Azerbaijan

The Quarterly Bulletin of the “Improving Law Enforcement and Governance in the European Neighborhood Policy East Countries and Russia” Program

May – September 2011
Dear friends,

We are proud to release the fourth issue of our country newsletter. It covers the period of three months from May to September 2011. Among the highlights of this period are intensification of activities related to promotion of ecological education and conduction of media events. We do also strengthen works on the development of the forest legislation in the country.

During this period of time our legal and ecological education consultants have extensively travelled across the country, meeting with the schoolchildren, teachers, education specialists, representatives of local authorities and municipalities. The aim was to present and discuss our recently-produced publications intended to enhance ecological education and application of the forest legislation in Azerbaijan. As a result, both “School of Young Forester” – teacher support pack and compilation of legal acts and norms, regulating the forest relations – “Handbook for the Forester” became widely recognized within the wider audience.

The ENPI FLEG Legal Team chaired by the International Legal Consultant is continuing revising the Azerbaijani forest legislation and preparing recommendations for the respective governmental authorities. Here, we would like to stress supportive-ness and constructiveness of the Forest Development Department of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan. Thanks to their constant assistance Program experts have been highly welcomed both in the capital and in the pilot regions and got an access to all necessary information and statistical data.

Activities in the area of public awareness have been mainly focused on conduction of meetings with the leading national media outlets and organization of field visits for the journalists. Among the key developments was successful accomplishment of the Media Tour and the seminar for the journalists in the Lankaran region of Azerbaijan. Events have produced extensive coverage of the ENPI FLEG Program and its activities in the national Internet and paper-based media sources.

To ensure a better understanding of benefits of the forests and an importance of the sustainable forest management our Program Team has developed a special poster “Life of the forest” which lively illustrates biodiversity of the Azerbaijani forestland. On a basis of a request from the Ministry of Emergency Situations and Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources we have initiated work on the Wildfire prevention manual for the volunteers.

Given an increased interest to the Program activities and objectives in Azerbaijan, we have decided to publish thematic articles in this issue. Our contributors are Program’s experts. We are looking forward continuing this tradition in the future.
At the end, we would like to thank all people who were instrumental and supportive in implementation of the Program’s activities in Azerbaijan.

Sincerely,
ENPI/FLEG Program Team in Azerbaijan
ABOUT THE FLEG PROCESS

The Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) Program was created to combat the threats posed to forests by illegal logging, trade, poaching and corruption. Poor governance of forest resources combines with weak rule of law to undermine sustainable economic growth, societal equity, and environmental conservation. The effects of unsustainable forest management and illegal forest activities include: significant loss of revenue to governments, the private sector and rural communities (especially forest-dependent communities); degradation of the environment and forest ecosystems; loss of biodiversity; and the loss of carbon stocks, further exacerbating climate change.

ABOUT THE ENPI/FLEG PROGRAM

The ENPI-FLEG - “Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in the European Neighborhood Policy East Countries and Russia” Program has been initiated in response to the growing problem of illegal forest activities in the participating countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and Russia). This Program is funded by the European Union.

The initiative is comprised of processes which address the complex and politically-sensitive issues related to illegal logging at national and regional levels, and is implemented in cooperation with the major stakeholders:

- governments (Ministries, departments, parliaments, judiciary authorities, local authorities, customs)
- civil society (NGOs, community organizations)
- private sector (timber companies, business)

However, even well designed initiatives will fall short unless there is political commitment and cooperation at the highest levels. Improving forest law enforcement and governance will require collaboration across sectors and stronger stakeholder involvement. In Azerbaijan the ENPI-FLEG Program started in 2009 and it is implemented by the World Bank and IUCN.

NEWS ON THE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Promotion of ecological education in the pilot regions and new accomplishments in development of the forest legislation

Meetings of the ENPI FLEG consultants with the schoolchildren, teachers and education specialists in the regions

Since the release of the “School of the Young Forester” tutorial the ENPI FLEG Program’s ecological and forest education consultants have carried out numerous book presentation meetings from May through July 2011 in the northern and southern regions of Azerbaijan. Seminars titled “Environmental education of schoolchildren
in forest conservation areas” have been hosted by the Guba Regional Ecological Education and Practice Center (GREEPC), office of Department of Education in Shamakhi district and on the premises of the secondary school # 6 of Lankaran district of Azerbaijan. Among the participants were representatives of the regional Forest Restoration and Protection Enterprises (FRPEs) under the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, regional representatives of Ecological Education and Practice Center, methodologists and local biology teachers.

