore, by leaving the responsibilities of the activity to the Country Program Coordinator and field consultants, IUCN enabled the activity to be self-sustaining and able to operate and continue without their facilitation.

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Chapter 3: Facilitating Factors & Challenges in Implementing IUCN-FLEG Activities

Introduction

Despite taking place across a range of social, economic, and environmental contexts, many commonalities can be drawn across IUCN-FLEG's experiences implementing activities. Following the process of interviewing CPCs on their implementation work and writing in-depth case studies on selected activities, the team performed a cross-case analysis to identify themes that unified IUCN-FLEG's experience across its work in the ENPI and Russian region. This cross-case analysis resulted in the creation of a set of facilitating factors and challenges that were each shared across several activities.

- *Facilitating factors* describe pre-existing conditions or actions taken by IUNC-FLEG that appeared to enable the effectiveness of the program's work.
- *Challenges* describe conflicts, roadblocks, and difficulties that IUCN-FLEG had to overcome to implement its work.

This analysis describes the notable facilitating factors and challenges affecting activity implementation, identified through viewing the experiences presented in case studies as a whole. Part I overviews the facilitating factors, and Part II overviews the challenges. These factors are grouped into categories based on common themes, and are also evaluated individually through supporting examples from the case studies. The facilitating factors and challenges are not an exhaustive list of all possible examples for the full suite of IUCN-FLEG activities. They do, however, highlight prominent factors that enabled or challenged the effective implementation of the activities examined for this study. Taken as a whole, these facilitating factors and challenges presented in this section provide a descriptive overview of IUCN-FLEG's overall programmatic experience.

I. Facilitating Factors

This section identifies and assesses the prevalent factors that appeared to facilitate the effectiveness of IUCN-FLEG's activities across nine notable activities. This section also provides specific examples from the case studies to illustrate how these facilitating factors assisted the effective implementation of activities. The facilitating factors are grouped into three broad categories, which serve to highlight commonalities across the factors and how they are present in countries and activities.

CPC Characteristics and Qualifications focuses specifically on how the CPCs' skills, and personal and professional backgrounds uniquely influenced their ability to effectively engage with community, government, and NGO partners. *IUCN-FLEG's Professional Reputation and Network* explores IUCN-FLEG's ability to leverage professional relationships and set programmatic agendas that magnified the effectiveness and applicability of the program's work at the community, regional, and national level. Finally, *Program Structure and Culture of IUCN-FLEG* analyzes how IUCN-FLEG's program management style and internal and external communications influenced the program's ability to carry out activities effectively and define its role and responsibilities as an implementing partner. See Appendix F for a list of which facilitating factors were present in each activity analyzed for this report.

A. CPC Characteristics and Qualifications

The characteristics and professional qualifications of the CPCs proved invaluable to their ability to establish and leverage relationships throughout all of the activities analyzed in this report.

Native Expertise

IUCN-FLEG hired CPCs who were native to the country in which they worked and spoke the country's language, which ensured that the CPCs had a deep understanding of cultural and social cues and contexts. The CPCs were thus less likely to be perceived as "outsiders" to the communities in which they implemented activities, and community members tended to be comfortable working with and sharing information with CPCs and their field teams. As a result of this community support, there was less resistance to IUCN-FLEG's work and activity implementation was able to progress more smoothly than it might have otherwise.

A salient example of the benefits of native expertise is seen in IUCN-FLEG's work in Georgia's Tusheti Protected Landscape. Georgia CPC Marika Kavtarishvili is native to the Tusheti region, giving her an understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by how Tushetian culture shapes the political, social, and economic activities in the region. Kavtarishvili's native understanding was especially important for IUCN-FLEG's work in the Tusheti region because, according to Kavtarishvili, Tushetian communities are particularly resistant to working with outsiders due to their communities' isolation and strong sense of tradition. Given her native understanding of the Tusheti region, Kavtarishvili already had established social networks and cultural understanding in otherwise isolated communities. She leveraged her understanding of Tushetian culture, including Tushetian people's strong sense of ownership of and responsibility

for managing Tusheti's forest resources to engage community interest in local governance of the Tusheti Protected Landscape.

Pre-Existing Professional Relationships

In several cases, the effectiveness of an activity was attributed to CPCs' previously established professional relationships with government partners in the countries in which they worked. Pre-existing professional relationships and networks enabled CPCs to recognize effective communication avenues to pursue with government officials, allowing them to overcome delays that can occur when establishing new government contacts through formal channels. The CPCs were all highly qualified professionals in their countries' respective forestry sectors and had built substantial professional networks through their careers, both of which they drew upon for their work with IUCN-FLEG.

Moldova CPC Aurel Lozan formerly worked for Moldsilva, Moldova's state forestry agency. The professional relationships he established with Moldsilva officials during his career at the agency allowed him to overcome Moldsilva officials' usual distrust of outsiders to the agency. This trust established through Lozan's pre-existing professional relationships facilitated his work on behalf of IUCN-FLEG to encourage the development of a new communication strategy for Agency Moldsilva. High ranking officials in Agency Moldsilva are usually politically appointed positions and the frequent turnover in Moldova's political leadership led to corresponding changes in the Agency's leadership. Moldova's FLEG focal point, Petru Rotaru, is an officer in Moldsilva as well as a Lozan's former colleague. This relationship helped Lozan maintain the continuity and momentum of IUCN-FLEG's work with Moldsilva, by providing him with a close and sustained contact in the agency during periodic leadership changes.

The pre-existing relationships that the CPCs had with government officials also provided unique opportunities for impromptu brainstorming and informal discussion. Belarus CPC Marina Belous' experience working as a consultant for the Belarus Ministry of Environment for several years before joining the IUCN-FLEG team helped establish her credibility with the Ministry of Forestry. Belous's existing professional relationships with officials at the Ministry of Forestry enabled her to bypass official processes to arrange meetings with ministry officials (such as formal requests through letters or emails). Hence, she was able to more easily meet and discuss IUCN-FLEG's work with ministry officials. As these meetings tended to be more informal, they provided greater opportunity for robust, substantive discussions that allowed ministry officials to brainstorm ideas with Belous. This collaborative process of idea generation also instilled ministry officials with a sense of ownership in IUCN-FLEG's work.

Pre-existing professional relationships also helped IUCN-FLEG in unexpected ways. This can be seen, for example, in the case of the Ukraine CPC Roman Volosyanchuk. Volosyanchuk had a longstanding career in the forestry sector in Ukraine prior to his work with IUCN-FLEG, which provided him with strong professional connections throughout Ukraine's forestry sector. Most significantly, a number of Volosyanchuk's connections were involved in a forestry working group formed to promote policy change in light of Ukraine's 2014 political revolution. Some of these connections were elected to Ukraine's new parliament and sought to push proposed forestry sector reforms that IUCN-FLEG opposed. Because Volosyanchuk had pre-existing professional

relationships with these new parliament members, he was informed about the proposed reforms early on. This information allowed him to effectively mobilize opposition with other NGOs in order to oppose the proposed reforms, and to mediate the resulting conflict that arose between environmentalists and foresters.

