Joint Forest Management
A multidimensional approach for sustainable rehabilitation of forests

Background
In Soviet times, Tajikistan was highly dependent on subsidized fuel from other parts of the Soviet Union. After independence, affordable fuel was no longer available, with disastrous consequences for the natural resources. As the local people did not have any other choice, they illegally cut wood from the forests for heating and cooking. Besides, uncontrolled livestock grazing hindered the forests’ natural rehabilitation.

Objective and Approach
The introduction of the Joint Forest Management approach in the Western Pamirs on riparian forest plots, aims at contributing to an improvement of the livelihoods of the local population. The objective is to reduce the degradation of natural resources in order to achieve positive environmental as well as economic impacts.

Former illegal forest users are provided with legal user rights by the State Forest Agency (SFA) and are, according to individual management plans, responsible for the protection and development of “their” plots. The harvested products are divided between the tenants and SFA, so both parties have a mutual interest in the sustainable management scheme.

JFM is a bottom-up approach, in which local actors participate in the decision-making of the strategy and the selection of priorities. Involvement of local and regional governmental structures initiates respective modernization of institutional and regulatory framework. This, in turn, paves the road for a broader dissemination of the approach.

The Project
JFM is implemented by the GIZ project „Sustainable Management of Natural Resources“ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and was until June 2011 also implemented by the GIZ project “Sustainable Rehabilitation and Development of Flood Plain Forests in GBAO” on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.
**Elements of Joint Forest Management**

The different elements of JFM are indispensably linked and are prerequisites for the functioning of JFM:
- To lay the groundwork for a sustainable forest management, detailed contracts between SFA and private tenants are concluded. The “contract on JFM” is a legally binding document, covers a period of 20 years (with automatic extension) and includes the rights and responsibilities of both.
- As a next step, management plans and annual plans are elaborated jointly to ensure a sustainable management of the plots.
- With a civil society structure (Forest User Groups), representing the rights and obligations of the tenants, the aim is to consolidate a counterweight to the SFA.
- In order to fulfill the requirements of the management and annual plans, tenants receive technical consultancy by SFA.

**Status of JFM implementation**

*Dissemination of JFM (Local level)*
At the current stage the JFM approach is implemented in three districts (Roshtkala, Ishkashim and Shugnan) in the Western Pamir. 463 contracts with tenants have been concluded and a total area of 1864 ha are under JFM and thus in the process of rehabilitation. In addition forestry GIS (including general maps, maps of forest degradation etc.) for the districts of Roshtkala, Ishkashim and Shugnan has been developed and is actively used by the different partners of the forestry sector.

*Reformation of the SFA in GBAO (Regional level)*
Respectively the process of restructuring the regional and local forestry authorities is supported. New forest agency staff needs to be trained as advisors and observers of the local tenants’ forestry measures. Important key characteristics for the reformed SFA will be transparency, accountability and efficiency.

*National Forestry Sector Reform (National level)*
With JFM as a bottom-up approach, the aim is to upscale locally generated best practices in Tajikistan and beyond. A new forestry code which includes participatory forms of forest management, has been issued in 2011. This provides incentive for the implementation of JFM in other parts of Tajikistan.

**Economic and Environmental Impacts**

The sustainable management of forest plots by the JFM approach leads to the rehabilitation of essential ecosystem goods and services, which contribute very positively to climate change adaptation and mitigation, to conservation of biodiversity and to combating desertification. Thus the JFM makes relevant contributions to the three Rio conventions, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

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