During the meeting the ENPI FLEG Program’s Ecological Education Consultant Lala Dadashova has made a broad presentation featuring Program’s goals and objectives in Azerbaijan. She specifically discussed an importance of organization of ecology-related activities for the students in the area of sustainable forest management and forest preservation.

Program’s Consultant together with the teachers has carried out some meetings outdoors in a forest where she demonstrated methodology of conduction of geo-botanical, ecological and hydro-biological research; techniques to study the vertical structure of forests; analysis of ecological state of the forest; specification of rare natural records and degradations as well as elaborated on ways to eliminate and mitigate the anthropogenic damage on the forests. She also introduced “Yong Forester School Manual” – a teacher support pack newly-developed within the ENPI-FLEG Program in Azerbaijan.

Meetings produced ultimately positive responses among the stakeholders. Representatives of FRPEs in Guba and Shamakhi regions informed that special areas have been already allocated for the young foresters to carry out research activities. Forest specialists have also promised to conduct regular supervision over the students’ research work in the forests.

Another promising outcome was a list of 10 pilot schools selected in the Jalilabad district which has been introduced by the head of the district department of Ecological Education and Practice Center, Ilkham Salmanov. These schools are expected to be the first participating to implement the “school-based young forester unions” concept in the region.

Program’s experts concluded these series of seminars/trainings by conduction of the event in the Center of Ecological Education and Practice under the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan in Baku. Participants were mainly representatives of the governmental institutions, universities and non-governmental sector. Discussions have focused on importance of development of the ecological education in the country and the role which the ENPI FLEG Program plays in this process. Release of the “School of the Young Forester” tutorial and its further application in the secondary schools has been recognized as an essential tool in promotion of ecological education in Azerbaijan.
ENPI FLEG Program’s legal experts met with the stakeholders in the regions

In August 2011 the ENPI FLEG Program’s legal consultant in collaboration with the Society of the Judicial and Sociological Studies “ZIYA” carried out a series of the book presentation events in western and northern regions of Azerbaijan. The aim was to collect more information on the application of the recently-developed within the framework of the Program the Compilation of national and international legal acts and norms regulating forest relations in Azerbaijan. Participants were representatives of forestry enterprises, municipalities and local executive authorities of Shamkir, Touz, Gadabak, Dashkasan, Agstafa, Gazakh, Gey-Gol and Khachmaz regions of Azerbaijan.

During the meetings Program’s experts have mainly elaborated on the content of the book and shared with the stakeholders the changes and modifications envisaged to the Azerbaijani forest legislation. Foresters and employees of the forestry enterprises were extremely positive in evaluation of the book application in their everyday work. It appeared that not only forest specialists, but also employees of the law enforcement authorities expressed their interest in acquisition of the book. There was a suggestion to circulate the book among the prosecutor’s offices of the forest regions.

The ENPI FLEG Legal Team continues analysis of the Azerbaijani forest legislation

Another visit of the ENPI FLEG Program International Legal Consultant to Azerbaijan has been carried out on September 6-12 2011. The main objective was to continue work on the development of the Azerbaijani forest legislation as well as to conduct meetings and consultations with the stakeholders in the capital and in the pilot regions. The Legal Team has specifically been examining possible modifications to the Azerbaijani Forest Code.

In order to get the first hand information on the ground the Team together with the Program Coordinator, Azer Garayev and the Focal Point of the Program, Ragim Ibrahimov, has conducted a field visit to Lankaran region of Azerbaijan on September 8-9. The main aim was to study work methods and law enforcement practice as
well as to examine gaps and collisions existent in the forest legislation which create barriers in application of legal acts and hinder effective management of the State Forest Fund and perspective forest areas.

A series of meetings have been conducted with the representatives of the regional branch of the Forest Development Department of MENR, foresters, local ecological NGOs (“Damir Aghaj” and “Transparency” Resource Center), local executive authorities and municipalities. During the meetings the stakeholders elaborated on the particularities of the regional ecosystems, biodiversity and pointed out main threats and challenges.

