

Case Study

Enhanced Relevance and Sustainability of FPUAs and Federations for Forest Management

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Enhanced relevance and sustainability of FPUAs and Federations for forest management.

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Interviews with Mark Vata, chairperson of Ana e Malit Forest and Pastures Users Association (FPUA) and other members; Sokol Guri, chairperson of Shkodra Regional forest federation and other board members, during November 2019-February 2020;

When: This case study refers to the period November 2019 - April 2020

Who: It is prepared in the framework of the project “**Afforestation, training and education for sustainable community based forest management in Albania**“. Co financed by Lenzing Co, and ADA - Austrian Development Agency.

Why: The aim of the project is to raise awareness, build capacities, and scaling mechanisms for sustainable forestry in Albania, and this case study helps to facilitate this process.

What: FPUAs and Federations play an indispensable role in decentralized forest management and should be recognized in the legislation as the main actor to support the management of forest and pasture land in the municipalities. Their relevance and sustainability leads to sustainable management of forests and natural resources.

Introduction

This case study on “**Enhanced relevance and sustainability of FPUAs and Federations**“ is prepared during the period November 2019- April 2020. It is prepared by CNVP Albania in close collaboration and through personal interviews and meetings with Mark Vata chairperson of Ana e Malit Forest and Pastures Users Association; Sokol Guri, chairperson of Shkodra Federation of Forest and Pastures and Rexhep Ndreu, chairperson of National Association of Forest Federations in Tirana held during November 2019-February 2020. This case study is prepared in the framework of “ **Afforestation, training and education for sustainable community - based forest management in Albania**“ project 2019- 2022 which is being implemented in Albania. Case studies are identified as one of the main communication channels to be used for bringing the messages to the target audience during project implementation, raise awareness on scaling mechanisms for sustainable forestry in Albania. The key message intended to be conveyed through this case study is that – Federations and FPUAs play an indispensable role in decentralized forest management and should be recognized in the legislation as the main actor to support the management of forest and pasture land in the municipalities. Their relevance and sustainability leads to sustainable management of forests and natural resources.

Context

Municipal forests and pastures have a distinctive feature of their management, in that they encompass many actors at various levels, from local to national. Local people are organised into Forest and Pastures Users' Associations (FPUAs) i.e Ana e Malit FPUA that are involved in the direct management and use of forests and pastures. The FPUAs and users are organised and represented further at regional and national

level in Forests and Pastures Federations, i.e. Shkodra regional forest federation. The associations represent users of family forests at different levels, provide information, capacity, provide lobbying and advocacy in their interest in forestry development, reform, decision making processes and policy dialogue, and help them in networking and relations building all with the overall aim of sustainable family forest management and economic development. Regional federations have a key role in influencing political and legal reform, including securing property rights for users and improve the management of the forest and pastures.

All FPUAs are registered to the court, and have been affected by different legal framework applied. Both FPUAs and federations are supported in i) improving their structure and functioning by holding democratic election, paying particular attention to women representation in their boards; ii) building their capacities through wide variety of trainings for sustainable natural resource management; and iii) improving their service delivery to ensure sustainability. In addition, there has been provision of a wide range of activities that supported the intensification of the political reform and improving the process for rights of use and ownership of forests by local communities / individuals and especially FPUAs, as the main actor for the communal forest management.

FPUA of Ana e Malit and Shkodra forest federation are the main project partners in implementation of first project component for sustainable afforestation and re-cultivation of 10ha degraded community managed forests and empowerment of rural communities to improve their forest management and their income possibilities.

FPUA Ana e Malit is established in 2006 and has its steering board of 7 members (2 women). The association has about 150 members, households of Ana e Malit administrative unit. Shkoder regional forest federation is established in 2004 representing 12 FPUAs in the region and has its steering board of 9 people (2 women) and 4 technical staff (3 women).

-Awareness raising and training on protection, rehabilitation and sustainable use of forest area, provided by federation technical staff and Eco Social Farm. More than 65 people (FPUA members, students of technical forest school and other stakeholders) are involved in these activities.

-Implementation of anti-erosion measures in project area. Building double fences and dry walls. 31 FPUAs members are involved in this activity during the first year.

-Planting trees (olive trees, hazelnuts, pines, oaks) in an area of 2 ha. 25 FPUAs members involved in implementation of this activity. Students of technical forest school and other stakeholders participated in planting trees.

Achievements during the first year:

- Increased awareness and local expertise for sustainable forest management by establishing a holistic best practice example
- Increased women participation in project activities
- Increased cooperation between local government, FPUA, Forest federation, fortes technical school, Eco social farm and other local stakeholders.
- sustainable afforestation and re-cultivation of 2ha degrade community managed forests
- empowerment of rural communities to improve their forest management and their income possibilities

Legal framework and challenges

FPUAs were established based on the law on Civil Society Organizations No 8788 (2001). Their activities were affected by changes in 2008, where the new transfer process of forests from central government to local ones brought changes in their roles and responsibilities. In 2015 Albania government undertook a new administrative reform which merged the former communes into 61 big municipalities and affected some FPUAs too, which changed their names and statutes. CNVP supported the preparation of a Forest Policy Document which will shed more light on the roles and responsibilities of FPUAs and federations. The new Forest Law is also defining better roles of these important structures for sustainable natural management. Their roles are subject to Forest law and the law on self-governance of municipalities too. Despite the

support and active engagement, FPUAs and federations encounter several challenges to highlight just a few:

- Strengthening the roles and responsibilities in natural resource management.
- Building partnership between municipalities and FPUAs and Federation and involvement in all process, from planning to implementation of annual plans.
- Service delivery for economic sustainability (not more than 20% of annual turnover can be from economic activity).
- Fiscal treatment of FPUAs and federations (VAT, social and health security).
- Financial sustainability and donor driven.
- Reorganization of FPUAs based on the administrative reform, changes in the statutes and democratic election to involve more women and youth in their boards.

Recommendations

- FPUAs and RFs needed to merge and operate at municipal level as per the new division rather than Administrative Level. This promoted their capacities to municipalities building mutual respect and trust and establishing institutional cooperation.
- Enabling environment for equal participation of men and women in process, and a strategic focus on gender equality is crucial to have a good effect on the involvement and representation of women in decision making bodies and their ability to benefit from forest and pasture management.
- Further strengthening of FPUAs and RFs is needed to review their structures and adapt gradually to the administrative reform as well as to lobby for better positioning with municipalities to become more proactive in advertising their service delivery capacities, based on their roles.
- Federation need to extend their scope of service delivery and make use of business opportunities in order to become more (financially) sustainable; increasing its capacities to apply for IPA/IPARD grants.
- FPUAs and RFs are civil society organizations and as such they need to act independently of the state institutions as part of the triangle (Government- Business – Civil Society).

This research case study was conducted in the frame of the project: **Afforestation, training and education for sustainable community-based forest management in Albania – a business partnership co-financed by the Austrian company Lenzing and the Austrian Development Agency.**

