



**EURASIA
PARTNERSHIP
FOUNDATION**

Environmental Investment Program (Eco-Awards)

Final Narrative Report

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Submitted to:

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Ecological Awards (Eco Awards) Program was initiated and financed by BP, on behalf of its oil and gas co-venturers (BTC Co. and SCP Co.) and administered by Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF). In 2010, the environmental initiative was joined by HSBC Bank Georgia. Due to successful operation of the program, this support continued in 2011 as well.

The three-year Eco-Awards Program was developed to promote and reward the active involvement of local non-governmental organizations in addressing local environmental issues with practical solutions. Through education and mobilization, the program promoted sustainable use of natural resources, engaging communities in economic activities.



There was **demonstrated interest toward the program,**

which could be seen from sheer number of applications submitted to EPF during the three years of the program implementation. In the first year (2009), 49 proposals were submitted to the Foundation through the grant competition announced on EPF's web-site, as well as www.jobs.ge. In 2010, the number of applications increased to 51 and, in 2011, 73 organizations applied to the program.

To ensure objective and non-discriminatory selection process, the proposals submitted to EPF were reviewed by a board of independent experts, having extensive experience in the field. The panel of experts, which included representatives from various international organizations (such as the World Bank, UNDP, and OSCE), research institutes (Institute of Botany, Institute of Zoology), and the government (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection), provided expertise in evaluating the projects in accordance with predefined criteria.

Throughout the program cycle, EPF awarded 16 proposals submitted by 15 NGOs (one NGO was awarded twice in 2009 and 2010) with the total award amount of **745,113.64 USD** (in 2009 - 243,999.64 USD, in 2010 - 234,966

USD, in 2011 - 266,148 USD). The winners of the grant competitions were officially announced at the Eco-Awards Ceremonies, which brought together representatives of all relevant institutions, including the government authorities, non-governmental organizations, international community and the media. It is noteworthy that **60 percent of the winner organizations are regionally based.**

All projects supported through the three-year program **addressed environmental issues**, while **at the same time provided economic development opportunities for local communities**, which, in turn, contributed to improved socio-economic conditions and long-term sustainable development. For example, the project implemented by Georgian Tourism Association (GTA) under Eco-Awards 2009, which aimed at facilitation of market-oriented, participatory, sustainable tourism for the selected protected areas of Georgia, introduced a new product – horse-riding tours in Algeti National Park. Through providing their horses to Algeti National Park, local residents gained access to additional sources of income. Today, the park offers two horse-riding, two hiking, and one combined trail to visitors. According to the existing statistics, about 9,171 tourists visited Algeti National Park during 2011-2012 (4,828 in 2011, 4,343 in 2012). During the same period, the combined income of local residents living in the vicinity of the park amounted to GEL 3,500 (GEL 2,000 in 2011, GEL 1,500 in 2012). Furthermore, the project supported the purchase of 5 saddles, which were transferred to the ownership of a local resident, who serves as one of the park rangers. The funds received from renting saddles have been used not only for routine maintenance, but also for purchase of an additional horse, so that the Park could be ready for meeting the increased demand on horse-riding tours in the coming years.

The project implemented by the Association Flora and Fauna in 2010 along the Black Sea coast (Ajara, Guria, Samegrelo), which aimed at supporting the reduction of the negative impact of the predator mollusk *Rapana Venosa* and ghost fishing, also created economic development opportunities for local fishermen. Throughout the project, about eight tons of *Rapana* was gathered and distributed by the fishermen and divers engaged by the grantee. The funds raised by selling the mollusk were used to cover the divers' salaries and maintaining the harvesting equipment.

The project of the Rural Communities Development Agency (RCDA) awarded under Eco-Awards 2011, aimed at enabling small farmers and disadvantaged villagers in the communities of Chokhatauri and Khobi districts to overcome



the poverty and sustain the livelihoods through building their skills and capacities in environmental protection and utilization of renewable energy resources. Through the project, 24 people received theoretical knowledge and practical skills to construct and maintain solar water heaters, solar dryers of fruits and vegetables, and briquetting press. The most active project participants

were offered support in starting up small businesses by RCDA. A group of 13 people, with sufficient theoretical knowledge and technical skills, is now fulfilling orders from various organizations (ACF - Action Contre la Faim, UNDP, NGO Ecovision, etc.) and individuals. The group has already constructed 19 solar water heaters, 16 solar dryers of fruits and vegetables and 3 solar heating systems. The total amount received through this orders reached 19,960 GEL, of which GEL 3,912 was pre-tax profit.

The project implemented by the Friends' Association of Vashlovani Protected Area (established under the project implemented within Eco-Awards Program 2009 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature – IUCN) in 2011, aimed at ensuring the survival of the endemic Kolkhian pheasants, both in terms of restoration of Kolkhian pheasant in its natural habitats and development of pheasant farming as an income-generating activity among the local population. The project team identified 11 households in Tetrtskaro

Village willing to participate in the project. By nursing up to 8 pheasants with the support of the project team, each family received additional revenue of 100-150 GEL. After the end of the project, in six months, the number of households expressing interest in pheasant farming reached 30.



The Eco-Awards Program has also **contributed to formation of public-private partnerships**, which was translated into better cooperation between the state and the society. Thus, 5 of the 16 eco-awards projects aimed at development of various protected areas of Georgia. Consequently, the projects have formed fruitful partnerships with the Agency of Protected Areas of Georgia and local administrations of selected areas, which has contributed to fulfillment of projects' objectives.

To improve the tourism infrastructure in Tusheti Protected Area, Georgian Tourism Association (GTA) closely cooperated with the Agency of Protected Areas (APA). The project funded under the Eco-Awards 2010 envisaged equipping the guesthouses in Tusheti with solar powered electricity and water heating systems. The APA was implementing similar, but larger scale project in Tusheti with support from the Czech government. Thus GTA and APA actively coordinated to avoid overlap and to complement each other's activities so that the two projects could cover the entire Tusheti area.

To build the capacity of scientific and advisory councils of Protected Areas, IUCN Caucasus Cooperation Center under its project - *Promoting Stakeholder Participation in Protected Territories*, drafted strategic frameworks and Terms of References which were handed to the APA. The project also supported creation of the Friends' Associations of Vashlovani,

Tusheti and Lagodekhi Protected Areas, which in turn contributed to promotion of these Protected Areas.

In August 2010, EPF funded small project provided by the Administration of Tusheti Protected Area. A special brochure: Tusheti Protected Areas – Field Guide was re-printed and disseminated during the traditional Festival in Omalo. The brochure highlighted two projects funded under Eco-Awards Program and focused on development of Tusheti PA (IUCN in 2009 and GTA in 2010).

The Eco-Awards Program resulted in **improved networking among various environmental organizations and other stakeholders working in different regions of the country.** Both, Sustainable Development Association (ASDA) and Georgian Tourism Association (GTA) implemented projects that supported sustainable development of protected territories through the introduction of alternative energy sources and eco-tourism development. These organizations have consistently supported each other through joint trainings and opportunities to learn from each other's experiences. Another example of coordinated work is provided by the



Association Mta-Bari and Wild Plant Conservation Association (WPCA). Both organizations implemented projects concentrated on the conservation and commercial use (including support to export in the long-term) of economically important species of wild flora protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The

WPCA had been providing its conservation expertise, while at the same time learning from the partner organization about those protected species of flora that are grown in Adjara.

The program succeeded in involving youth in various activities, related to environmental protection issues. Four out of 16 projects

demonstrated youth participation. Under IUCN Caucasus Cooperation Centre's project, about 190 schoolchildren from Zemo and Kvemo Alvani, Tusheti (7th-11th grades) attended seminars on such themes as the purpose and functions of Tusheti Protected Area, Georgia's Red List of endangered species, eco-cultural traditions of Tusheti, etc. They also underwent trainings on campaigning, crisis management, and project cycle management. Later, under Junior Rangers' Program component, each of the Friends' Associations of Tusheti, Lagodekhi and Vashlovani PAs, selected 15 schoolchildren (45 in total), who participated in eco-camps, clean-up activities, trainings, and seminars. Today, 44 children are still involved in Junior Rangers' Program.

