



EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD  
AND PARTNERSHIP  
INSTRUMENT EAST  
COUNTRIES FOREST LAW  
ENFORCEMENT AND  
GOVERNANCE  
II PROGRAM



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# Forest Management Practices: Examples and Lessons from FLEG Process in ENPI East Countries and Russia

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# Good Forest Management Practices: Examples and Lessons from FLEG Process in ENPI East Countries and Russia

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), under the framework of the Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) II European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) East Countries Programme (ENPI FLEG Program), sought to facilitate efforts to improve forest governance and address issues of illegal logging in six Eastern European countries and Russia. The ENPI FLEG Program represented an innovative approach to establishing sustainable forest governance practices and improve rural forest-dependent community livelihoods by working with governments and civil society in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia. The Program was funded by the European Union and implemented through separate initiatives of the World Bank, IUCN, and World Wide Fund for Nature during two phases: FLEG I taking place during 2008-2012, and FLEG II spanning 2013-2016. This report is focused solely on the ENPI FLEG activities undertaken by IUCN.

In general, the ENPI FLEG Program aimed to implement the 2005 St. Petersburg FLEG Ministerial Declaration. The Declaration was undersigned by 44 countries from Europe, North Asia and other regions and represents governments' commitment to address illegal logging and associated forest crimes in Eastern Europe and Russia (ENPI FLEG, 2005). The ENPI FLEG Program focused on building knowledge, understanding, and capacity for more sustainable forest practices through education, new community enterprises, scientific research, and institutional reforms and policy. This report describes and analyzes the main outcomes and lessons learned from the activities IUCN implemented under the second phase of the ENPI FLEG Program in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia. The report also highlights the most significant facilitating factors and challenges faced during the implementation of the activities showcased in the report.

IUCN FLEG activities were carried out in each country by a Country Program Coordinator (CPC) with support from a Program Coordinator and a Program Officer at IUCN headquarters in Gland, Switzerland. The analysis of each IUCN FLEG activity was based on the descriptions of objectives, main outcomes, facilitating factors, challenges and key insights

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provided by IUCN FLEG CPCs and Program coordinators at IUCN headquarters (IUCN FLEG team). The IUCN FLEG team received a short electronic questionnaire that sought to capture their extensive knowledge of the details and main components of each activity. Information provided by the IUCN FLEG team was complemented with information available in official activity reports and through the ENPI FLEG official website (<http://www.enpi-fleg.org/>).

In broad terms, the IUCN FLEG activities reviewed contributed to fostering sustainable forest governance in participating countries by focusing on one, or several, of the following objectives:

1. Filling information gaps of forest issues with credible, accurate data to inform forest policy and reform.
2. Bridging communication gaps between communities, the general public and forest government agencies.
3. Promoting transparency and accountability of forest government agencies.
4. Raising awareness on forest issues in participating countries among civil society and elevating the importance of forest issues in the public agenda.
5. Providing expert advice and guidance on innovative forest governance initiatives implemented in the region.

Overall, key facilitating factors identified in this analysis of IUCN FLEG activities include the IUCN FLEG team's professional reputation and network, the Program's adaptability to the local context, and the Program's structure and culture that encouraged learning and adaptation. Some common challenges encountered were community distrust of outsiders, uncertainty due to government reforms, changes in institutional culture, and financial and human capacity limitations of governments in the region. Several lessons were drawn from the analysis of IUCN-FLEG activities. For instance, the IUCN-FLEG was effective at implementing its activities by adopting a facilitative role within existing institutional processes and adapting to the institutional and socio-political context in which they were operating. Finally, the IUCN-FLEG program's ability to create synergies with governments, NGOs and citizens involved in forestry sectors in Eastern Europe and Russia allowed them to have a consequential impact in the region.

This report aims to provide a framework to help facilitate an institutional learning process relating the implementation of IUCN activities under the FLEG Program. The report provides an initial set of outcomes and lessons learned for almost all IUCN FLEG activities implemented between 2013 and 2016. The authors hope that the framework presented in this report will assist the IUCN FLEG team reflect on the facilitating factors, and the strategies to overcome challenges, that were instrumental to the effective implementation of the IUCN FLEG Program. The authors also hope that this report enables the IUCN to extract overall lessons learned from their experience in the FLEG Program and institutionalize strategies that helped the IUCN FLEG team achieve their objectives of advancing sustainable forest governance in the ENPI region. The report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 presents a brief description, main outcomes, facilitating factors, challenges and lessons learned for each activity analyzed. Activities are organized by

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country of implementation. A separate section within chapter 2 is dedicated to three activities implemented at a regional scale. Finally, chapter 3 presents a brief overview of general lessons learned from the full suite of activities reviewed.

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## Chapter 2: Activity Outcomes and lessons learned

### Regional Activities:

- Regional Forest Dependency Study
- Forest Community Fingerprint
- Local Forest Governance Study

### Armenia:

- Public Monitoring of Forests
- Empowering Forest-Dependent Communities through Roadshows

### Azerbaijan:

- Climate Change Adaptation
- Approaches to Sustainable Methods for Tugay Forest Rehabilitation
- Analytical Study on the Use of Energy Efficient and Energy Consuming Construction Materials in Forest-Dependent Communities

### Belarus:

- Analytical Studies of the Structure and Dynamics of Forest Offenses
- Improvement of the System of State Assessment of Forest Resources

### Georgia:

- Pest and Disease Study and Management
- Support in Development of State Program on Firewood
- Tusheti Protected Landscape Community Management
- Forest Law Enforcement Work
- Forest Related Information Flow, Public Awareness, and Participation
- Forest Functionality Study

### Moldova:

- Forest Ecosystem Services Analysis
- Comparative Legal Analysis
- Public Involvement and Communication
- Eco-forest Journalist Training

### Russia:

- Bezhanitsy Eco-Tourism Development Alliance
- Library of Best Practices of Legal Forest Use

### Ukraine:

- Open Letter on Forest Reform Legislation



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## Improvement of the Process of Stakeholder Involvement into Decision-Making in the Forest Sector

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## Regional Activities

The activities implemented by IUCN FLEG at a regional level focused on increasing the knowledge and understanding of the relationships between forests, rural communities, and forest institutions in the ENPI region and Russia. IUCN FLEG's regional activities provided crucial information to understand the underlying social, economic, and regulatory dynamics that determine rural communities' use of forest resources. The Forest Dependency study performed an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic dynamics that characterize rural communities' relationships with their local forests. Meanwhile, the Forest Community Fingerprint project developed an innovative methodology that linked socio-economic information derived from the Forest Dependency study with geo-spatial information of forest cover. Finally, the Local Forest Governance study reviewed the forest legal frameworks of five FLEG participating countries that regulate rural communities' interactions with their immediately surrounding forests.

### **Forest Dependency of Rural Communities in ENPI East Countries and Russia, Regional (RWP 18)**

#### *Activity Summary*

The Forest Dependency (FD) study aimed to characterize the relationship of rural communities across the ENPI region with their surrounding natural resource base. The study was designed to analyze two aspects of forest dependence. First, it characterized rural communities' consumption patterns of forest products in order to assess the nature and scale of forest dependence. Second, the study quantified the “*true value of a fully-functioning forest to rural communities*” (Bakkegaard, 2014) by analyzing the extent to which forests contribute to rural household's basic sustenance, fuel provision, income generation, and risk management in times of crisis.

The study sought answers to the following research questions:

- What value does the forest have to these communities?
- What forest-related products are significant?
- Who in particular is most dependent on the forest?
- How do these communities use the forest? For example, as a safety net? For current consumption?
- Why do they use the forest?
- What are the implications of their relationship with the forest?
- How does this relationship factor in or relate to national and regional forest policy? To climate resilient development?

In order to achieve their research objectives, the IUCN FLEG team developed a unified research methodology that would accurately characterize forest dependence within each country



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and also provide comparable results across the region. The IUCN FLEG team integrated elements of the CIFOR Poverty Environment Network, PROFOR-IUCN's Forest Poverty Toolkit, and the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Survey. The Forest Dependency study contains a regionally-adapted quantitative household survey for the ENPI region that systematically accounts for household income and wealth and permits inter-country comparisons of environmental product use.

The study was performed by seven national consultants coordinated by a regional consultant at IUCN headquarters. Surveys were deployed on pre-identified pilot regions to maximize representativeness of the study. The activity also developed user guidelines and trained national consultants prior to performing surveys. A total of 1256 household surveys were performed across the region in rural communities located in heavily forested areas. In addition to household surveys, IUCN FLEG consultants performed a community questionnaire or village focus group. Survey results were codified, entered into the special database and analyzed. Ultimately, the study developed seven national reports and one regional report.

As Ekaterine Otarashvili, IUCN FLEG Project Officer, explained *“the study sought to generate quantitative results that would assist policy makers to improve forest governance and develop forest policy that incorporates the priorities of local communities. Results of the study were communicated back to the communities and to the central level governments.”* She further noted that information provided by the study could *“direct policy makers’ attention to the importance of the availability of forest resources. This information would be helpful to develop and implement local-level development plans and policies, as well as forest and natural management processes”* (personal communication, October 7, 2016).

### *Outcomes*

The Forest Dependence study set a precedent as the first to analyze the relationship between rural communities and the northern temperate and boreal forests of Eastern Europe and Russia. The study shed light on the main drivers and dynamics behind unsustainable forest use in the region. In this sense, it provided knowledge of utmost importance in defining strategies to address forest issues. The study provides a credible methodology to track changes in forest dependence and monitor the impact of policies established to foster sustainable forest governance in the region. Study findings were organized into seven country-specific reports and a comprehensive report for the entire region (prepared both in English and in national languages). The Forest Dependence study has been widely distributed throughout the FLEG network in ENPI participating countries. Reports have been shared with communities, and government officials at central governments level and NGOs in each country.

The study sheds light on the main drivers behind unsustainable use of forest resources, illegal logging, and unauthorized extraction of wood and other forest products for local consumption. It does so by providing answers to questions relating to the value of forest products

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for rural communities, the most important forest products, who is most dependent on the forest for survival, and stratifying forest dependence study by income quintiles. Detailed information on forest use and the main drivers for unsustainable forest product extraction provided evidence for policy makers to start taking measures to address these issues. For instance, in the case of Moldova, the study revealed that communities' firewood requirements and consumption patterns surpass the amount of firewood provided by the government. Therefore, the study found evidence of illegal logging to cover subsistence fuel needs in those communities in particular, but the dynamic is representative for the entire country:

*“The analysis revealed that firewood represents the largest share of forest related revenue for locals (31% in terms of total value and 23% in terms of frequency of total collection). By comparing these data to those provided by Agency Moldsilva, the central authority in charge of forestry administration, it emerged that local communities use larger volumes of firewood than forest administrators can officially supply.” (“Forest Dependency in a nutshell,” 2016).*

In this sense, the Forest Dependence study revealed that the use of firewood for heating and cooking needs is, arguably, the main driver behind local communities' illegal extraction of wood from forests. It also revealed that the poorest community members relied on forest products for subsistence and were the most vulnerable to the reduction in forest product availability due to degrading forest conditions. The study has provided credible data that underlines the gravity of some of the forest issues faced by the region and provides government authorities with the information required to take adequate measure in addressing these issues.

In some countries, such as Azerbaijan and Ukraine, a second phase of the forest dependence study is currently underway. The fact that a second phase of the study is being undertaken highlights the relevance of the information obtained during 2014 for stakeholders involved in fostering sustainable forest governance in the region. As Nariman Aghayev, head of the local NGO Center of Sustainable Development Research in Azerbaijan, said about the second phase of the study: “[a]s in the first phase, we expect to collect and analyze useful and practical information on these communities' social, economic, and educational conditions, and all stakeholders await our analysis with deep interest. I believe that this work will allow us to develop a set of helpful guidelines for forest authorities and public institutions” (“Azerbaijani Rural Communities and Forests: A Profound Connection,” 2016).

### Overview of study findings

#### **Surveyed population:**

The study surveyed a diverse range of rural communities in the ENPI region. Between 150 and 200 surveys were performed in each country. In Armenia, 196 household surveys were performed in the North, North East and South regions of the country. In Azerbaijan, 150 households from the Zakatalsky district in Northwest Azerbaijan were surveyed. Meanwhile, 200



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households were surveyed in the Tianeti Municipality of Mtskheta-Mitaneti Region of Georgia. Another 200 households were surveyed in the mountainous Gomel Region of southeastern Belarus. In Moldova, 150 total surveys were taken from communities spread across North, Central and South Moldova and another 150 were surveyed in Western Ukraine. Finally, due to its geographic extension and contrasting natural conditions, 210 households were surveyed in three high forested regions of Russia: North-West Russia, Central Siberia and the Russian Far East.

In general, surveyed communities had an aging population dedicated to subsistence livelihoods (agriculture, grazing, or forest-product collection for self-consumption). Most of the younger people had migrated to urban areas in search of economic opportunities. There are, however, some exceptions to this trend. Azerbaijan's improving economic conditions have led to an increase in population migrating back to rural areas. The study found that this trend is putting additional pressure on forest resources, mainly firewood for heat and cooking ("Azerbaijani Rural Communities and Forests: A Profound Connection," 2016).

Part of the study analyzed households' dependence on forests based on income. Sampled households for each country were sorted according to income levels into quintiles. Results showed that community members in the lower income quintiles relied on forest resources for subsistence in a greater proportion than those in the higher income quintiles. This result is consistent with literature on forest dependence across the world, and gives indication that the survey questionnaire is accurately capturing patterns of forest use.

### **Use of forest products:**

The study provided detailed information on the specific forest products being used by communities. It also estimated the economic value of forest products using self-reported values. The study revealed that almost 25% of forest products collected across the region are wild fruits. In Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, berries represent between 43% and 52% of the total value extracted from forests. Meanwhile, mushrooms and nuts are of high importance in Russia, Belarus, Moldova and Azerbaijan. In Armenia and Georgia, there is a significant dependence on livestock given the predominance of pastures. Approximately 17% of relative forest income for households came from the harvest and sale of different species of berries, mushrooms, and nuts.

The study paid particular attention to the use of a key forest product: firewood. Across the entire region, firewood was identified as a primary forest product crucial for subsistence. According to the study, firewood comprises 17% of total forest value used by households. These data provide evidence that firewood resources required and consumed by forest-dependent communities is higher than that provided by forestry agencies in most of the ENPI ENA countries. This information, combined with the socio-economic analysis of forest dependence by income quintiles highlights the importance of addressing the issues of finding sustainable fuel provision strategies and livelihoods for the most vulnerable community members.

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Overall, surveyed households noted a declining availability of firewood, fodder, berries and mushrooms in their surrounding forests due to illegal collection, overharvesting and climate change. In the case of berries, overharvesting using unsustainable techniques that increase yield but impair plant regeneration place additional stress on forests and impacts those extracting these products for self-consumption in a greater proportion than those that extract them for sale. Meanwhile, reduced rainfall and drought in the past few years have had a negative impact on total yields and availability of non-timber forest resources.

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Building on existing knowledge

The Forest Dependence study benefited from the availability of widely tested methodologies for assessing human-forest relationships in other parts of the world. The IUCN FLEG team adapted aspects of the CIFOR Poverty Environment Network, PROFOR-IUCN's Forest Poverty Toolkit, and the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Survey and developed a survey methodology relevant to the northern temperate and boreal forests of Eastern Europe and Russia. Given the regional nature of the study, having a unified survey questionnaire helped obtain comparable results across all countries studied. As Richard Aishton, IUCN FLEG Program Coordinator stated, “[p]eople in Eastern Europe have been living in and around forests for countless generations and have their own unique relationship with the forest. We hope this study will be valuable not only to the local and national officials as they set and enforce forest policy that directly impacts these people, but also to larger efforts to better understand the human dependency on nature, no matter where we live” (“Assessing Forest Dependency in Eastern Europe,” 2014).

Another important facilitating factor was integrating local expertise and understanding of each country's historical, socio-economic context to the survey design. As Luba Balyan, Country Program Coordinator for Armenia, noted “the freedom given to national consultants in selecting the forest communities to be surveyed and adapting the general methodology to national and local needs was instrumental for obtaining accurate results” (personal communication, September 29, 2016).

#### Investing in data management

The quality of data collected was ensured by training national expert consultants in charge of the study. The study presented a challenge in terms of data management due to the volume of information obtained through surveys. In this sense, hiring an IT specialist to be in charge of compiling, structuring, storing and formatting the datasets produced was key to facilitating their interpretation. The IT specialist managed the study's databases in a proficient manner. This allowed the IUCN FLEG team to focus on identifying relevant patterns in forest use within communities and common trends of forest dependence across the region.



### Sparking interest among forest agencies

For some countries, IUCN FLEG faced difficulties persuading national level stakeholders of the importance of the Forest Dependency study. Given the magnitude of the research envisioned, garnering support from forest institutions at a national level was of utmost importance to gain access to forest communities in different parts of each country. Similarly, the study required a great deal of collaboration from local authorities as IUCN FLEG consultants visited remote rural communities that are often wary of outsiders.

The importance of obtaining government support for the study is highlighted by the experience in Belarus, where implementing the study required the cooperation of different levels of government. A series of interviews between IUCN FLEG consultants and local officials took place in order to convince Belarusian officials that the activity was an official matter sponsored by international organizations but coordinated on a national level by the Belarusian Ministry of Forestry (Almazán et.al. 2016). After these interviews, IUCN FLEG consultants earned the trust of public officials and local community leaders, permitting them to successfully perform the study's 200 household surveys.

### Overcoming community distrust

One of the main challenges faced by the study was obtaining accurate information for some survey questions. As Ekaterine Otashvili explains *“some villagers were distrustful towards interviewers at the initial stage of implementation. Some questions seemed suspicious to community members, particularly those inquiring about monetary income from selling forest products or firewood consumption”* (personal communication October 7, 2016). The main reason behind this distrust were the regulatory restrictions on firewood and non-timber forest product extraction in all seven countries. Legal restrictions incentivize households to underreport their firewood consumption and the amount of forest products they extract for sustenance or resale. Therefore, firewood and non-timber forest product relevance for rural livelihoods is most likely underestimated by the report.

### Balancing national representativeness with regional comparability

Another challenge for the Forest Dependency study was designing a research methodology that would provide representative results for each country and identify regional trends of forest dependence. In this sense, several aspects of the study exemplify the tradeoffs between regional significance and country specificity. Luba Balyan highlighted the following five aspects of the study design that were of particular relevance for Armenia.

- *“Initially the methodology for carrying out this research was too*

general and did not account for country specific circumstances. This resulted in some unavoidable information gaps, particularly in terms of rural communities' real income.

- Similarly, it was very difficult to involve men in focus group discussions because it was high season for harvest and male participants were not available for an interview in the village. Also, a certain percentage of young men had temporally migrated to Russia for seasonal work.

- Middle-aged and senior respondents reportedly felt uncomfortable answering questions during surveys and attempted to hide actual amounts of their sales' profit and total cash income because such behavior was punishable during the Soviet period.

- In terms of firewood consumption estimation, the questionnaire for Armenia did not contemplate the fixed allotment of 8 m<sup>3</sup> of deadwood, free of charge, per household per year prescribed by Armenian law. This created some discrepancies in the cash and subsistence estimations of firewood consumption as the annual firewood consumption records make no distinction as to how much firewood was purchased with respect to how much firewood was obtained for free. This gap, however, has been bridged during the second phase of the Forest Dependency study.

- Finally, irrigation water supply as an agricultural input is not reflected in respondents' survey answers. While a portion of irrigation water is purchased by villagers, another portion is used without paying the required fee. In fact, some community members use their drinking water supply to irrigate their land because irrigated water supply is not measured by domestic water meter readings." (Personal communication, September 29, 2016).

### *Lessons learned*

A key lesson learned from the Forest Dependence study is the value of building on existing expertise and knowledge to advance research in somewhat neglected regions of the world. In this case, the IUCN FLEG team adapted existing methodologies for rural community forest relationships frequently applied in the tropics. Their approach not only facilitated the performance of the Forest Dependence study itself, but provides an opportunity for engaging in comparative studies across the northern temperate and boreal forests with forests in other parts of the world. In this sense, the Forest Dependence study is an example of the value of integrative research over developing highly specific research approaches that impede comparison across different contexts and across time.

Another lesson learned from developing the study is engaging consultants that will be considered as insiders by communities and local government officials. The Forest Dependence study sought to shed light on the living conditions and forest product consumption patterns of rural communities. Given current legal frameworks regulating forest product extraction and the high reliance of rural households on forest products, performing the study required consultants



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aware of the context and complexity of human-forest relationships in each country studied. The study could not have been performed without the participation of national consultants whose reputation served as a “door opener” to engage local officials and community members.

Another lesson learned related to engaging with local expertise is provided by the Forest Dependency study in Belarus. The IUCN FLEG team in Belarus engaged professor Maryna Lazarava from Gomel State University as the national consultant in charge of conducting surveys for Belarus. Professor Lazarava, in turn, engaged her master program students in the research. As Ekaterine Otarashvili reflects *“engaging professor Lazarava proved to be very helpful for the study as it helped to expose its results to the academic sector in Belarus. Based on this positive outcome, IUCN FLEG concluded that it would have liked to engage universities of other education and research institutions from all participating countries in the implementation of this activity”* (personal communication, October 7, 2016).

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## Forest Community Fingerprint and mapping of forest dependency, Regional (RWP 18)

### Activity Summary

The Forest Community Fingerprint (FCF) project builds on results from the Forest Dependency study also performed under the IUCN FLEG Program. The FCF methodology synthesizes data from the more than 1250 household surveys performed during the Forest Dependence Study with remote sensed data of the 36 surveyed locations. Synthesized data is used to analyze and depict forest dependent communities. The FCF is based on the principle that the socio-economic and environmental conditions of a community can be inferred based on the characteristics and changes of their surrounding environment. For instance, an area rich in non-timber forest resources (NTFR) that experiences poverty or an economic crisis may expect to see increased forest degradation as community members resort to NTFR for survival or supplementing their income. As the consultant GeoVille explained, *“The aim of this study was to develop a framework explaining the social-economic aspects of the human-nature dependency structure in northern boreal forest ecosystems”* (GeoVille Information Systems GmbH, 2015).

Some of the variables explored by the FCF are the role of forest products in supporting forest-dependent community livelihoods, the relation between human dependence and income, and common drivers for human dependence on forests. It also takes into account the differences between human-forest dependence based on regional characteristics and stages of economic development. There are six main parameters of analysis for the FCF in terms of community level data: human resources, financial capital, market system, forest-based knowledge, forest ecosystem stability and infrastructure. Meanwhile, there are six parameters that focus on the physical characteristics of a community’s surrounding forests: landscape characteristics, village structure, infrastructure, agriculture, forest and hazards. The hazard parameter captures the risk of damage to the community or their resources from natural phenomena such as floods or landslides.

As Ekaterine Otarashvili explains *“the FCF methodology permits a multivariate analysis of human-nature dependence in boreal and temperate forest ecosystems. The multivariate approach provides a way to characterize the efficiency and sustainability of interactions between communities and their surrounding forest ecosystem resources”* (personal communication, October 7, 2016). In general terms, the FCF methodology links communities’ forest resource use patterns with the conditions of the surrounding market system, infrastructure and forest ecosystem stability. Comparability of FCF across communities is achieved by creating a relative ranking of each parameter's results: the upper limit is defined by the best functioning community while the lower limit is defined by the poorest functioning community. The FCF's parameters are calculated based on weighted averages of each collected variable. This means that parameters can be adjusted to reflect local or regional conditions of the area of study and therefore obtain more accurate estimates of forest-human dependency and poverty-forest relations. Given its integrative approach, the FCF methodology is highly flexible.

## Outcomes

The FCF study produced a multivariate, comparative assessment of forest-dependent communities in ENPI countries by combining results from the Forest Dependence study, also produced by IUCN FLEG Program, and satellite imagery of forest cover for surveyed communities. Results have been organized into a layered mapping system that helps visualize specific aspects of human-forest dependence (i.e. dependence on NTFP or dependence on timber) and relate them to forest ecosystem indicators (e.g. forest cover). As Ekaterine Otashvili stated *“by applying the FCF methodology it is possible to assess if communities are close to a tipping point in terms of forest resource use. It is also possible to estimate relative levels of community resilience to external shocks based on the state of surrounding forests”* (personal communication, October 7, 2016).