Personal Relationships

Pre-existing personal relationships allowed CPCs to engage with key community members, both professionally and informally, to promote greater understanding of and interest in IUCN-FLEG's work. In most cases, these strong personal connections existed because CPCs were native to the countries in which they worked and had pursued professional careers there, which translated into opportunities for creating and leveraging further professional connections that advanced IUCN-FLEG's work.

CPC Kavtarishvili's longstanding friendship with Eristo Lagazidze, the director of the Tusheti Protected Landscape Administration (TPLA), was key in promoting Lagazidze's interest in collaborating with IUCN-FLEG. Kavtarishvili consistently engaged with Lagazidze and the TPLA in face-to-face discussions to help Lagazidze and the TPLA assess the benefits of local governance of the Tusheti Protected Landscape. These discussions provided Lagazidze with concrete ideas and options for IUCN-FLEG's strategic involvement in advancing effective management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape.

B. IUCN-FLEG's Professional Reputation and Network

The positive professional reputation and networks that IUCN-FLEG established through its previous and ongoing work in the ENPI and Russian region also facilitated the program's ability to establish new partnerships and leverage expertise and authority from existing professional relationships. See Appendix G for a list of organizations that IUCN-FLEG partnered or engaged with in the activities analyzed for this report.

Broad-Based Support

Broad-based support across sectors enhanced the accessibility of IUCN-FLEG's work to a wide range of audiences. By engaging a range of sectors in its activities, such as academia, tourism, emergency management, youth education, and the media, IUCN-FLEG attracted a diverse range of interests and perspectives from these sectors. Attracting this range of sectors enabled the program to apply its work to the needs and interests of a broader array of groups, which often led to a wider understanding and applicability of IUCN-FLEG's work amongst sectors who may have otherwise not been engaged with the program.

In assessing the readiness of Azerbaijan's forestry sector to adapt to climate change, Azerbaijan CPC Azer Garayev engaged with Azerbaijan's Ministry of Emergency Situations and Ministry of Education to promote educational outreach to the public on the impacts of climate change to forests, particularly forest fires. This engagement encouraged Azerbaijani government officials across different agencies to consider the broader applications of IUCN-FLEG's climate adaptation research in the forestry sector, and educate the public on the program's work. Further,

the engagement across sectors stimulated interest amongst government agencies in the applicability of IUCN-FLEG's climate adaptation research to sectors beyond forestry, especially since climate adaptation had not been a policy priority of Azerbaijan's national government.

Professional Networks of Expertise

Aligning program activities to the work of other NGOs, donors, and government agencies working within specific countries and across the region helped IUCN-FLEG target partners and formulate strategies needed to more effectively implement activities. These relationships also created a built-in network of support for IUCN-FLEG's work, in turn enhancing the credibility of the program's research and outcomes.

Azerbaijan CPC Garayev coordinated IUCN-FLEG's research on climate adaptation in the country's forestry sector with the interests of other climate change-focused international organizations, including the EU-funded Clima East Policy Program and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's National Focal Point in Azerbaijan. Garayev drew advice from this expert network to identify key pilot regions and communities for IUCN-FLEG's climate adaptation research. Garayev also fostered discussions within this network to build support in Azerbaijan's national government for IUCN-FLEG's research on climate change adaptation in the forestry sector, ultimately contributing to the institutionalization of some of the program's climate adaptation recommendations.

Networks of expertise that CPCs built and activated to implement their activities also built credibility for IUCN-FLEG's work and activity outcomes, particularly in the case of scientific research and surveys. In IUCN-FLEG's work on forest pest and disease management in Georgia, CPC Kavtarishvili built a network of professional and academic contacts that were involved in or advised the study. This network included experts in the Georgia Agency of Protected Areas, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and academic institutions. This supporting network of expertise ultimately served to enhance the credibility of IUCN-FLEG's scientific results with Georgian government officials, who were in turn more inclined to accept the program's findings and apply them to the protected areas management plans.

Alignment with Other Organizations' Agendas

Attentiveness to the interests and goals of other funders and implementing partners, and creating synergies between the agendas of IUCN-FLEG and these organizations contributed to activity implementation as well. Connecting IUCN-FLEG's activity objectives to those of other organizations helped create cohesive programmatic outcomes across countries and regions, and motivated the investment of additional resources from partner organizations in the program's work. Aligning activities with existing national policy agendas fostered recognition of the importance of IUCN-FLEG's work within governments, and the ensuing support from government officials helped further establish the program's credibility with government partners. The IUCN-FLEG team needed to be familiar with the range of NGO and government stakeholders within their country and region, and to understand how to align with these stakeholders' agendas.

For example, Georgia CPC Kavtarishvili recognized that the Czech Development Agency had a strong interest in continuing to invest in the development of the Tusheti region if the management responsibilities of the Tusheti Protected Landscape were more clearly defined. The expectation for sustained donor investment in the Tusheti region encouraged Akhmeta municipality to further engage with IUCN-FLEG's work in the Tusheti region to clarify the TPLA's management rights. Similarly, in IUCN-FLEG's work in Bezhanitsy, IUCN-FLEG's understanding that the Russian government wanted to promote ecotourism in Russia helped them to solicit government funds targeted at fostering new businesses and entrepreneurs to be applied to the activity.

Framing “Win-win” Scenarios

Consideration of community and stakeholder interests helped the program frame activities in a way that created linkages across the needs of implementing partners. These “win-win” scenarios were achieved by CPCs and program staff being well-informed about the interests of implementing partners such as governments, donors, and communities, and identifying a compelling need for IUCN-FLEG's work that unites partners.

In the Bezhanitsy ecotourism development alliance, IUCN-FLEG identified potential synergies between the local need for rural development near Polistovsky Nature Reserve and regional and national government policies that sought to promote ecotourism across Russia. Russia CPC Andrey Zaytsev used his expertise in facilitation and conflict mediation to guide the creation of partnership between Tsevlo community members and Nature Reserve officials in designing a plan that met the objectives of all partners and garner the support of authorities across multiple levels of government. This collaborative process developed the ecotourism development alliance as a partnership strategy to resolve the conflict that arose between Tsevlo community members' need to gather forest resources from the Preserve for subsistence use, and the existing government restrictions on removing forest resources from the Preserve. The ecotourism development alliance permits Tsevlo community members to extract non-timber forest resources to manufacture handicrafts for tourists from buffer-zones in areas surrounding the Nature Reserve. This addresses the community members' need to access forest resources necessary to their livelihoods, while also addressing the shared interest of the community and government officials of promoting sustainable management of the Preserve's forest resources.

IUCN-FLEG's ability to create linkages between activity outcomes and government needs helped government officials recognize the relevance and potential of the program's work, which encouraged government officials to support it. Because the data gathered in the Regional Forest Dependence Study offered opportunities for national and community-level development, governments recognized the value of the clear and credible quantitative data gathered in the study and supported IUCN-FLEG's work on the study. The FLEG focal point for Armenia specifically remarked that the study provided the type of clear quantitative data needed to lobby parliament for economic and political support for rural communities. Thus, IUCN-FLEG was able to facilitate the collection of data that provided important information to both the program and its implementing partners regarding the forest resource use of communities, while also providing governments with quantitative data that could help more clearly connect forestry policy goals to impacts on community forest resource use.