To increase the youth's awareness on environment protection, Georgian Tourism Association closely cooperated with schools under both of its projects (2009 and 2010). As a result, eco-camps were set up in the Algeti, Vashlovani, Lagodekhi, Borjomi-Kharagauli, and Tusheti natural reserves. More than 170 children participated in such activities as plotting out and marking footpaths in the woods for tourists, cleaning up litter, installing trash bins; during the camps, children were also provided with seminars on environment protection issues. Apart from that, a group of volunteer students participated in marking of two trails in Tusheti PA.

The project, implemented by Civil Society Institute (CSI) in 2011 offered an innovative model of providing agricultural service to farmers of Khulo, Keda, and Shuakhevi, through active involvement of the youth; 31 local schoolchildren served as liaisons between the farmers and the project specialists, filming the



cases of diseased cultures, sending photos and related questions from farmers via Skype to agricultural specialists and returning relevant recommendations to the beneficiaries. Through this model, full agricultural

service was provided to the farmers of the target villages with the minimal effort, with the number of consultations reaching 444.

To promote eco-educational awareness among young people and support capacity - building of youngsters in environment protection, **EPF implemented two smaller scale operational projects jointly with the APA, under Eco-Awards program, in 2009 and 2011.** Both projects included competition among school children on environment protection theme, award ceremonies and trip to protected areas. During the first project, APA and EPF organized a nation-wide competition among school children (about 25 schools from Tbilisi and 45 schools from the regions participated in the competition) to reveal the winners in the following nominations: the best paintings, photos, compositions, video clips, and original handicrafts. As a result, **26 winners** were identified, who were recognized at a day-long conference, which took place on May 22, 2009 at Tbilisi State University. The winners also participated in special eco-tour to Lagodekhi Protected Area (organized on June 5, 2009), in order to celebrate Environment Protection Day and to inform the youth about biodiversity and Georgia's protected areas. All participants were received free T-shirts with logos of the Program donors (BP, SCP, BTC, and EPF).

A similar competition was organized in 2011 as well, but only for students of Tbilisi schools. At the ceremony dedicated to the International Day of Biodiversity (May 23), EPF and the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia awarded **15 children**, who then went on a field trip to Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park together with their teachers and representatives of the APA, EPF, and the media. The tour showcased the results of the Georgian Tourism Association's (GTA) efforts, which it undertook as part of the 2009 Eco-Awards Program. Namely, Tbilisi-based school children met with local youth - members of ranger camps, which were set up under the GTA project, as well as learned about the importance of biodiversity from the administration of the National Park. As in 2009, the tour participants received free T-shirts with donor organization's logos and other souvenirs.

Due to lack of information and low public awareness on environmental protection issues, **EPF decided to strengthen the media component in the Eco-Awards Program** and highlight not only existing problems, but

specific ways of their resolution. In this regard, EPF announced a grant competition for TV/Radio companies, CSOs, and TV studios to showcase Eco-Awards Program and all 16 projects awarded under the program, as specific examples of how to resolve different environmental issues. Totally, seven proposals were received through the competition, which were reviewed by the board of independent experts. The experts gave highest ranking to the proposal submitted by the studio Midifilm Ltd. Initially, it was foreseen to broadcast the documentaries on the New Channel (Akhali Arkhi), but due to limited coverage this channel, it was recommended to establish contacts with other broadcasters. Upon the experts' recommendations, Midifilm obtained an official letter from the Georgian Public Broadcaster, stating GPB's commitment to broadcast all documentaries.

Fifteen documentaries (one is describing 2 similar projects) were aired on GPB and also uploaded on the Internet TV - TV Business at <http://tvb.ge>, with total number of views of 27,626. The documentaries contributed to promotion of the activities of the Eco-Awards projects. For example, several people, as well as business groups, addressed the Friends Association of Vashlovani Protected Areas with the proposal for further cooperation. Wild Plant Conservation Association also received number of requests to sell the seeds and bulbs of the economically important plants Cyclamen and Galanthus (Snowdrop).

Another operational project, implemented jointly with the APA in July 2011, **aimed at providing the representatives of the central and regional media outlets with broader knowledge about the Protected Areas, focusing on their importance and the functions they serve in protecting biodiversity**, so as to increase the media coverage of the project and various environmental issues. EPF and its partners organized a two-day media-tour to Sataplia Reserve and Prometheus' Cave, which was attended by 15 representatives of central and 6 representatives of the regional media. The head of APA presented about the protected areas of Georgia, while EPF representative provided brief overview about the Eco-Awards program. The event was covered by Rustavi 2, Imedi, and Real TV. Articles were published by various news agencies.

Quotes:

Guram Kakabadze, one of the farmers involved in the Association Mta-Bari's project: *"We are planning to grow these plants on our corn-plots that would enable us to get additional income from the same plot. This is especially important in mountainous areas, where farmers own small pieces of land"*.

David Bagrationi, one of the fishermen of Makhinjauri Fishermen Brigade, involved in the Association Flora and Fauna's project: *"Before I took part in the project, I did not know that Rapana venosa was a threat to other mollusks and should be removed from the sea to protect the diversity of sea life. Through our project, I took part in scuba diving trainings, so that I could start removing Rapana venosa from the Black Sea. Apart from protecting the environment, catching Rapana mollusks is a profitable endeavor. Its meat sells well on the Turkish market and with a well thought out campaign, the demand on Rapana meat is likely to grow on the local market. Its shell also makes attractive souvenirs, which can serve as an additional source of income."*

Anzor Kritiuli, one of the guest-house owners involved in GTA's project (2010): *"When tourists see light in the windows of guest-house, they are tending to come to my place, to ask for conditions and then finally stay"*.

Annex I - Summary of the Eco-Awards Projects

Eco-Awards 2009

Biological Farming Association ELKANA

Project Title: Reviving Akhaltsikhe (Meskhetian) Wheat Tsiteli Doli and Setting up Effective Market Chain for its Sustainable Use

Project Duration: June 1, 2009-December 1, 2010

Under Eco-Awards 2009 Program, Biological Farming Association Elkana implemented a project aimed at reducing the negative impact of agriculture on the environment in Samtskhe-Javakheti region and preserving the local agro-bio diversity through introduction of the sustainable use of endemic species.

Today, when several hundreds of cultivated plants are forgotten and in some cases, completely lost, it is very important to take measures for reviving these traditional products.

Meskhetian Tsiteli (Red) Doli wheat, which was sown by Georgian people from the time immemorial, now become one of the endangered endemic species. The Akhaltsikhe (Meskhetian) Tsiteli Doli wheat possesses unique features, such as resistance to cold, drought, parasites and diseases. This variety of wheat is easy and less expensive to yield, because it does not require intensive care or fertilizer. Nor does it require special care. Most importantly, the bread is wholesome and has numerous health benefits.

Project Objectives:

- Introduce and promote bio-farming principles broadly in Samtskhe-Javakheti region;
- Revive the wheat Tsiteli Doli to produce enough for commercial use;
- Improve the socio-economic conditions of farmers in Samtskhe-Javakheti through the establishment of a bio-wheat marketing chain.

Implemented Activities and Results:

- Tsiteli Doli wheat was sown on the thirty hectares of land (ten ha in the first year and twenty ha in the second year) in the following villages of Samtskhe-Javakheti region: Klde, Tsnisi, Minadze, Ivlita, Tskurti, Saro, Vale, Tskordza, Ghreli.
- The members of the Association of Farmers of Samtskhe-Javakheti Region Farezi, who participated in the project, provided eight trainings during two years. The training courses were focused on the following topics:
 1. Basics of organic farming
 2. Crop production: soil agro-technology, pest control, tillage, preparing seed material and sowing
 3. Specifics of growing Tsiteli Doli
 4. Business planning and marketing



In addition to the listed activities carried out during the project, farmers were provided with consultations on organic farming during the course of the project. They acquired necessary skills to independently continue growing Tsiteli Doli wheat.

- A seed bank was created with enough material to further expand the area of cultivation and produce enough crops for commercial purposes.
- Contracted by Elkana, Begeli Ltd. purchased a portion of the harvested wheat. This contributed to improvement of socio-economic conditions of the farmers, participating in the project.
- Begeli Ltd. started producing bread in November, 2010. From November 2010 till June, 2011, Tsiteli Doli bread was baked once a week, and sold in the shop Bio Valley. Today the bread is baked daily and can also be found at the restaurant Ar Idardo.
- A documentary on Tsiteli Doli was prepared and uploaded on YouTube and other video-sharing websites.