The FCF methodology was initially developed for, and applied to, communities located in northern temperate and boreal forests. The FCF concept has a flexible nature and can be adjusted to measure overall levels of community poverty and forest productivity. In this sense, the FCF has the potential to infer, with a certain degree of confidence, the resource use dynamics and ecosystem stability of other rural communities based on the similarity of forest ecosystem indicators. In general terms, the FCF methodology uses information on the correlation between surveyed communities’ socio-economic and behavioral patterns of forest resource use with the physical conditions of nearby forests to identify similar communities based solely on the geospatial data available.

The FCF methodology is an innovative methodology with great potential to inform policy makers, and conservation practitioners’ efforts to improve forest governance and natural resource use. In fact, as Andrey Zaytsev, IUCN Country Program Coordinator for Russia explains *“the FCF methodology has the potential to become a universally applicable tool that, due to its flexible character, can be applied to other forest ecosystems such as tropical rainforests or even, after some further adaptation, non-forested ecoregions”* (personal communication, September 29, 2016). The IUCN FLEG team and GeoVille Ltd. consultants responsible for developing the FCF methodology produced a research paper on the methodology. The manuscript has been submitted to an academic journal and is currently undergoing peer-review.

## Facilitating Factors

### Investing in multidisciplinary research approaches

The FCF study was facilitated by the collaboration of highly qualified and talented



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professionals in fields of ecology, forestry, GIS and remote sensing, and information technology. Consultants at GeoVille Ltd. worked in close collaboration with IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinators and IUCN FLEG Program Coordinators at IUCN headquarters to develop the methodology to relate socio-economic and behavioral information of forest use to geo-spatial information on forests. Consultants at GeoVille Ltd. also collaborated closely with national consultants in charge of implementing the Forest Dependency study in order to increase their understanding of the forest use dynamics characterized by the Forest Dependency study.

Meanwhile, the study benefited from the assistance of an IT specialist who developed and managed the database incorporating survey information from the Forest Dependency study. Their expertise in database management facilitated the integration of data generated by the Forest Dependency study with geospatial imagery used by GeoVille to perform the FCF study.

Finally, the study benefited from the cooperation and information exchange with a broad range of stakeholders such as local authorities, local communities, local forestry enterprises, State Forestry Agencies across the ENPI region, and environmental NGOs. Their deep understanding of human-forest relationships in each participating country in the FLEG program provided context and key insights that helped GeoVille consultants understand and interpret the data being used for the FCF study. In this sense, local expertise on forest use provided by several stakeholders (e.g. local citizens, forestry officials, academics) helped increase the accuracy of information produced by the study.

### *Challenges*

#### Developing an innovative human-nature assessment methodology

One of the main challenges experienced by the study was developing an integrative assessment methodology of human-forest dependence that could produce generalizable results and inform policy using highly contextual forest use and geo-spatial forest data. The IUCN FLEG team is engaging with both the academic sector and stakeholders in forest governance in order to share the FCF methodology as much as possible. The IUCN FLEG team hopes to initiate a dialogue about the methodology's predictive power and potential future applicability in the field of forest governance and conservation.

### *Lessons learned*

One of the key lessons learned from the FCF study is the need to maintain a flexible approach when developing new assessment methodologies. As the FCF study progressed, IUCN FLEG team and GeoVille Ltd. consultants recognized there was potential to develop a generalizable assessment tool. The FCF study expanded its potential to increase our understanding of human-forest dependence and inform forest governance policy and sustainable management in areas beyond pilot locations where the FCF study was performed. In this sense, efforts to improve forest governance in northern temperate and boreal forests in Eastern Europe

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have contributed to the efforts to improve natural resource governance in other areas by exploring a new methodological approach to understanding the complex dynamics of human-nature interactions.

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## Local Forest Governance Study, Regional (RWP 20)

### Activity Summary

The Local Forest Governance Study reviewed the forest governance structures of each participating country in the ENPI FLEG Program. The study comprises 5 case studies from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Even though information was taken from 6 countries, the complex socio-political circumstances and the armed conflict within parts of the region made it difficult to travel and access all areas needed for the study (particularly Russia and Ukraine). The study, conducted by IUCN consultant Stefan Michel, focused on describing and analyzing the governance structures of local forests. Local forests are those located near rural or urban areas and provide vital services to inhabitants of nearby communities.

During Soviet rule, these forests were administered by state and collective farms. After the end of the Soviet Union, each country in the region defined diverse administration and management schemes for their local forests. As Stefan Michel notes “[a]fter the collapse of the Union, the governance of local forests developed autonomously in each country, and developed very diverse systems. In some cases, a stark contrast to the system from which they came was established. Some countries integrated all local forests into centrally governed state forests, some others established subnational management entities or handed them over to local municipalities” (“Once upon a Time the Soviet Style Forest Management... and then?,” 2016).

The study reviewed relevant national documents on forest governance such as policy documents, national and sub-national laws and bylaws to understand the true workings of local forest governance. Secondary sources of information included reports prepared under the ENPI-FLEG framework and other projects. Finally, interviews were performed with a wide range of stakeholders involved in forest management such as government officials, forest inventory and management planning organizations, local administrations, local forestry enterprises, community representatives, NGOs and the private sector.

Based on the study, the common factors, challenges, and differences between local forest governance schemes were identified, and their relation to an efficient and sustainable forest governance understood. As Stefan Michel explained, “*this study represents an invaluable tool to assess the quality of governance of local forests in the FLEG II countries, and governance is a fundamental factor that determines whether forest resources are used efficiently, sustainably, and equitably. Its added value rests on the combination of a detailed overview of local forest governance in the region with illustrative cases, which show how and in what way concrete governance systems can influence natural resource management*” (“Local Forest Governance under the Loupe,” 2016).

### Outcomes

At the time of the study, few countries included terms such as “Forests of Local



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Importance,” communal forest management or ownership in their national forest legislation. However, in some cases, even state-owned forests that fall under the category of local forests were simultaneously being managed by several institutions at different levels of government. The study provides detailed information on the structure of local forest governance schemes including, to name a few, information on: legal definition and standing of local forests, ownership and user right systems, legal and regulatory frameworks, mandates of forestry organizations, financial arrangements, economic instruments and benefits sharing, the planning and decision making processes, provisions for stakeholder participation, and funding for forestry agencies. In general, the study found that *“local communal authorities neither own forests nor possess management rights for them. At the same time many rural communities in the ENPI-FLEG II countries depend on their surrounding forests and the natural resources and on locally important ecosystem services they provide”* Michel (2016b).

In this sense, the study provided information on the specific governance structure for local forests which can later be used to identify points of contention with traditional uses of forests, customary laws and practices and current legislation. As Ekaterine Otarashvili noted *“this information is key to define and clarify the effectiveness of governance and participation by the local forest dependent population in forest management and decision making process. It also identifies common trends in governance across the region and national differences. Finally it identifies most salient hurdles and cases of best local forest governance practices from participating countries”* (personal communication, October 7, 2016).

The study provides detailed, valuable information that can assist ongoing forest governance reform processes in the region. In reference to the potential impact of the study, Ekaterine Otarashvili concluded that *“this is the first time that a study has assessed and compared the legal, regulatory, and organizational frameworks of local forest governance in such a comprehensive and detailed manner. The identification of common trends and national differences, and the discussion of best practices as well as common obstacles and difficulties, contribute to defining the components of effective governance. I am sure that policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders will find this study extremely useful for their work”* (“Local Forest Governance under the Loupe,” 20116).

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Hiring respected experts

Hiring IUCN consultant Stefan Michel was crucial for the effective implementation of the study due to his expertise and rich experience in the region. Stefan Michel’s proficiency in forest governance and intimate knowledge of the ENPI region allowed him to overcome the methodological and implementation challenges of a study of this magnitude. Mr. Michel was able to capitalize on the background information provided by each IUCN FLEG Country Program Officer and perform field interviews and research across the countries analyzed. During

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visits to each country, Mr. Michel used his preexisting knowledge of the region to obtain the most detailed and insightful information from interviews with a wide range of stakeholders. Mr. Michel was able to engage forest professionals from central and local government and non-government organizations, academia, and research institutions. Similarly, field visits also proved of great value to the study as Mr. Michel was able to get a first-hand assessment of the effectiveness of particular governance systems.

### *Challenges*

#### Studying a loosely defined research subject: what is a local forest?

The greatest challenge experienced by this activity was defining a research approach that could analyze a wildly diverse, often contended, research subject such as local forests. As Stefan Michel notes “[t]he concept of local forest is multifaceted and very difficult to define. In the seven ENPI-FLEG countries, local forests include diverse areas and must be understood as a broad and flexible concept” (“Do You Know What a Local Forest is?,” 2016). The fact that there is no common, agreed-upon, definition of local forests throughout the ENPI region implied that existing assessment methodologies applicable for local forests in other parts of the world would not be adequate to analyze the particular case of post-Soviet republics in Eastern Europe and Russia. Ultimately, Mr. Michel defined his own research methodology based on government assessment criteria. The study defined local forests as “forests located in close distance to rural and urban settlements and of special importance for the wellbeing of the respective local people in terms of provision of forest resources and ecosystem services” (“Do You Know What a Local Forest is?,” 2016).

In practice, reviewing the diverse, context specific forest governance structures of each country represented a challenging task. The study not only contemplated the review of large volumes of official documents, but also a considerable amount of interviews and field visits. In order to deal with the methodological and practical challenges presented by the study, Mr. Michel opted for taking a flexible approach to the definition of local forests in order to evaluate governance structures that were the most relevant for each particular country. In the case of Belarus and Russia, rather than looking at local forest’s governance, the study analyzed forest governance from the perspectives of local people and forest agencies in relation to their interests and needs. The analysis of forest governance quality was performed following IUCN’s set of principles of good governance Michel (2016).

### *Lessons learned*

An important lesson learned was understanding how the methodological and practical challenges presented by analyzing an undefined topic like local forests affect implementation of a study like this one. Researching a contended topic like local forest governance generated insights on the validity of different methodological approaches and assessment methodologies. The study highlighted the importance of developing flexible methodological approaches that



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combine the review of official documentation with field visits and stakeholder interviews in order to understand the on-the-ground interactions between normative documents and governance practice. Similarly, the activity highlights the importance of engaging a qualified consultant, like Stefan Michel, with ample expertise and sensitivity to the nuances of society and governance across the ENPI region.

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## Armenia

During FLEG II, IUCN's country specific activities for Armenia focused on improving Armenian citizens' awareness of forest issues and increasing their level of participation in monitoring in addition to improving communication with Armenian authorities. In order to do this, the IUCN-FLEG team deployed two activities: i) developing a system for public monitoring of forests; and ii) empowering forest-dependent communities through roadshows. The public monitoring of forests activity trained interested citizens to document cases of illegal logging and developed the online platform through which to report these cases to Armenian authorities. Meanwhile, the empowerment of forest-dependent communities through roadshows activity deployed a caravan of FLEG experts that would engage in conversations with forest-dependent communities about forest issues. To a large extent, both activities built upon the results of FLEG I and the areas of opportunity identified during the first phase of the program.

### Public Monitoring of Forests in Armenia (ADA CWP 5.4, EC CWP 3.1)

#### *Activity Summary*

This IUCN activity facilitated the establishment of a citizen monitoring system for illegal logging activities in Armenian forests. It provided both the human and technical capacity to document illegal forest activities, and an online platform (<http://www.afpm.am/en>) to record the cases identified by volunteers. Through this activity, IUCN-FLEG sought to advance three main objectives: i) to “*raise the voice of local communities and that of the general public relating to changes happening in forests,*” ii) to “*improve the forest monitoring system(s) in Armenia,*” and iii) to “*make the issues of illegal and legal forest use more transparent in Armenia.*” (IUCN Country Program Coordinator, Armenia, personal communication, September 29 2016)

The activity began in 2014 and combines the use of satellite imagery of forest cover with community engagement to monitor and document illegal logging activity in Armenia. Local forests monitored fell under the jurisdiction of either Hayantar SNCO (the office under the Armenian Ministry of Agriculture in charge of regulating forest activities) or within the network of Protected Areas managed by the Ministry of Nature Protection. FLEG II experts and GeoInfo LLC reviewed satellite images of forest cover outside areas where legal harvesting was taking place. If a change of forest cover was detected, trained volunteers were deployed to document the loss of forest coverage. When visiting an area, volunteers gathered evidence of potential illegal logging in the form of GPS coordinates, photos and video. This information was uploaded to the dedicated website [www.afpm.am](http://www.afpm.am) where it was reviewed by FLEG II experts to determine if there could have been, indeed, evidence of illegal logging and, if so, authorities were alerted. Volunteer trainings prepared citizens to adequately identify, locate and document such cases as well as the proper procedure to upload information to the website. In this sense, the activity helped provide the authorities with credible information on the extent of irregular activities in Armenian forests that would otherwise go unnoticed due to Hayantar's institutional capacity to monitor the whole extension of forests under their jurisdiction.

Information gathered by volunteers that corresponded to incidences of illegal logging was

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shared with Hayantar directly as well as posted on social media, mainly Facebook. It is worth emphasizing that incidences of illegal activity posted on social media were subsequently delivered to wider audiences by other media, such as online news outlets or television. Local community members who follow the news and use social media themselves helped incidences of illegal logging detected by volunteer reach a wider audience.

Volunteers span a great range of backgrounds and interests. For instance, a volunteer commented during one of the trainings that *“I have seen people from the environmental department of the mayor's office of Kajaran town, members of Zangezur Biosphere Complex, activists, journalists and representatives of environmental NGOs. This wide range of interest shows how important our forests are to our community.”* - Aram Sargsyan, member of the local forest monitoring group and veterinary scientist by training (*“Not in our Forest,”* 2015). The website (<http://www.afpm.am/en>) is sponsored by FLEG II and is independent from any Armenian government agency. Participation by active, engaged citizens contributes to improving understanding of the magnitude and location of illegal logging activities across Armenia when cases of illegal logging reported by citizens is combined with information already available to Hayantar.

### Outcomes

This activity's accomplishments range from creating a network of active citizens engaged in monitoring illegal activity in their nearby forests to increasing the level of awareness of Armenian society on illegal forestry issues through increased media coverage on the topic.

In terms of identifying illegal forest activity, the activity has resulted in an impressive amount of cases of illegal logging being detected. In 2015 alone, volunteers identified 1,425 illegally removed trees over an area of 190 ha, eight forestry enterprises were inspected by Armenian authorities, three cases resulted in the successful prosecution of those responsible, and four directors of forestry enterprises were fired as a result of their implication in illegal activities. Similarly, the activity has developed the human capacity to perform an accurate monitoring of forests. For instance, 85 citizen volunteers were trained during 2015. FLEG II experts and the remote sensing technology and spatial analysis firm GeoInfo LLC train volunteers on how to use GPS navigation tools, analyze suspicious situations, record the data gathered in the field and the proper procedure for uploading it to the website. The knowledge provided by these trainings proves of utmost importance for generating accurate and credible data that Armenian authorities can use when prosecuting forest crimes. In the words of volunteer forest monitor Karine Panosyan *“[t]hanks to Public Monitoring, I developed the skill set to make a precious contribution to fight illegal logging. Technical knowledge acquired from practical implementation of this activity gave volunteers like me real power”* (*“Knowledge is Power,”* 2016).

Digital manuals and ten short-duration videos detailing monitoring procedures and

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featuring forest crimes (such as types of illegal logging) are also available on the website as a means to encourage citizens to self-report suspicious situations. In this way, the activity has created a network of NGOs, communities, students, activists, conservationists and recreational users such as hikers that are actively engaged in monitoring forests. The website itself, [afpm.am](http://afpm.am), constitutes an accomplishment of the activity by constituting a constantly updated reservoir of credible information that Armenian authorities can use to improve forest governance.

In terms of raising awareness on illegal forestry issues, the activity has “*catalyzed media coverage and investigative journalism on issues of illegal logging without approaching media directly. Generated coverage include four serious talk shows on TV, two Radio issues, and nearly 20 online articles and press releases*”. (IUCN Country Program Coordinator, Armenia, personal communication, September 29 2016). The use of the dedicated website and social media as a primary outlet for detected incidences of illegal logging has established an identifiable reservoir of information that other media outlets can rely on. Journalists, news agencies and TV channels are using the information provided by the citizen monitoring efforts in order to satisfy the public’s interest on the topic and uncover the magnitude of illegal logging activities. As Luba Balyan explains, “*as awareness of illegal logging in Armenia increased, we started receiving calls and invitations to attend talk shows, round tables, TV channels, among others, to participate in the increasing news coverage on the topic of illegal forest activity*” (personal communication, November 2, 2016).

### *Facilitating factors*

#### Addressing citizens’ concerns and calls for action

One crucial facilitating factor for the effective implementation of the activity was the fact that it addressed one of Armenia citizens’ main concerns. As IUCN ENPI FLEG’s Program Officer, Ekaterine Otarashvili, mentions “*the activity touched upon a problem that is real for Armenian citizens, one they are worried about. FLEG used that momentum to develop the activity*” (personal communication, October 19 2016). The fact that illegal logging was preeminent for the Armenian public garnered support for efforts to increase monitoring of logging activities among regular citizens and Armenian authorities alike.

#### Filling knowledge gaps

Armenian forest authorities, namely Hayantar SNCO, were supportive of the activity as it provides Armenian authorities with accurate information about illegal logging activities that are difficult to detect and prosecute due to logistical and capacity limitations faced by the institution. As Ruben Petrosyan, Chief Forester at Hayantar put it “[t]his[public forest monitoring] activity is the most transparent way for us to learn about what is happening in the forest and receive independent information from forest monitoring. Instead of relying only on monitoring that is administered by the government, we now have reports from a group of people that are really independent which includes local communities, active environmentalists and other citizens.” (“Not in our Forest,” 2015). Hayantar showed its support by helping mitigate challenges faced by



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volunteers when entering the forests without an official mandate to monitor forest activities; a conflict that commonly arose between local forest authorities, forestry enterprises and volunteers.

Another facilitating factor was having access to the technology and human capacity to use remote sensing techniques and the Landsat satellite imagery. Having this technical capacity *“helped considerably in detecting changes in forest cover in Armenia and hence be able to prioritize the sites for urgent visits and field expeditions to confirm and prove the actual on the ground changes, most of which were due to logging”* (IUCN Country Program Coordinator, Armenia personal communication, September 30 2016). It is worth noting that the ability to remotely identify areas of high priority assists the success of citizen monitoring as they are volunteers who receive no remuneration for their activities. Citizen monitoring is, to some extent, not only generating independent data on illegal forest activities, but also increasing the institutional capacity of Hayantar SNCO to prosecute forest crimes by covering areas they cannot monitor themselves.

### *Challenges*

#### Advancing change in a corrupt forest sector

The most challenging aspect of the activity was securing cooperation from local forestry enterprises in improving transparency in the forestry sector and increasing information sharing with the general public. As IUCN country program coordinator for Armenia, Luba Balyan, explains: *“[t]here was a problem of accessing the forestry enterprises for the purpose of citizen monitoring. Despite Hayantar's open position to cooperate, its subordinate branches (local forestry enterprises) were not prepared to cooperate and disclose information”*. This was mainly due to how the forestry sector in Armenia is organized and how illegal logging practices take place. In broad terms, illegal logging activities in Armenia are inscribed within a pyramidal structure that requires complicity from high ranking government officials and local authorities posted in local forests controlled by local “kinglets”. At the same time, Hayantar SNCO primarily holds an administrative role in forest management, particularly in relation to local forestry enterprises. This structure creates tensions between different jurisdictions involved in the forest sector and how forestry officials from different institutions relate to illegal logging. In many cases, illegal forest activities happen with either complicity of local forest officials or in spite of them when forest officials are forced to participate in the corruption and illegal logging system in order to protect their employment.

The systemic problems of corruption and lack of transparency generated conflict on the ground when volunteer citizens, who lacked an official mandate, attempted to visit and record illegal activities in the forest. In some cases, volunteers faced resistance to enter local forests in spite of having the support of Hayantar. In these cases, volunteers resorted to raising a public alert on the situation. Volunteers videotaped the conflict and shared it on social media outlets, a

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strategy that usually garnered attention by news agencies and media outlets, therefore assisting volunteers in fulfilling their activities.

### *Lessons learned*

One of the main lessons learned from the implementation of this activity is the importance of having national and local authorities support (or at least buy-in). In this case, the deep sense of ownership of the FLEG program by the Armenian government (represented by FLEG national Focal Points) was instrumental in providing the support of Hayantar SNCO for the activity along with their willingness to attempt innovative solutions to Armenia's forestry issues. Similarly, IUCN FLEG experts working on public monitoring of forests have been able to maintain an independent role verifying the validity of reports uploaded to the website while at the same time enjoying the support of government agencies in their efforts. This is a noteworthy outcome of the activity as it shows it is possible to balance having an independent role assisting forest monitoring efforts while fostering institutional collaboration with forestry authorities.

Another lesson learned from the activity is the recognition of how joining citizens with highly qualified experts in order to take advantage of satellite technology and remote sensing can significantly increase a country's ability to monitor remote, inaccessible areas. This is especially important when there is a reduced institutional capacity for monitoring efforts by government agencies or systemic corruption and lack of incentives for transparency and monitoring from forest agencies. Similarly, the FLEG program has helped make the forestry sector more transparent, something that can make real changes in society. As Luba Balyan, IUCN FLEG country program coordinator for Armenia explains *“the activity acted as an ice breaker, first of all, because it removed the fear of speaking up and talking about forestry issues in public and in traditional media. Even experts themselves, who knew a lot about these issues but were silent, have started engaging in the public dialogue. The activity helped change the attitude and mindset of the public at large with respect to illegal logging.”* (Personal communication, November 2, 2016).

Another lesson learned from the activity refers to the importance of directly working with forest communities and creating outlets for information to be publicly available. “Forest communities are a direct source of information of what is happening in the forest. Even if community members are not directly involved in monitoring activities, they may share important information with volunteers, providing additional proof for the observations made by volunteers from the city. In general, observations by volunteers are perceived as legitimate because volunteers have been trained to collect data properly and document their findings using video and photo material as an evidence. Being able to confirm findings by information provided by community members helps establish a system of local verification of events, increasing the validity and usefulness of information gathered by citizen volunteers.” (Luba Balyan, IUCN FLEG country program coordinator for Armenia, personal communication, November 2, 2016).



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## Empowering Forest-Dependent Communities through Roadshows, Armenia (ADA CWP 6.3)

### Activity summary

This IUCN FLEG II activity builds upon a FLEG I activity that took place in 2010. During the first phase of *Roadshows*, FLEG team experts and members of the NGOs Armenian Forests and Ecolur visited rural communities in Armenia to collect people's main concerns about the forest issues that directly affected their lives and relay them to Armenian authorities. In August and October 2015, the IUCN FLEG team, along with Ecolur and Armenian Forests experts, began a new version of *Roadshows* and visited 20 villages in the Armenian *marzes* of Lori, Tavush, Vayots Dzor, and Syunik ("2015 FLEG Roadshow: The Hotline between Yerevan and Your Village," 2015). The objective of the second phase of *Roadshows* was to build upon the efforts of the first phase and collect new proposals and concerns that citizens wanted Armenian authorities to be aware of.

The activity also aimed to follow-up on the implementation of suggestions derived from the first roadshows, continue raising awareness of local citizens on forestry issues, and collect new information for a new series of media coverage on the status of illegal logging and community development in rural-dependent communities. The team of experts that visited the villages used a wide range of strategies to engage with local citizens in order to raise awareness of forest issues and gather their opinions, concerns and proposals for better forest management in their surrounding forests. An example of these strategies included holding discussions in village centers in order to make explicit to citizens that discussions were open to everyone and that their input was not only welcomed, but valued. Similarly, Ecolur experts held presentations at local schools to engage younger generations.