Engaging Key Community Partners

Identifying and creating partnerships with key leaders and locally-respected individuals in rural, forest-dependent communities facilitated IUCN-FLEG's ability to communicate their goals to the community as a whole and overcome community resistance to program activities.

In the Forest Dependence study in Belarus, a key step in implementing the community survey was to interview the village council officials in each community before conducting the household surveys. These interviews were intended to gather baseline information on the communities being surveyed and to open communication channels between IUCN-FLEG and local officials. Further, interviews with village council officials were important because they allowed IUCN-FLEG consultants and field teams to communicate to local officials that the survey was officially supported by international organizations and the Belarus Ministry of Forestry. This communication helped establish trust and reduced community members' skepticism towards the survey, as local officials were able to convey to community members the source and intention of the survey and that it was being coordinated and conducted by official institutions.

Similarly, in IUCN-FLEG's work on the Bezhanitsy ecotourism development alliance, the continued involvement of citizen community leaders like Zinaida Fevrileva was crucial to maintain community engagement. Fevrileva is a respected senior citizen with a history of community involvement in Tsevlo, whose engagement was crucial in the early stages of the alliance as she was the first community member to agree to participate. Her initial involvement effectively established the partnership between Polistovsky Nature Preserve and Tsevlo, and encouraged more community members to become involved as the partnership further developed. Maintaining a high level of involvement from community leaders, such as Fevrileva, revealed the benefits of IUCN-FLEG's work to other community members, spurring further community involvement and a higher likelihood of effective activity implementation.

IUCN-FLEG's Pre-existing Professional Relationships and Reputation

IUCN-FLEG established a positive reputation as a reliable international organization and a network of professional relationships through a history of effective action in the ENPI and Russian region in FLEG I and II. This reputation and professional network facilitated IUCN-FLEG's work with government and NGO partners by helping to instill a sense of trust and confidence in the program's work to existing and prospective partners.

Azerbaijan CPC Garayev and FLEG consultant Bariz Mehdiyev's pre-existing professional relationships with local governments in the climate adaptation study's pilot regions were critical in identifying and connecting to key stakeholders and decision-makers in the pilot regions. These professional relationships were built from previous and effective IUCN-FLEG activities in the region. Garayev emphasized the importance of these relationships built from IUCN-FLEG's previous work in Azerbaijan to his current work on Azerbaijan's forestry climate adaptation planning. He further emphasized how successful results of previous activities helped in the development of new partnerships and the inclusion of a range of stakeholders in Azerbaijan's forest sector to assist in designing IUCN-FLEG's work.

C. IUCN-FLEG Program Structure and Culture

Several structural and cultural components of the IUCN-FLEG program, such as flexible programmatic management and frequent communication amongst CPCs and program managers at the IUCN, helped to facilitate effective activity implementation.

Convener and Impartial Participant

Through its work under FLEG, IUCN maintained its neutrality and reputation as a trusted international organization by upholding its role as a convener and impartial participant. The program's focus on remaining neutral, fostering discussion, and mediating conflict contributed to the perception of IUCN's role as a trusted partner and a facilitator rather than a controlling body. This dynamic facilitated a supportive atmosphere for the CPCs to work with communities and governments. Further, serving a facilitating role in activity implementation also fostered a sense of transparency, and showed implementing partners that IUCN seeks to facilitate the needs of its partners rather than further its own agenda.

In Russia's Bezhanitsy region, CPC Zaytsev adopted a mediation role to assist in resolving the forest resource-use conflict between Tsevlo community members and Polistovsky Nature Preserve officials. Rather than seeking to advocate for a specific solution previously identified by IUCN-FLEG, Zaytsev acted as a facilitating partner to find an effective solution that would align with the sustainable forest management needs of the community and government.

Transparency of Process

IUCN-FLEG also fostered a sense of transparency in its activity implementation by being upfront with its implementing partners as to how the program would implement its work and the resources the program was and was not able to provide. This transparency helped the program remain trusted by its implementing partners throughout the activity implementation process.

Transparency about program capacity was especially important for IUCN-FLEG's work in Georgia on the forest pest and disease study. When the Georgian government solicited assistance in obtaining the technical laboratory resources needed to carry out the study's research, IUCN-FLEG clearly conveyed that they could not fund or provide these resources. Instead, negotiations with the Georgian government resulted in an alternative plan to facilitate the assistance of labs outside the country. IUCN-FLEG's ability to maintain its role as a facilitator, not a funder, and the ability to negotiate an alternative option ensured that the activity was effectively implemented.

Flexibility in Adjusting Program Scope

An ability to adjust programmatic scope and explore how to facilitate activities beyond its core expertise enabled IUCN-FLEG to be flexible in its approach to selecting activities and to seize windows of opportunity when appropriate.

In the forest pest and disease management study in Georgia, CPC Kavtarishvili negotiated with Program Coordinator Richard Aishton to facilitate technical and scientific research that was

usually beyond IUCN-FLEG's capacity. Aishton was initially concerned about taking on the forest pest and disease management activity, because the program does not have the technical capacity to conduct such scientific and technical research. Kavtarishvili and Aishton were instead able to work together to coordinate a consultant hiring process to enable technical research for the forest pest and disease management study. This ability to be flexible and expand program scope to facilitate more technical research allowed the program to build further professional credibility with the Georgian government. Further, as the Georgian government rarely contracted out such technical work when the government itself lacked the capacity, the program's ability to seize this window of opportunity to partner with the Georgian government solidified their status as a trusted and expert partner to the Georgian government.

Communication Amongst IUCN Managers and CPCs

Continuous communication between IUCN program managers and the CPCs proved essential throughout the IUCN-FLEG program. According to Moldova CPC Lozan, Program Coordinator Aishton served as an indispensable formal and informal resource for the CPCs (A. Lozan, personal communication, February 18, 2016). In addition to providing assistance on the official aspects of IUCN-FLEG's program management, Aishton was also available to the CPCs in an informal capacity to brainstorm and give advice, providing the CPCs with new ideas on how to proceed with their work. The FLEG program as a whole, and IUCN specifically, also focused on providing opportunities for in-person meetings for CPCs and FLEG program staff. The annual FLEG Steering Committee meeting, and additional IUCN-FLEG specific coordinating meetings held in the spring and fall of each year, provided opportunities for IUCN-FLEG staff and CPCs to meet in person, discuss and compare work being done in each country, and brainstorm new strategies. These in-person meetings offered opportunities for Aishton to work with the CPCs to give feedback, as well as for the CPCs to learn from each other's experiences. Overall, IUCN-FLEG's in-person meetings and frequent communication amongst CPCs and program staff helped to align the IUCN-FLEG team's goals.

Effective Team and Project Management

Characteristics built into IUCN-FLEG's program structure and fostered by Aishton and Ekaterine Otarashvili, the Project Officer, facilitated activity effectiveness. According to Aishton, the fact that Otarashvili and he took care of administrative and procurement tasks freed up time for the CPCs to focus exclusively on designing and implementing activities in their countries (R. Aishton, personal communication, February 26, 2016). This allowed more opportunity for CPCs to be creative and independent in their in-country work.

