ENPI FLEG ARMENIA NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 5  JANUARY - APRIL, 2011

ENPI FLEG ARMENIA PROGRAM JOINS THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS
Research Activities

Demand for Fuelwood Prevails: Study Reveals

Fuelwood has been, and will remain, in high demand by local households, revealed a study that assessed the economic and social impacts of unsustainable forest practices and illegal logging. Among the reasons identified for the prevailing demand for fuelwood were: the relatively low prices compared to gas supply systems, electricity or other common fuel alternatives; high poverty rates; and the lack of alternative fuel sources in many forest-dependent communities.

Conducted by the International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education and commissioned by IUCN this survey targeted 819 households in eight Armenian regions located within a 10-km vicinity from the forest, and 20 sawmills in three forest-rich regions (full report is available here: http://enpi-fleg.org/index.php?id=research). It mainly analyzed the results of a series of surveys conducted in 2003 and 2010 with monitoring and comments on the observed trends.

Over the past seven years the average fuelwood consumption, in all the surveyed households, declined by 11.8%, yet the average price per cubic meter has increased by 29%. Forest cover shrank over that time, and the price escalated due to the constant fuelwood demand and additional costs incurred by retrieving fuelwood from the so called "difficult-to-reach" parts of forests.

There was also a significant shift in that households now buy fuelwood from middlemen rather than collect it themselves. So, the efforts of "Hayantar" aimed at restricting households: access to forests and cutting down illegal logging by forest-dependent communities have brought some good results. On the other hand, profit-seekers now enjoy broader and easier access to forests than in 2003, on top of the fact that abuse of the ticketing system has been greatly overlooked by "Hayantar."

At present, there is still a large consumption of fuelwood which exceeds the maximum level of supply and continues to drive illegal logging by profit-seekers. The study estimated the minimum level of illegal logging at 240,000 m³ annually, which is nearly 80 times higher than official statistics.

To increase the efficiency of forest protection and effectively combat illegal logging the study suggested launching a number of pilot projects aimed at influencing the demand for fuelwood and enhancing access to alternative sources of fuel. Specifically for improving the livelihood of the rural population, the study suggested establishing some collection centers for non-forest timber products (berries, fruit, vegetables) as well as developing bee-keeping businesses in some forest rich regions. Furthermore, the study proposed more intensive usage of solar energy and biogas plants.

Obviously, there are many other methods which can be applied at the institutional level in order to influence illegal logging. However, considering the lack of political will in the country these prove quite unrealistic and far-fetched. Therefore, the recommendations in the above study mainly focused on the households themselves with only one realistic leverage - the demand for fuelwood.

Awareness Raising Activities

2011 Calendars devoted to the International Year of Forests

WWF-Armenia published a diary and pocket calendars to increase public awareness on the importance of forests and their protection, the role of forests for humans and possibilities of their use for different purposes.
In light of the UN International Year of Forests the diary presents information on and photos/maps of the forests and specially protected nature areas of Armenia, tree species, as well as ENPI FLEG Program. The information is in Armenian and English.

The pocket calendars show non-timber forest products - fruits, berries, mushrooms, and plants. They emphasize the richness of Armenian forests in terms of variety of products coming from the forests, which can be used by population.

The calendars were widely distributed among different stakeholders - respective ministries and other state bodies, NGOs, communities, private sector and others.

Newly Launched Website of Hayantar

With IUCN’s support Hayantar State Non-Commercial Organization’s Armenian-English website was created. The aim of the website is to provide information about the activities of Hayantar.

Visitors can access forest related photo and video materials, Hayantar’s latest news, press publications and glossary of terms from the homepage. Subsequent pages present a historical overview on Hayantar and its structure, including activities of various departments and information on 19 forest enterprises functioning in eight regions of Armenia. Comprehensive information is presented on Hayantar’s activities in the fields of forest inventory, use, conservation, protection, reforestation, aforestation and management, as well as cooperation with local and international organizations. Management plans of forest enterprises and RoA Forest Code, relevant laws and legal acts are also presented.

The website will be regularly updated to keep its visitors informed of the developments contributed by Hayantar in the forest sector.

Institutional Development Activities
Increasing Effectiveness of Forest Management

WWF-Armenia experts currently develop draft charters and GIS maps for Gyulagarak and Ijevan/Arjakhleni state sanctuaries and the draft management plan for Gyulagarak sanctuary.