A follow-up seminar – “Towards a new Azerbaijani Forest Code” has concluded a current round of consultations and discussions on the national forest legislation. Event was held on September 12, 2011 and has been attended by the representatives from the Forest Development Department of the MENR, Forestry Research Institute, the Ministry of Agriculture, Institute of Sociology and Law under the National Academy of Sciences, Association of municipalities, State Soil and Cartography Committee, local executive authorities of the pilot regions and local ecological and legal NGOs.

The keynote speaker, the ENPI FLEG Program’s International Legal Consultant Peter Herbst elaborated on particularities, benefits and application of the forest legislation in Europe and Asia. Discussion also produced an exchange of views on existent gaps in the Azerbaijani forest legislation and changes suggested by the international and national legal experts.

Mr. Herbst and generally the whole Legal Team have particularly underlined supportiveness of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan. Due to the Ministry’s constant assistance to the work of the Program the Team members were allowed to visit restricted forest areas and private sites and got a possibility to obtain any kind of information from the respective regional institutions and governmental authorities.

All acquainted information has been being currently examined an analyzed by the Program’s Legal Team. The Team is expected to deliver proposals and recommendations based on the respective international experience in the nearest future.

Successful completion of Media Tour and seminar for the journalists; strengthening of relations with the leading in-country media outlets

In July 2011 the ENPI FLEG Program has carried out one of the key activities envisaged in the area of outreach and public awareness. On July 11-13 2011 the Media Tour, including intensive seminar for the journalists has been organized and held in
the Lankaran city of Azerbaijan. Selected region which is located in the very south of Azerbaijan and surrounded by the Talysh Mountains is famous with its sub-tropical climate as well as with its distinct flora and fauna.

The ENPI FLEG Program’s Team in Azerbaijan was the main organizer and contributor to the event. To ensure the presence of the key stakeholders representatives of the Forest Development Department of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Committee on Energy, Natural Resources and Ecology under the national Parliament (Milli Mejlis), forest specialists, ecologists, NGOs and local executive authorities have actively participated during the event.

A three-day seminar primarily covered issues of a social and economic impact of an unsustainable forest management on the local population. 36 participants who represented country’s leading media outlets were lectured by the Program’s consultants on various forest and ecological-related topics such as current state of the forestland in Azerbaijan and regional particularities of the Talysh zone; causes of the illegal logging in Azerbaijan and its negative ecological and socio-economic impact.

Program’s experts have also elaborated on the status of the forest legislation in the country. Journalists were particularly interested on the long-term consequences of the illegal logging and ways how to deal with this alarming trend. Among the possible solutions to the country ecological problems experts emphasized importance of the public awareness activities and intensive media coverage.

To get the first-hand insights the Program organized meetings with the local forestry specialists and field visits. Participants have met with the head of the regional Forest Protection and Rehabilitation Enterprise. He elaborated mainly on the problems of the forestry sector in Lankaran-Astara region. While asked on the local particularities, he pointed out the poor infrastructure and weak technical base as well as low wages of the foresters as core problems. Among the other important activities were the meetings with the head of the Lankaran forestry facility and the visit of the recently restored by the MENR forest sites.

Also participation of the respective state authorities gave a possibility to the journalists to get the first-hand information on particular issues and problems both during the formal discussions and informally. During the end session the journalists expressed their complete satisfaction with the information and knowledge obtained during the lectures and meetings with the specialists.
Media tour and the seminar have been further covered by the leading national newspaper “Zerkalo” and “Kaspiy”, Lider and Khazar TVs. Information on the media tour has been featured by the Internet-based news agencies APA, Trend, 1news and FinEco. More information on the media coverage is available at http://www.enpi-fleg.az/index/09m.html.

**Role of the ecological education in preservation of the forests**

The current state of the “Planet’s green shield”- forests demands countries to unite their efforts in implementation of the large-scale initiatives all over the world.

In Azerbaijan use of the wood and wood products for living and heating purposes by the local population as well as the illegal logging carried out at the occupied territories, existence of the nomadic cattle-breeding and negative impact of the climate change have been identified as key problems. Lack of the sufficient knowledge among the population on importance of the forest’s biodiversity and necessity of preservation of the rare flora and fauna species resulted in unsustainable use of the natural resources. In this situation not only forest specialists, but also each and every citizen has to possess fair amount of ecological knowledge to ensure a sustainable use of the forest resources.

Recognizing importance of the UN-declared 2011 as an “International Year of Forests” the Azerbaijani President announced the ongoing year as a “Year of Tourism”. This creates wider opportunities for the development of ecological tourism as an effective mean in promotion of the forests’ preservation and protection of the natural resources nationwide.