Further, when developing IUCN-FLEG activities, an emphasis on clear terms of reference, a defined activity structure, and a clear methodology helped to provide a structure roadmap. According to CPC Kavtarishvili, all CPCs were required to give precise justification for the need for each activity, and its expected outcomes (M. Kavtarishvili, personal communication, February 23, 2016). Through this process of elaborating on an activity's pros and cons and expected risks and measurable outcomes, CPCs were required to clearly define the structure of their activities and how they would be implemented. According to CPC Garayev, this strict outlining of activity

objectives and tasks also helped in more effectively assigning tasks to consultants helping with activity (A. Garayev, personal communication, March 15, 2016).

In addition, the supportive, interactive, and collaborative dynamic amongst the CPC team and Aishton's professional trust in the CPCs enabled a more effective process of developing and implementing activities. According to CPC Zaytsev, Aishton and Otashvili used their expertise of IUCN's organizational goals and objectives to help the CPCs frame their activities within IUCN's ideological framework and programmatic capacity. "This is a win-win situation, because [the CPCs] get to know and use the powerful tools and knowledge accumulated by one of the oldest international environmental NGOs in the world, and IUCN gets the opportunity to translate their approach to the [ENPI region]," noted Zaytsev (personal communication, February 16, 2016). CPC Volosyanchuk also emphasized that Aishton was cognizant of the different social, economic, and political circumstances in each country, and thus understood that activity implementation and challenges were unique to each country context (R. Volosyanchuk, personal communication, March 9, 2016).

Recognition of Key Points of Policy Intervention

IUCN-FLEG's ability to recognize when and how to seek policy change through key points of intervention facilitated their ability to leverage change through targeted preparation and action. The substantial research that CPC Kavtarishvili conducted on the legal framework governing the management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape helped her recognize the gap between the written policy and its implementation that prevented the municipality from managing the landscape effectively. Once this gap was recognized, Kavtarishvili was able to identify key partners to work with and developed strategies to pursue that would address this issue.

II. Challenges

This section analyzes the challenges that IUCN-FLEG faced across multiple countries and activities, and highlights commonalities in circumstances that led to these experiences. Some of these challenges were experienced by several CPCs across several countries and activities, while others were experienced in a single country or activity. This section also discusses how, in some cases, the CPCs' abilities to identify the cause of a challenge allowed them to implement strategies that directly addressed and overcame the challenge.

Three overarching categories of challenges are presented. *Community Resistance* examines the challenges IUCN-FLEG faced in working directly with communities, especially with regard to gaining trust, mediating conflict, and ensuring participation. *Government Transitions and Procedural Constraints* focuses on the challenges that were unique to IUCN-FLEG's work and relationships with government partners, and how the characteristics of government partners sometimes presented barriers to activity implementation. Finally, *Capacity Limitation* concerns the difficulties IUCN-FLEG faced in leveraging the program's own limited resources, and in working with partners who lacked the technical and human capacity to implement necessary work. See Appendix H for a list of which challenges were present in each activity analyzed for this report.

A. Community Resistance

IUCN-FLEG implemented activities in a range of socio-economic contexts, each requiring country and community-specific knowledge to understand the unique needs of stakeholders and implementing partners. Challenges arose from a perceived suspicion towards IUCN-FLEG's work from communities, often as a result of a general distrust toward "outsiders" in the communities. The program also faced challenges in communicating the need and importance of its activities to communities, and in communicating the role of IUCN-FLEG to on-the-ground partners. Finally, the program encountered challenges in designing its work to fit the needs and norms of community life in order to maximize the effectiveness of activities.

Distrust and suspicion for IUCN-FLEG activities

IUCN-FLEG faced distrust and suspicion from community members for several reasons: the perception of CPCs and IUCN-FLEG staff as "outsiders," the perceived intentions of IUCN-FLEG's work, and community members' suspicions toward government agencies. These challenges also speak to the divide that many communities often feel between local-level needs and the priorities of national governments, and the resulting lack of responsiveness communities perceive from national government to their local-level needs.

CPCs and field consultants sometimes faced distrust and suspicion from community members at the outset of their work due to their "outsider" status to communities. Community members could initially be less supportive of work promoted by outside groups, as it seemed unlikely to them that outsiders would understand community needs. While working in Bezhanitsy, Russian CPC Zaytsev had to overcome community members' initial suspicions of IUCN-FLEG's outsider status. According to Zaytsev, community members distrust policies and programs

advocated by the federal government or people living in large urban centers like Moscow since, from their perspective, these groups do not have a strong understanding of rural communities like Bezhanitsy and are not particularly interested in creating beneficial policies for these areas. However, because the IUCN office in Moscow implemented a project in Bezhanitsy in 2006, community members in Bezhanitsy had already experienced IUCN's commitment and ability to understand and be responsive to the community's needs. This previous engagement in the community helped overcome community suspicion.

Because IUCN-FLEG often partnered with government agencies, the program faced the challenge of community distrust of governments while implementing activities as well. According to Armenia CPC Luba Balyan, Armenian rural communities often feel the national government does not have an understanding of or respond to their local needs. This distrust and suspicion of community members towards government agencies could also be attributed to the ineffectiveness and corruption in government institutions in many ENPI countries, as well as the memories of older community members of transgressions by the Soviet regime. As a result, IUCN-FLEG faced suspicion towards questions posed to community members in surveys for the Roadshows activity, as community members interpreted the surveys as government investigations into their forest use and were wary of participating.

CPCs and field teams also encountered distrust and suspicion to surveys they conducted as a part of their work, especially due to the nature of their questions and which community members they sought to speak with. For example, some community members thought that the Regional Forest Dependence Study was attempting to uncover illegal forestry activities in communities, which is why community members underreported their use of forest products. IUCN-FLEG recognized this behavior, and had to factor in the underreporting as they interpreted the survey's results.

Skepticism of need for IUCN-FLEG's work

IUCN-FLEG faced skepticism from community members regarding the need for the program's work in the community. They also faced doubt regarding the potential for success in IUCN-FLEG's activities. This skepticism and doubt was especially prevalent when activities involved promoting economic initiatives around behavior change or sustainable resource use that differed from a community's traditional economy or social norms.

In Russia, IUCN-FLEG worked with Bezhanitsy community members to engage them in ecotourism activities that could convert their traditional subsistence use of forest products to businesses catered to tourists, providing community members with larger economic benefits. However, as this type of economic activity was new to community members, there was skepticism towards the potential success of this strategy. To address community members' doubts of the benefits of ecotourism, CPC Zaytsev hosted a workshop that brought together community members from Belarus and Russia to learn about successful ecotourism models in their respective communities. Through interacting with Belarussian community members to learn about agrotourism initiatives in Belarus, Bezhanitsy community members saw tangible and relatable examples of how ecotourism could be economically sustainable in their own community. By recognizing the source of community members' skepticism towards the activity, the IUCN-FLEG

team addressed skepticism directly by providing community members with tangible examples from sources that were more credible to the community.

Ensuring a broad spectrum of community participation

IUCN-FLEG often faced challenges in ensuring participation from a broad spectrum of community members when activities involved surveying communities to gain an understanding of community life. In Armenia, CPC Balyan faced the challenge of ensuring equal participation and input across genders in the Roadshows events, as a result of daily and seasonal work schedules in surveyed communities. Recognizing that unequal gender participation was due to community members' conflicting schedules rather than lack of interest in or pushback to IUCN-FLEG's work, Balyan scheduled Roadshows events for times when a broad representation of community members would be available and in-person meetings more feasible.