### Outcomes

As a result of the first phase of *Roadshows* in 2010, Armenian authorities passed a decree that entitles residents of forest-dependent communities to receive eight cubic meters of deadwood per year free of charge to cover their heating and cooking needs ("2015 FLEG Roadshow: The Hotline between Yerevan and Your Village," 2015). Other proposals that arose from conversations with communities during the first roadshows series were adopted during a high level round table that took place in Yerevan in July 2015. During its second phase, *roadshows* provided a follow-up on the implementation of the proposals accepted after the first roadshows including the one that entitled vulnerable citizens to deadwood provision, a service that had unfortunately been interrupted in at least one of the visited villages. In relation to this event, Nazeli Vardanyan, environmental attorney and Director of Armenian Forests NGO, noted Martun Matevosyan's, Director of Hayantar SNCO and FLEG II Focal Point, response to the situation: "[Mr.] Matevosyan's first reaction was of astonishment, as Hayantar had never given the instruction to interrupt the wood provision. After a quick investigation, it emerged that this

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decision was taken by the staff of the Regional Governor Office and the Head of the local forestry branch in Artavan” (“2015 FLEG Roadshow: The Hotline between Yerevan and Your Village,” 2015). Mr. Matevosyan, assured FLEG and NGO experts that the situation would be corrected at once in order to ensure that local citizens of Artavan would have access to the much needed deadwood during the approaching winter months.

*Roadshows’* second phase also provided detailed information on the concerns and experiences of rural citizens in forest-dependent communities of Armenia. For instance, obtaining deadwood for heating is a burdensome task for villagers, especially for senior citizens or children, because forest degradation is forcing people to hike high up the hills, constantly further away, in order to gather the precious resource. Most citizens are unable to access alternative sources of energy, such as gas, due to a lack of proper infrastructure or the economic means to afford such fuel sources (“2015 FLEG Roadshow: The Hotline between Yerevan and Your Village,” 2015). Casual conversations with citizens at the 20 villages visited during the second phase of *Roadshows* highlighted the relevance of ensuring access by local citizens to deadwood as a means of ensuring these people’s well-being and survival. In this way, *Roadshows* has provided invaluable information about the current situation experienced on-the-ground by remote rural communities of Armenia and the drivers behind illegal extraction of forest resources.

Similar to *Roadshows’* first phase, concerns gathered during conversations with communities will then be conveyed to a wider audience by the news and journalistic coverage that results from the experiences of NGO experts that participate in the Roadshows (Almazán et.al. 2016). Likewise, concerns and proposals of citizens relating forest issues will be relayed to Armenian authorities through an official channel such as the high level round table held in Yerevan in July 2015 between FLEG experts and Hayantar and other government representatives.

Overall, *Roadshows* have helped promote cooperation between rural citizens and the Armenian government by providing a bridge through which rural citizens can express their most pressing issues and concerns. Armenian authorities in response, have obtain detailed information about the on-the-ground situation for these communities and will be able to design appropriate measures to combat illegal forest activities while, at the same time, improve the well-being of citizens in rural areas. Another outcome of Roadshows has been an increased awareness by rural citizens of the negative impacts of illegal logging and other forest issues and a better understanding of the link between these activities and their current circumstances and problems.

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Building on previous IUCN activities

One important facilitating factor for the effective implementation of *Roadshows’* second phase was the incorporation of lessons learned during its first phase in terms of how to engage communities and when to visit rural areas. During the second phase of Roadshows, FLEG II



consultants and NGO experts already had experience engaging rural communities and were able to refine their methods of interaction. For instance, the community engagement process consisted of an intense participatory process that included meetings at village squares, casual conversations with FLEG and NGO experts visiting the communities, and school presentations that engaged younger generations within each community. In all cases of engagement with citizens, FLEG and NGO experts avoided interactions that resembled lectures on forest issues and opted for an approach of holding casual conversations with citizens who showed interest in the roadshows. This approach helped citizens from these remote villages feel more at ease with visiting experts (Almazán et.al. 2016).

Similarly, visits to rural areas were timed during the agricultural low season in order to maximize attendance by male community members. Meetings at village squares were held in the afternoon in order to ensure that the largest number of interested citizens could attend. In this way, the activity tried to maximize the sources of input for suggestions and concerns that will be later conveyed to the government and avoid collecting information from a less representative group of villagers.

Finally, the activity benefited from the expertise and professional reputation of Armenian NGO experts as it increased the activity's legitimacy in the eyes of local citizens. For instance, during the second phase of *Roadshows*, environmental lawyer Nazeli Vardanyan played a crucial role in the community engagement process. Ms. Vardanyan had visited communities during the first phase of *Roadshows* and engaged with community members. Upon her return to communities, local citizens recognized her and were confident talking to her. Ms. Vardanyan's presence helped ease local citizen's distrust of IUCN FLEG's roadshow caravans and facilitated citizens' participation with FLEG experts.

### *Challenges*

#### Addressing local citizen's distrust of outsiders

One of the challenges for this activity continues to be overcoming citizen's distrust of outsiders as a result of eroded trust in the government by local citizens (Almazán et.al 2016). In order to address this distrust, *Roadshows* experts have taken a personal, non-threatening approach of community engagement that clarifies, from the outset, that visiting FLEG and NGO experts are independent from the Armenian government and are there to listen to community members. As Nazeli Vardanyan, environmental attorney and Director of Armenian Forests NGO, recalls "*They were looking at us suspiciously, until someone recognised [sic] me from an interview on TV and reassured the others that they could trust us*" ("*2015 FLEG Roadshow: The Hotline between Yerevan and Your Village,*" 2015).

Similarly, the public meetings held at village squares and presentations at schools eventually encouraged citizens to engage with FLEG experts on conversations about forest topics

and express their concerns and suggestions on how to improve forest management in their surrounding area. As Ms. Vardanyan noted, “[e]veryone was satisfied and grateful. Both citizens and local authorities understood that they could trust us. The crowd that gathered at the town hall would not disperse, as people wanted to ask for advice on several other issues, hoping we could help them. It was almost night time when we got into the car...” (“2015 FLEG Roadshow: The Hotline between Yerevan and Your Village,” 2015).

Another challenge that remains is reassuring communities that their concerns are being heard by Armenian authorities and that measures are being taken in order to address those concerns. In this sense, there needs to be a higher level of engagement between Armenian authorities at the federal level with those operating at a regional or local level. An example of the need for further communication and institutional cooperation is the fact that the provision of firewood for citizens was suspended in the community of Artavan due to a decision from a regional manager, in spite of the firewood service having already been sanctioned at the federal level.

### *Lessons learned*

In a context of high distrust in government authorities by rural citizens, having experts that would be perceived as credible, independent and trustworthy by both community members and Armenian authorities has proven vital to lead initiatives that aim to bridge communications between both parties. The credibility and professional reputation of IUCN FLEG and NGO experts participating in *Roadshows* encouraged community members to engage in the activity. To some extent, their credibility was conveyed by being recognizable public figures (due to having appeared on television). In this sense, engaging the media as an integral part of *Roadshows* proved to be a highly effective strategy to cement the activity’s credibility. Similarly, the professional reputation and expertise from FLEG and participating NGO members reassured Armenian authorities that the information being conveyed as results of *Roadshows* was credible and worthy of attention.

A challenge for the future effectiveness of the recently established communication channel is ensuring that decisions made at high levels of government in Yerevan, are translated into long lasting policy measures at the local level. There is a need to engage more actively with local and regional authorities in order to facilitate implementation of decisions taken at higher levels of government. Improving these process will reduce the risk of community members losing trust in the process due to feeling that they are not being heard. An example of the need for higher communication and collaboration with regional and local authorities is the fact that deadwood provision for the town of Artavan was canceled by a regional forestry official.

Another are of opportunity for *Roadshows* is establishing a mechanism to channel interactions with community members that occur between the community visits. NGO experts that participated in the caravans have consistently received calls from rural citizens. As Luba Balyan, country program coordinator for Armenia, explains “community members usually reach out to visiting experts and call asking questions and consulting about a range of issues which



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*were discussed with them such as illegal logging, land erosion related problems, loans, legal forestry and land-use issues.” (Personal communication, November 2, 2016).*

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## Azerbaijan

The IUCN FLEG activities in Azerbaijan focused, primarily, on providing government officials and policy makers with accurate information to design effective forest management policies. The Climate Change Adaptation study for Azerbaijan assessed the vulnerability of Azerbaijan's forests to climate change and Azeri forest officials' awareness of the impacts and available strategies to cope with effects of climate change. The Tugay Forest Rehabilitation study provided detailed information about the current status of tugay forest ecosystems in pilot regions of Azerbaijan. The insights and recommendations derived from the study are aimed at assisting Azeri officials in their efforts to implement tugay forest rehabilitations programs. Finally, the Analytical Study of Energy Efficiency for the rural construction sector in Azerbaijan provided a quantitative assessment of overall energy efficiency of rural households in Azerbaijan.

### Climate Change Adaptation, Azerbaijan (CWP 2.1)

#### *Activity Summary*

As part of the FLEG II Program, the IUCN FLEG team performed a study on the level of climate change vulnerability of Azerbaijani forests. The study also assessed the level of awareness of national and local forest management officials on the impacts of climate change and how prepared they are to deal with its impacts. The study involved a desktop review of current research on impacts of climate change in forests and meetings with relevant organizations with expertise and knowledge about climate change issues such as the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR). Similarly, MENR was working on Azerbaijan's Third National Communications to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and with the Asian Development Bank. In order to get ground-level information, the study performed surveys and interviews in two pilot regions of Azerbaijan: the Shamakhi district with an arid climate and the semi-arid Lahij. Pilot surveys and interviews assessed the level of awareness and preparedness to deal with climate change by forest officials and communities in the area.

The study showed that forests in Azerbaijan are very vulnerable to climate change. This is of particular concern as both Azerbaijan's watersheds and the livelihoods and well-being of rural forest-dependent communities depend greatly on forests. Another issue of great concern is that most forest management officials, especially those at the local level, were unaware of the effects of climate change on forests. Forest management officials were also unaware of the programs and strategies available in Azerbaijan to adapt to climate change. The study highlighted that Azerbaijan's forests are at risk of higher rates of forest fires, loss of biodiversity, drought, increased frequency of extreme weather events, increased risks of forest pest and disease outbreaks, and potential loss of livelihoods of forest-dependent communities due to loss of forest resources (Mehdiyev 2015).

## *Outcomes*

The study provided the Azerbaijani government with an invaluable source of information for planning adequate climate change adaptation strategies. It actively contributed to raising awareness on climate change and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies as an integral part of policy making in Azerbaijan. Higher awareness of climate change issues led MENR and the Ministry of Emergency Situations to create a joint committee to address climate change related issues such as forest fires. The study also contributed to the tools and methodologies available to professionals in the forestry sector to be aware, understand and deal with effects of climate change in Azerbaijan (Almazán et.al. 2016). As Azer Garayev, IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator for Azerbaijan, pointed out “[t]his report gives Azerbaijani officials a solid understanding of the challenges and importance of addressing climate change in Azerbaijan’s forest landscapes so they can make wise decisions when taking the necessary next steps” (“FLEG II releases forest climate change readiness report in Azerbaijan,” 2015).

## *Facilitating Factors*

### Building on IUCN FLEG’s expertise and professional networks

The IUCN FLEG team’s professional reputations as highly qualified, trustworthy experts on climate change issues allowed them to approach high government officials, government agencies across different sectors, local forestry officials, and community members. IUCN FLEG experts leading the study, Azer Garayev and Bariz Mehdiyev, used their individual professional expertise and professional networks to identify key stakeholders across Azerbaijan’s government agencies that would be most receptive to hearing the potential benefits of a climate change vulnerability assessment for Azerbaijan. Similarly, Garayev’s expertise in developing education methodologies and Mehdiyev’s expertise in climate change assessments proved vital to obtaining useful information for the diverse set of involved stakeholders and using appropriate communication strategies to convey the study’s results (Almazán et.al. 2016).

### Fostering stakeholder collaboration based on common interests

The IUCN FLEG team facilitated collaboration across different government agencies who shared concerns about the effects of climate change on forests. Collaboration was based on the understanding that climate change affects multiple sectors. Hence, finding solutions requires coordinated action by agencies with different mandates and areas of expertise. For example, as a result of increased awareness of climate change impacts in Azerbaijan, MENR and the Ministry of Emergency Situations created joint committees to focus on climate change adaptation to prevent forest fires. Similarly, the Ministry of Education collaborated with MENR to develop



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education materials on climate change for adults and children (Almazán et.al. 2016).

IUCN FLEG also fostered the creation of a network of climate change professionals. IUCN FLEG facilitated regular meetings between senior government officials in charge of forest policy and climate change experts working in Azerbaijan. Through these meetings, government officials and climate experts were able to exchange information and discuss the ways in which climate change affects forests in Azerbaijan. Some of the partners involved in the network include consultants at the Clima East Policy Program, the director of the National Climate Change Center (part of MENR), and the UNFCCC National Focal Point for Azerbaijan (Almazán et.al. 2016).

### *Challenges*

#### Raising awareness on local impacts of global climate challenges

An important challenge for the activity was to perform a study that would be relevant and understandable across different levels of government agencies and different geographical scales. The study sought to raise awareness of the effects of climate change in local communities and yet obtain information useful for decision makers at a national level. For instance, the study showed that local forestry officials and community members thought of climate change as a global issue that had no direct impacts on their surrounding forests (Almazán et.al. 2016). Therefore, the study sought to raise awareness of the palpable effects of climate change in their communities. However, the study design needed to balance obtaining detailed information with maintaining representativeness of results at a national level.

### *Lessons Learned*

This activity highlights the value of performing multi-tiered studies that engage stakeholders at different levels of government and across institutional sectors. Presenting results that were relevant at a local level helped raise awareness of climate change for communities and local forestry officials as they could directly relate to the information. This helped increase support for the activity at a local level as it presents an opportunity to obtain information that triggers actions at local management levels. Similarly, fostering collaboration among officials from different government agencies and national programs helped raise awareness of climate change in the national agenda. Climate change was consistently elevated in national discussions as different experts recognized the linkages and common concerns between their areas of expertise related to climate change effects. This increased the incentives to collaborate and harness public awareness and support on the issue as shared objectives would be more likely to gain support for action across different levels of government in Azerbaijan.

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## Approaches to Sustainable Methods for Tugay Forest Rehabilitation, Azerbaijan (CWP 4.2)

### Activity Summary

This activity performed an in-depth study of the current ecosystem conditions of four pilot areas along the Kura and Araz rivers that were once covered by tugay forests. The purpose of the study was to obtain a detailed diagnosis of these areas in order to develop an adequate strategy for tugay forest rehabilitation. In this sense, the study aimed to contribute to the efforts of Azerbaijan's Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR) and international organizations such as the EU, FAO, and WWF to preserve Azerbaijan's forest funds. Azer Garayev, IUCN FLEG II Country Program Coordinator, noted that *"tugay forest rehabilitation is relevant to the Azerbaijani government due to the potential negative effects of degraded landscapes on the well-being of local communities. The continued loss of forest cover also contributes to aggravating the environmental situation in the region"* (personal communication, October 23, 2016).

Tugay habitats occur in semi-arid and desert climates in the central Asian region. Tugay, also spelt tugai, is a form of riparian forest or woodland associated with fluvial and floodplain areas subject to periodic inundation, and largely dependent on floods and groundwater rather than directly from rainfall. Tugay forests provide a series of benefits to forest communities as a main source of firewood and fodder for grazing. The forests also provide key ecosystem services as regulators of microclimate, flood and soil erosion control, and wildlife corridors. In particular, tugay forests along the Kura River have experienced severe pressure after the construction of the Mingachevir hydro-electric power station in 1953 and intense firewood extraction in mid 1990s.

As the IUCN FLEG II Country Program Coordinator explains, *"despite the Azerbaijani's government prioritizing restoration of forest landscapes along the Kura river, the process is not fully achieving its objectives due, in part, to the level of degradation of landscapes. Newly restored tugay forest areas are in need of permanent care. However, participation of local executive authorities and local population is limited as the benefits of engaging in the restoration of forest landscapes have not been clearly identified"* (personal communication, October 23, 2016). In light of these circumstances, the IUCN FLEG Program analyzed the historical, natural, and socio economic aspects typical of tugay forests in Azerbaijan. The study sought to identify the main benefits, impacts and challenges that have led to the loss of almost 95% of tugay forests in Azerbaijan.

The activity had two main objectives:

1. Provide quantifiable information on tugay forest conditions to help decision makers and responsible authorities decide on proper tugay forest rehabilitation activities.
2. Involve local communities in the rehabilitation process as a way to increase the local population's knowledge and understanding of rehabilitation objectives



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with hopes of increasing participation in rehabilitation activities.

The study analyzed available data, statistics, reports, management systems and methodologies relating to the tugay forest ecosystem as well as conducted assessments of three selected areas for establishing potential rehabilitating programs. The study collected field data from areas along the Kura and Araz rivers in order to assess the ecological status of four pilot study subsections. Area-specific assessments considered the economic interests of local communities in order to account for the potential benefits and costs of forest rehabilitation measure on communities' livelihoods and well-being.

### *Outcomes*

As a whole, the study helped improve the understanding and knowledge of the forest rehabilitation process at local forestry enterprises, local authorities, academia, and local rural communities. The intended audiences of this study were employees working in the forestry enterprises of the 9 pilot regions of Azerbaijan, representatives of the local authorities, and local communities in these regions. The results of the study were distributed among forest specialists, forest communities and local authorities in the four pilot areas of the study in order to increase their awareness of the economic and social issues relating to restoration of tugay forests. The report was also published in the ENPI EAST FLEG II website where it is available to the general public.

The study provided credible information on a broad range of topics related to the rehabilitation of tugay forests. For instance, the study quantified the potential economic and well-being losses for local populations due to erosion of tugay forests. It also provided insights into communities perspectives of restoration efforts based on socio-economic considerations. Finally, the study developed a set of sustainable working tools and better practices for the effective rehabilitation of tugay forest landscapes at the arid floodplain territories. Some of the management tools showcased in the study are the following:

- i) economic stimulation and mobilization of local communities aimed to restore landscapes,
- ii) the establishment of mixed forest landscapes,
- iii) the establishment of joint forest management schemes.

Likewise, the study developed a roadmap for a phased implementation of restoration efforts in 9 neighboring regions. After review and recommendations from the representatives of the National Program Advisory Committee (NPAC) the study was introduced in the local forest enterprises of 9 pilot regions with the participation of local authorities and local communities in the form of a training course. Feedback on users' understanding of this methodology was collected by the IUCN FLEG Program in order to improve the tools available for tugay forest restoration efforts in Azerbaijan.

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## *Facilitating Factors*

### Building on professional expertise and networks

The activity required cooperation from a wide range of partners across Azerbaijan's forestry sector. In particular, the activity was possible due to the collaborative disposition of officials in the Forest Development Department of the MENR, researchers at the Forest Scientific Institute and Baku State University, officials at local forest enterprises, local administrations, and participants of local communities such as local business and farmers. Collaboration across this wide range of stakeholders was possible thanks to the IUCN FLEG team's professional reputations and their ability to effectively communicate with involved parties involved in the process. Similarly, cooperation and support from members of NPAC and other International Projects, who supported the performance of the study, related to tugay forests facilitated the implementation of the activity.

## *Challenges*

### Addressing knowledge gaps

One of the main challenges for tugay forest rehabilitation is the lack of advanced rehabilitation methodologies and corresponding funding to implement them. As Azer Garayev, IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator, explains "*the problem is aggravated by lack of good cooperation between the forestry enterprises, local authorities and local rural communities*" (personal communication, October 23, 2016). To a large extent, implementation of this activity significantly helped improve collaboration between these stakeholders. The study developed advanced tools for planning tugay forests rehabilitation. Proposed methodologies contemplate eliciting stakeholder input and considering the economic interests of local populations as a fundamental part of the planning process.

## *Lessons Learned*

Analyzing the status of tugay forests in Azerbaijan highlighted the importance of "*taking into account the views of local stakeholders, institutions and forest dependent communities throughout the decision-making process of forest reforestation.*" (Azer Garayev, personal communication, October 23, 2016). In this sense, the activity showed the potential benefits of engaging a wide range of stakeholders during an ecosystem's assessment process. Mapping different stakeholder's interests or concerns relating an ecosystem rehabilitation process helped identify key areas of opportunity to foster cooperation among different levels of government and



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local communities. Incorporating these concerns into the planning process proved to be an effective strategy to build trust among stakeholders that would otherwise feel wary of ecosystem rehabilitation processes. Therefore, this approach increases the likelihood that rehabilitation efforts will be successful in the long term. Finally, it is worth highlighting the value of hiring national experts instead of international consultants. Assisting national experts gain experience with the methodologies used for the study builds in-country professional capacity. National experts have increased their qualifications to take on similar research projects in the future, without the need for direct assistance from IUCN FLEG Program.

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## Analytical Study on the Use of Energy Efficient and Energy Consuming Construction Materials in Forest-Dependent Communities, Azerbaijan

### Activity Summary

This IUCN FLEG activity addressed the need for accurate information on the use of energy efficient technologies and building materials for housing in rural areas. Understanding construction practices in Azerbaijan's rural context is relevant as it is highly correlated to firewood consumption for heating. As Azer Garayev, IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator, explains *“during the first phase of the FLEG Program we identified that one of the main threats to the Azerbaijani forests was the use of firewood by local population for heating purposes. Deadwood extraction in Azerbaijan can be considered as illegal firewood extraction and it constitutes a major share of forest-related violence in the country”* (personal communication, October 23, 2016).

In spite of improvements in gas supply to rural regions, firewood is still extensively used in Azerbaijan's remote villages. This IUCN FLEG study sought to gain understanding on current building practices in rural Azerbaijan, map the materials predominantly used in existing households, and identify the main challenges to improve overall household energy efficiency. This study represents a first step in addressing the lack of knowledge and human capacity in the construction and forestry sectors necessary to increase the use of energy-efficient and sustainable forest supply-chain practices. Azer Garayev, noted *“local specialists working in the forest and construction sectors do not generally use principles of sustainable forest management. This trend stems from a low level of technical and institutional development over the past 20 years. The former secondary vocational facility dedicated to train experts in these sectors was located in the occupied territories of Nagorno-Karabakh which resulted in a shortage of forest specialists on the ground”* (personal communication, October 23, 2016).

This activity studied two pilot communities in Azerbaijan: Nazırlı village in Barda district (an arid area) and Sarıtala village in Tovuz district (mountainous area). It focused on evaluating current energy-efficient technologies and energy-saving methods being used or that could potentially be used in rural civil construction. An assessment of the main challenges that prevent the introduction of energy efficient practices was also performed. The study characterized the main construction and insulation materials that are energy inefficient but have been historically and traditionally used in surveyed villages. It analyzed alternative methods through which wood consumption for heating and cooking could be reduced as well as clearly identify the economic or technological challenges that prevent this change. Finally, the study provided a quantitative estimation of the impacts on forest dependent communities' livelihoods that result from using inefficient energy systems and construction materials. An important part of this assessment included the estimation of firewood consumption, and therefore, provided an estimate of the volume of illegal logging associated with covering firewood needs of forest dependent communities.

The study conducted interviews with construction companies, local authorities and local

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administration. The study surveyed the materials used in doors, windows, walls, and ceilings. It then calculated average heat loss based on the materials with which buildings were constructed. This part of the study, along with information collected on the equipment used for heating, was a key element in estimating real use of firewood needed to fulfill heating requirements by the local population. Additionally, the study estimated the expected costs of reconstructing or refurbishing existing dwellings in order to increase energy efficiency. Finally, the study compared the difference in energy use between existing efficient energy production versus existing wood burning energy production. As Azer Garayev, IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator, explains *“the comparison estimated the difference in cost, heat, and energy production between commonly used wood-burning installations and available technologies that use wood more efficiently or use alternatives to wood”* (personal communication, October 23, 2016).

