

INTRODUCING JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF FOREST RESOURCES

ILC'S DATABASE OF GOOD PRACTICES

2

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Country: **Kosovo** - Principal Organisation: **NAPFO**

ABSTRACT

After successfully advocating with the government of Kosovo for the approval of a new forest strategy, based on participatory management of forest resources, NAPFO supported the implementation of Joint Forest Management in local communities. The process entailed raising awareness

on this model with forest users, setting up participatory decision-making mechanisms including multiple stakeholders at different levels of governance and collecting evidence of the sustainability of Joint Forest Management in forest resources use.

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FARMING SYSTEMS**



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RIGHTS FOR WOMEN**



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**COMMUNITIES,
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**ENGAGEMENT WITH THE
PRIVATE SECTOR**

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND
NATURAL DISASTERS**

SKILLS

**ADVOCACY AND
CAMPAIGNING**

**LAND POLICY AND
MULTI-STAKEHOLDER
DIALOGUE**

**APPLICATION OF LAWS,
GUIDELINES AND
STANDARDS**

BACKGROUND

The National Association of Private Forest Owners of Kosovo (NAPFO) is functioning as an umbrella of 24 associations with a total membership of nearly 5000 private forest owners. Forests in Kosovo have the potential to contribute to the country's national economy by producing forest products in a sustainable manner. However, forest degradation and the relevant loss of ecosystem services is currently one of the major environmental challenges. Continued unsustainable forest harvesting have resulted in damaging and destruction of the forest resource base. A challenge often brought up by forestry stakeholders is the limited availability of legally harvested wood, lack of resources to draft annual harvesting plans,

unsustainable regulation and bureaucratic system in Kosovo's forestry sector, weak capacity and law enforcement combined with corruption. In this regards NAPFO is playing a crucial role, by lobbying government institutions and bringing relevant stakeholders together for joint actions, while engaging municipalities as local governance bodies and the Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, the Kosovo Forest Agency and the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. In addition, based on the national forest strategy, joint forest management was introduced. The process was supported by the CNVP Foundation and NAPFO was one of the main actors.

THE CHALLENGE

In Kosovo local communities were not part of decision making processes regarding forest management. By joining efforts with the CNVP Foundation, NAPFO could participate in joint consultation meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Rural Development and local municipalities, to discuss the problems of forest degradation. A new forestry strategy (2010-2020) was

prepared with the broad participation of the main stakeholders and approved by the government. This strategy recommends joint forest management as a solution to turn some forest management activities that were considered illegal in Kosovo into legal participatory forest management. The process was long due to the resistance encountered initially in the public institutions.



OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

The new forestry strategy could be used as a legal basis for starting to implement Joint Forest Management in Kosovo. Joint Forest Management entails sharing products, responsibilities, control and decision-making over forest lands between the Kosovo Forest Agency and local user groups. It involves a contract specifying the distribution of authority, responsibility and benefits between families in need for forest products in villages and the Kosovo Forest Agency, taking into account the amount of land allocated for joint forest management and annual wood

production, forest rehabilitation or silviculture. Continuous lobbying with the Ministry and having tested joint forest management on a small scale in some villages were key factors of success of NAPFO's evidence-based advocacy work with government institutions.

MOVING TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

NAPFO's member associations coordinated the process in the municipalities that had been selected as pilot for the implementation of Joint Forest Management. The process was initiated in 10 municipalities where local associations of private forest families together with local communities could manage the state forest for a specific period of time. Considering that the forest was mainly degraded due to illegal cutting, it was agreed by state forest

institutions that local associations and local communities could lead on the management of the forest. The attitude of local communities changed, and now the forest is being protected and well managed. The firewood is secured and delivered to the local community, to the benefit of the vulnerable families and of women in these villages.