Existing tension amongst stakeholders

In some cases, IUCN-FLEG faced challenges due to existing tensions amongst stakeholders, and needed to navigate these conflicts while remaining perceived as an impartial advisor. Existing tensions amongst political stakeholders in the forestry sector was the main challenge faced by CPC Volosyanchuk during the Open Letter activity, given the historical tensions in Ukraine between foresters and environmentalists over forest management issues. When IUCN opposed the Ukraine Parliament's proposal to ban forestry exports in the Open Letter activity, other environmental organizations in Ukraine assumed IUCN's stance was in support of the forestry industry. Volosyanchuk had to rely heavily on his professional networks to mediate this misunderstanding through communication and roundtable discussion, and to also create wider understanding for the need to oppose the proposed reforms. Existing tensions amongst stakeholders imperiled IUCN's ability to maintain its status as an unbiased partner and required Volosyanchuk to act decisively to ensure misunderstandings were mitigated.

B. Government Transitions and Procedural Constraints

Partnerships with government agencies were crucial to the effectiveness of many activities. Yet in many cases, partnerships with government agencies were inherently uncertain due to barriers created by politics, frequent leadership changes, and bureaucratic structures.

Changing government leadership

Changes in government leadership and resulting uncertainty of new government leaderships' interest in IUCN-FLEG's work posed a significant challenge to activities that required close partnerships with government agencies. In some cases, political regime shifts caused changes in government leadership. Further unexpected changes occurred when agency officials were dismissed or left their posts. Even when new government leadership was supportive of IUCN-FLEG's work, new government officials needed to be updated on the program's accomplishments and goals before new initiatives could be implemented. This further delayed activity implementation.

Issues associated with changing government leadership were present in the Belarus Forest Dependence study, when IUCN-FLEG's key contacts within the forestry agency were unexpectedly dismissed or left their posts. It was important for IUCN-FLEG to be aware of the goals and interests of the new officials who replaced these contacts, in order to quickly react to new officials' stance on the program's work. Regardless, both unexpected and expected changes in government leadership have the potential to cause uncertainty or delays in the implementation of activities, especially if the new administration or agency employees are uncertain about their support for IUCN-FLEG's work or its benefits.

Government delays

The timelines of many IUCN-FLEG activities were closely tied to the cooperation of government agencies, and threats of potential government delays posed a significant risk and challenge. These delays could be caused by bureaucracy; they could also relate to intentional choices by government agencies or elected officials to postpone activity implementation, depending on their desire to prioritize the activity relative to other needs. For example, CPC Kavtarishvili in Georgia needed to be very aware of the Georgian government's stake in the process of transferring the Tusheti Protected Landscape from national to local management. Without the Georgian government's continued interest and cooperation in the transfer process, IUCN-FLEG's work in the Tusheti region would not have moved forward.

Shifting the institutional culture of government agencies

Some IUCN-FLEG activities promoted a shift in government agency management or behaviors that signaled a significant change for the operations and work culture of the agency, further contributing to government officials' suspicion. For example, in the Moldovan CPC's work on the Moldsilva website, some Moldsilva government officials felt that there was little benefit to sharing information with the public on their operations because it had not been done by the agency previously. Because information sharing and communication with the public had not been done before, Moldsilva officials felt that information sharing would instead expose the agency's activities to corruption inquiries. Similarly, when implementing the Forest Dependence study in Belarus, CPC Belous encountered pushback from government officials who did not see the importance of the survey data because they did not understand the potential impact of the study or how it aligned with traditional forestry operations. Although Belous was able to convince officials of the benefits community-level data could provide for forestry management, it was not typical for government officials to change their opinions in this way.

C. Capacity Limitations

Finally, activity implementation was challenged by the limited resources and capacity of the IUCN-FLEG program or implementation partners.

Resource limitations

While adequate funding, adequate time to implement broad-ranging activities or surveys, and access to technological resources are common limiting factors across many international

programs, these resource limitations affected IUCN-FLEG's ability to implement and scale-up activities in unique ways.

Gaining access to the funds required to scale-up activities often proved challenging. For example, IUCN-FLEG sought to scale up the ecotourism strategies employed in Bezhanitsy to communities across Russia. However, for this activity the program deliberately chose to not give money to community members in Bezhanitsy for starting or building up their ecotourism businesses, since the focus was on finding a way to make these businesses locally sustainable. Instead, IUCN-FLEG funded the salaries of CPC Zaytsev and other experts, who gave community members guidance and advice. The challenge to other communities seeking to establish similar sustainable rural development partnerships is thus to find funding for themselves. Unfortunately, if there are not further sources of funding available, especially given EU sanctions on Russia and Russia's recent economic downturn, there may be a lower chance of replicating this activity successfully across a broader geographic scale.

IUCN-FLEG also faced challenges in planning for and accomplishing the requirements within limited timelines, especially activities that required substantial preparation time. Because of budget and time constraints, the design of the Forest Dependence Survey was not able to include a control area (such as steppe or agricultural areas) in its analysis to more accurately assess forest use across topographical regions. Although the survey ultimately provided a large amount of data, there were some challenges in characterizing this information due to the lack of a control group.

Finally, in some cases, IUCN-FLEG's implementing partners lacked the technical resources and capacity to meet the needs of activities. In Georgia's forest disease and pest management study, the Georgian government lacked the specialized labs needed to process and analyze field research samples. IUCN-FLEG was eventually able to leverage its regional professional network to connect with labs with the necessary technical capacity in Ukraine and Poland; however, this activity experienced delays nonetheless.

Human capacity limitations

Human capacity limitations, such as lacking implementation partners with the specialized expertise or professional skills to implement activities, also posed a challenge to implementing and sustaining IUCN-FLEG's work. In the Georgia Tusheti case, IUCN-FLEG did not anticipate the lack of professional and administrative capacity that delayed implementing management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape. Even though parts of their work in the region focused on building this human capacity, it is still too early to tell how effective IUCN-FLEGs efforts towards capacity building will be.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

Introduction

This report has documented and analyzed nine notable activities of the IUCN-FLEG program. The program represents an innovative approach for implementing provisions of the St. Petersburg Declaration. Rather than following a top-down implementation strategy, similar to those traditionally associated with large scale internationally funded programs, the IUCN chose a locally-tailored bottom-up approach. The individual case study analyses in Chapter 2 highlight many accomplishments associated with IUCN-FLEG activities in six countries in Eastern Europe and Russia. The cross-case analysis of facilitating factors and challenges in Chapter 3 highlights several key factors that were evident across the activities and that appear to have made a significant difference to the effectiveness of the program. Reflecting on these accomplishments, facilitating factors and challenges two overarching themes emerged that help explain the functioning and effectiveness of the program.

I. Qualities of the IUCN Team and its Culture

The first theme that emerged from our analysis refers to the qualities of the IUCN-FLEG team as professionals and the ideals that guided their work in the program. To a large extent, it were these characteristics that clearly mattered to the program's impact in the countries where it was implemented.