### Outcomes

This IUCN FLEG study represents a comprehensive evaluation of rural household construction and heating practices that provided information on the use of energy efficient materials and technologies in rural households. Some of the key insights derived from the study relate to understanding the availability of alternative fuel sources and the fuel preferences of studied communities. In particular, the study identified some of the challenges preventing the adoption of alternative fuel sources to firewood. Firewood used for heating and cooking has been identified as the main driver for illegal extraction of firewood in rural areas. The study revealed that rural households prefer firewood as a primary energy source. Community members perceive firewood as the most reliable fuel source, and the most affordable.

In terms of using gas as an alternative to firewood, the study revealed that gas is not widely available in the area studied. Gas is also considered an unreliable fuel source due to constant power outages occurring 10 to 15 years ago. The adoption of renewable energy sources also faces several challenges. For instance, the study identified insufficient financial resources, and technical and geographic obstacles to the establishment of small-scale hydropower stations in the mountainous village of Saritala. A common challenge for studied communities is the generalized lack of knowledge and awareness of renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, and energy saving practices (Huseynova, 2016).

It is expected that insights on current construction practices and the challenges for introducing renewable energy sources in surveyed areas will assist Azerbaijani authorities in their efforts to foster energy efficient construction practices, substitution of firewood as a heating source and a more sustainable use of forest resources in general. The study provides information for the Ministry of Industry and Economy and the Ministry of Emergency Situations (State Construction), the State Agency on Renewable and Alternative Energy Sources, state forestry enterprises, local authorities and municipalities.

For instance, the study followed a sociological and economic approach to analyze the

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main obstacles for using energy-efficient and energy-saving technologies in buildings and heating systems in rural forest-dependent regions of Azerbaijan. This analysis was coupled with evaluating current institutional capacity for the introduction of alternative energy sources in these regions. This information provides insights to assist pilot initiatives aimed at incentivizing the use of high-efficiency energy technologies as alternatives to forest-based heating sources. Insights provided by the study include recommendations for the development of special economic stimulus proposals targeted at local populations. It also includes recommendations on how to improve the institutional framework necessary for maintenance and technical support of these energy alternatives.

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Building partnerships with government institutions and local communities

Performing a study of such magnitude and detail required collaboration from a broad range of partners across the forestry sector in Azerbaijan. Key government agencies included the Forest Development Department of the MENR, the Ministry of Industry and Economy, the Ministry of Emergency Situations (State Construction), the Architecture and Building State Committee, the State Agency on Renewable and Alternative Energy Sources, local forest enterprises, and local municipalities. The study aimed to analyze the link between rural household construction practices and unsustainable extraction of firewood. Therefore, cooperation from these institutions was crucial to obtain relevant information on methodologies, institutional capacity, and expertise available across different levels and sectors of government. Similarly, engagement with environmental NGOs and citizens of local communities, including businesses and farmers, was crucial in order to obtain detailed information of on-the-ground circumstances experienced by rural communities.

To a large extent, ensuring collaboration from this broad range of stakeholders was possible due to the IUCN FLEG team's professional reputation as independent and well-respected experts. The team's level of expertise and previous work performed under the FLEG program provided them with the necessary credibility to approach a broad spectrum of partners in the forest sector. Similarly, the IUCN FLEG team had the support from NPAC members in Azerbaijan, which enabled the IUCN FLEG team to engage in initial conversations with different government agencies that would have otherwise been difficult to reach. In terms of garnering the trust and participation of communities for the study, the IUCN FLEG team conducted special round tables and workshops with local stakeholders and communities. During these roundtables and workshops, IUCN FLEG team provided information about the use of high-efficiency energy technologies as alternatives to forest-based heating sources. This helped raise awareness of the link between firewood consumption for heating and forest degradation, increasing the issues' salience at a local level and therefore sparking interest for the activity and the insights it could provide. However, due to data limitations, the study represents a general approximation to current energy efficiency of rural households based on construction materials and heating technologies.



### Data limitations

As Azer Garayev explains, “one of the main challenges for this activity was the lack of data on high-efficiency energy technologies and knowledge of the use of traditional materials in the village housing construction” (personal communication, October 23, 2016). In order to address this challenge, the study followed a cost-benefit approach to obtain detailed information of the current use of technologies and building techniques used in Azerbaijan. Based on this approach, the study focused on estimating the economic cost of introducing energy efficient heating technologies and construction materials. Estimated costs were compared to the potential benefits of introduced technologies in terms of fuel savings and avoided deforestation. It is expected that the information obtained through the study will provide guidance on future studies and inform Azerbaijan’s energy efficiency policies relating to construction in rural areas.

### *Lessons Learned*

A key lesson learned from this activity is the importance of maintaining an institutional reputation as independent and highly qualified experts. Government officials trusted the IUCN FLEG team’s expertise and professional capabilities to obtain credible information that would assist them in developing effective policy to address unsustainable firewood use in rural areas. At the same time, government agencies at a local level, NGOs and communities in particular were confident that the information they provided, as well as their concerns relating to firewood, would be valued and accurately incorporated into the study.

It is worth highlighting that local authorities and communities trusted IUCN FLEG team members due to the fact that the IUCN FLEG team invested time in directly engaging with them. The IUCN FLEG team also designed a study methodology that combined quantitative approaches to estimate energy use with an analysis of broader economic, historical and institutional capacity issues. A broader research approach proved effective in engaging stakeholders across different sectors and provided an integrated perspective of social, economic and institutional drivers behind the unsustainable use of firewood resources.

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## Belarus

During phase II of IUCN's FLEG Program, activities in Belarus helped increase Belarusian forest agencies' understanding of forest use by local communities. The IUCN FLEG activities increased Belarusian officials' capacity to assess the status of Belarusian forests and develop effective strategies for their sustainable management. The Analytical Studies of Forest Offenses characterized forest offenses in Belarus and assessed the relationship between the existing legal framework and incidences of illegal forest use. Meanwhile, the Improvement of the State Assessment of Forest Resource System activity provided recommendations for Belarusian officials to design a new, integrative forest resource assessment system that incorporates forest ecosystem services valuation techniques.

### **Analytical Studies of the Structure and Dynamics of Forest Offenses (CWP Activity 4.2.1)**

#### *Activity Summary*

This IUCN FLEG activity arose out of the Belarussian forestry sector's need for accurate information on how forestry offenses happen around the country. The activity focused on analyzing the dynamics and structure of forest offenses as well as on the causal relationships between forest offenses and regulatory changes. Additionally, the activity analyzed the correlation between Belarus' legal and economic regulatory framework and forest offenses. The activity's primary objective was to generate information that would assist Belarussian decision-makers in their efforts to improve forest management, conservation, and sustainable forest use both in Belarus' current context as well as in the future. The analysis provided the Ministry of Forestry with data on the types of offenses occurring in Belarus, their main causes and underlying drivers. Based on this information, several proposals on how to improve forest management practices and prevent forest offenses were developed and presented to Belarussian policy-makers.

#### *Outcomes*

The activity had two main outcomes. Firstly, it developed a "*thorough analysis of the control operations in Belarussian forests*" along with important insights of the causes of forest offenses. The activity reviewed records of forest violations and offenses committed in the past. Based on the analysis of this records, a set of recommendations was developed to assist the Ministry of Forestry in curtailing offenses. A methodology to achieve this objective was delivered to the Ministry and to individual forest units across Belarus to assist forestry officials in their daily activities combating forest offenses (Marina Belous, IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator, Belarus, personal communication, October 26, 2016).

Secondly, the analysis of forestry offenses revealed useful insights on the dynamics and causes leading to this behavior. For instance, as the IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator

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for Belarus explained, “a lot of the minor offenses in specific forest units reviewed could not in fact be considered as an illegal practice but rather as a too formal and rigid approach to controlling forestry operations.” The overzealousness with which minor offenses were prosecuted results from the rigidity of forest management plans and their temporal horizon (usually ten years). Forestry officials are required to review the current status of forests under their jurisdiction and compare it with to the expected status prescribed by the forest management plan. In this sense, discrepancies arising between the actual state of forests and ten year-old predictions of how the forest should have looked could lead forestry officials to determine that the “felling of a single birch tree in a pine plot should be considered illegal logging.” In this sense, the activity provided valuable information and insights on the on-the-ground effects of forest management rules and, hence, provided officials at the Ministry of Forestry with the tools to review and improve their forest management and control protocols.

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Building on institutional support

A key facilitating factor for this activity was the high level of interest and motivation by the Ministry of Forestry to obtain information about the dynamics guiding forestry offenses. Their interest and commitment to the activity facilitated information sharing with IUCN FLEG consultants from the Ministry of Forestry, its regional and district offices as well as scientific-research institution called “Belgosles.” Secondly, the activity benefited from having a highly professional and well-respected consultant perform the analysis. The consultant was well known and respected by different stakeholders in the forestry sector which permitted the performance of stakeholder interviews and access to documents on forestry offenses in the custody of the Ministry of Forestry.

### *Lessons Learned*

One of the main lessons learned from this activity relates to the importance of garnering support for the activity from Belarussian-high level forestry officials. Ensuring support from forestry officials proved key to accessing the data required to perform the study. A close collaboration with forestry officials also ensured that the results of the study would be used to inform forest management planning.

Another key lesson learned is that there is a gradient of forest offenses and, in some cases, incidents recorded may not in fact be a violation or offense. In this sense, the rigidity of forest management plans can sometimes lead to over-reporting of forest offenses by including instances where “no real harm to the forest or to physical and juridical persons” is taking place. Therefore, “proper planning and design of forest management as well as more reasonable flexibility in control operations may bring the number of recorded forest offenses down and present a more accurate description of actual harm being done to the forests” (Country Program



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Coordinator, Belarus, personal communication).

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## Improvement of the System of State Assessment of the Forest Resources, their Condition and Development (CWP Activity 1.3)

### Activity Summary

This activity assessed the feasibility and pertinence of establishing an integrated forest valuation system that combined valuations of timber with those of specific ecosystem services like climate change mitigation, recreation, water catchment, biodiversity conservation, among others. Prior to the activity being approved by IUCN FLEG's Steering Committee in December 2015, Belarus employed two parallel systems for estimating the value of forested land: the State Forest Cadastre, and State Assessment of Condition of Forests. As Marina Belous, IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator, explains, *“one system utilized a traditional forest inventory approach to forest valuation and applied the volumes estimated by the inventory to a projected value. The other, parallel system, utilized a more general approach based on land area and vegetation type. The two systems overlapped and created a confusing calculus for valuing forest resources”* (personal communication, 26 October 2016). Additionally, in spite of some overlap between the methodologies used by both systems, neither contemplated the estimation of other services provided by forests such as climate change mitigation, recreation, energy, water catchment, biodiversity conservation, and rural livelihood development potential.

The activity was separated into two phases. The first phase focused on evaluating the costs and benefits of unifying the Ministry of Forestry forest evaluation systems and determining the pertinence of pursuing such a task. The reason for performing this analysis as an IUCN FLEG activity was to provide the Ministry of Forestry with an impartial and comprehensive analysis of its evaluation methods. The second phase focused on determining the structure of a unified evaluation system and which criteria and evaluation approaches it should include. For instance, during this phase, IUCN FLEG consultants developed a proposal of a unified evaluation system that included both timber valuations and additional services such as climate change mitigation, recreation, energy, water catchment, biodiversity conservation, and rural livelihood development potential.

### Outcomes

The main outcome of this activity was the proposal of a unified forest resource assessment system that includes an *“assessment of quantitative and qualitative indicators of forest resources in one degree or another.”* The proposal has been approved by the Ministry of Forestry. Presently, the Ministry is endorsing a legal document with the approval of the system. Therefore, it is expected that, in the near future, the proposed unified assessment system will become the official forest assessment system used in Belarus. As Marina Belous noted, it is hoped that an integrated valuation system *“will provide information on how to minimize the effects of climate change; inform forest restoration and afforestation efforts; define sustainable allocation of forest resources for fuel or energy generation; identify protective forests; account for forest biodiversity; and assist in the definition of strategies to maintain and improve the*

*economic situation of the local communities in a sustainable way”* (personal communication, October 26, 2016).

The proposed evaluation system is consistent with international valuation methodologies such as TEEB.

The concept of a unified forest resources assessment system for Belarus is based on the following principles:

1. Combining two existing forest accounting systems into a single forest resources assessment system.
2. Preserving the continuity of existing accounting forms of state forest inventory and state forest cadaster.
3. Compliance of assessment system forms with the provisions of the Forest Code of the Republic of Belarus, enforced starting 2017.
4. Matching, as much as possible, the Belarussian forest resources assessment system with international approaches to the assessment of forest resources.
5. Optimizing registration forms of the state forest inventory by excluding recurring ones, as well as excluding insufficient and inefficiently operating data.
6. Accounting for the possibility of obtaining reliable and objective data from forestry institutions, and other organizations to fill in registration forms of forest inventory.

The proposal contemplates including the following sections of the state forest inventory and assessment:

- Extent of forest resources;
- Forest biological diversity;
- Productive functions of forest resources;
- Protective functions of forest resources; and
- Socio-economic functions of forests;

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Building on institutional support

A key facilitating factor for this activity was the goodwill and disposition of the Ministry of Forestry to discard its outdated evaluation systems. As the primary partner for the activity, the Ministry’s commitment and open disposition to accept the results of the evaluation and actively pursue the establishment of a new system was instrumental for the analysis. Similarly, the legislative commitments undertaken by Belarus, such as the enforcement of a New Forest Code

and Belarus' international obligations relating forest management and reporting, assisted in maintaining institutional support for the activity. These regulatory commitments helped the Ministry of Forestry elevate the need for an efficient system to be discussed on a higher regulatory level.

### Building on trust and respectability of IUCN FLEG consultants

Another facilitating factor for successfully designing the new system were the insights on forest dependent communities obtained from the regional forest dependence study that had also been performed by the IUCN FLEG Program. The activity benefited from having a consultant that had previously worked with the IUCN FLEG team during the implementation of the forest dependency study. The level of expertise on rural forest dependence was particularly relevant to review the assessment methodologies used to assess the quantity and quality of non-timber forest resources. Finally, IUCN's professional reputation as a credible and independent repository of best practices surrounding forest conservation greatly facilitated collaboration with Belarusian officials. Belarusian forestry officials trusted the IUCN's expertise and therefore decided to request their assistance in improving Belarus' forest valuation system.

### *Lessons Learned*

This activity provides an example of the potential benefits of exploiting synergies generated by combining expertise on forestry topics. Specifically, the activity profited from involving consultants who had worked on the forest dependency study as they were able to provide insightful suggestions and analysis to the activity. As explained by Marina Belous, the presence of these consultants “*resulted in more general discussions and brought alternative views on some aspects of forest assessment that assisted in improving Belarussian assessment systems*” (personal communication, October 26, 2016).

## Georgia

The IUCN FLEG Program in Georgia assisted the implementation of forest governance reform through a wide range of activities. Two activities helped bridge the knowledge and human capacity gaps required for sustainable forest governance. The Pest and Disease Study helped the Georgian government access the scientific expertise and technical equipment required to assess the health of Georgian forests. Meanwhile, the Forest Law Enforcement Work developed training materials for forest officials in order to assist the prosecution of illegal forest use. Another two activities provided accurate information of forest resource use in order to develop effective forest management programs. The Support in Development of State Program on Firewood provided Georgian officials with accurate information on the firewood requirements of Georgian rural communities. Similarly, the Forest Functionality study increased understanding of forest resource use by analyzing the underlying dynamics that create incentives for unsustainable forest use by rural communities in Georgia. The Tusheti Protected Landscape Community Management activity provided expert advice and guidance during the implementation of an innovative forest governance scheme in Georgia. Finally, the Forest Related Information Flow, Public Awareness, and Participation activity provided a platform for a broad range of Georgian stakeholders interested in forest topics to access updated information on forest resource use, legislation and forest governance.

### **Pest and Disease Study and Management in Georgia (EC CWP 2.3, ADA CWP 5.3)**

#### *Activity Summary*

This activity studied the negative effects of invasive species and pests in Georgian forests, particularly the effect of the invasive insect, *Calonectria preudonaviculata*, on *Buxus colchica* forests (commonly referred to as boxwood). Since 2009, boxwood forests had shown signs of degradation due to unsustainable use; a condition that worsened with the arrival of the *Calonectria preudonaviculata*. The Agency of Protected Areas (APA) and other Georgian authorities were very concerned about the status of the boxwood, endemic tree species of religious significance in Georgia and part of IUCN's Red List. However, the Georgian government lacked the capacity (both expert scientists and laboratories) to adequately study the status of boxwood population. As Marika Kavtarishvili, IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator in Georgia, explains "*[the authorities] turned to IUCN and we began a very fruitful collaboration to stem the spread of the disease, we were asked to intervene and devise a strategy to address this specific issue in protected areas. For this purpose, we decided to use our professional contacts and engage experts and research centres from around the world*" ("Moving on the International Chessboard to Save Boxwood," 2015) and ("New Moves to Combat Forest Pests and Diseases in Georgia," 2016).

The study consisted of two phases. The first phase studied the status of forests under the jurisdiction of the APA in Mtirala National Park, Kintrishi Protected Areas and Ajameti

Managed Reserve. Meanwhile, the second phase studied the status of forests in five areas under the National Forestry Agency's (NPA) jurisdiction. The study was conducted by Ukrainian specialist Iryna Matsiakh, Doctor of biological science from the Forestry Department of the Ukrainian National Forestry University in Lviv, teamed with the acclaimed Professor from the same university, Dr. Volodimir Kramarets, and involved considerable international collaboration. Soil samples for the 2014 and 2015 studies in APA and NFA managed forests were analyzed in laboratories of the Forest Protection Department of the National Forestry University of Ukraine, the Forest Research Institute in Warsaw, Poland and the University Of Applied Sciences Of Western Switzerland. Meanwhile, samples of symptomatic forest plants (*Buxus colchica* and *Quercus imeretina*) were analyzed in the DIBAF University of Tuscia in Viterbo, Italy.

### Outcomes

The study performed in collaboration with the APA and NFA resulted in two remarkable publications about the status of pests and diseases in forests in Georgia (the *Assessment of Forest Pests and Diseases in Protected Areas of Georgia* and the *Assessment of Forest Pests and Diseases in Native Boxwood Forests of Georgia*). With the information provided by the study, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection (MoENRP) established a national plan to address boxwood forests' pests and diseases. The plan outlines actions to be taken during 2016 and 2017 and is expecting approval from the Georgian government. As Ms. Natia Jordanishvili, Head of the Forest Protection and Reforestation Department of NFA, noted “[w]e were not fully aware of the gravity of the spread of pests and diseases in our forests. FLEG II made available to us a large amount of information which was indispensable to proceed with the next steps” (“New Moves to Combat Forest Pests and Diseases in Georgia,” 2016). Similarly, the MoENRP has released a video campaign named “Save the Box Tree” targeting heavy harvesting of boxwood by the population during Easter. The boxwood tree has an important religious significance in Georgia, it is considered a sacred tree that is cut and placed in homes during the season, adding pressure on boxwood population and facilitating the spread of boxwood pests and diseases across Georgia.

Ultimately, the scientific publications derived from the studies have contributed to the pool of scientific knowledge concerning pests and boxwood. Results have been presented across the region and resulted in a collaboration between Dr. Matsiakh and Süleyman Demirel University in Isparta, Turkey, where Dr. Matsiakh participated in a short-term scientific mission analyzing the effect of invasive species on forests. Knowledge generated from boxwood in Georgia holds the potential to contribute greatly to pest control in Turkish forests located in the same eco-region. As Dr. Matsiakh explains, “Turkey, whose northeastern part belongs to the same eco-region as Georgia, is facing a similar problem with invasive species. Therefore, it is extremely useful to combine our knowledge and try to find new methods to control these infectious agents” (“Moving on the International Chessboard to Save Boxwood,” 2015).



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## Facilitating Factors

### Providing technical expertise to address forest issues

One facilitating factor for implementing this activity was the endorsement of the IUCN FLEG program by the Buxus Survival Committee (an informal body established by MoENRP) and the EU Twinning project as capable experts (Almazán et.al. 2016). The professional reputation of IUCN FLEG team members as highly qualified and trustworthy experts was crucial to convince the Georgian government to reach out to IUCN FLEG and request assistance.

Another facilitating factor for the activity was the IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator's ability to diplomatically navigate a position of a knowledge provider with limited resources. The IUCN FLEG program could provide the Georgian government with access to high quality experts and equipment for the analysis of pests and diseases. Yet, they were unable to provide funding for the Georgian government to perform those activities themselves. In the end, the IUCN FLEG team was able to limit their involvement in management and funding dynamics associated with boxwood forests. As a result IUCN FLEG became a source of knowledge to assess state of pests in Georgian forests under the jurisdiction of two different agencies, the APA and NFA, and design a plan that implies remedial actions to address effects of pests in forests at a national level.

### Facilitating trans-boundary collaborations among experts

During 2014, Dr. Matsiakh worked with Dr. Volodimir Kramarets, Associate Professor at the Ukrainian National Forestry University in Lviv and surveyed the status of boxwood in Mtirala National Park, Kintrishi Protected Areas, and Ajameti Managed Reserve. Their findings were used by the Planning and Development Division of APA. As Khatuna Tsiklauri, the main specialist of Natural Resources at the Planning and Development Division of APA said, "*[t]he rigorous assessment and analysis carried out by FLEG in Georgian protected areas were fundamental to support my work at the Agency*" ("Moving on the International Chessboard to Save Boxwood," 2015).

Similarly, in summer 2015, Dr. Matsiakh collaborated with Giorgi Mamadashvili, Senior Specialist at the Forest Maintenance and Reforestation Department of NFA when performing a 16 day field trip to five selected regions of Georgia to analyze the status of boxwood forests managed by the NFA. Giorgi Mamadashvili concluded that "*[i]t was a very useful field trip for me. My responsibility at the National Forestry Agency is to address the problem of forest infestations, and I learned a lot from FLEG. This activity proved invaluable to us, as we were able to share precious information with the international community of experts*" ("Moving on the International Chessboard to Save Boxwood," 2015).

## Challenges

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### Capitalizing on unexpected opportunities

The main challenge for this activity was garnering support from IUCN FLEG headquarters staff. In general, the study of pests and diseases in boxwood forests represent an unconventional IUCN FLEG Program activity. This is due to its qualities as a primarily ecological study, and area of expertise that transcends the IUCN FLEG team members' direct area of expertise. The IUCN FLEG headquarters staff was concerned that objective and technical expertise required for the study went beyond the mission and available resources of the FLEG program. However, the IUCN FLEG team in Georgia proved itself capable of facilitating the collaboration of high quality experts in Georgia and abroad (when local expertise was insufficient to perform required tasks).

As the activity progressed, it revealed the potential of a high quality scientific analysis of pest and diseases in boxwood forests in informing forest management practices in Georgia. The activity helped address the lack of capacity by Georgian institutions to perform similar studies by including Mr. Giorgi Mamardashvili, a staff member at NFA, during research activities. Mr. Mamardashvili collaborated closely with FLEG experts and is currently using his experience and knowledge in the NFA. It is worth highlighting the role of IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator throughout the activity's implementation, Marika Kavtarishvili, as she excelled at explaining up-front the limitations of the IUCN FLEG program to assist the Georgian government.

### Bridging technical expertise gaps

Another challenge experienced by the activity was the lack of necessary scientific expertise and laboratories to perform the analysis of soil samples required by the study. In this sense, the IUCN FLEG was able to obtain official authorizations letters from the APA to transport soil samples to laboratories abroad. The provision of these letters are clear evidence of the level of trust that Georgian authorities have in IUCN FLEG experts (Almazán et.al. 2016).

