

CASE STUDY 15

GROWING DECENTRALISED FOREST IN KOSOVO

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Country: Kosovo
Sector: Forestry

CONTEXT

Rural communities in Kosovo represent 60% of the population, unemployment is high and dependency on agriculture and forestry is high. Forests are especially important for firewood production for rural communities for their heating and cooking. Forests contribute to income for many rural households. Forests are identified as one of the major economic opportunities for rural areas, but are currently under utilized. In Kosovo 40% of the forest area is privately owned by small scale forest holders owning on average less than 2 ha. The public forests (60%) are State owned and managed by the Kosovo Forest Agency. Illegal logging, unsustainable forest management and weak governance are major problems. Local communities are not involved and the needs of those citizens are not met regarding firewood, other wood and non wood products, as well as their interests for environmental services (water management, soil stabilisation and micro climate). The Government of Kosovo has an extensive aim for decentralisation. This includes also decentralisation of public forest management to local governments. The forest decentralisation is also included in the Forest Strategy of the Government of Kosovo.

In 2009, SNV started the project 'Strengthening Sustainable Private and Decentralised Forestry, Promotion of Economic Development through Capacity Building in Farmer Based Forest Management in Kosovo and its region'. This is a joint project of Sida and SNV for 4.5 years with a total budget of 4.1 million €. The project is focusing on private and decentralized forest management. The vision is to have Kosovo's forests fulfil the needs of citizens and society regarding forest products and services, safeguarding biodiversity and contributing to local economy.

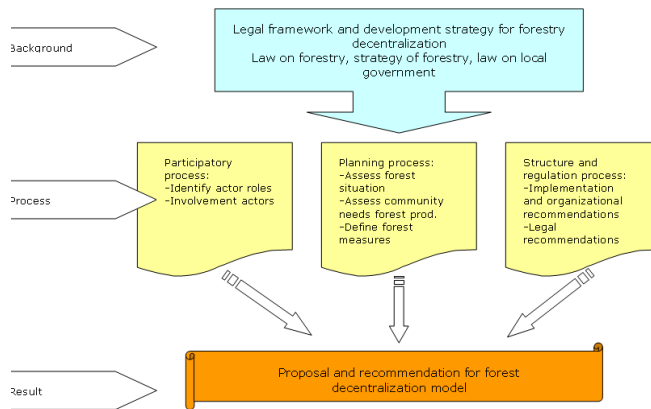
CLIENTS AND PARTNERS

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development is the main partner within the project. We are working together with the Ministry regarding the implementation of their forest strategy, in which forest decentralisation is an important aspect. The Kosovo Forest Agency, the agency under the Ministry, is dealing with forest management and is an important client in the decentralisation process. Local Governments and their communities are the other stakeholders in the decentralisation process. Private forests owners are represented in Local Private Forest Associations and their umbrella at national level. All these stakeholders are clients within the project.

INTERVENTION LOGIC AND METHOD

In consultation with the Ministry pilot municipalities were selected to start developing the forest decentralisation process. The pilots take the government decentralisation aim for forest decentralisation as basis. The process has three pillars. Firstly, a participatory process with inclusion of all stakeholders; secondly, the forest planning process with identification of needs, potential of production and setting of objectives; and thirdly, the structures and regulations needed.

Process of Pilot on forest decentralizations



There are three municipalities involved representing different forest and community situations. Each municipality has working groups who function as Local Capacity Builders in identifying how the forest decentralisation can be implemented at local level. Main questions to address are the roles and responsibilities between especially local government and Kosovo Forest Agency. How to include local communities and private forest associations in sustainable forest management? How to fulfil the needs of the people for mainly firewood? At field level we worked to have multi-objective forest management for production and environmental services. Specific attention is given to small scale forest management and practices, securing multiple products at annual basis.

OUTCOME

This project has contributed to several outcomes as follows:

* Improved sustainable forest management practices

The forest decentralisation gives a new approach to forest management in which local communities are involved. This has an effect on the way how forests are managed; it needs to assure multi objectives and fulfil needs of communities. The forest planning process is now including different stakeholders and especially addressing the needs of local communities and combining this with the potential of the forest resources.

A new form of forest parcel description is introduced used by the forest actors in the pilots. It introduced a direct objective setting for the specific areas, contrary to the overall target setting used previously. It allows people to better plan and manage their forests at specific areas, having sustainable forest management in which the needs of people are combined with the potential.

Within the approach an innovative forest management practice is introduced called farmer forests. This type of forest management is not focused on large scale timber production, but is small scale with multiple objectives and therefore better suited to needs of local communities.

* Improved service delivery to private forest owners

Last year the Government of Kosovo made an amendment to the forest law in which it delegated competences regarding forest protection and forest exploitation to the local government. This required a new approach and involvement of different forest stakeholders in the process. The framework was set, but the practice on how this needs to be implemented still needs a lot of work. Within the project through working groups at municipality level a process was set to identify approaches on involvement of local communities at village level. This resulted in a forest management approach bringing the practices to the local level (people and forests).

The identified process will be further elaborated and will give guidance to defining the roles and responsibilities between the Kosovo Forest Agency and Local Government as well communities groups.

The Municipality increased its capacity within Agricultural and RD department for forest management. Based on the delegated competences for forest management they are providing services for forests (private and communities).