A team highly committed to changing forest governance

The team, both on-the-ground in the individual countries and the program staff at IUCN headquarters in Gland, was comprised of exceptionally knowledgeable individuals who were native to and experts about their countries and the region. They were clearly committed to the objectives of the program, and were collaborative in their approach. Despite working in notably different countries on notably different activities, they maintained close communication with each other, sharing ideas, discussing challenges and offering advice. The team culture clearly valued and promoted an open-minded learning approach. They were a team in the true sense of the word.

Associated with the team's commitment to transform forest governance in their countries was their ability to connect with similarly committed professionals on the ground. At times, emerging democracies and developing countries in general are assumed to lack sufficient human capacity to successfully perform deep-rooted, long lasting institutional reforms. IUCN's experience in the region is a clear example that this assumption is not always correct. Eastern Europe and Russia proved to have a robust group of people who shared IUCN-FLEG's country program coordinators concerns, values, ideals and objectives for forest governance and were therefore able to find qualified collaborators to effectively implement their activities.

IUCN's objectives as a leading environmental conservation institution

The IUCN brings together a wide range of environmental organizations and actively seeks to build a collaborative network with local environmental groups, governments and international entities in order to advance the conservation of natural resources. This overarching institutional objective provides them with the capacity to work as facilitators and mediators for advancing natural resource conservation. The activities implemented by the IUCN under the FLEG program provide excellent examples of the transformative potential of the IUCN's value proposition (IUCN, 2008) in fostering a veritable change in the perception, valuation and governance of forests. By staying committed to the provision of credible, trusted knowledge and emphasizing their role as conveners and partnership builders, the IUCN-FLEG team was not only able to promote change in the locations where activities were implemented but also lay the groundwork for future change across the ENPI region.

II. Qualities of the IUCN-FLEG Program and its Strategic Approach

The second theme we identified as conducive for the IUCN-FLEG's effectiveness refers to how the ideals of the IUCN as an institution and the IUCN team's commitment to improve forest governance in the region informed an innovative and adaptive program implementation strategy. This particular strategy has several noteworthy elements described below.

Understanding and adapting to the socio-political context

The IUCN-FLEG team showed a remarkable capacity to adapt to the institutional and socio-political context in which they were operating (post-Soviet countries undergoing a deep-rooted reform and institutional transformation process). Understanding the context in which they operated meant that the team focused on clarifying their role as assistants to these institutions' own process and determine how to collaborate with them in the most resource-effective and impactful manner. The same is true in identifying the incentives and needs of communities who oftentimes felt neglected by governments and were suspicious of outsiders. We believe this approach enabled the team to gain the trust of communities and government officials in these countries and encourage them to participate in unconventional activities that promised great benefits. The team showed deep understanding of the complex underlying socio-political context and insecurities generated by international organizations collaborating with governments in emerging democracies to transform their institutions.

Similarly, by focusing on facilitating existing, perhaps incipient, reform processes permitted the IUCN to maximize the breath of their activities by committing a smaller amount of resources (both human and financial) than if they were leading processes themselves. Sometimes, this strategy included performing experimental activities that responded to specific government research and information needs, with the hope that the reputation, trust and information obtained from them would provide dividends in the future. Finally, playing the role of facilitators fostered ownership by the parties involved in each activity, increasing the likelihood of their continuity independent of the IUCN-FLEG program.

Performing strategic experiments

At the same time, the IUCN-FLEG team's highly adaptive approach implied being opportunistic and flexible when selecting and designing activities. In general, implemented projects were specifically tailored to the particular needs of the community or government agency and the circumstances that gave rise to the activity itself. However, each member of the IUCN-FLEG team always kept in mind how the implementation of each activity could contribute to the broader goals of the FLEG program. Similarly, the activities pursued by the IUCN-FLEG team highlight their talent in identifying projects that would contribute to progressive changes in people's perception of the value of forests, how they should be governed, and the structure of legislation and institutions in charge of their stewardship.

At times, the activity selection and design process meant pushing the boundaries of standard projects performed by the IUCN. This process required the IUCN-FLEG team's vision within each country along with a great deal of flexibility and trust at the program's coordination level. The IUCN-FLEG team also recognized the potential for higher effectiveness achieving their long-term outcomes by nurturing a strategic balance between working within current legislative frameworks to foster an inside-driven transformation and pushing emphatically for legislative changes.

Tapping into the potential of local human capacity

By combining the use of local human capital and emphasizing the role of IUCN-FLEG as a facilitator of reforms, the program empowered a diverse set of people to transform their countries' forestry sector. For instance, IUCN-FLEG's work raised forestry agencies' awareness of the forest issues and needs that citizens of rural forest-dependent communities were experiencing. It also raised awareness on the rights that communities are entitled to relating the use of forest resources. It also provided some of these communities with the opportunity to start small scale businesses using non-timber forest resources sustainably; simultaneously diversifying their livelihoods and collaborating with changing their perceptions on the value of forests and the benefits of active stewardship.

IUCN's work empowered forestry agencies by providing credible data to inform future forest policy or change forest legislation. In this sense, the program provides an example of how bridges can be built in order to incorporate scientific knowledge and its principles with the economic and social aspects of natural resource management. On occasion, it empowered officials within forestry agencies to take steps towards higher transparency and accountability by providing expert advice and assistance in bridging the gap with other local professionals from different disciplines. Finally, IUCN's work also enabled collaboration between scientists or forest-dependent citizens across different countries, expanding the possibilities of learning and taking advantage of the expertise held by people in the region.

III. Final Observations

In the end, the IUCN-FLEG program can be characterized as a process that generated synergies within and across multiple actors (governments, NGOs, citizens) involved in forestry sectors in Eastern Europe and Russia. The IUCN's FLEG program presents a noteworthy example of how to effectively bridge the tensions between local and large scale forest governance objectives, tensions that are common to all natural resource governance. In this sense, the IUCN's work contributes to the broader dialogue surrounding natural resource governance from a perspective of multi-layered human and ecosystem interactions. The ICUN-FLEG program was able to navigate the seemingly opposed objectives of reducing the negative impacts of illegal forest use while promoting the equitable use and stewardship of forest resources, a feat nothing short of remarkable. We believe this provides evidence of the consequential impact that avoiding human exclusionary conservation strategies and taking into account the multiple layers of ecosystem, human and institutional interactions, discussed by Berkes (2007), can have for appropriate natural resource governance.

References

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- IUCN. (2008). *A 2020 Vision for IUCN, A Global Union for Sustainability* (April 2008-final version).

Appendices

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Appendix A: Narrative Interview Questions

Introduction: “This interview is intended to extract the story of the activity from beginning to end and understand the process that went into developing it. It will play out like a conversation between the Country Coordinator and student and there will be follow up interviews that will probe more detail.”

Phase 1 (pre-activity) – Country considerations & Aspirations

1. Please explain how the idea for this activity began? Was there a specific issue or need that sparked this?
2. Were there any cultural or regional needs that had direct influence over this activity selection?
3. What influenced your decision to commit to this activity?
4. Who did you initially think of reaching out to for further information? (NGOs, professionals, academics, etc.)
5. How did the needs or interests of other FLEG partner organizations influence the selection of this activity? Or did they?