### *Lessons learned*

This activity highlights the importance of building trust and maintaining communication between staff members of a Program at different hierarchical levels. In this case, IUCN FLEG Program Coordinator, Richard Aishton trusted Country Program Coordinator Marika Kavtarishvili's judgment relating the importance of performing the pest and disease study as a mechanism to increase the credibility of the IUCN FLEG Program in Georgia. In spite of the activity deviating from IUCN FLEG's traditional scope of work, Richard Aishton agreed with Ms. Kavtarishvili to support the activity. Ultimately, the study represented a significant networking and trust building endeavor between IUCN FLEG and the Georgian government. The IUCN FLEG's willingness to provide support to Georgian institutions when they were facing severe technical restrictions positioned the IUCN as a trustworthy, highly capable and



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credible partner.

Another lesson learned from the activity relates to the benefits of responding to opportunities that hold the potential of advancing a Program's objectives in unexpected ways. In this case, the IUCN FLEG team members' ability to recognize such an opportunity opened up new avenues that increased the human and institutional capacity of Georgian officials to design sustainable forest management strategies. The activity also led to the adjustment of the IUCN FLEG country work plan to better meet the needs of FLEG's work in Georgia.

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## Support in Development of State Program on Firewood, Georgia (ADA CWP 4.7, 4.9, 6.1)

### Activity Summary

The IUCN FLEG Program assisted Georgian forest authorities develop Georgia's State Program on Providing Rural Population with Firewood, a government program that determines policies to extract firewood for heating sources in a sustainable manner. In order to do this, the IUCN FLEG team performed a detailed estimation of total consumption of firewood for heating in local populations. The IUCN FLEG team also collaborated with the Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN) to raise awareness on the true value of forests and contribute to crafting a national strategy that fosters sustainable use of forest resources. Forests in Georgia *"provide long-term economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits, and play a vital role in meeting the energy needs of local populations"* ("Forest is not Firewood," 2016). The activity built on previous studies performed in Georgia that highlighted the relevance of forests for sustaining the livelihoods of rural populations. The Forest Dependence Study performed by IUCN FLEG in 2012 and the Study on Economic and Social Impact of Unsustainable Forest Practices and Illegal Logging on Rural Population of Georgia, carried out by Vasil Gulisashvili Forest Institute both found that rural populations are heavily reliant on timber forest products for energy, mainly heating and cooking (Marika Kavtarishvili, personal communication, September 29, 2016).

During 2015, the IUCN FLEG team and CENN presented their opinions and suggestions to Georgian policy makers as a way to assist the Georgian government in its efforts to reform the forestry sector. As a result, the IUCN FLEG team and CENN worked together with the National Working Group established by the MoENRP in order to obtain an accurate assessment of firewood needs in Georgia. The study revealed the gravity of the firewood provision issue in Georgia. As Marika Kavtarishvili, IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator, stated *"[a]ccording to our preliminary calculations, we need about 3,285,000 m<sup>3</sup> of firewood per year to heat the houses of the almost 550,000 Georgian families in need of fuel. The annual amount of firewood currently available is of approximately 188,000 m<sup>3</sup>: The shocking truth is that there is a massive deficit. If we thought of bridging this gap exclusively through firewood, all Georgian forests would disappear in a few years"* ("Forest is not Firewood," 2016). The activity also focused on mapping the use patterns of energy resources in rural communities and raising local populations' awareness of available energy sources.

### Outcomes

An important outcome of the activity was the provision of valuable information on forest resource use to inform policy at a national level. In addition to estimating firewood needs for the entire country, the study reviewed the regional availability of alternative energy sources such as natural gas, coal, briquettes, and nutshells. The study included a detailed cost-benefit analysis comparing firewood to these alternative energy sources. Tornike Gvazava, Head of the National Forestry Agency (NFA) and FLEG Focal Point, pointed out that *"[t]he pioneering work done by*



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*FLEG and CENN is of major importance for us. For our Agency, the real challenge remains the allocation of firewood to local households, which still represents our primary activity. The fact of having reliable data and analysis at our disposal is crucial to improve our services.”* Similarly, Karlo Amirgulashvili, Head of the Forest Policy Service of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, noted “[t]he data on firewood need provided by FLEG is crucial in the discussion on the urgency of reforms both at the local and national levels. The FLEG team is bringing an invaluable contribution to the debate. The activities realised [sic] within FLEG Program are a precious support for our Ministry in the development of sectoral policies” (“Forest is not Firewood,” 2016). Ultimately, the information provided by IUCN FLEG was instrumental for the development of the State Program on Providing Rural Population with Firewood.

The FLEG team has also helped raise awareness on the magnitude of forest issues in Georgia by engaging concerned citizens directly. For instance, a brochure on firewood consumption was developed and widely disseminated across Georgia. A video produced by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) titled ‘*More heat with less wood*’ has been translated into Georgian and posted on media outlets. The video reviews concepts relating to wood burning technologies, their relative energy efficiency, and the benefits of using high-efficiency technologies. Marika Kavtarishvili also participated in a radio interview alongside Rezo Getiashvili from CENN where they both talked about the issue of heating and use of firewood in Georgia as a means to raise awareness among the general public on the importance of the issue. Finally, awareness raising campaigns on issues of firewood and forest management targeting Georgia’s youth have been deployed in schools and eco-camps.

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Facilitating inter-agency and public-private collaboration

During this activity, the IUCN FLEG team not only focused on providing accurate and credible information to policy makers, but it emphasized the need to incorporate the efforts of different government institutions and civil society in addressing the energy needs of Georgia.

As Marika Kavtarishvili emphasized, “*the burning issue of heating resources cannot be addressed by the MoENRP alone, but the Ministries of Finance, of Energy and of Regional Development and Infrastructure must play a central role in the debate. The National Forestry Agency is currently employing most of its staff in social cutting, the cutting of trees for non-commercial purposes, to meet the energy needs of local households and state institutions. We think that this burden shouldn’t be borne by the NFA. The Government itself should take responsibility for this, so that the NFA could focus on activities fostering the sustainable management of forests*” (“Forest is not Firewood,” 2016).

Recognizing the importance of including other agencies and partners working on forest

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issues, the MoENRP accepted recommendations from the IUCN FLEG Program and established a National Working Group within the National Forest Program (NFP). The National Working Group included the following wide array of government agencies, international organizations and private consulting firms.

- NFA, Forest Policy Service, and APA (agencies within MoENRP)
- Georgian Ministry of Energy,
- Agricultural University of Georgia, and Georgian Technical University,
- United Nations Development Program,
- Deloitte, World Energy Group,
- NFP regional coordinators for Adjara, Kakheti and Samegrelo-Upper Svaneti.

IUCN FLEG assisted officials at the NFA and FPS throughout the process of designing a Georgia's State Program on Providing Rural Population with Heating Sources. They assisted in developing the methodology that informed the collaboration process embodied by the National Working Group, contributed at raising awareness on the issues of firewood provision in the public arena, and working day-to-day with the NFA and FPS.

### *Challenges*

#### Overcoming institutional inertia relating controversial issues

The main challenge experienced by this activity was overcoming MoENRP's reluctance to establish a national policy addressing firewood provision. Without the support and political will from MoENRP officials to develop a State program dealing with firewood, IUCN FLEG's work would not have been consequential. Similarly, another challenge was convincing MoENRP officials to publicly accept and validate firewood consumption estimates produced by the study. Total use of firewood for heating and cooking is a contentious issue as it is MoENRP's responsibility to protect Georgia's forest resources. As Marika Kavtarishvili noted "*the NFA officially allocated 600 000 m<sup>3</sup> of firewood annually. The IUCN FLEG study revealed that local population used 2.4 million m<sup>3</sup> of firewood annually*" (personal communication, September 29, 2016). Ultimately, MoENRP accepted the results of the study enabling the activity to continue.

### *Lessons learned*

One of the main lessons learned from this activity is the importance of having a well-defined working methodology, a clear objective, and maintaining constant communication with collaborators when implementing a broad scope, inter-agency policy process. The IUCN FLEG team benefited from having a highly qualified team and a clearly defined road-map for facilitating the development of a State program addressing firewood provision. Both these factors enabled them to adequately assist MoENRP as they initiated the complex inter-agency and multi-party collaboration process to develop Georgia's State Program on Providing Rural



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Population with Heating Sources. Ultimately, the activity highlights the value of having credible quantitative estimations to support decision-making. This IUCN FLEG activity generated accurate data on Georgia's firewood consumption prior to engaging in policy recommendations to address the issue.

Another lesson learned is the important role and the value inherent in facilitating essential inter-agency and public-private communication and collaboration necessary to make progress on an issue like illegal firewood extraction. While the standard approach of international NGOs is to adopt an expert role of providing scientific and technical advice, the IUCN instead adopted a facilitating role, connecting the in-country experts and agencies so that the outcome would be more credible and better supported in the end.

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## Tusheti Protected Landscape Community Management, Georgia (EC CWP 2.7)

### Activity Summary

Through this activity, the IUCN FLEG Program had the opportunity to contribute to a historic decision to pioneering forest management by local authorities: the Tusheti Protected Landscape Administration (TPLA). As of 2015, the TPLA is the formal administrative body of the Tusheti Protected Landscape, a category V protected area as defined by IUCN, located in Akhmeta, Kakheti, in north-eastern Georgia. The fact that the Tusheti Protected Landscape is a category V protected area means that this is an *“area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value; and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values”* (“Preparing the final mile in historic handover of Georgian forest protection to local control,” 2014).

The Tusheti Protected Landscape, though only being covered by forests in 10% of its area, is the home of the Tushetian ethnic minority in Georgia (approximately 100,000 people live in three villages at the foot of the Caucasus Mountains). Tushetians have a deep rooted connection to the area and traditions of forest management and interactions that date back hundreds of years. Together with the Tusheti Strict Nature Reserve and Tusheti National Park, the Tusheti Protected Landscape is part of the 31,518 hectare Tusheti Protected Area and represents one of Europe’s largest protected areas (“Preparing the final mile in historic handover of Georgian forest protection to local control,” 2014).

In 2014, the Georgian Government officially transferred forest management control of the Tusheti Protected Landscape to the Tushetian people by authorizing the local TPLA to manage the forests in the Protected Area. In order to do this, the Georgian government *“amended two forest laws allowing the Tusheti Protected Landscape to remain within the government controlled forest system, called the State Forest Fund, but under the management of the Akhmeta municipality which uses the TPLA as the managing agency”* (“Home at Last: Tusheti Protected Landscape Officially Under Local Control,” 2014).

The FLEG II program team collaborated with this process by providing a technical and legal analysis explaining the legal basis for the management of a Protected Area in a structure such as the TPLA. They also provided technical support for the definition of the TPLA’s methodology for forest management and served as facilitators between community members, local Tushetian authorities and the Georgian government in the negotiations to define the legal framework, organization and management responsibilities that the TPLA would have. Currently, the TPLA consists of nine members, seven of which are Tushetians, who are responsible for the management decisions regarding the forests within the Tusheti Protected Landscape. Merab Matchavariani, the National Forestry Consultant for FLEG II program in Georgia, noted that *“[l]ocal control in Tusheti forests is a way to give the people who have lived in the area for*



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*centuries the ability to sustainably manage the forest to meet local forest needs, preserve their cultural heritage, and provide employment for local people in forest management, tourism, and recreation. The local administration is working hard to undertake all the necessary measures to establish proper forest management so it will be able to meet the primary objectives of ensuring the integrity of forest ecosystems and their ecological stability over the long run” (“Home at Last: Tusheti Protected Landscape Officially Under Local Control,” 2014).*

### *Outcomes*

The efforts by all those involved in the almost 10 year process permitted the creation of *“the first case of decentralizing forest management in Georgia and the first time forests in Tusheti have been under local control since before the Soviet period began in Georgia in 1921”* (“Home at Last: Tusheti Protected Landscape Officially Under Local Control,” 2014). As Marika Kavtarishvili, FLEG II Country Program Coordinator for IUCN Georgia and a native of the Tusheti region said *“Tusheti is both a beautiful place with tremendous natural value and a place where people depend on the land for their livelihoods. This transition to local control can help both the forest and the people living there, and a lot of work has gone into it from both the national and local levels to make sure it does”* (“Home at Last: Tusheti Protected Landscape Officially Under Local Control,” 2014).

This activity included an analysis of the legal basis to uphold the validity of a local management structure of the Tusheti Protected Landscape in the form of the TLPA. IUCN FLEG Program Country Coordinator, Marika Kavtarishvili, performed this in-depth analysis and elaborated a report presented to the Georgian authorities (the study can be found on the GeoForest Portal at <http://enpi-fleg.ge/geoforestportal/index.php/en/publications-iucn>). The IUCN FLEG team and FLEG consultants in Georgia collaborated with local Tusheti officials and the Georgian government in order to find the most adequate legal structure to manage the Tusheti Protected Landscape. As part of this process, the Georgian government amended two forest laws allowing the Tusheti Protected Landscape to remain within the government controlled forest system. The TPLA is constituted as a *non-commercial legal entity* which means that it can operate and raise money from outside the municipal government further ensuring its autonomy from the central Georgian government (“Home at Last: Tusheti Protected Landscape Officially Under Local Control,” 2014).

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Facilitating cooperation between local communities and government agencies

Establishing the TPLA was a long process that lasted almost a decade and involved the collaboration and negotiation between the Georgian government at the national level, the Agency of Protected Areas within the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, local Tushetian authorities and the Tushetian people. Negotiations worked on establishing the

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mechanisms through which the Tusheti Protected Landscape would be managed respecting the area's Natural Protected Area status and the traditional relationship between Tushetians and their surrounding forests. The FLEG II program was a key facilitator of the process through which these agencies and stakeholders interacted and negotiated the details of what would become the TPLA. The process involved engaging and collaborating directly with government agencies, local authorities and Tushetians. In this sense, having a local Tushetian as part of the FLEG II team proved of vital importance for the process to succeed as Marika Kavtarishvili, FLEG II Country Program Coordinator for IUCN Georgia, represented a credible and trusted figure by both Georgian government officials and Tushetians alike.

### Developing human capacity for forest governance

The FLEG II program provided technical assistance for TPLA managers to develop their forest management methodology. They also facilitated the participation of TPLA rangers in a series of trainings on how to prosecute forest crimes (particularly those related to illegal extraction of firewood for household heating and cooking).

### *Challenges*

#### Addressing local concerns of access to resources

The establishment of the TPLA required negotiations with the Tushetian people and the assurance that their traditional ways of living and interacting with the forests would be preserved under the new local management of the Tusheti Protected Landscape. In many ways, the efforts performed by the FLEG II team consisted of assisting local authorities and the Georgian government to clarify the rights of access and use of local forests by local citizens. They also assisted in clarifying the responsibilities that a local management agency would have over protecting the forests and enforcing forest legislation in the area. Clarifying these aspects of the transition to a locally managed Protected Area was key to garnering the support of Tushetians for the project and facilitating the final steps of the process.

### *Lessons learned*

One of the main lessons learned from this activity is the importance of emphatically addressing local communities concerns that arise during forest governance reform. The IUCN FLEG team identified key issues for Tushetians and facilitated the negotiation process with the Georgian government in order to address these concerns. Another lesson learned from the activity was building on existing networks and links to communities and government agencies, particularly when dealing with contentious issues (such as forest management responsibilities and access rights). In this case, the fact that the IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator for Georgia is Tushetian proved of critical importance as it generated trust among Tushetians that they had one of their own as an ally in the negotiation process with the Georgian government. Similarly, the trust built on common ethnicity between the IUCN FLEG Country Program



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Coordinator and community members helped reassure Tushetians that the cultural significance of forests were understood and considered in the process by which authority was devolved.

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## Forest Law Enforcement Work, Georgia (EC CWP 4.1, ADA CWP 5.1)

### Activity Summary

This IUCN FLEG activity helped address Georgia's need for qualified forestry experts. Marika Kavtarishvili, IUCN GLEG Country Program Coordinator, explained how *“a considerable number of professional foresters changed profession after Georgia regained independence from the Soviet regime in 1991. This process was a result of the economic readjustments triggered by transitioning from a planned to a market economy”* (personal communication, September 29, 2016). The need for increasing the number of highly qualified foresters has been recognized by the Georgian government and has been included in Georgia's National Forest Concept adopted by the parliament decree N1742-I on December 11, 2013 under its Chapter 7 on education and science.

The activity focused on supporting government efforts to improve the education of forest experts. Therefore, it developed a series of training modules on law enforcement and day-to-day forest management. Topics covered by training modules include the procedure to provide firewood to local populations, and the procedure to detect, address, and prevent forest violations. The activity hoped to strengthen forest related education in Georgia by providing state institutions, higher education institutions, and training centers with necessary educational materials (i.e. the law enforcement training module). The IUCN FLEG Program sought to increase human capacity to manage Protected Areas sustainably and incorporate issues of concern to FLEG in forest-related education.

### Outcomes

As a result of this activity, several education institutions in Georgia have a fully developed forest law enforcement training module. The IUCN FLEG Program conducted trainings with 40 rangers from the APA as well as high ranking senior officials. Trainings took place during July 2015 in Borjomi (Western Georgia) and Kvareli (Eastern Georgia). The workshops consisted of a five day, hands-on field practice including simulated trials where actual judges presided over the proceedings. The objective of this activity was to provide rangers with the knowledge and practice to investigate, gather evidence, and follow the legal procedure required to prosecute forest violations effectively. During mock procedures, rangers had to collect and present evidence before judges to prosecute forest crimes. Mistakes, no matter how small, sometimes resulted in the guilty party going free. This gave a sense of realism to the trainings that helped rangers practice under similar conditions of an actual proceeding. As Mr. Vaja Cherkezishvili, the head of the security division in Vashlovani Protected Areas, noted *“[d]uring my more than 20 years of working for the Protected Areas Administration, this is one of the best trainings I have ever attended. Even when we know the procedures, the mock trials really helped me see how one simple mistake in the real world can be enough to unravel all of our enforcement efforts”* (“Role Playing Brings Real Solutions,” 2015).

## *Facilitating Factors*

### Incorporating judiciary expertise into forest law enforcement trainings

A key facilitating factor for this activity was the agreement from the High Council of Justice of Georgia that permitted acting judges to take part in developing the training module. Judges were hired as trainers by the Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPEL) Environmental Information and Education Center. The Government of Georgia issued a special resolution that allowed the judges to be hired by the Center. Acting judges, one from Tbilisi Court of Appeals and one from Borjomi Magistrate Court (which has under its jurisdiction large parts of the Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park in southern Georgia), were allowed to provide their expert advice on the content of the training module. Similarly, they participated as trainers during the first training session directed at senior foresters from the Agency of Protected Areas (“Role Playing Brings Real Solutions,” 2015).

Referring to the trainings, Ms. Shorena Kavelashvili, the judge from the Tbilisi Court of Appeals, said “[t]he training is dealing with the issues which at the end will ensure that the process of revealing and addressing the violations and presenting the facts and evidences at the court is done in a proper manner. This in turn will guarantee that justice will be in place and none of the offenders stay without appropriate sanctions, which is also the best way of preventing illegal actions” (“Role Playing Brings Real Solutions,” 2015).

### Strengthening links between FLEG Program and government institutions

Concessions from the Georgian government allowing active judges to train forest officials are nothing short of remarkable and required considerable amount of inter-agency cooperation. It was the first time environmental protection agencies in Georgia collaborated directly with the Judiciary and it is a testament of the Georgian government’s commitment, across different levels and jurisdictions, with improving forest governance in Georgia. Similarly, trainings were held in forests under the jurisdiction of the APA. Throughout training sessions, judges and rangers were able to discuss the reasons behind specific aspects of a procedure in order for rangers to fully comprehend the rationale behind each step of legal proceedings. As Ms. Shorena Kavelashvili, the judge from the Tbilisi Court of Appeals participating in the trainings, highlighted “[t]he fact that the rangers and judges are sitting at one table and discussing all those legal aspects of the challenges and problems arising in daily work is very essential” (“Role Playing Brings Real Solutions,” 2015).

## *Lessons learned*



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This activity showcased the benefits of engaging institutions with varying degrees and areas of expertise to address a lack of human capacity in the forestry sector. The training module developed for Georgian foresters incorporated the knowledge and insights of the highly qualified IUCN FLEG team and the highly qualified active judges in Georgia's judiciary system.

Additionally, the judges participated in the practical trainings held in 2015 providing a learning environment that closely resembled reality. In this sense, the activity highlights the importance of developing training tools that are closely related to real experiences. The practical training approach kept foresters engaged with the educational material. Simulated trials of forest offenses allowed foresters to understand the reasons behind specific procedures for collecting and submitting evidence of forest offenses.

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## Information Flow, Public Awareness and Participation, Georgia (EC CWP 5.3, 5.4, ADA CWP 4.4, 4.5)

### *Activity Summary*

The IUCN FLEG Program implemented several activities directed at increasing the availability of forest information for the general public. An important component of these activities was the establishment of an online portal containing the Forest Resource Center and the GeoForest Portal <http://enpi-fleg.ge/geoforestportal/index.php/en/>. Similarly, they directly engaged some communities to raise awareness on sustainability and forest management issues.

The GeoForest Portal and the Forest Resource Center, generally referred to as GeoPortal, compiles forest related information in Georgia on an easily accessed online platform. The Forest Resource Center part of GeoPortal contains scientific publications, relevant legislation, best forest management practices, and links to forest sector public organizations, NGOs, and scientific institutions. The Forest Resource Center has been envisioned as an online hub for global-to-local and local-to-global knowledge exchange. Meanwhile, the GeoForest Portal stores forest maps and geospatial information that can be used to create thematic maps for forests, climate change, and population dissemination (Sulkhanishvili, 2016) (GeoForest Portal, 2016). The portal features maps showing and tracking changes in forest cover, firewood requirements, presence of forest diseases and pests, or areas affected by fire. The activity included trainings on GIS and technical skills to administer and maintain the GeoPortal for IT specialists at MoENRP. Trainings with MoENRP personnel were crucial to ensure the proper functioning of the portal after its management is transferred to the Ministry at the end of the FLEG Program.

### *Outcomes*

The main outcome of this activity is that the GeoPortal has been developed and the Department of Biodiversity and Forest Policy (DoBFP) has agreed to host it after the FLEG Program ends. Officials from the NFA, APA and DoBFP have received training on using the WebGIS software in order to ensure maps on GeoPortal will be maintained and updated. Similarly, the IUCN FLEG team has trained several IT specialist at MoENRP and is developing a WebGIS manual in Georgian to ensure MoENRP has the institutional capacity to maintain the portal in the long term. The portal is mostly available in both Georgian and English. GeoPortal provides a platform through which interested parties, ranging from high level officials to ordinary citizens, can be informed about the issues affecting Georgian forests. The portal permits access to the policies, programs, best practices, and efforts being done to address forest issues.

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Ensuring access to data

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Establishing the GeoPortal and populating it with relevant forest information, particularly detailed maps, required MoENRP to share information of forests under their jurisdiction. MoENRP was willing to facilitate this data exchange based on the professional relationships between the IUCN FLEG team and officials at MoENRP derived from several years of collaboration under the FLEG program. Collaboration with officials at the NFA, the APA, and the DoBFP were crucial for the implementation of the activity. Another facilitating factor was the availability of qualified FLEG consultants who collected field data, including GPS data, to complement information provided by MoENRP (Marika Kavtarishvili, personal communication, September 29, 2016).

### *Challenges*

#### Transforming institutional perspectives on information sharing

The main challenge faced by the activity was agreeing with MoENRP officials on what was the most appropriate format and content of GeoPortal. Sharing a wide range of forest information with the general public is a new practice for MoENRP. To a great extent, MoENRP's interest in incorporating the GeoPortal to the DoBFP is a response to the Georgian government's efforts to increase transparency in the forest sector. It was also a response to the positive feedback received by the national website established by IUCN FLEG I for collecting forest information. The professional relationship between MoENRP officials and IUCN FLEG team members facilitated the communication and negotiation process to define the appropriate format for the final version of GeoPortal.