A previously conducted assessment revealed legal, institutional, management and law enforcement problems of the mentioned sanctuaries. Based on certain proposals of this assessment, the above mentioned documents are being developed.
The work is implemented in close cooperation with specialists of "Hayantar" State Non-Commercial Organization and the Ministry of Agriculture - the bodies responsible for the forest sanctuaries in the structure of forest enterprises - considering their comments and suggestions.

By the end of the expert work, the final drafts will be presented to "Hayantar" to proceed with further steps on their circulation, finalization, and approval by respective bodies. WWF-Armenia experts also develop draft governmental decisions on revision of sanctuary borders and approval of charters.

The draft charters and management plans can be also used as best practices for development of similar documents of other sanctuaries under "Hayantar".

World Bank’s Mid-term Mission Reviewed ENPI-FLEG Armenia Program Activities

ENPI FLEG Armenia Program hosted a mission conducted January 31-February 4 by Andrew Mitchell (Sr. Forestry Specialist, Europe and Central Asia Region, World Bank), Nils Junge (International consultant) and Emily Fripp (International Consultant).

The main objective of the mission was to follow up with ENPI FLEG Armenia activities, measure the progress and summarize the results of household survey on illegal logging.

During the mission Andrew Mitchell met with the Minister of Agriculture to discuss the progress of the program implemented. In the discussion Andrew Mitchell highlighted the importance of institutional and legislative amendments in the forestry sector. He also met with Hayantar and Forest Research Experimental Center.

International consultants Emily Fripp and Nils Junge have prepared presentations for the World Bank Armenia Country Manager and “Hayantar” key staff to describe activities implemented up to date, main objective, preliminary analysis of the situation in the forestry sector, as well as expected outcome of the activity implemented.

Current Illegal logging study update was a replication of a similar survey conducted in the frames of FISP program back in 2003, where Emily Fripp also took part. In the current study she covers issues of illegal logging and market analysis. During the meeting with “Hayantar”, Emily described the current study and stated: "Based on new household survey data and up to date official statistics, the study provides a multidimensional analysis of forest resource use and misuse in Armenia. It examines competing demands for fuelwood and timber under conditions of limited supply and weak state institutions and assesses the limitations and opportunities for development of a forest sector industry."

Nils Junge, consultant responsible for political economy and social impact analysis aspects of the survey mentioned:
"From an institutional perspective, the survey considers the factors which enable a reduction in illegal logging, and what policies can reduce it."

The final report of the study is being prepared currently and will be discussed with the key stakeholders, as well as Government officials in April.

Timber Legality Confirmation System in Accordance with EU Requirements

A seminar entitled “Timber legality confirmation system in accordance with EU requirements” was organized March 15-16 in Novgorod by WWF Russia. The event was organized in the frames of ENPI FLEG initiative. The main objective of the seminar was to discuss international and national experience of timber legality confirmation
system establishment. Armenia was represented by participation of M. Matevosyan ("Hayantar" SNCO), and A. Hakobyan (The World Bank).

As M. Matevosyan mentioned, "Legislation reforms play key role in fighting against illegal logging and illegal supply of timber. During seminar it occurred illegal logging and supply is a major issue not only for ENPI FLEG participating countries, but also for Western Europe."

Discussions resulted in following recommendations:

- in combating illegal logging and supply of timber apply strict legislative, executive measures, as well market control on National and International levels;
- continue close cooperation with EU to ensure awareness, which is necessary for the implementation of Regulations on timber, while all of its articles come into force (3 March 2013);
- in ENPI FLEG participating countries carry out legal reforms for ensuring timber competitiveness in external market, which would include mandatory inventory of round wood, round wood tracking from logging area till export;
- improve State concept on round wood origin and supply legality tracking, run pilot projects on control mechanism;
- amend forestry legislation, particularly regarding illegal activities in the forest (including determination of "illegal preparation of timber", development of document formats, confirmation of timber legality etc);
- make available data on expenses made to implement EU requirements, including for small and medium businesses.

A. Hakobyan mentioned, "This was the first real opportunity for "Hayantar" to get acquainted to those hands on activities carried out by private sector to confirm timber legality. In this regard, participation in the seminar is very important for successful implementation of ENPI FLEG in Armenia."

Summarizing World Bank Activities

Week of April 11-15 has been quite busy for ENPI FLEG Armenia Program. World Bank hosted a mission comprised of Andrew Mitchell (Sr. Forestry Specialist, Europe and Central Asia, WB) and Nils Junge (WB Consultant). The main objective of the mission was to summarize the progress of the Program up to date, present implemented activities, and discuss further steps.