- In October 2010 and 2011 bread festivals were organized by the Association Elkana on the premises of the History Museum in Akaltsikhe. The purpose of the event was to introduce the wider public to the agro-tourism infrastructure of the region and promote traditional products, among them local wheat varieties. The attendees of the event had a chance to taste and appraise the Tsiteli Doli bread.
- In the framework of an additional award, acknowledging a successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, Elkana purchased additional seeds of Tsiteli Doli, which will later be distributed among farmers residing in Akhaltsikhe (seeds will be handed over to the farmers who were not involved in the project) and Kvemo Kartli with an aim to expand the project coverage. The wheat harvested by so-called new farmers will be purchased by Ltd Begeli for baking bread and later selling it on the market.

GEORGIAN TOURISM ASSOCIATION (GTA)

Project Title: Market-Oriented Sustainable Tourism Development in Protected Areas of Georgia

Project Duration: April, 2009 – November, 2009

Georgian Tourism Association (GTA) received funding under Ecological Awards Program in 2009 and in 2010.

Under Eco-Awards 2009 Program, GTA implemented a project aimed at facilitating market-oriented, participatory sustainable tourism for Protected Areas (PA) in Georgia. The project was implemented in Algeti, Vashlovani, Lagodekhi, Kintrishi and Mtirala nature preserves and was carried out in close partnership with the Agency of Protected Areas (APA).

Currently, potential of the Protected Areas for attracting international and as well as local tourists is not fully realized, as relevant services and accommodation facilities are still underdeveloped. The information about existing services and facilities is not properly provided to potential visitors. Local residents around the selected PAs also lack awareness on benefits from PAs in general, and possibilities to get additional income through sustainable tourism activities.

Project Objectives:

- Increase knowledge of local stakeholders about practical tourism needs and realistic approaches to tourism, which will translate into increased quality of tourism products and services;
- To develop attractiveness and educational potential in selected Protected Areas through various means;
- To create and promote practical information about existing/potential sustainable tourism in Georgia, as well as conservation concepts for an international and domestic public.

Implemented Activities and Results:

- To increase the awareness of different available touristic services, educational workshops/seminars were provided to the administrations of the targeted protected areas, also local community representatives and guesthouse owners. The workshops were held in Mtirala, Algeti and Vashlovani national parks.
- For popularization of the Kintrishi, Mtirala, Vashlovani and Lagodekhi Protected Areas, video clips were produced, shortened versions of which were posted on the internet (see the links: <http://www.tourism-association.ge>, <http://www.youtube.com/user/georgiantourism#p/u>).
- Touristic infrastructure was created in the least developed Algeti PA; an outhouse was built and a picnic area, as well as a small footbridge was set up. Also, a bilingual information board with the map of the area and touristic routes was installed.
- The project envisaged close cooperation with the local schools and as a result, eco-camps were set up in the Algeti, Vashlovani and Lagodekhi natural reserves. The main activities at the camp included creating tourist infrastructure, such as plotting out and marking footpaths in the woods for tourists, cleaning up litter and installing trash bins. During



the camps the children were also provided seminars on how to live in nature without damaging it. The eco-camps lasted for four days.

- Under the project a new product: horse riding tour (two routes) was created. The horses for the tours belong to local residents of Algeti and are rented out, thus, providing additional sources of income for the locals. According to the existing statistics, more than 100 visitors used this service in 2010.
- To improve the service of horse riding tours, five saddles were purchased, which were transferred to the ownership of the local park ranger. The funds received from renting of the saddles were used not only for routine maintenance, but also for purchasing an additional horse, so that the Park is ready for increased demand on horse riding tours.
- A database of family guesthouses was compiled and placed on the organization's web-page and on www.travel-tbilisi.com to enable the access to the booking facilities for international orders.
- Various informational materials were prepared, printed and disseminated, namely, touristic map of Algeti National Park (bilingual-Georgian and English), brochure on school-camps and photo documentation of the workshops

IUCN CAUCASUS COOPERATION CENTER

Project Title: *Facilitating Stakeholder Participation in Protected Areas of Georgia*

Project Duration: March, 2009 - December, 2

Under Eco Awards 2009 Program, IUCN Caucasus Cooperation Center implemented a project aiming at promotion of environment protection in Georgia through facilitating stakeholder participation in protected territories.

The project covered three protected areas: Lagodekhi, Tusheti and Vashlovani and was implemented in cooperation with the Georgian Society of Nature Friends (Telavi), the Mlokosevich Society (Lagodekhi) and the Agency of Protected Areas (APA).

Protected areas (PAs) play an essential role in conserving Georgia's unique biological diversity, and in maintaining the country's ecological infrastructure. They are the source of a wide range of ecosystem goods and services (ranging from fresh air and water to recreation and sources for future pharmaceuticals) and contribute to rural livelihoods. Therefore, their effective management is a major priority for the Georgian society. Effective PA management relies on strong stakeholder participation as PAs and communities living in their vicinity have a close mutual relationship. On the one hand, effective PA management and biodiversity conservation in PAs relies on the compliance and support of those living around them. On the other hand, PAs can both challenge and support the livelihood strategies and economic interests of stakeholders.



Project Objectives:

- Engage all stakeholders of Georgian protected areas in planning, management and distribution of benefits through effective and transparent participation mechanisms.
- Engage local stakeholders in supporting pilot protected areas through various mechanisms and improve their capacity.
- Encourage strategic planning at the national level for environmental protection.

Implemented Activities and Results:

- To strengthen the scientific and advisory councils of the national parks, strategic frameworks and Terms of References were drafted and were later distributed among the national parks' agencies.
- Two trainings were held for the stakeholders living in the vicinity of Tusheti, Lagodekhi and Vashlovani national parks. The first training focused on national parks and their management. The participants learned about biodiversity, the concept of a national park in general: how

it functions and what it seeks to do. The second training was on the opportunities for greater public engagement in the management of national parks, which was conducted with the support of Aarhus Centre.

- The Friends' Associations of Vashlovani, Tusheti and Lagodekhi Protected Areas were created. The Friends' Associations implemented various projects, which in turn contributed to not only promotion of the Protected Areas and but also organizational capacity building of these associations. The Friends' Association of the Tusheti National park created a resource center, which is open to all interested parties. Any visitor can stop by and learn about the park and about the Friends' Association and receive general information about environmental protection efforts. The Friends' Association of Vashlovani Protected Areas participated in the grant competition announced under Eco Awards 2011 Program. The proposal submitted by the Association was highly rated by the proposal selection panel and received funding.
- The youth rangers' program was developed and implemented. Within this program the schoolchildren living in the vicinity of Vashlovani, Lagodekhi and Tusheti protected areas participated in eco-camps, various competitions, excursions, trainings; they were also provided with seminars and lectures on environment protection issues.
- Based on the youth rangers' program prepared by the IUCN, APA is elaborating separate programs for each protected area.
- A brochure entitled Strengthening Public Involvement in Managing National Parks was prepared and published. The brochure covers issues dealing with management of national parks, public participation and information about the experience gained through the project.
- Additional award amount, acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, was handed over by IUCN to the Friends' Association of Vashlovani Protected Areas for implementation of the project Junior Rangers for Protection of Eagles Gorge. Within the framework of the project, the association staff, with support of schoolchildren and young people, cleaned and installed a filter in the water channel in the Eagles Gorge. All the activities carried out were supported by the administration of PA and the local municipality. Implementation of this small project is very important for the protection of the environment in Eagles Gorge. In addition to meeting its planned objectives, the project serves as a continuation of the achievement of a

previous project that was implemented by the IUCN as it is oriented on the involvement of various stakeholders, especially youths, in protection of the environment.

ASSOCIATION FOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT "MTA-BARI"

Project Title: Support to cultivation and realization of Economically Important Species of Adjara Wild Flora in the Buffer Zone of Mtirala National Park

Project Duration: April 2009 – November 2010

Under Eco-Awards 2009 Program, the Association for Environment Protection and Sustainable Development Mta-Bari implemented a project aimed at supporting sustainable use of economically important and endangered indigenous species of Adjara wild flora (*Galanthus woronowii* and *Cyclamen coum*) included in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and involving local population in marketing of these species.

The project was implemented in the buffer zone of Mtirala National Park and covered three districts of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara: Kobuleti, Khelvachauri and Keda.