Phase 2 – Initial Activity Goals and Context

1. What were the initial goals of the activity and how were these goals determined?
2. Who suggested that this activity was needed and could prove to be effective? Did the proposal undergo any negotiations?
3. How is this IUCN activity different from past IUCN activities?
4. How was the activity an innovative approach to achieving FLEG’s objectives?
5. Was there any cultural context or country need that has influence over the activity?

Phase 3 – Activity Implementation

1. What specific steps or procedures were necessary in order to implement this activity? What are some specific examples?
2. What factors were particularly helpful in implementation of this activity?
3. What challenges, both anticipated and unanticipated, did you encounter when implementing this activity?
 - a. (How did you address these challenges?)
 - b. (Were some challenges insurmountable, if so, why?)
 - c. (How did you overcome implementation challenges?)
4. How did the region’s social, political, or economic context affect implementation of this activity?
5. What relationships or partnerships helped the implementation of the activity? Were there pre-existing relationships? If not, how did they come to be during activity implementation?

Phase 4 – Outcomes & Results

1. What was accomplished as a result of this activity?
2. What qualities make the activity a success for IUCN and the FLEG program?
3. Has the activity influenced institutional change towards sustainable forest management? How has this activity generated a change in country institutions, legislation, forest management culture and practices, forest access and use?
4. Did the results of the activity prompt further analysis or replication by other organizations in different regions of the world?
5. Have additional activities been planned or implemented that build off the success of the original activity?
6. In what aspects does the activity’s results contribute to the implementation of elements of the St. Petersburg Declaration?
7. In retrospect, would you approach this activity development any differently? Would you consult with any different individuals or organizations? Start in a different way?

Appendix B: Forest Dependence Study Interview Questions

1. What is the importance of the FD studies in your country?
2. What kinds of things did the government in your country see as important within the FD work?
3. Has the government expressed interest in continuing the FD work, if so: Why is the Government choosing to continuing the FD work?
4. Was this activity influenced by the Forest Dependency studies, or did it influence the creation of the Forest Dependency studies?
5. How does a greater understanding of the specific forest materials that local communities depend improve forest management-related decision making by centralized government?
6. Alternatively, how does the understanding of community needs provided by the forest dependency survey facilitate efforts to shift forest governance to local control?

Appendix C: Interview List

Interviewee	Role	Date	Topic
Aishton, Richard	Program Coordinator	7/6/2015	Regional Forest Dependence Study
		8/4/2015	Regional Forest Dependence Study follow-Up
Balyan, Luba	CPC - Armenia	7/13/2015	Roadshows
		7/13/2015	Citizen Monitoring*
		7/14/2015	Roadshows follow-up
		7/15/2015	Citizen Monitoring follow-up*
Belous, Marina	CPC - Belarus	7/20/2015	Forest Dependence Study - Belarus
		7/21/2015	Forest Dependence Study - Belarus follow-up
Garayev, Azer	CPC - Azerbaijan	7/13/2015	Climate Adaptation
		7/14/2015	Climate Adaptation follow-up
Kavtarishvili, Marika	CPC - Georgia	7/14/2015	Pest and Disease Management
		7/14/2015	Tusheti
		7/15/2015	Pest and Disease Management follow-up
		7/15/2015	Tusheti follow-up
Lozan, Aurel	CPC - Moldova	8/3/2015	Forest Inventory*
		8/3/2015	Antis-Moldsilva
		8/4/2015	Forest Inventory follow-up*
		8/5/2015	Antis-Moldsilva follow-up
Volosyanchuk, Roman	CPC - Ukraine	8/3/2015	Social Impact*
		8/4/2015	Open Letter
		8/5/2015	Open Letter follow-up
Zaytsev, Andrey	CPC - Russia	8/3/2015	Bezhanitsy
		8/4/2015	Bezhanitsy follow-up

*denotes interview for activity not chosen for case study analysis

Appendix D: IUCN-FLEG Program Coordination Email Survey Questions

Questions sent to Richard Aishton – Program Coordinator & Ekaterine Otarashvili – Project Officer:

1. What were your objectives and concerns in administering this program?
2. What specifically did you try to do in order to help guide and support country-level activity?
3. What was particularly challenging about administering this program?

Questions sent to the IUCN CPCs:

1. What was particularly helpful for you in how the IUCN-FLEG program was administered?
2. What were some specific things that Richard and Ekaterine (and/or others at IUCN) did that helped as you identified and implemented activities in your country?
3. In what ways, if at all, was the NPAC helpful to your work?
4. In what ways, if at all, was the JCT helpful to your work?
5. What was particularly challenging about how the program was administered?
6. In hindsight, what else might have been helpful to you as you undertook activities in your country?

Appendix E: IUCN-FLEG Program Coordination Email Survey Respondents

Respondent	Role	Date of response
Aishton, Richard	ENPI FLEG Program Coordinator	2/26/2016
Balyan, Luba	CPC - Armenia	3/10/2016
Belous, Marina	CPC - Belarus	3/11/2016
Garayev, Azer	CPC - Azerbaijan	3/15/2016
Kavtarishvili, Marika	CPC - Georgia	2/23/2016
Lozan, Aurel	CPC - Moldova	2/18/2016
Otarashvili, Eka	ENPI FLEG Program Officer	2/16/2016
Volosyanchuk, Roman	CPC - Ukraine	3/9/2016
Zaytsev, Andrey	CPC - Russia	2/16/2016

Appendix F: Questionnaire for Forestry Sector Professionals – Climate Change Adaptation

1. Organizational information

- Is your organization involved climate change related issues or forest management? If yes, how?
- Could you please describe structure of management of climate change related issues or forest management within your organization?
- How many staff do you have?

2. Understanding of the problem

- Do you have any information on climate change and its impact to different sectors of economy, as well to forest areas?
- Could you please describe existing problems related to climate change negative impact to forest?
- Are there any activities implemented or planned related to climate change mitigation and adaptation of forests?
- What are the main type of forests most vulnerable to climate change tendencies?

3. Current capacity and knowledge

- How you can evaluate knowledge and capacity on climate change impact to forests?
- What is the reason of weak capacity and knowledge?
- How could it be increased?
- Does your organization organize any capacity building activity on climate change adaptation of forests?
- Does your staff participate at any capacity building activity related to climate change organized in the framework of national or international projects?
- Do you think that international practice in on climate change adaptation of forests could be applied in our country?
- What are the main obstacles? Institutional structure or legislative basis? Or low level of awareness?

source: ENPI FLEG. (2015a, January). *National Report Azerbaijan – Final report on climate change impact (including social and economic impact) to local forests of Azerbaijan, as well on relevant capacities on climate change mitigation and adaptation* (Rep). Retrieved from <http://www.enpi-fleg.az/post/final-assessment-report-of-the-national-consultant-on-technical-support-for-the-development-of-local-adaptation-to-climate/>.