### *Lessons learned*

Marika Kavtarishvili highlighted the need to collaborate with key stakeholders in order to foster adoption of innovative communication strategies that increase transparency of the forest sector. In this case, the IUCN FLEG team in Georgia communicated effectively with MoENRP key officials and gained support for the GeoPortal initiative. The activity's design contemplated transfer of the GeoPortal to NFA after the conclusion of the IUCN FLEG Program. Therefore, special emphasis was placed on fostering a sense of ownership of the portal within the NFA as an important tool for sharing information on forest issues. Similar attention was paid to training Ministry personnel to maintain the portal.



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## Forest Functionality Study, Georgia (EC CWP 2.2 ADA CWP 4.6)

### *Activity Summary*

The Forest Dependence Study performed by IUCN FLEG II provided insights on rural communities' reliance on forest resources for their survival. The forest functionality work sought to further analyze the underlying dynamics that create incentives for unsustainable forest use by rural communities in Georgia. Marika Kavtarishvili, IUCN FLEG Country Program Coordinator, noted that the study aimed at understanding the complex interactions of economics, social issues and environmental management that determine how rural communities relate to their natural resource base (personal communication, September 2, 2016). Another aim of the study was to estimate the value to rural communities of fully functioning forests. Ultimately, quantifiable information obtained through the study was expected to assist decision makers in their efforts to improve forest governance in Georgia.

### *Outcomes*

The activity studied the communities of Tianeti, Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, and Chokhatauri. It provided detailed information that complemented results obtained during the Forest Dependence Study and hence provided policy makers with *“concrete and measurable results that would assist them in dealing with the complexities in sustainable forest management that arise from the interactions of economics, a broad range of social issues and environmental management.”* (Marika Kavtarishvili, personal communication, August 15, 2016). The study was presented at a stakeholder meeting in MoENRP. Translation into English of the report's executive summary is ongoing and it will be used to increase awareness of the study's results.

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Leveraging institutional credibility to foster collaboration with government officials and rural communities

The study depended on the IUCN FLEG teams' ability to garner the support of MoENRP's NFA and DoBFP to implement the study in the pilot communities of Tianeti, Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, and Chokhatauri. Similarly, IUCN FLEG required the support of local self-governments in each community in order to obtain credible information on rural communities' relationship with their natural environment. In this sense, the professional credibility and high capacity of IUCN FLEG experts garnered MoENRP's support of the activity. MoENRP's support helped IUCN FLEG obtain information from the National Statistics Office of Georgia and assistance from Georgia's Ministry of Agriculture.

The technical sophistication of the study required IUCN FLEG to find highly qualified experts to perform the study. This in turn increased the credibility of the study's findings and

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increased the likelihood that they would be accepted by MoENRP. Finally, IUCN FLEG's reputation as trustworthy, highly qualified experts allowed them to build trust with communities and obtain support from local self-governments to perform the study. Community and local government participation has proven crucial for identifying degraded forest areas, buffers, and newly 'in-grown' abandoned agricultural fields that could become pilot projects for restoring forest functionality.

### *Challenges*

#### Changing institutional perceptions of the value of a study

The main challenge for this activity was convincing the NFA that performing a forest functionality study could provide relevant information for improving forest governance. Marika Kavtarishvili explains that "*NFA officials perceived that the study was necessary for IUCN's purposes but not for NFA's. However, after receiving the results from study in Tianeti and realizing their potential, the NFA requested IUCN FLEG expand the study and cover three additional areas*" (personal communication, September 29, 2016). The initial results presented to NFA officials sparked their interest on using the methodology to analyze another three areas of interest in Georgia where forest functionality assessments could greatly inform program design. NFA officials also had proactive conversations with IUCN FLEG team members to include new questions in the study.

### *Lessons learned*

The main lesson learned from this activity is the importance of building professional relationships with key stakeholders (in this case MoENRP). Existing trust between IUCN FLEG team members and MoENRP officials permitted the implementation of the first part of the forest functionality study, results that demonstrated the value for NFA and thereby led to the implementation of the rest of the study. In this sense, this professional relationship allowed IUCN FLEG to overcome initial skepticism about the value of an activity to provide crucial information to inform forest governance policies in Georgia.

It is worth highlighting the significant change in NFA official's perception of IUCN FLEG's study. At first, NFA officials perceived the study as a worthwhile endeavor only in terms of maintaining the working relationship between IUCN FLEG and the Georgian government. The methodology proposed by IUCN was unfamiliar to Georgian officials and they had reservations on the credibility of findings obtained through it. The fact that they permitted the performance of the first phase of the study is a clear example of how highly Georgian officials value IUCN FLEG's collaboration. Ultimately, findings from the first part of the study changed Georgian official's perception of the information obtained. It also increased the validity and relevance of methodologies used by IUCN FLEG. Finally, it reinforced trust between IUCN FLEG and the Georgian government where the established working relationship facilitates the



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introduction of innovative approaches to improve forest governance in Georgia.

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## Moldova

During phase II of the IUCN FLEG Program, activities in Moldova focused on increasing available information of the value of forests to Moldovan society and improving communication between Moldova's forestry institutions and the general public. The Forest Ecosystem Services (FES) analysis provided a detailed monetary estimation of the benefits provided by forests to the most important economic sectors in the country. The Comparative Legal Analysis reviewed Moldovan forest legislation and assessed its effectiveness to foster sustainable forest governance compared to the legal framework of nearby countries, including the European Union. Meanwhile, the Public Involvement and Communication activity assisted Agency Moldsilva with redefining their communication strategy with the Moldovan public in order to increase public engagement with forest issues and increase accountability by Moldovan forestry institutions. Finally, the Eco-Forest Journalist Training helped build capacity among Moldovan journalists to accurately report on forest topics and capture the complexities of forest governance problems and achievements, thereby contributing to raising awareness on forest issues in Moldova.

### Forest Ecosystem Services (FES) Analysis, Moldova (CWP 3)

#### *Activity Summary*

The Forest Ecosystem Services study in Moldova identified and described the main services provided by forests to Moldovan society. The study followed an ecosystem service approach for valuating forests. Through this approach, economic value is assigned to the benefits that certain forest functions generate for human beings. The ecosystem service perspective posits that forest benefits other than the goods they produce (e.g. firewood, berries, timber, and mushrooms) can be assigned an economic value. Some common examples of ecosystem services provided by forests include water purification, fresh air, recreation, and carbon sequestration. Aurel Lozan, IUCN Country Program Coordinator for Moldova, provides an example of this thinking approach. *“If a pencil or a mobile phone, for instance, has a price and value assigned in the market, then what the forests produce and offer have prices and values as well. There is a variety of such products and services that forests have historically generated, are generating now, and will hopefully generate in the future”* (personal communication, October 6, 2016).

To some extent, the FES study complements the Forest Dependence (FD) study performed in Moldova in 2014. Similar to the FD study, the FES study explored the relationship between rural communities and their natural resources (focusing on forests) to assess their level of inter-dependence beyond the provision of forest goods. The study also focused on estimating the value of forest ecosystem services provided to six key economic sectors in Moldova: agriculture, water management, tourism, fishing, natural disaster risk mitigation and climate change mitigation. These economic sectors were selected based on data availability and their relevance to Moldova's economy and society.

The study was conducted by the Transilvanian University of Brasov (Romania) and combined information gathered through surveys in rural communities with official statistics and data provided by other government agencies, research institutions, and independent studies. As Aurel Lozan explains *“the study analyzed existing information and data of Moldovan economic sectors relevant to forests, findings from meetings and discussion with Moldovan institutions responsible for forests, results of background studies undertaken during both phases of the ENPI FLEG Program, and materials from other projects and initiatives in Moldova. This work included also FES approach and experience of other countries”* (personal communication, October 6, 2016). The FES study focused on rural communities due to the fact that 54% of Moldova’s population lives in rural areas. Some of the FES that were analyzed include provision of habitats for diversity, soil protection, water regulation and carbon sequestration (Transilvania University of Brasov, 2015).

### Outcomes

One of the main objectives of the study was to provide credible, quantifiable information about FES and their relation to key Moldovan economic sectors. FES were estimated in monetary terms, providing key data for policy analysis. For instance, the study found that total FES represent 0.85% of Moldova’s 2014 Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This estimate contrasts with the official estimate of the forestry sector’s contribution to Moldovan economy of 0.3% (Aurel Lozan, personal communication, October 6, 2016). In addition to estimating the value for Moldova’s most relevant FES, the study identified areas where forest ecosystems are being managed unsustainably. The final report (Transilvania University of Brasov, 2015) provides a series of recommendations for policy design and actions that would steer Moldova towards using a sustainable ecosystem management approach (SEM) for forest management.

The FES study estimated the benefits and costs of two scenarios, a business as usual (BAU) and a sustainable ecosystem management (SEM) scenario, and compared the net benefits of each. The value of total ecosystem services provided by Moldovan forests was estimated at around \$68.84 million (US Dollars) in 2014 (Transilvania University of Brasov, 2015). This information, along with the detailed recommendations of the study, provides an extremely valuable resource for Moldovan politicians, policy makers and other interested parties when discussing, evaluating and deciding forest management programs in Moldova. As Petru Rotaru, FLEG Focal Point for Moldova and Chief of the Department of Forestry, Hunting and Protected Areas at Moldsilva, said *“Moldsilva is the main beneficiary of the results of FLEG, and data obtained from FLEG analyses have been taken into great consideration in designing policy and strategies for a sustainable development of Moldovan forest resources”* (“Forest Ecosystem Services Discussed with Local Stakeholders in Moldova,” 2016).

The study’s findings are also being used in order to raise awareness on forest issues across all sectors of Moldovan society. An example is the presentation by Aurel Lozan, on Agro TV about the status of agroforestry in Moldova. A link to the presentation can be found in (“Agroforestry in Moldova: Aurel Lozan, FLEG Country Program Coordinator, on Agro TV to



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discuss this topic,” 2016). Meanwhile, the final study report is available online at Moldsilva and ENPI FLEG official websites ([www.moldsilva.gov.md](http://www.moldsilva.gov.md), [www.enpi-fleg.org](http://www.enpi-fleg.org)). The report was also distributed among specific interested stakeholders such as Moldova’s Ministry of Environment, Agency Moldsilva, environmental NGOs, experts and practitioners in forest management from other government agencies in Moldova and abroad, local communities, and mass-media (Aurel Lozan, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Generating credible and relevant information for public policy

An important facilitating factor for the study was choosing a research methodology that considered ecosystem services in relation to broader economic sectors of Moldova. As Aurel Lozan explains “*the economic sector approach was aimed at processing and presenting information that is quantifiable and relevant for specific decision makers in each studied sector*” (personal communication, October 6, 2016). Being able to present information that is relevant beyond the forestry sector itself helped increase awareness of the value of forests in relations to other sectors. An example is the attention being paid to the role of forest ecosystems in harboring Moldova’s biodiversity. This topic was elevated in the national agenda through the recent National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NPSAP), approved by the Government of Moldova in 2015, which used IUCN FLEG data to highlight the social and environmental relevance of forests. Another example is the attention being paid to the linkage between forests and water provision. On March 21, 2016 Moldsilva issued the special order Nr 91 to monitor water resources in Moldsilva’s forests. Overall, the activity helped elevate the conversation surrounding forest management in the national public agenda.

### *Challenges*

#### Introducing novel methodologies for forest valuation

An important challenge for the activity relates to the magnitude of the study. The FES study was the first time that benefits to Moldovan society provided by forests were estimated using the ecosystem service approach. This presented challenges in terms of data availability to perform the required estimations. Similarly, being unfamiliar with the methodology posed a challenge in terms of the credibility of findings for Moldovan officials. Ultimately, the results of the study were accepted as credible by Agency Moldsilva (and therefore by other government agencies) and results are currently being used to inform forest governance policy.

### *Lessons learned*

One lesson learned from the activity is the value of having a broad-base set of partnerships with government agencies and NGOs to elevate the credibility and visibility of the

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activity. This increased the likelihood that activity results would be seriously considered in future government policies and programs. Another lesson learned highlights how quantitative economic estimations provided by the FES study enabled findings to be better understood and considered by organizations that are typically considered outside the discourse on issues of forest management and sustainability.

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## Comparative Legal Analysis, Moldova (CWP.6)

### *Activity Summary*

During 2014 and 2015, IUCN FLEG performed a comprehensive study of Moldova's forestry legal framework and presented an independent opinion on its effectiveness, including recent practices and challenges. The study consisted of a comparative analysis of Moldova's forest legal framework with respect to international forest legislation (particularly that of the EU) and legislation in neighboring Ukraine and Romania. The study reviewed the Forest Code, adopted in 1996, and engaged in discussions with experts working in forestry related sectors in Moldova such as the environment, agriculture, and regional development sectors. Experts were asked to provide their perspectives on Moldova's forest legal framework. Similarly, IUCN FLEG consultants met with national and international experts, and participated in thematic events organized around forestry topics.

The study reviewed a wide range of policy and legal documents such as:

- International policy documents relating to forestry and biodiversity;
- Independent reports on Moldova's legal framework (performed by the World Bank, IUCN, WWF and Soros Moldova Foundation);
- Forestry acts of EU members and other ex-soviet societies (namely Romania and Ukraine); and
- Moldovan national policy documents and regulatory acts.

IUCN FLEG hoped that their independent opinion on the functionality of Moldova's forest legal framework would assist Moldovan officials in their efforts to improve forest regulations. Some of the legal documents currently under consideration include:

- A new Forest Code (based on structure proposed within phase I of the ENPI FLEG program);
- Legislation related to the management of border forests (forest vegetation);
- Legislation related to the management of forests and/or forest vegetation managed by communities (municipal forests);
- Legislation related to the private sector owning forest resources; and,
- A new Action Plan for implementing a sustainable forestry sector development strategy.

### *Outcomes*

The study identified several areas of forest resource management in Moldova that require reform for the sustainable management of forest resources. Some of the main challenges identified are corruption, a highly politicized forestry sector, and neglect of the experience and

professionalism of those working in forest management agencies. Overall, the study concluded that forest managers undertake a cursory approach to forest law enforcement due to the confusion created by a number of coexisting, sometimes contradictory, legal documents (Aurel Lozan, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

The report outlines several recommendations including incorporating a forest ecosystem services approach as an alternative for unsustainable forest management practices, the use of conservation principles in forest management, directly addressing climate change issues, and improving forestry sector financing. One particularly relevant recommendation is separating the different functions and attributions (i.e. responsibilities and authority) of forestry stakeholders. Another key recommendation is creating a clear forest legislation that is easy to interpret and that raises awareness on the goods and services forests provide to society. The final technical report titled “Republic of Moldova: Comparative Analysis of the National Forest Legislation with the international legal framework for ensuring an efficient management of forest resources” is available to the public through the ENPI FLEG II website and Agency Moldsilva’s website. The report was also shared with decision-makers at the Ministry of Environment, Moldsilva and several environmental NGOs, forestry units and government officials and public servants at other agencies.

As Aurel Lozan explains, “*the findings of the study triggered an in-depth evaluation of several issues for the environmental sector in general, discussions that involved both governmental and non-governmental sectors. An example is that both the Ministry of Environment and Agency Moldsilva have established special technical working groups to review and improve the legal framework regulating the use of forest resources in Moldova (namely the Forest Code). Another example is a new bill of the Law on Game Conservation and Management, developed by Moldsilva and submitted in 2016 to the Ministry of Environment. The draft has been endorsed by other government institutions and stakeholders, and it is in the process of being submitted to the Government for approval and proclamation*” (personal communication, November 23, 2016).

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Accessing key information

The forest regulation comparative analysis required the review of an extensive amount of legal documents, both specific to Moldova and for other countries. In terms of accessing Moldovan legislation, the IUCN FLEG team’s task was greatly facilitated by the online web-portal (<http://lex.justice.md/>) and the willingness to collaborate of several officials at Agency Moldsilva, the Ministry of Environment and other authorities with whom the IUCN FLEG team had established professional relationships. The study profited from several meetings with national and international experts to directly discuss Moldova’s forest legislation. Relevant information was also obtained by participating in workshops, round tables and bilateral meetings on the topic. The level of cooperation provided by Moldovan agencies is a testament to the



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respect and credibility of the IUCN FLEG team in Moldova. The openness of Moldovan officials to work with IUCN FLEG, to a great extent, is the result of years of maintaining a respectful professional relationship between IUCN FLEG team members and Moldovan officials.

## *Challenges*

### Fostering simple, understandable legal frameworks

A challenge faced by the activity was identifying redundancies or gaps within Moldova's legal framework and understanding the motivations for maintaining complicated laws. As Aurel Lozan explained, *“as a result of the study, we found out that in some cases the legal framework in Moldova is deliberately complicated in order to benefit some groups (e.g. the forest lease regulation). In other cases, the legal framework does not reflect the interests and concerns of all stakeholders, creating conflict between forestry institutions and communities. This is a serious issue as a complicated legal framework deters the general public from taking interest and participating in discussions on forest issues and forest regulation”* (personal communication, November 23, 2016).

## *Lessons learned*

This activity highlights the importance of understanding the interactions and complexities of a legal framework undergoing a process of reform. Aurel Lozan noted that *“one of the conclusions from the study was that the environmental and forestry legislation in Moldova is better structured, compared to international standards, than commonly perceived and actually enforced, but it still needs adjustments to match reality and to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are taken into consideration (and not to only serve certain groups)”* (personal communication, October 6, 2016). In this sense, the activity shows the potential benefits of undergoing in-depth, detailed, comparative analysis of legislation as a way to provide independent recommendations for government reforms. The fact that the IUCN FLEG team is respected as highly professional experts by Moldovan officials increases the likelihood that their recommendations will be taken into account.

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## Public Involvement and Communication, Moldova (CWP. 8)

### Activity Summary

This activity refers to the collaboration between Moldsilva, IUCN FLEG Program and the Antis-Media advertising agency to structure and implement an awareness and communication campaign for Moldsilva. The “Forest Communication and Knowledge Plan” embodies Moldsilva’s strategy to increase the level of awareness on forestry issues in Moldova, address concerns about corruption and transparency within the agency and increase the amount of information on forest use and forestry sector financing that is available to the public.

As a result of the IUCN FLEG’s team input, Moldsilva created the Department of Information and Public Communication to handle the agency’s engagement with the public. The IUCN FLEG team and Antis-Media also assisted Moldsilva in redesigning their official website ([www.moldsilva.gov.md](http://www.moldsilva.gov.md)). Relevant improvements to Moldsilva’s website include disclosure of information on timber auctions, public procurements, new legislation and policies, job positions in the forest sector, and best practices. The general structure of the website was updated increasing its user-friendliness and visual appeal. According to Viorica Caciuc, Moldsilva’s Press Officer, “[a]s a result of FLEG’s inputs, public awareness on these subjects has increased significantly. The new version of Moldsilva’s communications strategy represents a necessary step towards the improvement of our communication and transparency procedures, as this is the most important communication-related document of our Agency” (“Communication and Transparency: Building Bridges between Moldsilva and Moldovan Citizens,” 2015).

Similarly, IUCN-FLEG and Antis-media helped Moldsilva organize workshops, called *Discover your Forests*, in Moldovan Nature Reserves with young students and children. During the workshops, children participate in guided tours of forests, learn about forest functioning, major threats to forests and sustainable ways of living. Each workshop held a contest where the children could test their newly acquired knowledge and earn prizes. Workshops aim to foster young people’s interest in forest issues and engage the future generation of foresters and socially aware citizens. As Vlad Dilma, chairman of the NGO Defensiv Club who helped organize a workshop in 2015 noted, “everything is about our attitude towards nature and the forests in particular, and about how we protect forests and keep them safe from being polluted and destroyed. A healthy environment means a healthy society and vice-versa, so this event is just an excellent moment for the young generation to prove this right here at this beautiful Nature Reserve” (“FLEG brings young generations to forests, 2015”).

### Outcomes

This activity has helped Moldsilva implement substantive changes to their communication and engagement with the general public. It also helped Moldsilva enact deep rooted institutional changes. The Division of Public Participation and Information was established at Moldsilva’s headquarters. This Division is dedicated to handle and implement



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Moldsilva's communication strategy and all the programs that are defined within that strategy. Under the guidance of the FLEG Program and in compliance with national legal requirements, Moldsilva has defined its Communication Strategy for 2015- 2018.

Likewise, Moldsilva, IUCN FLEG and Antis-Media have collaborated in organizing “a large number of local and national-wide events. These events include Beech festivals, interactive lectures with children, establishing dialogue platform with the public, contests for fine art schools and sport clubs, an international day of children, an international day of forests, Europe Days in Moldova, production of written and video-materials as well as attracting more mass-media experts/institutions to forests and forestry sector” (Aurel Lozan, personal communication, October 6, 2016). Similarly, Agency Moldsilva has set up a “hot-line” that allows members of the general public to report forest crimes directly to the agency in an anonymous way (Almazán et.al. 2016).

Moldsilva's updated website has greatly increased its visibility among the Moldovan public. A comparative analysis performed by Moldsilva and Antis-Media revealed that visits to the website have consistently increased after 2012, when IUCN FLEG helped redesign the webpage. The analysis showed that, between 2014 and 2015 alone, visits to the website had increased 33%. A larger number of visits to Moldsilva's website has also increased visibility of FLEG related activity as five of the top ten news featured in the website are FLEG activities (Aurel Lozan, personal communication, October 6, 2016). In 2015, Moldsilva began using social platforms like Facebook and You-tube and the web-page ([www.ecopresa.md](http://www.ecopresa.md)) as part of the efforts to reach a broader audience. Two films, *Children are the forests* showing what forests are from children's perspectives and *Living with forests*, were uploaded to social media for broad distribution. Both films were produced by Antis-Media with support of Moldsilva and Forest Research and Management Institute.

Overall, Moldsilva's efforts represent considerable improvements in transparency and its ability to raise awareness of forest issues and the efforts being made to address them. As Viorica Caciuc, Moldsilva Press Officer commented, “[d]uring the past few years, the activities undertaken by the ENPI FLEG Program, in collaboration with Moldsilva, have enriched and stimulated the debate about forest-related issues in Moldovan media. FLEG studies on topics such as wood consumption, illegal logging, and timber traceability, constitute the primary source of most journal articles in the sector” (“Communication and Transparency: Building Bridges between Moldsilva and Moldovan Citizens,” 2015)

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Building on Moldsilva's initiative to change

A key factor that facilitated the process of redefining Agency Moldsilva's communication strategy was the agency's readiness and political will to improve transparency.

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Several high ranking Moldsilva officials were convinced of the need to redefine Moldsilva's engagement with the public. In previous years, the agency has been heavily criticized for extensive corruption, participation in illegal forest activities and interference of political interests with Moldsilva's operations (Aurel Lozan, personal communication, October 6, 2016). Therefore, Moldsilva recognized the need to raise awareness on forest issues and actively engage with the public in order to restore the image of forestry personnel as professionals committed to protecting the forests.

### Helping transform Moldsilva's communication culture

Based on IUCN FLEG's reputation as trusted, independent professionals, in 2011, the former General Director of Moldsilva asked IUCN FLEG for help improving their communication with the public and their ability for international cooperation (Aurel Lozan, personal communication, October 6, 2016). During this activity, the IUCN FLEG team collaborated with Agency Moldsilva officials to increase the amount of information available to the public and address society's requests for greater transparency (Almazán et.al. 2016). This represented a considerable change in Moldsilva's institutional culture, as the Agency had traditionally been over-zealous in protecting forest related information. The activity itself represents the engagement between the government and members of the private sector (Anti-Media) and NGOs (Moldovan Association of Environmental and Eco-tourism Journalists and Ecological Movement of Moldova) in their efforts to foster greater transparency in Moldova and a more active civil society from a young age.

Moldsilva's transformation, from an institutional perspective, is nothing short of remarkable. With assistance from IUCN FLEG Program, the Agency undertook a broad range of initiatives:

- Establishing a special division to deal with communication and information as well as public participation within Moldsilva,
- Hiring a communication or press officer,
- Reviewing and rebuilding Moldsilva's website,
- Increase transparency by disclosing forest information,
- Engaging the public to learn more about the forestry sector,
- Restoring the image of the forestry personnel.