During the recent years, anthropogenic stress on the environment has been increasing, jeopardizing genetic erosion of unique species of plants. Especially this refers to the plants, having economic importance, such as *Galanthus woronowii* and *Cyclamen coum*. These plants have decorative and therapeutic features and are widely spread in the buffer zone of Mtirala National Park and adjacent territories. Population residing on these territories is poor and strongly dependent on local resources, resulting in uncontrolled use of the given species. The plants are collected directly from nature, while according to the CITES convention, for commercial purposes they have to be grown and collected in specially designated territories and plots under special control (ex situ, off site). Apart from that, since there is strong demand on the bulbs of *Galanthus woronowii* in Europe, there is a potential for exporting them. Thus, propagation of these two species ex situ

(off site) can serve as an alternative source of income for the local population.

Project Objectives:

- Involve farmers in cultivation of commercially important species of Adjara wild flora: Galanthus woronowii and Cyclamen coum, which are protected under CITES convention (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).
- Support marketing of commercially important species of wild flora: Galanthus woronowii and Cyclamen coum through direct contacts.



Implemented Activities and Results:

- Based on the preliminary meetings, 22 families, residing in the buffer zone on Mtirala National Park, were selected. The families were handed the bulbs of Galanthus woronowii (4800kg) and Cyclamen coum (200kg) free of charge for cultivation of these species on their private plots. The farmers were also provided consultations on cleaning and planting of those bulbs.
- Farmers received special informational brochures, entitled Support to cultivation and realization of Economically Important Species of Adjara Wild Flora in the Buffer Zone of Mtirala National Park, containing guidelines on cultivation, marketing and export strategies of the target plant species.
- On September 19, 2009 a seminar was organized in Batumi, where attendees included experts, representatives of local and central government, NGOs, farmers and other stakeholders. During the meeting an agreement was reached among the Ministry of Environment Protection, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development and experts involved in the project to take measures for tackling the problems existing in this field.

- The plots were inspected several times by an inspector from the Caucasus Wild Plant Certification Center to ensure that among the bulbs that were gathered during inspections, did not include ones prohibited by CITES for export. Today, the growth and development cycle of the cultivated bulbs completely corresponds to its biological rhythm. In 2013, the caliber of the bulbs will fully conform to the realization standards and the farmers will have an opportunity to increase the scale of the propagation of the plants so that they can later provide them to the producers licensed by the Ministry of Environment or to other foreign companies interested in this field.
- The Association Mta-Bari closely cooperated with another winner of Eco-Awards 2009 Program: Wild Plant Conservation Association (WPCA), which was implementing a similar project in Tbilisi and its vicinity. The two organizations exchanged experiences and lessons learned. In addition, WPCA staff visited Adjara and collected *Galanthus woronowii* seeds, which were later stored in the seed bank.
- As a result of the project, after 2012 farmers involved in the project will have an opportunity to sell bulbs of species cultivated at their land plots and, thus meet all the legal requirements set by CITES over sale and export of the species of Adjara wild flora. It should be noted that there is already stated interest from the concrete local company involved in selling bulbs to cooperate with these farmers, if the bulbs to be harvested in 2013 meet the standards.
- Within the award of 2,450 GEL issued for successful implementation of the project, ASDA prepared organization's web-page (www.mta-bari.ge), which promotes the given project, as well as association in general.

WILD PLANT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Project Title: Ex-Situ Conservation and Commercial Use of Some Economically Important Species of Wild Flora Protected by CITES Convention

Project Duration: March 2009 - September 2010

Under the Eco Awards 2009 Program, Wild Plant Conservation Association (WPCA) implemented a project, aiming at supporting conservation and

commercial use of economically important species: *Cyclamen vernum* Sweet and *Galanthus woronowii* A. Losinsk (Snowdrop), which are protected by Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The project was implemented in within 20-25 km of Tbilisi.

During the recent years, with the increase of anthropogenic stress on the environment genetic erosion of unique species of plants is taking place. The ones that have decorative and therapeutic features are the most vulnerable. The main subjects of anthropogenic stress are *Cyclamen vernum* Sweet and *Galanthus woronowii* Losinsk (snowdrop) that are collected in-situ, i.e. in wild nature and then sold, thus hindering their self-reproduction. This especially affects *Cyclamen*, which is propagated by seeds. Besides, there is a growing export of *Cyclamen* tubers and *Galanthus*' bulbs. Unfortunately, small businesses involved in these activities are collecting commercially useful species directly from nature. The CITES convention stipulates necessity of taking ex-situ (off site) conservation measures in places such as botanic gardens, special genofond reservations, seeds banks and farmers' plots. In the western part of the country, these flowers are growing in abundance, but in eastern Georgia they are in danger of extinction.

Project Objectives:

- Develop practical methods to protect two economically important plant species: *Cyclamen vernum* Sweet and *Galanthus woronowii* Losinsk through ex-situ conservation in living collections and a seed bank.
- Raise public awareness about the importance of protecting wild flora species.

Implemented Activities and Results:

- An assessment was carried out to study the condition of the populations of the target species in their distribution areas. The GPS coordinates were taken down from 22 areas of *Cyclamen* distribution and eight areas of *Galanthus* distribution. Based on the results, a map was charted. Apart from this, plants living alongside the *Galanthus* and *Cyclamen* were also described. The complete information was inserted in an electronic database, which is available to all interested persons.

- In total 50 new herbarium samplings were placed in National Herbarium of Georgia
- According to international standards, a seed reserve was created with 29,655 *Galanthus woronowii* and 53,989 - *Cyclamen vernum* Sweet. The reserve was placed in the regional seed bank of the Caucasus
- A living collection of more than 7,000 *Cyclamen* sprouts and about 3,523 *Galanthus woronowii* snowdrop sprouts was created.
- Together with British colleagues, a method of vegetative reproduction of *Galanthus Woronowii* (snowdrop), so called twin-scaling, was elaborated and tested in practice; a bulb of the plant was divided into several parts. From one bulb it was possible to get ten or even more plants within a very short period – seven-eight months. The similar vegetative reproduction method was used to divide tubers of *Cyclamen* which also yielded positive results.
- A brochure containing information on the necessity of conserving the given species in the wild nature and also artificially cultivating them for commercial purposes.
- In the framework of additional award, acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, field activities were implemented in May, 2012. Ten expeditions were organized in the vicinity of Tbilisi to gather additional seeds of the *Cyclamen* and *Galanthus* and also four expedition were taken to gather *Galanthus* in West Georgia , namely in Adjara region, where *Galanthus* is widely spread in wild nature. As a result of the expeditions 6,500 seeds of *Galanthus* and 8,000 seeds of *Cyclamen* were gathered. Part of the seeds will be used for propagation of the given species in the Association's private plots and another part will be stored in the seed bank. The sprouts will be handed to the persons interested in cultivation of these species free of charge.



ECO-AWARDS 2010

ADJARA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (ASDA)

Project Title: Support to further Sustainable Development of Protected Territories of Georgia through Introduction of Alternative Energy Sources and Tourism Development

Project Duration: April 1, 2010 – January 31, 2011

Under Eco-Awards 2010 program, Adjara Sustainable Development Association (ASDA) implemented a project aimed at supporting further sustainable development of Protected Territories of Georgia through introduction of alternative energy sources and tourism development. The project was implemented in the Adjara region, namely within the Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Area.

A lot of projects are implemented with support of international organizations and funds in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources Protection and Agency of Protected Territories with an aim to preserve unique biodiversity and develop ecotourism in the country. Among other issues, however, development of proper infrastructure still remains one of the important problems requiring special attention. Introduction of environmentally safe mechanisms and methods, e.g. alternative energy sources is one of the key issues in this regard.

Project Objectives:

- Introduce solar-powered electricity and water heating systems within the territories of Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Area.
- Increase knowledge of local stakeholders about problems in the tourism field and realistic approaches to solving those problems through knowledge sharing and cooperation with other project under Eco-Awards 2010.

Implemented Activities and Results:

- The visitor center of Kintrishi Protected Area was equipped with solar-power electricity system.

- The visitor center of Kintrishi Protected Area was equipped with solar-power water heating system.



- Rangers' House of Mtirala National Park was equipped with solar-power electricity system.

- One guesthouse in the buffer zone of Mtirala National Park

was equipped with solar-power electricity system, which directly resulted in increased number of tourists and correspondingly, in improved socio-economic conditions of its owner. The solar systems proved its reliability in practice.