Appendix G: Full List of Facilitating Factors for each Case Study

Facilitating Factors	Azerbaijan	Armenia	Belarus	Georgia - Pest Management	Georgia - Tusheti	Moldova	Russia	Ukraine	Regional Forest Dependence Study
CPCs' Characteristics and Qualifications									
Native Expertise	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pre-Existing Professional Relationships	x		x	x		x		x	x
Personal Relationships					x			x	
IUCN-FLEG's Professional Reputation and Network									
Broad-Based Support	x				x	x	x		
Professional Networks of Expertise	x	x	x	x			x		x
Alignment with Other Organizations' Agendas	x	x		x	x		x	x	x
Framing Win-win Scenarios			x				x		x
Engaging Key Community Partners		x	x		x		x		x
IUCN-FLEG's Pre-existing Professional Relationships and Reputation	x		x	x		x		x	x
IUCN-FLEG Program Structure and Culture									
Convener and Impartial Participant		x	x			x	x	x	x
Transparency of Process		x	x	x				x	x
Flexibility in Adjusting Program Scope		x		x					
Communication Amongst IUCN-FLEG Leadership and CPCs			x	x					x
Delegation of Management and Collaborative Structure		x	x						x
Recognition of Key Points of Policy Intervention		x	x		x		x		x

Appendix H: List of Partner Organizations for each Case Study (except Regional)

	Azerbaijan	Armenia	Belarus	Georgia - Pest Management	Georgia - Tusheti	Moldova	Russia	Ukraine
NGO		Armenian Forests		Caucasus Environmental NGO Network		Ecological Movement of Moldova	Union for Conserving the Mental Health of the Youth	Forest Stewardship Council, WWF
Government	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Education	Hyantar (Armenia Forestry Agency), Ministry of Agriculture	Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Environment	Agency of Protected Areas, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, National Forestry Agency, Buxus Survival Committee	National Forestry Agency, Tusheti Protected Landscape Administration	Moldsilva Forestry Agency, Forest Research and Management Institute	Polistovsky Nature Preserve, Ministry of Natural Resources, Education Ministry	State Forestry Agency
International	Clima East, UNFCCC		Global Environment Facility	EU Twinning	Czech Development Agency		Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark	
Academic			Gomel State University, Belarusian State Technological University	Ukrainian National Forestry University (Lviv), DIBAF University of Tuscia, Viterbo, Forest Research institute, Warsaw				

Appendix I: Full List of Challenges for each Case Study

Challenges	Azerbaijan	Armenia	Belarus	Georgia - Pest Management	Georgia - Tusheti	Moldova	Russia	Ukraine	Regional Forest Dependence Study
Community Resistance									
Distrust and suspicion for IUCN-FLEG activities		x	x			x			x
Skepticism of need for IUCN-FLEG's work	x								x
Ensuring a broad spectrum of community participation		x	x				x		x
Existing tension amongst stakeholders							x	x	
Government Transitions and Procedural Constraints									
Changing government leadership			x			x		x	
Government Delays					x				
Shifting the institutional culture of government agencies				x		x			
Capacity Limitations									
Resource Limitations			x	x			x		x
Human Capacity Limitations				x	x				

Appendix J: Acronyms

ADC - Austrian Development Corporation

APA - Agency of Protected Areas (Georgia)

CPC - Country Program Coordinator

ENPI - European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument

EC - European Commission

EU - European Union

FLEG - Forest Law Enforcement and Governance

FSC - Forest Stewardship Council

FTA - Free Trade Agreement

IO - Implementing Organization

IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

NFA - National Forestry Agency (Georgia)

TPLA - Tusheti Protected Landscape Administration

UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

WWF - World Wide Fund for Nature

Appendix K: IUCN-FLEG Contacts

IUCN Staff

Aishton, Richard - ENPI FLEG Program Coordinator

Otarashvili, Ekaterine - ENPI FLEG Program Officer

IUCN Country Program Coordinators

Balyan, Luba - CPC Armenia

Belous, Marina - CPC Belarus

Garayev, Azer - CPC Azerbaijan

Kavtarishvili, Marika - CPC Georgia

Lozan, Aurel - CPC Moldova

Volosyanchuk, Roman - CPC Ukraine

Zaytsev, Andrey - CPC Russia

Relevant FLEG Focal Points

Martun Matevosyan - Armenia, Director of Hayantar SNCO

Ibrahimov, Rahim - Azerbaijan, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources

Kulik, Alexander - Belarus, Ministry of Forestry

Rotaru, Petro – Moldova, Agency Moldsilva

Relevant FLEG Consultants

Bakkegaard, Riyong Kim - Regional Forest Dependence

Erik Grigoryan, Armenia

Nazeli Vardanyan, Armenia

Inga Zarafyan, Armenia

Amalya Hambartsumyan, Armenia

Mehdiyev, Bariz – Azerbaijan

Lazarava, Maryna - Belarus

Matchavariani, Merab - Georgia (Tusheti Protected Landscape Management Plan)

Matsiakh, Iryna - Georgia (Forest Disease and Pest Management Study)

Appendix L: About the ENPI FLEG II Program

The ENPI East Countries FLEG II Program — Complementary Measures for Georgia and Armenia is being implemented by the World Bank in partnership with WWF and IUCN. It complements the EU-funded FLEG II Program. The objectives of the Program are to support Georgia and Armenia in strengthening forest governance through improving implementation of relevant international processes, enhancing their forest policy, legislation and institutional arrangements, and developing, testing and evaluating sustainable forest management models at the local level on a pilot basis for future replication. The three specific Program objectives are: Implementation of the 2005 St. Petersburg FLEG Ministerial Declaration and ensuring continuation of the process launched in 2005 (regional level); Formulation and implementation of sustainable forest sector policies, including legal and administrative reforms for sustainable forest management and protection (national level); and demonstration of best sustainable forest management practices in targeted areas for further replication (sub-national level). The overall objective of the complementary EU-funded Program is to promote sustainable forest governance, management, and protection of forests in the participating Program countries, ensuring the contribution of the region's forests to climate change adaptation and mitigation, to ecosystems and biodiversity protection, and to sustainable livelihoods and income sources for local populations and national economies.

Project Partner



AUSTRIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) supports countries in Africa, Asia, South Eastern and Eastern Europe as well as the Caribbean in their sustainable development. The Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (MFA) plans ADC strategies. Austrian Development Cooperation aims at reducing poverty, conserving natural resources and promoting peace and human security in partner countries. Long-term programmes and projects support help towards self-help. The ultimate goal is to bring about a sustainable improvement in conditions of life. <http://www.entwicklung.at>



WORLD BANK

The World Bank Group is one of the world's largest sources of knowledge and funding for its 188 member-countries. The organizations that make up the World Bank Group are owned by the governments of member nations, which have the ultimate decision-making power within the organizations on all matters, including policy, financial or membership issues. The World Bank Group comprises five closely associated institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA), which together form the World Bank; the International Finance Corporation (IFC); the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA); and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). Each institution plays a distinct role in the World Bank Group's mission to end extreme poverty by decreasing the percentage of people living on less than \$1.25 a day to no more than 3 percent, and promote shared prosperity by fostering the income growth of the bottom 40 percent for every country. For additional information please visit: <http://www.worldbank.org>, <http://www.ifc.org>, <http://www.miga.org>



IUCN

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. IUCN's work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development. IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world, and brings governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organisation, with more than 1,200 government and NGO members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 45 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world. www.iucn.org



WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with almost 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption. www.panda.org