### *Challenges*

#### Dealing with increased attention to forest issues

One of the major challenges for this activity was maintaining support for Moldsilva's reform initiatives throughout the years. Moldsilva's high ranking officials are politically appointed positions. The activity suffered from delayed implementation due to constant changes in Moldsilva's leadership, which required obtaining support from incoming leadership after each



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substitution (Almazán et.al. 2016). Similarly, Moldsilva's transparency initiatives received pushback within the institution as many of Moldsilva's officials were not accustomed to sharing information with other areas within the Agency, let alone the general public. Finally, increasing Moldsilva's engagement with the public began sparking attention on forest issues across Moldova. This process was accompanied by the need to maintain communication outlets, develop adequate communication materials, organize events and activities, and collect and organize forest data. This process was sometimes challenging as the Agency is constantly learning from the different aspects of the new communication strategy.

### *Lessons learned*

This activity highlights the importance of focusing on a role of facilitator and assistant to a government agency's reform process. In this case, the IUCN FLEG team members recognized that Moldsilva was requesting assistance in instrumenting a self-initiated process. Moldsilva wished to take advantage of IUCN FLEG's technical capacity and ability to engage a broad range of stakeholders. The most effective way to foster transparency within Moldsilva was respecting the Agency's ownership of the initiative. Institutional push-back from within Moldsilva would not have been overcome had there been a perception that IUCN FLEG was directly influencing the transparency agenda. In this sense, the credibility of IUCN FLEG team members as independent, respectful professionals that were assisting Moldsilva was key to maintaining the collaboration with Moldsilva.

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## Eco-forest Journalist Training, Moldova (CWP. 9)

### *Activity Summary*

This activity helped Moldsilva conduct a series of trainings for journalists. Trainings consisted of a theoretical and practical section. The topics covered by the trainings included how to report on forestry topics with an adequate level of understanding of ‘forest life’ (i.e. the day-to-day management and care of forests versus unregulated forest processes), forest terminology, an overview of forestry issues in Moldova, and basic technical knowledge about forests. Between May 2014 and June 2015, a group of 15 talented journalists participated in the training. These journalists were selected through a national application process. The trainings were organized by the Moldovan Association of Environmental and Eco-tourism Journalists (AJMTEM) in close collaboration with IUCN FLEG and Agency Moldsilva experts.

Part of the training included an introductory training at the Plaiul Fagului Nature Reserve and a site study and training at Codrii Nature Reserve. Journalists were able to visit the Reserves and directly learn about forests and forest issues. A journalism contest, named *Best forest material*, relating to FLEG and forestry topics was organized as part of the activity. The contest was open to all journalists in Moldova. Seven out of the 15 participants in the trainings earned a diploma and a prize.

The training’s main objective was to raise the quality of news stories and materials on forestry topics available through the media. A lot of emphasis was placed on the understanding and correct use of forest related terminology as well as an understanding Moldova’s most pressing forest issues. After the first contest’s success, Moldsilva continued hosting contests as a way to foster journalists’ interest in forestry topics and their accurate reporting.

### *Outcomes*

As a result of journalist trainings, 15 Moldovan journalists interested in forest topics have increased their capacity to adequately report forest issues. More than 100 press items covering a broad range of forest topics, such as private forests, government institutions, and forest ecosystem services have been produced since the trainings took place. Meanwhile, seven training participants earned prizes for their reporting items (either written materials, TV/radio features or video) during the *Best forest material* contest.

Overall, the activity has helped increase Moldova’s human capacity to accurately report on forest topics. Training participants expressed their satisfaction with the topics covered and reflected on how they have incorporated the lessons learned into their daily lives and professional development. For instance, Cristina Chiron, a journalist participating in the trainings and winner of the contest held after them said, “*Participation in this training program organized by AJMTEM supported by FLEG East ENI was interesting and useful for me. I learned things and new concepts that any environmental journalist has to know. Now not only I am careful*



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*when I write, but when I watch TV and I make remarks when the term "deforestation," e.g., is used incorrectly" (Association of Environmental and Eco-tourism Journalists, 2015).*

Similarly Lucia Taut, winner of the *Best forest materials* contest noted “[t]he trainings organized during the year helped us to better understand how to use correctly forestry terms, how forestry employees work, what are the problems from the field. It is very useful to interact with land specialists. The visits to Nature Reserves “Plaiul Fagului” and “Codrii” helped us understand what means a good forest management, which are the products and benefits from the forestry sector” (Association of Environmental and Eco-tourism Journalists, 2015).

Finally, Svetlana Tataru, another winner of the contest, commented “environmental themes were an area completely new to me and very different. But even it was very different it captivated me a lot. Moldova faces many problems in this field. By participating in the program, I was motivated to research a topic totally new for me -carbon sales - and this paper have to be accepted at an international conference in Pakistan. The appreciation of the jury from the national competition on forest themed journalistic materials motivates me to write more in this area” (Association of Environmental and Eco-tourism Journalists, 2015).

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Facilitating hands-on learning opportunities

A key facilitating factor for the effectiveness of trainings was the ability to visit forests and discuss forest issues. In this sense, Moldsilva forestry officials’ openness and willingness to collaborate with IUCN FLEG and AJMTEM were crucial for the activity. The fact that members of mass media, IUCN FLEG and AJMTEM, were allowed to enter Codrii and Plaiul Fagului Nature Reserves shows Moldsilva’s trust of the IUCN FLEG team and their commitment to increasing awareness of forestry issues in Moldova.

### *Challenges*

#### Overcoming knowledge gaps

A challenge experienced by the activity was overcoming the knowledge gaps that most journalists had on the correct use of technical terms related to forest issues. Aurel Lozan noted that “different levels of understanding of several technical terms led journalists to be confused about different forest situations. For example, ‘deforestation’ is a term commonly used when referring to the cutting or removal of trees. However, deforestation refers to a change in land use category” (personal communication, October 6, 2016).

### *Lessons learned*

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This activity highlighted the potential benefits of engaging specific sectors of Moldovan society in order to increase awareness of forest issues. As a result of trainings, there was an increased interest from journalists working in rural areas to report on forest issues and to participate in more trainings. The activity helped increase human capacity within the media sector. Similarly, it increased the capacity of Moldovan NGOs to provide trainings on forest issues. Aurel Lozan noted that AJMTEM is currently working on implementing similar projects to the trainings conducted with IUCN FLEG and Moldsilva, “*they used this experience and replicated it to other projects*” (personal communication, October 6, 2016). In this sense, increasing journalists’ capacity to accurately report on forest issues increases the quality and quantity of independent information available to Moldovan society.

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## Russia

The IUCN FLEG activities in Russia fostered the adoption of best practices for sustainable forest management. The Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance provides an example of an innovative approach to solve human-nature conflict and implement community based conservation projects in areas surrounding protected natural areas. Meanwhile, the Library of Best Practices of Legal Forest Use consists of an online reservoir of examples of sustainable forest use throughout Russia. The Library includes a legal and economic assessment of best practices in order to facilitate their adoption in other parts of Russia and the ENPI region.

### **Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance, Russia (CWP 4.3. FLEGI, CWP 4.1 FLEGII)**

#### *Activity Summary*

The Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance refers to the partnership established between the citizens of Tsevlo and the Polistovsky Natural Reserve (PNR) located in Bezhanitsy, North-Western Russia. The alliance arose as a strategy to help solve the conflict between Tsevlo citizens and the PNR resulting from restrictions on the use of non-timber forest resources in the areas within and around the Reserve. Access to non-timber forest resources has been a contested issue in the area ever since the establishment of the PNR in 1994, when historically unimpeded use of forest resources by local citizens was interrupted based on Russian legislation on protected areas. The IUCN served as both facilitator and adviser for the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance through an IUCN FLEG activity that spanned both FLEG I and FLEG II (2009-2012). The eco-tourism development alliance established between Polistovsky Natural Reserve and Tsevlo community members is expected to continue after the end of the FLEG program.

During the initial phase of the project, the IUCN-FLEG team engaged Polistovsky Natural Reserve staff, local government officials and key community members to facilitate a process exploring solutions to the conflict between Tsevlo citizens and the PNR. The process focused on identifying strategies that could address the issue of access to non-timber forest resources in the areas near PNR without jeopardizing the Natural Reserve. As a result, all parties agreed on pursuing an eco-tourism project combining visits to PNR with the development of alternative livelihoods using non-timber forest resources from the Reserve's buffer zones<sup>1</sup> to provide goods and services to visiting tourists.

Once the project was decided upon, the IUCN-FLEG team focused on offering expert advice to Polistovsky Natural Reserve staff and Tsevlo citizens in their efforts to obtain external

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<sup>1</sup> A buffer zone, is an area where you are allowed to make low profile agriculture, hunting and non-timber resource use activities. The general rule is that you can do whatever you want but either in a non-commercial way, that is, without the help of any kind of machinery or what is historically maintaining your livelihood. (Almazán et.al., 2016, p. 95).



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funding to establish the eco-tourism development alliance and perform required investments. Later on, they provided their expert advice to community members to create solid business plans for potential eco-tourism related activities. Several examples of the resulting business ideas include the creation of a local history museum, a tour of the nearby peat bog using rehabilitated train tracks, and handicrafts workshops called *master classes*. These economic activities revolving around the eco-tourism project are providing community members with new livelihoods that use non-timber forest resources in a sustainable manner. Additionally, as a result of the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance, Tsevlo citizens have changed their attitude towards the forests surrounding their community and are actively assisting Polistovsky Natural Reserve rangers in its protection and stewardship (Almazán et.al. 2016).

### *Outcomes*

To a large extent, the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance represents a remarkable transformation of the relationship between the citizens of Tsevlo and Polistovsky Natural Reserve. Based on the efforts of everyone involved in the alliance, the conflict over access to non-timber forest resources turned into the joint stewardship of the natural resources enclosed by the Reserve. However, the importance of the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance transcends the local sphere of Tsevlo as it has set a precedent of effective mediation of human-nature conflict surrounding protected areas in Russia.

In terms of local outcomes, the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism alliance has reduced incursions by local citizens into the Natural Reserve by providing opportunities to develop alternative livelihoods that use non-timber forest resources sustainably. Alternative livelihoods have ranged from developing entrepreneurial tourist attractions (such as a local history museum or a tour to the nearby peat bog) to manufacturing handicrafts and providing food and lodging to tourists. Workshops teaching techniques for the sustainable use of non-timber forest products, called *master classes*, are hosted in Tsevlo with support by the PNR. Workshop topics have ranged from soap making to dying of natural fabrics using fungi found in the Reserve. During 2015, the *master classes* proved to have potential as a livelihood strategy by taking the format of hobby tours: an attraction where tourists visiting the Reserve also take a *master class* and learn a skill. According to Andrey Zaytsev, IUCN FLEG Program Coordinator in Russia, “*Forming local, environmentally oriented development alliances between protected areas, local entrepreneurs and communities helps to reduce unemployment and provides legal business opportunities for citizens in the area. This in turn will help counteract illegal logging, uncontrolled non-timber forest resources collection and poaching*” (“Russia’s Largest National Park Developing Ecotourism from the Remnants of Quartz Mines,” 2014).

Meanwhile, broader outcomes of the alliance include examples of trans-boundary collaboration, knowledge exchange and peer learning. The alliance took advantage of the opportunities presented by similar projects and geographical proximity to Belarus, Estonia, and other parts of Russia to share lessons learned and foster valuable information exchanges. For

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instance, in 2014, several Tsevlo citizens visited the town of Lepel', Belarus to learn and exchange ideas from projects being implemented in both countries. Tsevlo citizens greatly benefited from hearing about Belarusian farmers' experiences and were impressed by their level of self-organization and their agro-tourism business model. Belarusian farmers were in turn impressed by the level of cooperation between Tsevlo citizens and Bezhanitsy local authorities, both at the PNR and the municipal government. After the visit, both communities obtained fresh ideas on how to improve their businesses and collaborate with local authorities to improve their livelihoods and, at the same time, address the underlying issues of illegal logging that had placed them on a path of unsustainable forest use. The exchange was organized and sponsored by IUCN FLEG II. As Andrey Zaytsev explains, "*FLEG II is willing to support further cross-border cooperation between rural citizens of the two countries. We see a great potential in matching expertise and efforts of local people from two countries to use non-timber forest resources for a better and more sustainable life in their remote villages*" ("Don't wait to innovate," 2015).

Another example of trans-boundary collaboration and learning that arose from the alliance is a research project focusing on analyzing fungi biodiversity in the Reserve. Estonian mycologist Anna Baklan was invited by Ms. Svetlana Igonina, the Head of the Research Department at the Polistovsky Natural Reserve, to perform an in-depth inventory of fungi species in the Reserve and its surrounding areas during 2016. This scientific collaboration sprung up from PNR scientists' recognition of Ms. Baklan's expertise during a three day *master classes* on how to produce paper and dyes from mushrooms that took place in Tsevlo in 2015. As Mikhail Yablokov, Director of Polistovsky Reserve commented "*The initial objective of FLEG's involvement in the region was to develop and implement sustainable forest use models. The presence of such a bright professional as Anna Baklan brought about an activity that will certainly benefit our reserve. The establishment of this international cooperation with Estonia, one of our European neighbors, will definitely contribute to shedding light on the biodiversity of the entire ecoregion*" ("Transboundary research cooperation for better understanding Russian mushroom diversity," 2016).

Similarly, the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance example has been shared with members of the Association of Protected Areas of the North-Western Region, and representatives of local communities surrounding the PNR through the seminar "Forming Partnerships with Local Communities" held on May 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> 2016 in the Polistovsky Natural Reserve. During the seminar, ENPI-FLEG members, Natalia Milovidova and Konstantin Gongalsky, shared the experiences and lessons learned from the partnership established between the PNR and members of Tsevlo village. They presented the activities performed during FLEG I and FLEG II in the Bezhanitsy District that have fostered a mutually beneficial coexistence between PNR and its surrounding villages. As Natalia Milovidova, FLEG II consultant for IUCN Russia notes, "*We wanted to demonstrate that protected areas represent a precious resource to help villages face ever growing socio-economic challenges*" ("Protected Areas and Local Communities: A strong bond," 2016).

Finally, the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance has been included as a case

study in the ENPI-FLEG library of best practices for legal forest use by forest-dependent communities making the experience in the Bezhanitsy district available to others. Lessons learned from this experience are already being used in other parts of Russia such as the Yugyd Va National Park. For instance, in the same way that Polistovsky Natural Reserve staff worked with local community members at Tsevlo, Yugyd Va National Park staff, together with FLEG II consultants, *“monitored the existing infrastructure suitable for development of ecotourism and the experience of the National park in engaging local citizens and businessmen into joint environmentally-oriented and responsible projects. The approach helped to avoid destructive competition for the existing resources between the National Park, businesses and citizens”* (“Russia’s Largest National Park Developing Ecotourism from the Remnants of Quartz Mines,” 2014).

### *Facilitating Factors*

In general terms, the effectiveness of the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance can be attributed to the convergence of four factors.

1. The willingness of PNR officials to engage in creative solutions to human-nature conflicts.
2. A participatory process that included local citizens and local government officials from the outset.
3. Effective project facilitation and guidance by IUCN FLEG members.
4. The willingness of the alliance’s partners to pursue their objectives and collaborate with each other.

#### PNR officials’ willingness to engage in creative solutions to human-nature conflicts

First, it is worth noting the crucial role that Polistovsky Natural Reserve Director, Mikhail Yablokov, played during the preliminary stages of the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance. Dr. Yablokov first approach the IUCN during FLEG I in an attempt to find a solution to the human-nature conflict between Tsevlo and the Reserve. The initial interactions between IUCN FLEG members, PNR officials and Tsevlo citizens laid the groundwork for the project implemented during FLEG II as it began establishing trust between IUCN consultants, PNR officials and Tsevlo citizens (Almazán et.al. 2016).

#### Including local citizens and local government officials from the outset

Another crucial facilitating factor for the effectiveness of the Bezhanitsy development alliance was the process through which it was established. IUCN FLEG members built upon the initial engagement between IUCN FLEG and Polistovsky Natural Reserve and established themselves as facilitators of a process where solutions to the conflict between PNR and Tsevlo would be developed and agreed upon by all parties involved. This highly participatory process,

which included local citizens from Tsevlo community and local authorities from the beginning, provided the citizens of Tsevlo with a sense of ownership of the project while, at the same time, made sure that the proposed project would be in line with local and regional government development strategies.

#### Effective project facilitation and guidance by IUCN FLEG team members

Similarly, it is worth highlighting the advisory role that IUCN FLEG members played throughout the implementation of the project. During the first year, the IUCN assisted the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance in defining the project's road map and identifying funding sources to kick-start it and enhance its financial sustainability in the long term. Afterwards, IUCN consultants remained available to Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance members to provide expert advice on new business ideas and ways to increase tourist visits to the Polistovsky Natural Reserve. In this manner, the IUCN was able not only to assist in the long-term viability of the project but also monitor its development and fulfillment of objectives.

#### Building on the willingness to pursue common objectives

Finally, the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance establishment and continued development is a direct result of the efforts made by PNR officials and engaged Tsevlo citizens. Their collaboration first provided them with the required funding for initial infrastructure investments and has transformed the entrepreneurial plans of community members and PNR officials into ongoing successful livelihoods. Their partnership has also garnered them recognition and support from high ranking Russian forestry officials (Almazán et.al. 2016) and continues to provide them with motivation to continue with the project by their own means ("New Year's Resolution: More Initiatives to Support Ecotourism in Russia," 2016).

#### *Challenges*

##### Laying the ground for the Alliance's financial sustainability

The most significant challenge faced by the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance was ensuring the financial sustainability of the project. For instance, the alliance needed to ensure that the Reserve could obtain a steady flow of tourists throughout the year to maintain the economic feasibility of entrepreneurships started in tandem with the eco-tourism project. In this respect, the PNR established a series of partnerships with Russian tourist agencies that catered to both domestic and international markets, an interactive webpage for the Reserve was set up, and an agreement with the Russian Education Ministry was established to bring students to the Reserve during the low season (Almazán et.al. 2016).

Similarly, the alliance needed to ensure that proposed entrepreneurial projects were feasible given current market conditions in the area. The IUCN FLEG member's advice proved



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vital to Tsevlo citizens to create solid business plans associated with the alliance. Similarly, the trans-boundary exchange with farmers in Belarus helped Tsevlo citizens understand the importance of adequate pricing for handicrafts and other non-timber forest products manufactured as part of the alliance.

### *Lessons Learned*

In general, the Bezhanitsy eco-tourism development alliance is a testament to the importance of building trust with communities and local partners through a deliberate and properly facilitated community engagement process. The IUCN FLEG team was able to establish a working relationship with Tsevlo citizens, local forestry officials and PNR officials quickly due to IUCN FLEG's previous projects in the area. This highlights the benefits of engaging in long term relationships with partners on the ground and valuing the projects trust building potential.

Another lesson learned from the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance is the transformative potential of peer learning in relation to modifying perspectives on natural resource valuation and how to engage in market activities. This was exemplified by the profitable exchange between Tsevlo citizens and farmers in Lepel', Belarus. After their visit to Lepel', Tsevlo citizens were more aware of the importance of pricing their manufactured products appropriately in order to guarantee the economic viability of their enterprises.

It is also worth highlighting the key role that IUCN FLEG members played in the successful establishment of the eco-tourism development alliance. IUCN FLEG consultants were emphatic in explaining how the facilitating role of the IUCN fostered ownership of the project by local partners instead of dependence on external agencies such as the IUCN. The IUCN FLEG consultants, thanks to their knowledge of current Russian economic development plans and forest governance strategies, were also instrumental in helping alliance members to take advantage of windows of opportunity presented by the Russian government's support of encouraging tourism endeavors. Similarly, the IUCN FLEG members helped the alliance fulfill its potential by providing timely expert advice on business plans and assistance developing a long term strategic plan from the outset of the project.

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## Library of best practices of legal forest use, Russia (CWP 1.4. FLEGII)

### Activity Summary

The Online Library of Best Practices and Cases of Sustainable Forest Resources Use by Local Forest-Dependent Communities (the Library) is a reservoir of knowledge on sustainable forest management practices by forest-dependent communities being applied in Russia. The Library aims to provide a web-based information system where examples of legal and sustainable forest use by forest-dependent communities is readily accessible to practitioners, researchers, communities, and government agencies both in Russia and other countries. In doing so, the Library seeks to raise awareness on sustainable forest management projects being done with forest-dependent communities; projects that have sometimes been neglected in favor of commercial forest management practices. As IUCN FLEG country program coordinator Andrey Zaytsev explains, *“the library of best practices seeks to collect the existing and quite diverse experience in the alternative use of forests accumulated in different Russian regions. These are experiences that incorporate the needs and interests of local forest-dependent communities, something that the ongoing forest sector reform process in Russia has mainly ignored or overrode in favor of the needs of larger forest businesses”* (personal communication, September 29, 2016).

The examples and cases of best practices included in the website are selected from specialized Russian websites and international reports on forest management based on four criteria:

1. Project's profitability: verifies the project is economically feasible in the long term considering the Russian context and that there are relevant markets for the products being produced by the project.
2. Legality: verifies that the best practice being considered can be replicated in Russia based on the current legal framework (both nationally and for a specific region). For instance, the project is screened for use of rare species, forbidden substances or ethical concerns.
3. Environmental friendliness: the case being reviewed should not cause an irreversible damage to the environment.
4. Environmental or geographic feasibility: based on the local environmental conditions of Russia, the project being considered must match the resources available at the different eco-regions in Russia.

The Library contains the most relevant information (data, statistics, reports and publications) and examples of sustainable and legal forest use by forest-dependent communities in Russia. It also includes a legal feasibility analysis of collected best practices and cases along with a geographic and environmental analysis of their applicability (Request for expressions of interest: ENPI FLEG II, 2013). The Library also includes guidelines for introducing best practices of legal and sustainable forest use by forest-dependent communities using the



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principles of Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR).

The level of detail on each case included in the Library provides substantive information on cases that have successfully addressed challenges experienced by government agencies and communities regarding illegal logging, illegal timber trade and forest governance in Russia. Each of these case studies provides insights on the dynamics of forest governance and forest use, both legal and illegal, in Russia. This means that cases found in the Library can be used by forest law enforcement agencies across the region to take advantage of best practices already in place in Russia. It will enable these agencies to tailor interventions based on a greater understanding of how forest products are being extracted and prepared for trade in Russia to other regions.

The Library is a platform through which best practices can be widely distributed and the lessons learned from experiences across Russia can be used to foster an expanding number of sustainable forest management cases both in Russia and abroad. Knowledge transfer efforts are facilitated by the legal feasibility, environmental, economic and sustainability analysis that is performed for each case of best practice uploaded to the Library.

The online Library platform permits searching for best practices based on a wide range of categories as well as based on specific topics or keywords, a feature that allows interested parties to find cases that are most relevant to them and facilitates knowledge transfer. Sustainable forest practices available in the Library can be accessed based on a specific topic or keyword as well as one of the following categories:

- Type of practice
- Form of activity
- Location
- Resource base
- Investments
- Geographical applicability

### *Outcomes*

The Library, which has been active since the end of 2015, is currently being tested in its beta version and is constantly being updated as new cases of sustainable forest use become available. Approximately 100 examples of best practices have been formatted and uploaded to the website and are currently being peer-reviewed by voluntary experts from PNAs and academia. The environmental applicability analysis for these cases has been completed and a set of concrete recommendations for on-the-ground implementation of best practices has been elaborated based on this analysis. Similarly, the legal analysis of cases has been completed for the whole set of practices at the Federal legislation level and is currently being uploaded to the website. The legal analysis of cases at a regional legislation level is ongoing.

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Currently, the Library can be accessed remotely and most of the material is available exclusively in Russian on the beta version of the website (<http://www.fleg-infobase.ru>). The website has not been widely distributed as its functionality is still being tested<sup>2</sup>. At the moment the Library is hosted and overseen by the FLEG program but will be transferred to their developers at the end of the FLEG program. However, the IUCN will continue providing methodological support. The final version of the website aims to be a multilingual platform where information is available in Russian, English, and, possibly, Ukrainian. The Library is also developing “*efficient algorithms based on the analysis of best practices which consist of federal and local law use of forest resources, including legal information, economic opportunities and technical reference, backed by the examples of best practices in accordance with the type of business and territorial location*” (“About the website,” ENPI EAST FLEG II) to further facilitate knowledge transfer and application of best practices in sustainable forest management.