- In cooperation with the Georgian Tourism Association, a similar project was implemented in Tusheti Protected Area. Within the framework of the project, a joint seminar was conducted with an aim to exchange the practical knowledge about various approaches to tourism services.
- Beneficiaries of the GTA project and representatives of the administration of Tusheti Protected Area organized a study tour to Kintrishi Protected Area to share experience and achievements. The tour was also important in terms of establishing contacts.
- As a result of the project, the interest towards tourism services has increased among the residents of the buffer zones of Mtirala and Tusheti Protected Areas, resulting in improved cooperation between them and the administration of the Protected Areas.
- The interest towards the use of alternative energy is steadily increasing, not only among the residents of the buffer zone villages, but also among the municipalities as well. It is envisaged that Kobuleti municipality, under its village development program will fund organization of one guesthouse and will fully equip it with solar-power electricity system.

- In the framework of additional award, acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, ASDA created the organization's bilingual web-page – www.asda.ge, where information about the given project, as well ASDA's other activities was uploaded.

ASSOCIATION FLORA AND FAUNA

Project Title: Reducing the Negative Impact of Ghost Fishing and the Predator Mollusk *Rapana Venosa* on the Black-Sea Eco-system

Project Duration: May 2010 - April 2011

Under Eco Awards 2010 Program, the Association Flora and Fauna implemented a project along the Black Sea coast (Ajara, Guria, Samegrelo), which aimed at supporting the reduction of the negative impact of the predator mollusk *Rapana Venosa* and the ghost fishing (the term used for lost or abandoned fishing gear that harms the environment and especially threatens such species as the sturgeons and dolphins) on the Black-Sea eco-system.

The large predatory sea snail has become an invasive species in many different localities around the world. *Rapana venosa* is an active predator of epifaunal bivalves, and its proliferation is a serious limitation for cultivated and natural populations of oysters and mussels. *Rapana venosa* has caused significant changes in the ecology of bottom-dwelling organisms, causing the near extinction of the *Gudauta* oyster. Taking into account the fact that bivalve oysters play an important role in purifying water, there has been a dramatic decrease in the self-purification capacity of the water.

Another problem – Ghost Fishing is also acute for Georgia. When fishing nets are lost or are discarded into the sea, they move about with the tides and continue to trap fish on their own. Such nets destroy sea life and reduce fish populations. They have posed a threat to rare and endangered species such as sturgeon and dolphins.

Project Objectives:

- Increase the knowledge of fishermen and other stakeholders about problems related to the negative impact of *Rapana venosa* and ghost fishing.
- Introduce environmentally safe methods of *Rapana* fishing that will also contribute to improved socio-economic situation of fishermen.

Implemented Activities and Results:

- About 20 fishermen were selected from Sarpi-Kvariati, Green Cape, Tsikhisdziri and Batumi. They were provided trainings on diving and catching of *Rapana Venosa*.

- Selected brigades were equipped with aqualungs and other equipment, which were purchased under the project (eight sets of aqualungs, high pressure compressor and an inflatable boat).

- The organization elaborated and prepared ecologically safe and at the same time easy-to-make traps for catching *Rapana*, based on the Japanese and Korean analogues. Through seminars and trainings, the fisheries, involved in the project, received all the necessary information regarding methods of preparing such traps, their use and maintenance. They also learnt bio-ecological



characteristics of *Rapana Venosa* that will help them to identify the best period for catching, the optimal depth of their habitation. The organization also provided open seminars and discussions on the negative impact of Ghost Fishing.

- About eight tons of *Rapana* was gathered and was distributed by the fishermen and divers involved. Part of the amount received was used to cover their salaries and also the expenses of the equipment maintenance.

- The information campaign of the project included eight TV and two radio programs, seven press publications, a newspaper insert and three internet publications. The grantee also prepared special booklets, posters and stickers. The brochures entitled How to Catch Rapana and How to Use Rapana were distributed on the location of the fisheries. The information stands were installed at popular fishing venues, warning about the dangers of loose nets. All the materials and information prepared were uploaded on the organization's web-page www.florafaua.org.
- The association recorded qualitative and quantitative characteristics of Rapana in the Georgian part of the Black Sea (Ajara, Guria, Samegrelo), laying bases for establishing a quota on mollusk catching (for 2012 the quota is 1000 tons). Based on the agreement reached with the Ministry of Environment Protection of Adjara, Flora and Fauna will conduct overall monitoring of catching Rapana. That means additional incomes to the budget since companies are expected to obtain these quotas from the ministry.
- In the framework of additional award, acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, printed out and distributed additional 100 copies of the combined brochure **How to Catch and Use Rapana**, conducted four meetings/presentations for various target audience. In addition to this, with an agreement of city administration, four information stands were installed in the Batumi's Boulevard.

GEORGIAN TOURISM ASSOCIATION (GTA)

Project Title: Enhancing Sustainability of Tourism Development in Protected Areas of Georgia

Project Duration: April-November 2010

Georgian Tourism Association (GTA) received funding under Ecological Awards Program in 2009 and 2010.

Under Eco-Awards 2010, GTA implemented a project aimed at enhancing sustainability of tourism development in Protected Areas (PA) of Georgia.

The project covered Tusheti, Borjomi-Kharagauli and Algeti Protected Areas. Alongside improving tourist infrastructure, the project sought to make young people more environmentally conscious and involve them in nature conservation efforts. As in the previous year, the project was carried out in partnership with the Agency of Protected Areas (APA).

The Protected Areas are home to many of the sights that international visitors come to Georgia to see, and where many Georgians can see their homeland at its best. Conservation goes hand in hand with the support of the population that lives in and around the Protected Areas. People who earn additional income through sustainable tourism activities and services have a more positive approach to the ethos of the Protected Areas.

Project Objectives

- Introduce solar-powered electricity and water heating system within the territory of Tusheti Protected Area.
- Increase knowledge of local stakeholders about practical tourism needs and realistic approaches to offer tourism products and services.
- Develop attractiveness and educational potential in selected Protected Areas through various means;
- Create and promote practical information about existing/potential sustainable tourism in Georgia, as well as conservation concepts for an international and domestic public;

Implemented Activities and Results:

- Solar electricity systems and solar-powered water heaters were set up at five family guesthouses in the Gometsari Gorge, Tusheti, which contributed to improving the level of services provided to tourists and, accordingly, increasing the number of tourists.
- Trainings were held for the owners of family guesthouses in both the Tusheti and Borjomi-Kharagauli nature preserves. The trainings were provided by an expert with a great experience in this field. Member companies of the Georgian Tourism Association also participated in the trainings, sharing their experience with the family guesthouse owners.

- To increase the youth's awareness on environment protection, rangers' camps were established under the project. The first eco-camp was set up at the Algeti national park. Some 25 local children from the Manglisi School



attended the camp. The second camp was set up in the Borjomi-Kharagauli national park. The participating children re-marked old footpaths and cleaned up the area. They were also provided with seminars by an invited expert. The children had a wonderful opportunity to acquire valuable knowledge and skills in environment protection and at the same time have good time with their peers

- Informational boards and road signs were installed in Algeti and Tusheti national parks so that tourists could easily get around and appreciate the historic area shown on maps. Totally, two informational boards were installed in Algeti national park and five informational boards and two road signs were installed in Tusheti national park.
- A brochure, containing photo materials on project activities was published. Apart from that, informational brochures about the available guest houses in Gometsari Gorge was prepared and published, which were placed in tourist information centers.
- The organization closely cooperated with another winner of the Eco-Awards 2010 program, Adjara Sustainable Development Association, implementing a similar project in Mtirala National Park and Kintrishi Protected Area. As a result of this cooperation a joint seminar was conducted with an aim to exchange the practical knowledge about various approaches to tourism services. For sharing experience and the results attained, a study tour to Kintrishi PA was organized, which largely contributed to establishing important contacts.

- In the framework of additional award, acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, maps (electronic and printed versions) of 8 tourist routes in Tusheti were prepared.

RURAL ADVISORY SERVICE

Project Title: Ecologically Safe Pastures

Project Duration: July 2010-September 2011

Under Eco Awards 2010 Program, Rural Advisory Service (RAS) implemented a project aimed at reducing ecological risks through sustainable and effective management of pastures in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. The project covered three villages of Adigeni, Aspindza, and Akhaltsikhe municipalities – Sholaveri, Rustavi and Tsnisi.