In 2005 an important international conference has been held in Sankt-Petersburg city, Russia. With the participation of ecological and environmental governmental authorities of 44 countries the ENPI FLEG Program “Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in the European Neighborhood Policy East Countries and Russia” tasked to prevent an illegal logging and to ensure sustainable forest management in the participating countries has been launched. Promotion of the ecological education was listed among the Program’s key priorities. The Program puts a particular emphasis on a joint cooperation between the respective governmental authorities and a civil society to strengthen ecological education of the younger generation and population in general.
Guided by this idea, the unique book—“School of the Young Foresters” has been developed and produced in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources within the framework of the ENPI FLEG Program in Azerbaijan. This teacher support pack has been approved to be utilized in the secondary schools by the decree # 541 of the Ministry of Education on 07.04.2011.

In order to strengthen the ecological knowledge among the schoolchildren the tutorial foresees a set up of the “school-based young foresters’ teams” to conduct specifically-designed initiatives aimed to protect and preserve the forests. They are expected to operate in the secondary schools and in the ecological education and practice centers across the country.

The main idea behind the tutorial is to raise the interest in preservation and protection of the forests among the schoolchildren, to increase their knowledge on flora and fauna of the forest and to promote the concept of the sustainable use of the natural resources among the younger generation.

We have already witnessed that an enforcement of the ecological education in the secondary schools, a conduction of special forestry trainings in the ecological education and practice centers and a set up of “young foresters” teams significantly developed a “green mentality” among the younger generation. Using interactive techniques during the outdoors activities helped to increase the creativity of the schoolchildren and to strengthen their responsibility towards the environment. Conduction of trainings, ecological games, school-based monitoring, ecological studies and practice works proved to be extremely instrumental in development of the practical skills of the schoolchildren.

Besides, a closer familiarization of the schoolchildren with the flora and fauna would have a considerable impact on their future career choice helping to train highly-qualified specialists for the country forest sector.

Set up of ecological pathways within the framework of the Year of Tourism in Azerbaijan developed senses of care towards the environment among the schoolchildren. Whether it is river, lake, waterfall or a tiny ant hole – it represents a source of a tremendous interest for the ecotourists and develops humanistic attitude towards the nature. Among the activities carried out by the schoolchildren within the ecological pathways were allocation of the feed trays for the animals and artificial bird feeders. Supervising the same area the young foresters agitate among the tourists and the peers, clean up the forest from the occasional trash and secure the area against ecological violations.
The Year of Forest has produced various ecology-oriented events for the schoolchildren in Azerbaijan. Focused on the preservation and protection of the forests they varied from conduction of Olympiads to organization of thematic photo and painting exhibitions, ecological brain-rings and respective round tables. While conducted the ecological studies at the specially allocated forest areas the young foresters got a possibility to study the anthropogenic effect on the forests, to participate in cleaning activities and raise ecological awareness among the population. The young foresters have actively involved tourists in discussions on the climate change effect on the forests, significance of ecotourism, techniques for the prevention of wildfires and role of the society in protection of the forestland. They did circulate “Protect forests from fires!” leaflet among the tourists.

Development of the ecological education has been widely recognized as an essential part in implementation of any ecological-based activity in Azerbaijan. In this context, increase of the specially allocated forest areas for the schools and organization of the forums, gatherings and competitions for the young foresters are of extreme importance. Preparation and publication of the leaflets, manuals and memos are very instrumental in fostering and dissemination of the forest-related knowledge among the schoolchildren. Also organization of the summer ecological camps has been acknowledged by the forest education specialists as a vital tool to promote exchange of opinions among the interested youth. Becoming the forest experts close allies, the young foresters will contribute to the development of the sustainable forest management in Azerbaijan.

Lala Dadashova, PhD in Biology, ENPI FLEG Program Consultant on Forest Education.
Program Partners:

**European Commission**
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**International Union for Conservation of Nature** (IUCN) is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 110 government and 800 NGO members and almost 10000 volunteer experts in more than 180 countries. IUCN’s mission is to help the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges.

[www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)

**The World Wild Fund for Nature** (WWF) is the world’s largest independent conservation organization with over 5 million supporters worldwide, working in more than 90 countries. WWF’s mission is to stop environmental degradation, conserve the world’s biological diversity, and ensure that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable.

[www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org)

**CONTACTS**

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