*** Improved enabling environment**

The legal framework needs further adjustment. The first step is made with the inclusion of forest decentralisation in the forest law. The work done in the project resulted in many recommendations for roles and responsibilities between forest agency and local government, the capacity and structure needed at local government and regulations needed for implementing decentralised forest management.

The government started a process of making a complete new forests law. This is needed since change can not be dealt with through amendments only. Through the project all stakeholders are included in the consultation process. Especially the local governments and the private forests owners provide specific inputs in what is needed to change in the forest legislation to adjust to the new situation and safeguard sustainable forest management addressing the needs of society (both production and forest services).

*** Improved organizational structure for decentralised forestry**

The decentralisation of forest management requires increased organisation at local level. Regarding private forest management local associations are established in many municipalities. The project supported this and it resulted to registration of 9 local association and 4 in process. All of them are organised within the national level umbrella. Local associations are included in the process of decentralised forest management at municipal level.

The local government previously were not involved with forest management. Having now decentralised competences the local government administration needs to include forests management. Forest administration aspects are included within the agriculture and rural development departments of local government. In a transfer process from the forest agency, forest guards are now included within the local government staff. Based on the elaboration of roles and responsibilities further capacity is needed. Some local governments have already appointed forest engineers. The project supports with knowledge and understanding of these new structures as well identifying the best institutional structures needed at local level.

This project has contributed to increased production and income as follows:

*** Improved products and services from decentralized forests and increased income from private forests**

Firewood needs are high in rural areas. An average family needs about 10 m³/year at 40 €/m³ for heating and cooking. The total needs for firewood in Kosovo are over 1 million m³/year, while the Kosovo Forest Agency only planned a total allowable cut of 0.25 million m³/year. This is a huge gap. The reality is that people are using firewood. This gap between needs and planning resulting from weak forest governance leads to unsustainable forest management, un-transparent process and illegal logging.

Decentralised forest management is addressing the needs of local communities and the potential. The estimated potential for Kosovo forests is around 0.9 million m³/year. This is very near to the actual needs. The new approach with decentralised forestry is combining the needs and potential at local level. With sustainable forest management practices included it will also lead to an increased production on the long term. Focusing on small scale forest management (farmer forests) a higher production is feasible.

Decentralised forests are creating labour opportunities for local communities in forest management. The involvement of all stakeholders in the process assures a higher transparency and better governance. Currently many forests in Kosovo need an intervention for thinning. There is a backlog in this work from the past period. Involvement of the local communities within the planning gives opportunities to engage them in the implementation of such works. It assures the production for their needs (income in kind) as well labour opportunities.

Decentralised forest management includes multiple objective forest management. This is directed to both the production function as well as the service function of

LESSONS LEARNED

forests. Besides products, the needs regarding water management, soil stability and nature and biodiversity (tourism potential) at specific locations are included. Especially soil stability and water management aspects are very important for rural areas. This environmental function is influencing agriculture, irrigation and (drinking) water in the down stream areas.

The forest decentralisation process is ongoing and will need further support from many actors. The project of Sida SNV has forest decentralisation as one of its main focuses. It is beneficial that the project has a long term scope of four years. The main directions are included in the project. However specific interventions are flexible. This allowed adjustment as needed to the developments.

It is needed to base the work on the policy framework and use this as reference for the developments and practices at local level. Vice versa the results at local level re-inforce and provide further input at policy and regulatory level.

The political process interfered in the process. The forest amendments were made fast and based on political needs. This complicated the pilot process at the start, but it was used later as advantage to further develop decentralised forest management as well to mobilize local government country wide, instead of the pilot areas only. The change of government delayed the forest reform process (law). This on the other hand provides time to include better results from the local level in the process.

It is now important to have the structure up scaled. The results in the pilots of the project are promising. The reform process will be used to institutionalise these.

Competences transferred to local government are imbedded in the legal framework. All 36 municipalities are involved with decentralised forestry. This is an irrevocable process.

The involvement of multiple stakeholders in the process assures transparency and increased governance. This is strengthening the sustainability of the decentralised system. Involving multiple stakeholders lead to accountability and better understanding.

The forest decentralisation process set out at local level via the project has introduced combining the needs with the potential through forest management objective setting. The involvement of the local communities in the process was a first ever that local communities were consulted. Engagement in the forest management practice with support from local government and technical assistance and monitoring of the forest agency will lead to increasingly sustainable managed forests.



Unsustainable forest management



Typical decentralised forest area

SUSTAINABILITY



High forest producing timber and firewood Low forest, coppice producing firewood



A farmer forest



Local firewood production



Firewood needs at household



Illegal logging

STANDARD DATA

Start and end date of contract within which the intervention occurred:

01.01.2009 – 31.12.2012

Composition of team:

SNV: Haki Kola, Sebiha Ramaxhiku, Hajrush Kurtaj, Luan Zubaku, Miftar Lokaj, Ardita Dinaj, Arbnora Brovina, Peter Kampen

LCBs: Forestry Institute, Local Action Groups

External consultants: several forestry experts from Kosovo and international

Number of DADays already invested and planned to be invested per category of staff:

SNV: planned till end of project 1200 days, invested till now 595 direct advisory days

LCBs: planned 200 days, invested till now 45 days

External consultants: planned 50 days, invested till now 10 days

The financial resources invested: 19,504€

Client satisfaction and enhanced capacity scores: Regarding services delivered to the client and level of satisfaction (result measurement), the score is positive (19).