Samtskhe-Javakheti is surrounded by natural pastures, and as raising livestock is the main source of income in the region, the local population intensively use them. This, combined with the use of improper technologies, increases environmental risks for the region. Namely, due to overgrazing, certain flora do not have the full period needed to grow and pollinate, meaning that natural seeding does not take place and pastures are not naturally renewed, resulting in pasture degradation and soil erosion. The local population lacks information about the ecological risks of overuse of pastures and continues to use the old, environmentally unsafe, and harmful technology instead of an innovative one, which has been tested in many countries around the world.

Project Objectives:

- To increase knowledge of local community on prevention of ecological risks through rational use of pastures;
- To improve the quality of pastures and ensure their effective management;
- To create reservations for useful insects and flora

Implemented Activities and Results:

- Together with the local population, three demonstration plots were selected in target villages (one 3 hectare plot in each village). In September a mixture of seed grasses and legumes, consisting of eight components (pink clover, white clover, timothy-grass, English ryegrass, Italian ryegrass, bird's foot



- trefoil, orchard grass and meadow fescue), was planted with the use of an over seeder machine, an innovation technology of planting the grass seed through making superficial cuts in the ground, without turning the soil. What makes the over seeder method unique is the fact that sowing is done without preliminary ploughing, so that the structure of the soil is not disturbed. This reduces the risk of wind and water erosion. It also reduces costs by eliminating certain tasks such as ploughing. Such planting equipment has not yet been used in Georgia, but in developed countries it is widely used to improve pasturelands.
- The local communities were provided training on following the five topics:
 1. Ecological Balance
 2. Desertification
 3. Soil degradation and the ways for combating it
 4. Innovative technologies of pasture improvement
 5. Pasture management and preservation of its ecological condition
 - To preserve beneficial entomophages and flora three reservations (one in each village) were set up on 500 square meters of plots. The plots were fenced to guard the area from cattle.
 - It should be noted that since completion of the project RAS provided seeding service using over seeder machine to several farmers, indicating that innovative method attract interest of locals. At the

same time, providing this additional service contributes to the sustainability of the organization. At the same time, following successful implementation of the project organization evidenced growing of sales of composite grass used in the project.

- In the framework of additional award acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, RAS renovated and updated its web-page www.ras.ge thus contributing to further popularization of the given initiative, its results and organization itself.

ASSOCIATION ZEKARI

Project Title: Elaboration of the rehabilitation model of the erosive slopes of mountainous Racha and demonstrative rehabilitation of one of these slopes

Project Duration: April 2010 - January 2011

Under Eco Awards 2010 Program, the Association Zekari implemented a project aimed at reducing the negative impact of erosion and preventing landslides in the region of Racha.

Racha is a high-mountainous region of Georgia. Therefore, soil erosion and landslides are prominent problems for this area. However, illegal and uncontrolled wood cut, climate changes, earthquakes magnified the negative impact of the above-mentioned problems. In accordance with the official statistics obtained from the local municipality, the total area of erosive land in Ambrolauri region (lower Racha) is 163,3 ha. Local population is concerned about erosion process, which has negative impact on the land-plots that are being used for housing, farming, pastures, roads within villages, etc.

Project Objectives:

- Introduce environmentally safe and effective mechanism for erosive slopes' recovery.
- Increase knowledge of local stakeholders on recovery of erosive slopes.

Implemented Activities and Results:

- Based on the combination of scientific works and folk traditions, a model was elaborated consisting of six stages: fencing, cutting off the creeping soil to prevent the development of additional eroded areas, positioning willow beams in the ground for soil reinforcement, planting of anti-erosion trees (acacia, hornbeam, willow, buckthorn), interseeding and monitoring. The model is easy and at the same time quite cheap.
- 
- To keep the population well informed, project material with photos was printed to go into the local newspaper to tell people about how the project was progressing. Later a full color, illustrated brochure, Specifics for Restoration of Erosive Slopes was prepared and published.
 - Series of meetings were held with the population of the target villages to inform them about the model of restoring the erosive slopes. The brochure describing the model was disseminated during these meetings
 - Baring in mind that schools are the liveliest part of the target communities, the idea of establishing eco-clubs were introduced in schools of the villages. The teachers expressed commitment to provide environmental education through these eco-clubs.
 - In October 2010 a round table event was held, with the participation of the representatives from local government, international organizations and local NGOs where active discussion was held on the opportunities of replicating the model, proposed by the association.
 - The local council addressed the association with a request to implement similar projects in other villages as well. The organization prepared a new project to practice this experience across the whole Racha region, especially in the villages threatened most by erosion and landslides. The proposal was submitted to a grant competition

announced by the US Embassy and received funding, thus granting an opportunity to replicate the project in seven other communities.

- In the framework of additional award, acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, Zekari created its web-page - www.zekari.org.ge, prepared and printed additional brochure describing the model used in the given project and following project funded by the US Embassy. Additional presentation with participation of various stakeholders took place as well.

Eco Awards 2011

ASSOCIATION CAUCASUS GENETICS

Project Title: Minimizing Environmental degradation caused by overgrazing in Tetrtskaro region

Project Duration: April – December 2011

Under Eco Awards 2011 Program, Association Caucasus Genetics, together with Farmers' Organization Algeteli 2008 and Imprescon Partners, implemented a project aimed at minimization of environmental degradation caused by overgrazing in Tetrtskaro region by introducing sustainable pasture management methods to the local farmers. The project was co-funded by Mercy Corps.

In Tetrtskaro region almost all low-land pastures and 80 percent of mountain pastures are seriously overgrazed. Cattle and sheep overgrazing increases soil erosion. Overgrazing leads to a vicious cycle, where pastures produce less nutrition, animals produce less milk and, therefore, farmers need to increase the number of animals to receive the same amount of milk, causing even more overgrazing. According to international experience, even a simple pasture rotation system can decrease soil erosion as much as 15 percent during the first year and additional five percent annually in the next five years. At the same time, the biomass and its nutritional value can increase over 20 percent, decreasing the need for overgrazing and creating a good sustainable cycle.

Project Objectives:

- Reduce environmentally harmful overgrazing in selected villages of Tetrtskaro region.
- Improve pastures through demonstrating the benefits of rotational pasture management system and facilitating its practical implementation in project villages.
- Increase income in project communities through economically feasible usage of local cattle breeds in rotational grazing systems.

- Replicate sustainable pasture management models firstly in other parts of Tetrtskaro, and later in other districts of Kvemo Kartli and regions of Georgia.

Implemented Activities and Results:

- For introducing the project goals and objectives, various village meetings were organized with key farmers and village elders. After this direct communication period, 28 hectare pasture, needed for the experiment, was selected in Jorjiashvili and Bogvi villages. The communities participating in the project were supported with all the necessary equipment: a grass mower for grass and hay cutting, sufficient amount of pasture seed mix, solar panel-powered electric fencing equipment and cattle watering and shading system with insecticide skin flaps.
- The pasture was evaluated three times by the project specialists during the experiment and relevant recommendations were proposed on how to improve the soil composition. The pasture was cleaned from the existing plants, rubbish and stones, followed by cultivation and seeding, using the seed mixture of the plants that the pasture flora lacked.
- The pasture land was divided into six paddocks by solar panel electric fencing; insect repellent ropes were installed and watering and shading systems were organized to each paddock. The rotation cycle of paddocks varied from seven days up to three weeks depending of the paddock's growth status. The paddock was given a rest period when majority of grasses still had two to three leaves left uneaten. This way the plants could start rapid recovery and the pasture was quickly available for new grazing cycle.
- In total 13 trainings, field school workshops, and seminars were organized for participating farmers but three of the events were



targeted also to other stakeholders outside the participating villages. The final seminar at the end of November presented project findings, conclusions and recommendations to 28 interested livestock experts, agronomists and experts from all parts of Georgia.

- Two leaflets were prepared under the project on avoiding environmental degradation caused by overgrazing. First leaflet focused on introducing rotational grazing systems and the second leaflet described the economic model for starting and running rotational pasture management. The latter provides detailed data for implementing possible replications of the project.
- In addition to the follow up donor-funded projects, where the abovementioned model was used, there are about 20 cases of replication of electric fencing in other regions of Georgia. At the same time, there were about 7 cases, when farmers individually addressed Caucasus genetics to provide soil analysis that became possible after special soil test kit was purchased within additional award acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011.

CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTE

Project Title: Ecologically Safe Agriculture

Project Duration: April - December 2011

Under Eco Awards 2011 Program, Civil Society Institute (CSI) implemented a project aimed at improving socio-economic condition of local farmers residing in five mountainous villages of Adjara (Vashlovani, Nigazeuli, Akhaldaba, Zvare and Kvatasha), through introducing and promoting environmentally friendly and effective methods of agriculture.

Various developments in the past decades have created growing pressure on the environment. The lack of knowledge about modern, ecologically safe agricultural technologies and farming, as well as irrational usage of pesticides fertilizers, and contamination of soil and ground water, have led to a decline of soil structure and fertility, resulting in structural changes of ecosystem and other larger scale natural disasters.

One of the most important and practical means for reducing the adverse effect of the agriculture on the environment is introduction and promotion of biological farming methodology, especially in the regions prone to the risks of natural disasters.



Project Objectives:

- Popularization of ecologically safe and efficient methods of agriculture in five selected high mountainous villages of Keda, Shuakhevi and Khulo districts.
- Popularization of ecologically safe methods of agriculture among schools and increase in the role of schools in civic education through their involvement in the project.
- Formation of sustainable model of ecologically safe and efficient agriculture for further popularization across the country.

Implemented Activities and Results:

- Nine demo-plots were created, where various cultures, specific to the region (potato, cucumber, paprika and tomato), were produced by using different environmentally safe methods of agriculture.
- Theoretical as well as practical trainings were provided for farmers on such issues as bio-production of vegetables (cucumber, tomato, potato and paprika), biological methods of combating various plant diseases, ecologically safe methods to be used against phytophthora, warehousing of harvested crops, measures against the root putridity, and safe utilization of environmentally friendly pesticides. The bio-production methodology offered by the organization proved to be successful: the resistance of the plants toward various pests and the amount of harvest on the demo plots have exceeded twice and in some cases three times those, produced by the regular methods.
- The project offered an innovative model of providing service to farmers through active involvement of the youth. Eco-clubs were formed at schools of the target villages and were equipped with PC and camera.

Eco-club members served as liaisons between the farmer and the project specialists. Upon request from local farmers, the members filmed symptoms caused by diseased cultures or damage caused by pests, sent the pictures to specialists via Skype and returned relevant recommendations to the beneficiaries. Through this model, full agricultural service was provided to the farmers of the target villages with the minimal effort, with the number of consultations reaching 444.

- Flyers, containing information and useful advice on conventional as well as biological production of the agricultural crops (tomato, paprika, potato, cucumber) were printed and disseminated among the project beneficiaries and the communities in Keda, Khulo and Shuakhevi districts.
- Within the framework of the project a publication **Perspectives of Introducing Innovative Technologies in the Agrarian Sector of Mountainous Adjara** was prepared and published. The publication provides information on the results of the implemented activities, the analysis of the region's agrarian sector and the ideas and recommendations, together with ecological risks and ways of preventing them, and the influence of agrarian sector on the region's ecologic condition.
- Within the award of 2,450 GEL issued for successful implementation of the project, CSI prepared and issued publication describing various models for poverty reduction in rural areas, including the one used in Adjara, thus contributing to popularization of the project, its results, replication of the used approaches. Follow up presentations were conducted in Zugdidi, Batumi and Tbilisi in November 2012 with participation of various stakeholders including government representatives. The model provoked an interest of local government, expressed during the above-mentioned presentations, thus drawing prospects of replicating on larger scale in future.

RURAL COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Project Title: Support of Poor Communities in Chokhatauri and Khobi Districts in Sustainable Development through Building their Skills and Capacities in Environmental Protection and Utilization of Renewable Energy Resources

Project Duration: April - December 2011

Under Eco Awards 2011 Program, Rural Communities Development Agency (RCDA) implemented a project aimed at building skills and capacities of farmers and disadvantaged villagers in six selected communities of Chokhatauri and Khobi districts (*Guturi, Amagleba, Kheta, Khamiskuri, Dablatsikhe and Nabeghlavi*) in protection and utilization of renewable resources that will help them in overcoming poverty and finding ways to sustain their livelihoods.

As a result of underdeveloped rural sector, poverty continues to be deeply entrenched in rural areas of the target districts. Households in the selected communities are particularly vulnerable due to scarcity of energy resources. The lack of fuel has caused localized environmental problems such as deforestation for fuel, cutting of windbreaks, burning dung instead of using it for fertilizer, resulting in soil degradation. The project was implemented in partnership with the local CBOs **Momavlis Gzebi** (Ways of Future) and Khamiskuri-based **Water, Sanitation and Renewable Energy Resource Center**.

Project Objectives :

- Support the communities in decreasing environmental degradation - land erosion through reforestation of eroded land area and introduction crop rotation techniques.
- Support the communities in utilizing renewable energy resources through construction of water solar heaters and solar dryers for fruits and vegetables.
- Enable communities to decrease fire wood consumption through construction and installation of briquetting machines for production of fuel-briquettes from agricultural residues.
- Build public awareness and capacities of local communities on the above-mentioned and other aspects of environmental protection.

Implemented Activities and Results:

- Under the objective of supporting the communities in decreasing environmental degradation, 3800 seedlings of local varieties (Alder-tree, Maple-ash tree, Acacia, Linden) were planted on the eroded land area. More than 500 people, including schoolchildren, voluntarily participated in the cleaning, fencing and planting of the trees. Apart from that, two demo fields for demonstrating crop rotation were organized in Guturi and Kheta comprising one hectare.
- The organization selected 12 people from each district (Khobi and Chokhatauri), based on their interest and skills, to participate in Training of Trainers on construction and maintenance of **solar water heaters, solar dryers of fruits and vegetables** and **briquetting press**. As a result of these trainings, **12 dryers of different modifications** (two in Nabeghlavi, two in Khamiskuri, two in Kheta, two in Guturi, two in Dablatsikhe, two in Amagleba), **12 solar hot water collectors** and **six briquetting presses** were constructed by the training participants.
- The following publications were prepared and published:
 - ✓ Manual - **How to Construct a Solar Water Collector**
 - ✓ Manual- **Solar Fruit and Vegetable Dryers**
 - ✓ Renewable energy info sheet, containing one pager on solar collectors, solar dryers for vegetable and fruit and use of biomass
 - ✓ Publication **Climate Change-Causes and Consequences**
- In the framework of additional award, acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, RCDA constructed additional solar collector and two dryers with participation of the most active project participants, who were offered support in starting up small businesses. A group of seven people in Khamiskuri was fully equipped to fulfill orders and construct various environmentally safe



systems. One of the fruit dryers mentioned above was handed over to this group, enabling its members to use it jointly for drying fruits collected at their gardens and to sell them at markets.

- Later the group was extended and now 13 people, with sufficient theoretical knowledge and technical skills, are now fulfilling orders from various organizations (ACF - Action Contre la Faim, UNDP, NGO Ecovision, etc.) as well as individuals. The group has already constructed 19 solar water heaters, 16 solar dryers of fruits and vegetables and 3 solar heating systems. The total amount received through this orders reached 19,960 GEL, with the group's profit reaching 3,912 GEL.

REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTRE FOR THE CAUCASUS (REC CAUCASUS)

Project Title: Introducing the Practice of Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Local Communities and Increasing their Preparedness against Natural Disasters

Project Duration: April - December 2011

Under Eco-Awards 2011 Program, the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus) implemented a project aimed at introducing a practice of sustainable use of natural resources in the local communities of Oni district and increasing their preparedness against natural disasters. The project was implemented in three villages of Racha region: **Ghebi, Chiora** and **Gloia**.

The rate of occurrence of natural disasters has increased significantly in recent years. In addition to sensitive geological structure and complex relief, this is caused by increasing pressure from anthropogenic activity, especially in high mountainous regions of our country. There is low level of awareness among the local population about anthropogenic activities that cause natural calamities. Neither the local community, nor self-governance bodies have any information about or experience in sustainable management of forests and pastures.