Three main activates took place during the above-mentioned period:

- Illegal logging survey report presentation at Deputy Prime Minister's office, with participation of Ministers of Agriculture and Nature Protection, management of "Hayantar", State Forest Monitoring Center and Environmental State Inspectorate of the Ministry of Nature Protection;
- meeting with environmental NGOs with the purpose to discuss their letter addressed to WB, to a number of other international organizations, as well as to the Government, on the issue of critical state of the forests in Armenia;
- ENPI FLEG NPAC meeting (round table).

Discussion at the Deputy Prime Minister's office was very efficient. It was the official endorsement of the World Bank's Illegal Logging Survey Report by the Government. The Deputy Prime Minister mentioned that the Government of RA has enough political will and determination for solving the problems of the sector.

During the meeting with the NGOs, the participants had a unique opportunity to raise issues of concern directly to World Bank officials. During the meeting Artavazd Hakobyan mentioned that other similar meetings will be organized with the NGOs throughout ENPI FLEG Program, as NGOs are important partners in terms of program implementation.

The third meeting was regular ENPI FLEG NPAC meeting, which served a purpose to summarize all activities and studies implemented throughout the project up to date. NPAC meetings are especially efficient in terms of creating a platform for collaboration of state institutions, NGOs and ENPI FLEG Implementing Agencies in Armenia. Four presentations on surveys carried out in the frames of the Program were presented, which gave ground for follow-up discussion.
RoA National Forest Program Priorities Defined


The first phase of activities started in 2005, after the RoA adopted the National Forest Policy. Since then, within the framework of the NFP-Hayantar partnership, several regulations have been developed, training courses on reforestation and aforestation were conducted among stakeholders and public awareness activities on RoA Forest Code were carried out.

Representatives of forest sector state structures and local and international organizations participated in the workshop on March 15-16. They discussed issues related to the implementation of NFP activities in Armenia: legislative framework, reforestation, reducing illegal logging, management, protection and use of forests.

Using a special matrix, the participants assessed the progress and status of the RoA National Forest Program actions and identified weaknesses. The following priorities were defined as a result of discussions:

(a) developing the forestry sector legal and regulatory framework;
(b) supporting the development of practical education and training in the forestry sector; and
(c) raising the public awareness about forestry related issues so as to promote informed stakeholder participation in policy development.

* The National Forest Program Facility (www.nfp-facility.org) supports the implementation of national forest programs that address local needs and reflect internationally agreed principles.

World Forest Day Celebrated

"21 March - World Forest Day - is to remind communities of the importance of forests and the many benefits which we gain from them. I hope that the World Forest Day will contribute to the increase of awareness on raising challenges and to initial reflections on problem solving in forest management at all levels', said Dirk Boberg, UNDP Armenia Deputy Resident Representative in his opening speech addressed to the participants of March 21 event.

The event was organized by UNDP Armenia and REC Caucasus Branch Office in Armenia. Representatives of state structures and local and international organizations acting in the forest sector participated in the event. They raised such urgent issues, as decreasing forest resources as a result of investment business plans, unclear information on the forest cover, inaccessibility of forest management plans for the public at large, deforestation for industry purposes. The participants emphasized the involvement of all interested parties, including community members, in the forest management and protection processes.

REC Caucasus' Supporting Development of Community Forest Management Policy and Practice in Mountainous Regions of Caucasus project was presented. The project activities include building community forest management capacity, raising community members' and local authorities' awareness on sustainable forest management, and reforestation.

RoA Ministry of Nature Protection's Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts in Mountain Forest Ecosystems of Armenia project was also presented. The project is implemented jointly with UNDP with support of Global Environmental Facility.
ABOUT ENPI FLEG PROGRAM

The ENPI FLEG Program supports governments of participating countries, civil society and the private sector in the development of sound and sustainable forest management practices, including the prevention of illegal forestry activities. Participating countries include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. This Program is funded by the European Union.

www.enpi-fleg.org

PROJECT PARTNERS

European Commission
The European Union is the world’s largest donor of official development assistance. EuropeAid Development and Cooperation, a Directorate General of the European Commission, is responsible for designing European development policy and delivering aid throughout the world. EuropeAid delivers aid through a set of financial instruments with a focus on ensuring the quality of EU aid and its effectiveness. An active and proactive player in the development field, we promote good governance, human and economic development and tackle universal issues, such as fighting hunger and preserving natural resources.

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IUCN
IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. IUCN works on biodiversity, climate change, energy, human livelihoods and greening the world economy by supporting scientific research, managing field projects all over the world, and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. IUCN is the world’s oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,000 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 60 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 earth’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