Albania Natural Resources Development Project

Overview

Forests cover more than 50 % of Albania's surface area. The post-communist transition period in Albania was characterized by a massive internal and external migration of population, weak enforcement of laws and regulations, and overuse of natural resources − all of which resulted in considerable degradation of forests and pastures and erosion of soil. In response, the International Development Association (IDA) and the Swedish government supported participatory forest and pasture management planning and investment in 251 rural communes through the National Resource Development Project (NRDP). These investments have helped to support increases in income earned from forest and agricultural activities in communal areas and a significant reduction in erosion, and Albania is now one of the first countries to sequester carbon on eroded lands through the BioCarbon Fund.

Challenge

Following roughly two decades of transition, illegal logging, and overgrazing of forests and pasture lands, Albanians living in rural areas started to become conscious of the damaging effects these practices were having on the environment. To address this, residents organized in community-based organizations with their main goals of protecting and rationally using their resources.

MULTIMEDIA

Loading the player ...

Approach

Participatory planning and management of forest and pasture lands was piloted in only 30 communes during the implementation of the Albanian Forestry Project financed by the World Bank (1996-2003). Given its positive outcome and wide community support, the approach was extended under the NRDP Project in more than 200 communes. This experience led to the decision of the government of Albania in June 2008 to formalize forest land rights transfers to 345 communes - resources which are used by almost one million people. The project has addressed the issues of soil degradation and improved watersheds by (1) financing participative forest management planning; (2) piloting the preparation of micro-catchment plans which integrate agriculture, forest and pasture management; (3) financing investments in forestry, pasture and agricultural lands; and (4) financing carbon sequestration activities on commune forest lands through payments from the BioCarbon Fund.

More Results

220,000

tons of erosion reduced, improved water management, and conservation of biodiversity, and forest protection, which is contributing to less sedimentation in the irrigation channels and hydropower dams.

MORE INFORMATION

- Slide-Show: Forestry
- Slide-Show: Albanian Carbon Sequestration
- Project documents

Results

The project worked with 251 communes (33 more than the project objective). It is estimated that the improved management of Albania's forest and pasture resources and watersheds in 251 communes, through participatory planning, institutional change support and small-scale investments in planting of forests and orchards in degraded lands, thinning and cleaning of degraded forests and pastures, erosion and grazing control measures, contributed between 2005 and 2011 to:

- an 8 % increase in income earned from forest activities in communal forest and pasture lands;
- a 28 % increase in income earned from forest and agriculture activities in micro-catchments;
- approximately 220,000 ton reduction in erosion; and
- the establishment of forest and pasture extension service.

Albania is one of the first countries to sequester carbon on eroded lands. The Biocarbon Fund, a public/private initiative administered by the World Bank, reached an agreement with the government in June 2007 to purchase emission reductions received from carbon sequestration activities.

Partners

The IDA team worked closely with (i) the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration of Albania, which was responsible for overall project management; (ii) communes involved in the approval of forest management plans and supervision of investments; and (iii) Forest and Pasture Users Associations that participated in the process of preparation of management plans and implemented the investments. Key Development Partners included the Swedish government, which provided a financial contribution to the project.

Voices

> *"Given its large areas of abandoned and highly eroded lands, Albania had great potential for carbon sequestration. This would attract the attention of other investors to help Albania afforest its degraded lands, while at the same time be able to sequester some carbon – bringing direct benefits to the communities that are part of this scheme as well as to the globe."*
>
> *— Drita Dade, WB Project Team Task Leader*

> *"You have to have been here 10 years ago to see – no vegetation but much degraded lands and overgrazed forests. Through some interventions under the World Bank Project we made a huge service to the forest. We cleaned and thinned it to allow good woods to grow better and to open space for the*

> *wildlife to come back in our forests. We stopped goats and animals from grazing for the first three years. What we see here now shows that with proper management we can have good quality of timber, and animals and other plants are coming back.*

— A farmer from Gjalish, Uleza Commune, Mat.

Toward the Future

More sustainable, community-based natural resource management in Albania will lead to enhanced productivity, incomes, and, overall, improvements in land and water resources for the public sector. The NRDP has been at the forefront of developing Payment for Environmental Services (PES) and mitigation against climate change by providing a scheme to finance carbon sequestration on commune forest land through payments from the Bio Carbon Fund to local actors. Additional research is needed to quantify the benefits and costs of providing these services, with the ultimate goal of ensuring they are self financing in the long term. In addition, follow-up operations could take advantage of European Union accession funds provided for rural development to strengthen further the capacities of forest users' associations.

NB: This story, originally published in 2010, was updated to reflect results captured in the Implementation Completion Report (2012).