Project Objectives:

- Increase capacity and involvement of local communities of high-mountainous villages of Racha-Lechkhumi region (Ghebi, Chiora and Glola) in forest and pasture management planning, as well as awareness on reducing the risks of natural calamities, caused by irrational use of natural resources.
- Select and demonstrate some of the best methods of forest and pasture restoration with active involvement of local communities in zones that are heavily affected by natural disasters



Implemented Activities and Results:

- A map of specific risks for such large scale natural disasters as floods, landslides and avalanche zones was drafted for the three villages (Ghebi, Chiora Glola).
- Based on the GPS coordinates that were taken down during field visits, an interactive map was prepared with a scale of 1:25 000. WGS 84. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database containing ID code of the area, geographical coordinates, the nearest settlement, the type of geological process, short description of the situation and photo was also created with the map. The map was printed and handed to local municipality. Both, the map and the database are available in Georgian, as well as English language.
- To assess the local population's awareness about the anthropogenic factors of natural calamities and identify the concrete problems regarding forest and pasture management, interviews were conducted among the residents (60 residents in total) of the target villages. The interview results showed that the local population lack sufficient knowledge on how to act during the natural calamities.
- Reports on reducing the risks of natural calamities were prepared for all three villages

- Sustainable natural resource management plans were prepared for all three villages
- To support the natural revival of the forest, 6 hectares of the eroded land was fenced and loosening in strips (tilling about 8-10 centimeters into the soil to form strips or platforms). As seeds from some trees and plants are either dispersed by the wind or transported by birds, usually dropping them on the ground, this measure by and large facilitates natural revival. For reforestation measures, 1 hectare of land was selected. Totally, 5000 seedlings of Maples and Ash trees were planted on the territory. Both, the reforestation and natural revival measures were implemented in the surrounding territory of the village Ghebi.
- Under the project a Regional Guideline for Community Forest Management was published.
- In the framework of additional award acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, REC-Caucasus presented project results to various stakeholders, including beneficiaries, local government representatives, through organizing two-day site visit Racha villages.

GURAM TIKANADZE SVANETI YOUTH CENTER

Project Title: Support bio-farming and eco-tourism in Upper Svaneti as one of the prospective to secure eco-stability and cultural traditions in the area.

Project Duration: April - December, 2011

Under Eco Awards 2011 Program, Guram Tikanadze Svaneti Youth Center implemented a project aimed at promotion of eco-farming and eco-tourism in Upper Svaneti region.

As a result of growing economic activity in Svaneti, pressure on the local eco-system is mounting. Due to poor socio-economic situation in the region, the local population's daily activities (e.g. logging) also have significant negative impact on the environment. At the same time, there is a general lack of information about modern energy saving technologies, as well eco-farming and eco-tourism, in the region. This is particularly important short-

coming as both eco-farming and eco-tourism have great potential to attract tourists and, serve as means to promote the much-needed economic development in the area.

Project Objectives:

- Create small and experimental eco-farm and eco-guesthouse, which will serve as examples demonstrating these new technologies
- Raise public awareness among the local residents on eco-farming and eco-tourism



Implemented Activities and Outputs:

- A demonstrative eco-farm was created and a small experimental eco-guesthouse was constructed by combining old and new environmentally safe construction materials. The material consists of four components: limestone, sand, cement and sawdust and has features of both, concrete and natural wood. It breathes like wood, keeps in heat, and is durable and much cheaper than other construction materials. Material of this type has long been used in countries with severe climatic conditions.
- To gain the needed theoretical knowledge, the interested persons were provided a series of trainings on eco-tourism, agricultural cattle-breeding, eco-sanitary and sustainable agro-farming. The trainings once again demonstrated the potential of eco-tourism development in Upper Svaneti region.
- To study the current situation regarding the existing guest-houses, a self-assessment questionnaire for the guesthouse owners: How well do I know my guests, was elaborated by an expert on eco-tourism, Mr. Knut Gerber. About 75 respondents (guest house owners), from Becho to Ushguli, participated in the interviewing process. Consultant's recommendations were mainly focused on sanitary situation and necessary winter sport requirements. The report,

together with the questionnaire was used during the trainings as a useful resource.

THE FRIENDS' ASSOCIATION OF VASHLOVANI PROTECTED AREA

Project Title: Setting up of a Nursery of Kolkhian Pheasants

Project Duration: April -December 2011

Under Eco Awards 2011 Program, the Friends' Association of Vashlovani Protected Area (established under the project implemented within Eco-Awards Program 2009 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature – IUCN) implemented a project aimed at ensuring the survival of the endemic Kolkhian pheasants, both in terms of restoration of Kolkhian pheasant in its natural habitats and development of pheasant farming as an income-generating activity among the local population.

Historically, Kolkhetian pheasants could be found throughout the country. However, as a result of poaching and the growing pressure on the natural habitats of the mentioned species, the population of Kolkhian pheasant has dramatically decreased. Recently, a number of entrepreneurs emerged who are involved in reproduction.

Project Objectives:

- Set up a nursery near Eagle Gorge comprised of 18 open-air cages constructed in Kogota Gorge and 10 open-air cages constructed at the territory near village Tsiteitkaro with aim to hatch about 100 genetically pure Kolkhian pheasants necessary for further breeding and restoration of the given species.
- Contribute to improved social-economic status of the local population through involvement in pheasant farming activities and public awareness.

Implemented Activities and Outputs:

- A scientific – technical methodology was elaborated for collecting the eggs of Kolkhian pheasants from the places of their natural habitats.

The project team managed to collect about 153 eggs from three different populations: Vashlovani, Alazani and Iori.

- Two contact incubators, manufactured by the English company Brinsea, featuring Contact Incubation Technology was purchased. By using these incubators, 74 pheasants were hatched.
- Open-air cages were constructed in 11 households of Tetrtskaro village, which expressed willingness to participate in the project. The families were trained on special skills for nursing the pheasants. Through putting the acquired skills into practice, the families received not only additional revenues, but also valuable experience.
- A large, open-air cage was constructed in the Kogota Gorge (400 sq.m). Trees and bushes were left inside the cage, creating an imitation of wild nature. Pheasants from the Vashlovani population, preserving all the characteristics typical for Kolkhetian pheasants, were grouped as a pure Kolkhetian pheasants and placed in the large open-air cage. Besides this large cage, 18 small open-air cages were constructed in the Kogota Gorge
- A dwelling house for the staff of the nursery' was constructed in Kogota Gorge. The dwelling is equipped with cold and hot water and light, from solar systems and with all necessary household items.
- A special brochure, promoting pheasantry was published and a web-site - www.vashlovanifriends.ge, designed to attract new clients was created.
- In the framework of additional award acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, Association organized final presentation of the projects results with participation all stakeholders.

This presentation also aimed attracting potential donors and clients willing to purchase Kolkhetian pheasants from the Association. The incomes generated will be used for extension of the project, as well as other directions related to environmental agenda of the organization.



- The project also resulted in establishing contacts with the World Pheasant Association (WPA). Understanding the significance of the project, the WPA management expressed readiness to provide all kinds of support, including financial to the Association, which provides prospects for expansion of the project results on a larger scale. A short documentary about the project prepared by Midifilm Ltd, which was aired on Georgian Public Broadcaster and a TV plot on Rustavi 2, piqued significant interest towards the project - about 20 individuals, two foreign organizations and two business groups addressed the Association with the proposal for further cooperation, including the Hotel Chateau Mere, which bought 20 pheasants from the Association. The management of the hotel also sought the Association's expertise in planning and developing of pheasant farming.

Annex II – DOCUMENTARIES UNDER ECO-AWARDS PROGRAM

Midifilm prepared fifteen documentaries (one is describing 2 similar projects) that were aired on GPB Channel 1 and Channel 2. The documentaries were also uploaded on the Internet TV - TV Business at <http://tvb.ge> with total number of views of about 27,700. The links of the videos:

1. Guram Tikanadze Svaneti Youth Center

http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=132&fb_source=message

2. Association Flora and Fauna

http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=136&fb_source=message

3. Rural Communities Development Agency

http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=167&fb_source=message

4. Biofarming Association Elkana

<http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=192>

5. Adjara Sustainable Development Association

http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=206&fb_source=message

6. Association Zekari

http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=226&fb_source=message

7. REC Caucasus

http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=295&fb_source=message

8. The Friends' Association of Vashlovani Protected Area

http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=318&fb_source=message

9. Association Caucasus Genetics

http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=335&fb_source=message

10. Mta-Bari and Wild Plant Conservation Association

<http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=352>

11. IUCN

<http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=361>

12. Georgian Tourism Association

http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=370&fb_source=message

13. Georgian Tourism Association

http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=376&fb_source=message#.T23BWOH3TBc.facebook

14. Civil Society Institute

http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=256&fb_source=message

15. Rural Advisory Service

<http://tvb.ge/index.php?name=Video&op=view&id=268>