

Discussion on Transboundary Integrated Resources Management Plans (IRMPs) for the Khrami-Debeda and Alazani-Iori River Basins



On October 28 2010, in the Armenian Branch Office of the Regional Ecological Center of Caucasus (RECC) a round-table discussion on the Transboundary Integrated Resources Management Plans (IRMPs) developed for 11 communities of Lori region of Armenia (Alaverdi (Sanahin, Akner, and Madan), Aqori, Dsegh, Tumanyan, Qarinj, Marts, Akhtala, Shnogh, Shamlugh, Neghots, and Teghut) within the framework of the regional (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) project for Sustainable Land Management for Mitigating Land Degradation and Reducing Poverty in the South Caucasus Region was held. This EU-funded project being jointly implemented by REC Caucasus and CENN NGO (Georgia) aims to bring into focus the land degradation related issues and

challenges existing in the transboundary areas of the Khrami-Debeda and Alazani-Iori river basins and, in collaboration with local communities, develop Sustainable Land Management Plans for this areas, which will allow giving effective solutions to the above land degradation issues.



The round-table meeting was attended by the representatives of the Green Lane NGO, which is the project partner organization in Armenia, members of the Project Steering Committee and the expert group, local coordinators, representatives of the target communities, respective ministries, governmental bodies and other stakeholder organizations.

Introductory speeches were delivered by Ms. Nune Harutyunyan, the Director of the REC Caucasus Armenian Branch Office, and Ms. Nune Sarukhanyan, the President of the Green Lane NGO and the Project National Coordinator. They made brief presentations on the project history, its goals and objectives and

mentioned that the current stage of the project is the follow-up of the activities implemented last year. In 2009, the project expert group conducted a comprehensive study on the land degradation related problems in the target communities of Lori region. Based on the findings and outcomes, a report was developed that described the survey's findings and confirmed that this region is currently facing a number of challenges related to the land degradation process, which directly results in the loss of biodiversity, increased poverty and other issues.



At the current stage of the project, based on the results of the above survey, meetings have been held in the target communities with strong participation from the representatives of the local governments, stakeholder organizations and communities to identify together the most urgent environmental, economic and social challenges imposed by the land degradation and desertification processes and outline possible solutions to them. The above-mentioned Integrated Resources Management Plans are the direct output of those meetings.

The activities implemented by the project team and the results and outcomes of the meetings held in the communities were presented by the project local coordinators Ms. Ruzanna Mirzoyan and Ms. Anush Evoyan. They mentioned that during the meetings facilitated by the project implementation team participants identified, mapped and prioritized the problems existing in each target community. The results were summarized in tables showing the issues pointed out by the participants of the meetings along with possible solutions as viewed by the local population. The data summarized in the tables will be further analyzed by the expert group to be properly integrated into Sustainable Land Management Plans and pilot projects to be implemented in the target communities at the final stage of the project to contribute to solution of some most urgent issues.



In his speech, Mr. Samvel Galstyan, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Armenia, said that he appreciated the work done and dedication demonstrated by the project team.

- We have stressed many times that it's necessary to make agriculture a priority on the national economic development agenda but unfortunately we have not yet formalized this need, - mentioned the Deputy Minister.

Mr. Galstyan pointed out the fact that Armenia is significantly affected by the global financial and economic crisis.

- In this situation, failing to create necessary infrastructure and make investments in agriculture will lead us to even more severe crisis, - stressed the Deputy Minister.



Mr. Ashot Vardevanyan, the Deputy Director of the Bio-Resource Management Agency of the Ministry of Nature Protection of the RA and the Chairman of the Project Steering Committee, drew attention of the participants to the fact that knowledge sharing had to be one of the most significant components of this project. He stressed that for each issue systematic and comprehensive approach to problem solving had to be adopted. By way of example, Mr. Vardevanyan mentioned that the issue of reconstruction of roads raised by the communities had to be solved according to the Land Zoning Schemes developed by the Government of Armenia. He stressed also particular importance of sustainable pasture management and emphasized the need for national legislation on pasture management.

This latter issue was brought into focus also by Mr. Paruyr Fendyan, the Dean of the Department of Hydroamelioration, Land Management and Land Registry of the Armenian State Agrarian University and a member of the Project Steering Committee. Mr. Fendyan stressed that pasture allocation decisions had to be made only on a competitive basis with clear selection criteria and procedures.

Giving his opinion on the outcomes obtained by the project and the activities to be still implemented, Mr. Ashot Voskanyan, the Head of the Agricultural Policies and Extension Chair of the Armenian State Agrarian University and a member of the Project Steering Committee, stressed the importance of providing publicity to this project, its outcomes and outputs. He has emphasized that the project team has to make its best to deliver the findings and results of the studies, surveys and analysis made under the project to the respective policymakers (ministries, governmental agencies, etc) to ensure that the outcomes and outputs of the project become a factual data that can be used by the governmental bodies in decision-making process for development of national policies and strategies.