THE GOOD PRACTICE IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS

1

Communication with all stakeholders: Associations that are members of NAPFO are active at the municipality level and are therefore in a privileged position to interact with regional and local authorities, such as the Directory of agriculture and forestry, regional forestry offices, forestry experts and local communities. The main focus of the communication with these stakeholders was related to introducing the concept of Joint Forest Management to them and to clarifying that the process would be participatory and rely on an agreement with all parties; that it would start in one pilot village so as to test Joint Forest Management and build evidence of how forest degradation can be reduced by using this model; that the forest would be protected and the local community using the forest for a limited period of time benefitted by using the forest for firewood. The process was facilitated and supported by the CNVP.

2

Awareness raising within the associations of private forest owners: Ten associations of private forest owners engaged in awareness raising within their own associations to begin the process of introducing Joint Forest Management. They held open meetings with their members to analyse the best way of identifying suitable forest areas where the local village community would be willing to take part in participatory planning and management. Vulnerable groups were also involved in this phase (families with low or no incomes, women, minorities).

3

Participation in the forest strategy board: The implementation of a Joint Forest Management model has its basis in the government's strategic document on forestry. NAPFO played a crucial role in its development, representing private forest users. A working group for the implementation of the 2014-2020 strategy was created as a result of this process. NAPFO's participation in the forest strategy board was very important given the relevant work previously done with Local Associations in some municipalities. NAPFO focused its efforts on the implementation of those aspects of the strategy that regard the use of a participatory approach in forest management.

4

Advocacy: Forestry is managed on the basis of a decentralisation framework between central and local institutions without the participation of communities. NAPFO, together with its member associations of forest owner families, collected evidence regarding the impact of illegal cutting (90% of the total wood production in Kosovo) and of low participation of local communities in planning and implementation of forest management initiatives, and the concerns of forest users with the support of village representatives, experts, municipal authorities. NAPFO brought them to the higher level of forest governance, informing afterwards the central level, the forest strategy board and related stakeholders.

5

Lobbying the Ministry: NAPFO worked for a long time in the interest of private forest owners to defend their rights and simplify forest management procedures by introducing Joint Forest Management at the local level. By lobbying the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Rural Development, and thanks to the efforts of member associations and local communities, the priorities and needs of private forest users were taken into consideration in the new forestry law.

5



3 THREE FACTORS OF SUCCESS AND REPLICABILITY

1

Evidence-based advocacy - The community of the villages selected for Joint Forest Management are affected with challenges that include the mismanagement of forestry and natural resources, illegal cutting of wood and lack of income opportunities. This has led to poorly managed forests and forest degradation, mainly in the state property forest. The most successful experience was in the municipality of Novo Berde where the local community association was ready to lobby the local authority, demonstrating the sustainable use of natural and forest resources by the local community.

2

Good communication and cooperation – The two ethnicities (Albanian and Serbian) present in the communities joined forces and worked together on the basis of effective dialogue and willingness to cooperate.

3

Participation – A participatory approach was adopted, by engaging the families that would ultimately benefit from the process. These families can use firewood from a specific area based on the agreement made. This particularly benefitted the most vulnerable families, minorities and women.

LESSONS LEARNED

In order to achieve any result, it is important to remain focused although the process is long and needs significant engagement and effort from all stakeholders.

Achieving a change of mentality, management system and decision-making processes is challenging, especially when the approach is shifted from a centralised one to a participatory approach with the involvement of the local community.

There must be a very strong commitment of the local community to show that they are responsible and able to manage and protect the forest land from illegal logging, and simultaneously benefit from the forest. Showing the results of small participatory planning models developed and implemented with the support of other organisations is instrumental to successful evidence-based advocacy.



FIND OUT MORE

1. Asociacioni i Pronarëve të Pyjeve Private të Kosovës

www.akppp.net

2. Shfpp parku novoberde

<https://www.facebook.com/shfpp.parkunovoberde> n-que-se-aplique-lo-establecido-en-la-ley-71

3. CNVP

www.cnvp-eu.org