Once the final version is released to the general public, the Library will be a readily available platform for stakeholders involved in sustainable forest governance and combating illegal logging in the ENPI-FLEG region to learn from the experiences of forest-dependent communities in Russia addressing these issues. So far, the heads of municipalities in the Pskov Region in Western Russia have been introduced to the website as well as all six ENPI FLEG focal points during the last Steering Committee Meeting in Chisinau, Moldova in 2015.

An example case is the Bezhanitsy Eco-tourism Development Alliance, a project that combined the efforts of officials at the Polistovsky Natural Reserve and community members of Tsevlo to solve conflict between the protected area and use of non-timber forest resources by community members. The lessons learned from this example about community engagement and development of sustainable forest product or eco-tourism start-ups are being used to establish similar development alliances in other parts of Russia, for instance in the Yugyd Va National Park in the Northern Ural mountains.

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Eliciting input from intended Library users

The IUCN FLEG consultant team in charge of development of the Library built on initial input from multiple stakeholders among the local and Federal authorities, small forest businesses, academia, and local stakeholders in the forest-dependent villages who provided feedback on what would they like to see in the Library in order to improve the design and navigability of the website. In this sense, the iterative and user-based nature of the website will improve its ability to serve as a useful reservoir of information that diverse forest stakeholders across Russia can access to improve forest management practices across the country.

### *Challenges*

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the final version of the website may differ in its content once it is released to the general public based on the feedback obtained on the beta version.



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## Circumventing external challenges and dealing with data unreliability

Overall, the main challenge faced by the activity was the budgetary cuts experienced by the IUCN FLEG program in Russia as a consequence of EU sanctions imposed on Russia after the Crimea crisis in 2014. This challenge was addressed by hiring an intern to structure the legal advice from multiple experts in a consistent way and present this expertise using the same style. Another challenge experienced by the Library was the unreliability of official statistics on non-timber forest resource use in Russia which led the IUCN FLEG team to use verified forest resource use cases instead of relying solely on official statistics. This issue proved to be of particular importance based on the relevance of non-timber forest products for forest dependent communities that were the main source of best practices included in the Library.

### *Lessons Learned*

Given the objectives of the Library and the type of best practices that they sought to showcase, the activity would have benefited from a higher emphasis on climate change issues, because of the sensitivity of non-timber forest products to changes in climate conditions. The inclusion of this kind of information would have increased the relevance and analytic power of the best practices contained in the Library as it would have included information on the dynamic relationship between climate, resource availability and market demand of forest resources. In terms of addressing the importance of non-timber forest products and gathering relevant forest management information, the Library recommended a “*closer integration with the ongoing regional work on Forest Dependency and FLR as the Library is a good advertisement platform for both outcomes of FD and FLR activities*”. (A. Zaytsev, personal communication, September 29 2016).

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## Ukraine

The IUCN FLEG activities implemented in Ukraine focused on assisting efforts to improve transparency in Ukraine's forest sector and ensure that forest reform processes promoted the sustainable use of Ukrainian forests. The Improvement of the Process of Stakeholder Involvement in the Forest Sector helped Ukrainian forest agencies to increase data availability for the general public, raise awareness of forest issues, and increase accountability of forest resource use by forest authorities. The Open Letter on Forest Reform refers to the efforts by the IUCN and other international organizations to prevent the introduction of forest legislation that could foster unsustainable use of forest resources.

### Open Letter on Forest Reform Legislation

#### Activity Summary

This activity corresponds to the joint efforts performed by IUCN, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to convey their concerns to the Ukrainian Parliament regarding proposed forest reforms in December 2014. Shortly after the Maidan Revolution, the newly elected Parliament and Government, in spite of developing a complex reform of the forest sector, presented a package of three main proposals:

1. Banning timber exports from Ukraine
2. Allowing the privatization of forestry areas
3. Discontinuing the issuance of new timber harvesting licenses.

IUCN, WWF and FSC, perceived that these reforms had the potential to severely damage the Ukrainian forestry sector. As Roman Volosyanchuk, IUCN Country Program Coordinator for in Ukraine commented, “[t]he reform package was developed in a very chaotic period of time, right after the revolution. The new incoming parliamentary members wanted to take prompt actions against corruption, but they did not carefully weigh the negative consequences of the changes suggested” (“Our Voice Matters,” 2016).

Even though the three proposed measures were a source of concern for FLEG experts, one measure was particularly alarming due to its potential consequences for the Ukrainian economy and forest dependent communities. Firstly, banning Ukrainian timber exports represented a violation of the free trade agreement signed between Ukraine and the European Union. It also represented a violation of World Trade Organization rules and was, in principle, contradictory to the ideals of democracy and an open economy. Secondly, if the ban was to be implemented, the forestry sector would experience a drop in domestic prices of timber, temporarily benefitting the timber processing sector. In the long term, however, the measure would have a severe detrimental impact on timber companies and threaten the livelihood of those most vulnerable working in the sector. For instance, Pavlo Kravets, FSC National Representative

in Ukraine, expressed that “[t]he negative impacts of the reform would exert a particularly detrimental effect on rural communities whose economy is more directly dependent on a productive forest sector. Among the most vulnerable individuals are women working in forest nurseries, who would be the first to lose their employment. We also need to consider that economic difficulties could encourage illegal activities such as uncontrolled timber harvesting” (“Our Voice Matters,” 2016). In light of these circumstances, IUCN, WWF and FSC collaborated to express their concerns and draft alternative reform proposals to present to the Ukrainian Parliament through a document referred to as the “Open Letter.”

### *Outcomes*

In April 2015, after the efforts of the FLEG program through the “Open Letter” and the hard work of a wide range of other sectors in Ukrainian society (including government foresters), the measures to privatize forest areas and deny issuance of new timber harvesting licenses were removed from proposed reforms to the Ukrainian forestry sector. Similarly, in spite of the ban on timber exports being approved then, a new draft law was registered in 2016 at the Ukrainian Parliament Secretariat that aims to cancel the newly imposed ban on timber exports. In light of the positive impact of the FLEG program at this crucial moment for the Ukrainian forestry sector, Richard Aishton, FLEG II Coordinator for IUCN, highlighted that “[t]his success is the result of a working method that characterizes our FLEG II Program and can be summarized in two words: *dialogue & transparency*. FLEG II Country Program Coordinators have established a dense network of professional relations with both public and private stakeholders through open and constructive dialogue. Their positions reflect high-quality, quantifiable analysis and are discussed in an open and transparent manner. This approach makes our experts trustworthy partners who are able to tangibly influence the governance of forest resources in the FLEG countries” (“Our Voice Matters”).

IUCN, WWF and FSC’s joint collaboration is an example of these organization’s commitment to contributing with preserving the principles of sustainable forest management. By presenting their concerns on proposed forestry reforms in a diplomatic and transparent way, the IUCN, WWF and FSC were able to positively contribute to the reform dialogue taking place during the political turmoil that followed the Maidan Revolution. In the end, a measure that would have had a severe detrimental effect on the forestry sector and on the livelihoods of many Ukrainian citizens in rural communities was avoided. However, as the reform process continues, Mr. Volosyanchuk, IUCN Country Program Coordinator in Ukraine, reiterated “[w]e are following the development of the situation very carefully. We stay at policy-makers’ disposal to provide expert guidance and improve forest governance in Ukraine” (“Our Voice Matters,” 2016).

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Relying on professional reputations and credibility to navigate complex socio-political contexts



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The Ukrainian forest reforms were proposed during a period of political turmoil and forceful demands by the Ukrainian people to reduce corruption in all aspects of government. These circumstances, and the highly impactful consequences that proposed reforms could have on the Ukrainian forestry sector in the long term, required IUCN, WWF and FSC to rely on their expertise and reputation as unbiased professionals in order to effectively communicate their concerns. This collaborative activity took an in-depth look at proposed forestry reforms in 2015 and developed a coherent and credible set of opinions that clearly voiced their expert concern on the potential detrimental consequences of implementing reforms. The delivery of their message to the Ukrainian parliament, environmental NGOs, and the general public depended on these organizations' ability to portray themselves as unbiased experts motivated by a deep concern for the well-being of the Ukrainian forestry sector and not by political interests.

To a great extent, the FLEG Program's ability to portray themselves as unbiased is a direct result of the professional reputation and unquestioned ethical quality of IUCN, WWF and FSC team members in Ukraine. The professionalism and commitment with which IUCN, WWF and FSC experts conducted themselves permitted them to convey their concerns to environmental NGOs, forestry sector officials and the Ukrainian parliament in a way that positively informed forestry sector reforms. In the particular case of IUCN, this activity represents an example of their staff members' ability to live up to IUCN's mission and value proposition by being able to "*convene diverse stakeholders and provide the latest science, objective recommendations and on-the-ground expertise*" (IUCN, 2016) in order to inform forest governance in Ukraine.

### *Challenges*

#### Maintaining a reputation as unbiased, trustworthy partners in the environmental sector

The main challenge faced by the IUCN, WWF and FSC efforts to contribute to forestry sector reforms was addressing the negative backlash received from environmental NGOs after voicing concerns on the implications of proposed reforms. Initially, environmental NGOs responded negatively to the "Open Letter" presented by IUCN, WWF and FSC because they perceived it as a defense of Ukrainian foresters: a sector of the Ukrainian government that suffers greatly from corruption (Almazán et.al, 2016). In order to address the environmental NGOs' concerns, the international organizations held a roundtable in March 2015 to clarify the rationale behind opposing the proposed forestry reforms. The roundtable permitted an open and dynamic dialogue with members of the Ukrainian civil society that greatly enriched both parties' perspectives on proposed reforms. As Dmytro Karabchuk, FLEG II Activity Coordinator for WWF in Ukraine, described "*[w]e had a very open exchange of ideas and a constructive debate which resulted in a unified position. Together with our partners, we prepared a petition in support of the Open Letter, which received around 800 signatures*" ("Our Voice Matters," 2016).

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### *Lessons Learned*

The development of this activity highlights the incredible importance of having professional, committed and respectable local experts implementing programs that have multilateral and international partners. The ability of FLEG local experts to make use of their professional networks and reputation to establish dialogues with high ranking government officials and environmental NGO members alike is a testament to the value of tapping into the local expertise to advance sustainable forest governance principles. It is also worth highlighting the ability of FLEG experts to understand the role that international organizations could most pertinently play in an internal reform process, focusing on facilitating dialogue and shedding light on potential backlash from reforms at both a domestic and international level. In this case in particular, the professional reputation of FLEG experts was crucial for navigating a context of political turmoil and demands to reform a highly corrupt sector in a way that would positively contribute to the national dialogue occurring in Ukraine. The “Open Letter” was an effective contribution to the efforts of a wide range of individuals and stakeholders interested in improving Ukraine’s forestry sector.

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## Improvement of the process of stakeholder involvement into decision-making in the forest sector (FLEG II CWP 4.2)

### *Activity Summary*

This IUCN FLEG activity contributed to the FLEG Program's efforts to increase transparency and communication with the general public in Ukraine's forestry sector. The activity focused on working with Ukraine's State Forest Resource Agency (SFRA) in developing their communication strategy by helping them improve internet based resources. Specifically, the activity helped SFRA establish a unified official web-portal, and improve an interactive Ecomap to increase SFRA's presence on social media.

The need to increase communication between SFRA and the general public stems from the need to increase transparency in the forestry sector and public awareness of the conditions of forests in Ukraine. Establishing communication avenues between the Ukrainian authorities, the public and other stakeholders in the forestry sector helps to improve decision making in the management of forests, particularly in the case of locally controlled forests. Ukrainian legislation at the national level, embodied mainly in the "Law on Local Self-Governance" and the Forest Code, establishes the rights of local communities to access and manage local forests. However, conflict arises as the mechanisms for public participation in the decision-making process for local forest management are not clear. Similarly, the Forest Code entitles citizens to the free access to state and communal forests for collecting berries, mushrooms, flowers and other non-timber forest products for self-consumption. However, there are challenges to exercising these rights. On one hand, protected areas significantly restrict local citizen's access to certain forests. On the other hand, unrestricted use of resources in a region can lead to their unsustainable management. Given these tensions, the Ukrainian authorities wish to foster a sustainable compromise by involving stakeholders, such as local communities, in the development of forestry management plans and decision-making.

### *Outcomes*

Through the collaboration between IUCN FLEG and SFRA there has been considerable progress in the establishment of two online-based websites to serve as Ukrainian citizens' source of information about the forestry sector. The activity established the outline and structure of the unified SFRA web portal. It also improved the layout, structure and functionality of the "Ecomap" web-site.

In relation to SFRA's integrated website, the IUCN FLEG team assisted SFRA in identifying problems associated with content transfer from existing Regional Forest Management and Hunting Administration websites along with assisting SFRA receive the administrative domain name registration and SSL certificates from the Regional Forestry Administration. Finally, the IUCN FLEG team assisted with SFRA's development of proposals to improve

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access to online services for disabled people. The SFRA website is currently available in Ukrainian at <http://dklg.kmu.gov.ua/forest/control/uk/index>. The initial draft version of the new web-portal (currently under development with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization) is available at: <http://62.80.189.30/ua/>. Improvement of the second draft version of the “Ecomap” web-site has been completed. The improved draft version is available for testing at: <http://forestry.in.ua/>. Transfer of the data accumulated at the previous version (<http://ecomap.org/#/map>) is ongoing.

### *Facilitating Factors*

#### Leveraging the trust in the IUCN FLEG team

The implementation of this activity depended on the collaboration of the SFRA, the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food, local authorities, NGOs in the forestry sector, the media, and the broad public. In this sense, the positive results from activities implemented by IUCN during FLEG I had created a “*solid base for a quick start and good progress with this activity on further developing mechanisms of enhancing transparency of the forest sector and public involvement into the decision-making*” (Roman Volosyanchuk, personal communication, October 13, 2016). The professional reputation established by IUCN FLEG team members garnered them the trust from different Ukrainian government agencies, NGOs in the forestry sector and local authorities which facilitated the collaboration between these parties. The ability of the IUCN FLEG team to instill trust in all stakeholders involved was crucial considering the highly volatile political context experienced in Ukraine.

#### Identifying committed government officials to support activities

Another facilitating factor for the activity was the IUCN FLEG team’s ability to identify and involve the right representatives from SFRA to participate in the activity. As Roman Volosyanchuk explained, “*the middle and upper-middle level personnel (e.g. Heads of Departments, Senior Officers) are a key element to engage in the national and regional forest authorities. They possess very high levels of professional skills and hold stable jobs despite of frequent changes in institutional leadership positions (which are politically appointed positions). Establishing successful working relations with middle and upper-middle level personnel contributed significantly to advancing the activity*” (personal communication, October 13, 2016).

### *Challenges*

#### Dealing with institutional changes during times of socio-political turmoil

The main challenge to the activity were the frequent changes in the Ukrainian government leadership, namely within SFRA, caused by political processes in the country. These changes created uncertainty regarding the establishment of the unified web-portal as SFRA’s leadership had to be updated and convinced of the value of the project. Similarly, changes in



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government officials across the Ukrainian agencies presented challenges in coordinating transfer of information, domain over websites, and general communication between the different local forest management enterprises, SFRA and the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food.

Another considerable challenge experienced by the activity was a reduction in the forestry sector's revenues. Firstly, the political turmoil in Ukraine led to a reduction of State revenues which affected the forestry sector's ability to finance its operations, in this case, the ability to fund the establishment of SFRA's website. Secondly, the loss of State revenues resulted in the inability of state forest management units and enterprises to be able to maintain their staff at full capacity. This in turn affected operation revenues from timber extraction which further prevented forest units from fulfilling other administrative and management tasks, ranging from crucial fire control to the ability to collaborate with other government agencies.

An important anticipated challenge for the activity is maintaining momentum after the FLEG Program ends, mainly due to the fact that the budget to maintain and continue improving the web-portal has been provided by FLEG. However, the SFRA has taken ownership of the initiative, the web-portal is currently hosted at the official SFRA server. The SFRA is committed to advancing the maintenance of the web-portal and is actively engaged in owning the results of the activity.

### *Lessons Learned*

This activity highlights the importance of identifying and engaging representatives at government agencies capable and interested in continuing efforts started by Program activities. In this case, the activity identified officials at SFRA willing to take ownership of the web-portal after the end of the FLEG Program. Another lesson learned from the activity is recognizing the power of social demands for transparency and public accountability of authorities. In this case, demands by the Ukrainian society for transparency encouraged the SFRA leadership to actively work on the development of a new web-portal for the Agency (Roman Volosyanchuk, personal communication, November 22, 2016).

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## Chapter 3: Overall Lessons Learned

Several lessons were identified after reviewing the process through which the IUCN FLEG team designed and implemented their activities in the Program. We consider these lessons relevant and generally applicable for the design and implementation of programs that foster the sustainable governance of natural resources beyond the context of northern and boreal forests in Eastern Europe and Russia. Highlighted lessons learned relate to the IUCN FLEG team's ability to translate general principles and objectives of forest governance into locally relevant actions that were understandable for and relatable to a diverse set of stakeholders. In this sense, the IUCN FLEG team was able to effectively apply a “*think globally, act locally*” mentality to advance sustainable forest governance.

### Designing flexible and incremental projects:

In many occasions, the IUCN FLEG Program implemented projects that used innovative research methodologies or bridged existing information gaps about the use of forest resources. This meant that, oftentimes, government officials were doubtful about the IUCN FLEG activities usefulness to inform forest policy. Government officials and policy makers were unfamiliar with the research approaches being used or were unaware of how data generated could advance forest governance reform. Therefore, IUCN FLEG's design of incremental projects proved remarkably effective at showcasing the potential of IUCN FLEG activities. Performing small pilot projects generated concrete results that exemplified the potential of IUCN FLEG activities and helped increase government interest and support in expanding studies. In this sense, maintaining a flexible project design helped the IUCN FLEG team incorporate suggestions on research questions and expand studies' geographic locations to include feedback from government officials in order to obtain accurate information that would prove most useful for advancing forest governance. This approach was particularly useful for implementing forest ecosystem services and forest functionality studies in Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan and Ukraine. It was also instrumental to prove the potential of the regional Forest Dependency study and garner general support for its further implementation in the region.

### Build and maintain partnerships as independent, credible and trustworthy partners:

The FLEG Program was designed to address issues of illegal forest use in the ENPI region. Therefore, several IUCN FLEG activities focused on facilitating efforts to increase transparency of the forest sector in participating countries. Other activities focused on shedding light on the dynamics driving unsustainable use of forest resources with the hope of designing adequate policy to modify unsustainable behaviors. In the particular case of the ENPI region and Russia, addressing issues of corruption, transparency and illegal forest use often meant dealing with distrusting forest institutions and local communities. Understanding this context, the IUCN



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FLEG Program emphasized its role as an independent partner whose objective was to facilitate self-initiated transparency processes implemented by forest agencies. Assisting Agency Moldsilva in Moldova and the SFA in Ukraine to improve their communication strategies with the general public are examples of the effectiveness of facilitating processes rather than imposing accountability objectives.

Similarly, several IUCN FLEG activities that worked closely with local communities were effective due to the IUCN FLEG team's ability to prove themselves as independent experts who wanted to facilitate communication between local communities and forest agencies. The IUCN FLEG team members used their talent and professional skills as mediators and scientists to reassure distrusting local communities that IUCN FLEG's main objective was to generate a dialogue between communities and government agencies and raise awareness on the issues and problems faced by local communities. This approach was particularly useful for approaching communities in Armenia and Russia.

Finally, the IUCN FLEG team maintained constant communication with their partners in government agencies, research institutions, environmental NGOs, and local communities. The IUCN FLEG team members' disposition and consistent availability to collaborate, provide advice and serve as the face of the IUCN FLEG Program enabled them (and the Program) to be perceived as reliable, trusted partners for a wide range of stakeholders.

Capitalize on existing local expertise, invest in increasing local capacity:

To a great extent, the IUCN FLEG Program's ability to effectively implement such a wide range of projects across the ENPI region and Russia is the result of having a group of local, highly professional, respected experts in charge of coordinating the Program at a national level. The IUCN Country Program Coordinators and the FLEG Program Officer at IUCN headquarters are local professionals with long-standing careers in their respective countries. Each IUCN FLEG team member has an extensive professional network in their country of origin which enabled them to collaborate with a broad range of stakeholders and combine different sets of expertise. Finally, it is worth highlighting the role of IUCN FLEG's Program Coordinator at IUCN headquarters in facilitating the IUCN FLEG team's ability to capitalize on the opportunities that their local expertise provided them. The IUCN FLEG Program Coordinator trusted CPCs judgment and understanding of the local context in order to guide IUCN FLEG activities and assisted his staff's efforts when circumstances required him to do so.

In addition to using existing local capacity, several IUCN FLEG activities focused on building local expertise and institutional capacity to address forest issues. For instance, some IUCN FLEG activities provided expert advice and technical capacity to perform studies, developed online platforms for data exchange with broad audiences, and developed training materials to improve forest management. During activity implementation, and in preparation for the end of the IUCN FLEG program, emphasis was placed on including forest officials, local scientists and NGO experts in the development and maintenance of activities and their products

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(for instance, the Library of Best Forest Practices in Russia, the GeoPortal and Forest Law Enforcement trainings in Georgia, and the Eco-trainings for Journalists in Moldova). The IUCN FLEG team placed particular attention on developing the required capacity to continue the activities implemented during the project without the direct support of IUCN, thereby increasing the likelihood that the efforts and results of the IUCN FLEG Program will continue in following years.

## Final remarks

This report reviewed and analyzed the majority of activities implemented during the second phase of the IUCN FLEG Program. Overall, the IUCN FLEG Program presents a noteworthy example of how to effectively bridge the tensions between local and large scale forest governance objectives, tensions that are common to all natural resource governance. In this sense, the IUCN's work contributes to the broader dialogue surrounding natural resource governance from a perspective of multi-layered, coupled human and ecosystem interactions. The IUCN FLEG Program was able to navigate the seemingly opposed objectives of reducing the negative impacts of illegal forest use while promoting the equitable use and stewardship of forest resources, a feat nothing short of remarkable.

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## Acronyms

APA - Agency of Protected Areas (Georgia)

CPC - Country Program Coordinator

DoBFP - Department of Biodiversity and Forest Policy (Georgia)

ENPI - European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument

EC - European Commission

EU - European Union

FLEG - Forest Law Enforcement and Governance

FSC - Forest Stewardship Council

Hayantar SNCO –Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Armenia

IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

NFA - National Forestry Agency (Georgia)

MoENRP – Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resource Protection (Georgia)

PNR – Polistovsky Natural Reserve

SFRA - State Forest Resource Agency (Ukraine)

TPLA - Tusheti Protected Landscape Administration

UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

WWF - World Wide Fund for Nature



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## About the ENPI FLEG II Program

The Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) II European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) East Countries Program supports participating countries' forest governance. At the regional level, the Program aims to implement the 2005 St. Petersburg FLEG Ministerial Declaration and support countries to commit to a time-bound action plan; at the national level the Program will review or revise forest sector policies and legal and administrative structures; and improve knowledge of and support for sustainable forest management and good forest governance (including the impact of related EU regulations) in the participating countries, and at the sub-national (local) level the Program will test and demonstrate best practices for sustainable forest management and the feasibility of improved forest governance practices at the field-level on a pilot basis. Participating countries include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine. The Program is funded by the European Union.

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### 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, EuropeAid promotes good governance, human and economic development and tackle universal issues, such as fighting hunger and preserving natural resources.

[http://ec.europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm)

#### WORLD BANK



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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's work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development. IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world, and brings governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organisation, with more than 1,200 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 45 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

<http://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 planet'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.

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