

ASSOCIATION FOR PROTECTION OF LANDOWNERS' RIGHTS

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ENDOWMENT FOR COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION INITIATIVES IN WESTERN GEORGIA

Final Report

for the period of
September 25, 2003 – January 31, 2005

INTRODUCTION

Project on “Endowment for Community Mobilization Initiatives in Western Georgia” has been executed by the Association for Protection of Landowners’ Rights based on the agreement OC/CEF/03/06 with the International Land Coalition. Presented final report provides summarizing information on progress of the project activities during the implementation term encompassing period from September 25, 2003 up to January 31, 2005.

1. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

At the inception of the project, attention was emphasized on preparation of the Project’s structure and staffing. Project staff (i.e. project implementation team) was grouped as follows: Administrative Group was involved in administrative and management issues, Coordinating Group coordinated project activities and Public Relations Group coordinated dissemination of the information about the project through media. Project structure is attached to this report (*please see Annex 1*).

At the very first month of the Project implementation period, detailed work plan was prepared. It outlines all the main Project activities and defines timelines for them (*See Annex 2 for Project Work Plan and Annex 3 for Project Timetable*).

For the purpose of effective Project management, project groups prepared monthly/quarterly work plans in advance for each month/quarter and performance reports. Quarterly reports were prepared to summarize monthly reports. Members of the Project implementation team met each month. Monthly work plans, monthly reports, progress of the work, and existing problems were reviewed at meetings.

By the end of each month, the APLR’s financial department and the Project’s financial manager prepared monthly financial reports. Financial reports provided means to monitor planned and actual

spending of funds. During the project progress, Management group of the Project introduced several minor changes to the Project budget. Each amendment has been agreed with the ILC office and approved by them.

At the completion of the project, final financial report was prepared (*See Annex 4*). It also provides information about others donors that have contributed co-financing, outlining the amount of their respective contributions.

2. ESTABLISHING CBOs

2.1. Preparation of charter for Community Based Organizations

APLR experts prepared a draft Charter for CBOs in accordance with respective Georgian legislation. Charter has been prepared as a result of consultations with number of CBOs and international organizations with experience in CBO mobilization and development issues. CARE In., Eurasia Foundation and Mercy Corps are especially active in this respect. Their ideas were important for APLR and respective comments have been incorporated in the final draft. Albanian counterparts also reviewed the draft. At the next stage, draft Charter has been introduced to local population of project selected villages. Rural population was positive about establishing CBO in their villages.

The Charter introduces democratic and fair principles of community and CBO management, the principles allowing for maximum protection of the rights and interests of community members. Apart, it encourages direct and active participation of village residents in the community organization's management process. Charter has been included in the CBO manual and will serve as a sample for other interested stakeholders.

2.2. Establishment of CBOs

At the first stage of the project, meetings were held with village population and representatives of local self-governments. Information was provided about ILC funded project activities. In project selected villages general meetings of CBO founders were held and 5 representatives from each village were selected as CBO members. Also, at the CBO foundation meetings, Charters of each CBO were adopted; Board members and CBO Directors were elected. Protocols of the CBO foundation meetings were prepared. The indicated documents were notarized and have been registered in court. Thus 5 CBOs were founded in target villages. After registration of Community Based Organizations, APLR prepared seal for them and assisted in opening of their bank accounts. Later meetings were held with CBOs and local self-government representatives on planned project activities. As discussions revealed, they were interested to receive training in CBO development strategy. In response to their interest, three-day training on the development strategy of Community Based Organizations was organized for the CBO representatives.

2.3. CBO manual

As an initial step, manual structure was prepared listing information to be included. Project task coordinators and invited experts worked on preparation of material for the Manual. They did substantial and thorough work. Draft CBO Manual was sent for comments and recommendations to nongovernmental organizations working in Georgia on CBO development issues. Their views were considered during finalizing the Manual. The draft has also been reviewed by ILC office. As a result of these efforts and hard work, comprehensive CBO manual was published comprising information which is significant and interesting for CBOs, namely information about legislative issues related to ownership and use of land, both agricultural and non-agricultural, as well as common use land; principles of CBO

management and development, fundraising activities; taxation regulation; alternative dispute resolution services. Total of 1000 copies of CBO Manual have been printed. Additional 1000 copies were printed within other project that APLR executes. They have been distributed *gratis* to the NGOs, CBOs, international organizations (Mercy Corps, National Democratic Institute – Georgia (NDI), Care International, Horizonti Foundation) and all other parties interested in CBO development, land related and arbitration issues. In addition, the Manual was translated into English and published on APLR website at <http://www.aplr.org/en/multiT.shtml?mid=25>.

3. TRAINING OF CBOs AND LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE REPRESENTATIVES IN LAND LEGISLATION

As envisaged by the project, APLR's legal team prepared training material on those normative acts, which were of interest to the representatives of CBOs and local self-governance. Special attention was paid to land related issues, including common use lands, as the objective was to increase capacity of CBOs to manage and administer the land in CBO ownership. Respective training program was prepared. Trainees were grouped to include 4 representatives (2 CBO representatives and 2 representatives of local self-governance) from each village in one group. Therefore, training was provided to 20 persons. Training was conducted in two stages. First stage was introductory in nature and concerned goals and objectives of CBOs and general land-related legal issues. Second stage of trainings concerned taxation issues and norms of the Civil Code.

4. PREPARING ORTHOPHOTO PLANS AND CADASTRAL INFORMATION

Due to several years of activity in the field of title registration, APLR possesses different types of cadastral information, also satellite and aerial orthophotos. The Association had orthophotos for Project selected villages and Sakrebulo. To perfect the picture, some additional field work have been carried out. As a result, digital cadastral information has been prepared for roads, rivers, pastures, construction-buildings, land parcels existing either in ownership or in use. In parallel, Sakrebulo land arrangers were hired to assist in verification of cadastral information. Finally, there were produced maps in scales 1:2000, 1:5000 and 1:10000. After cadastral plans were prepared, material was presented to representatives of local self-governance, CBOs and land arrangers and training provided about the use of this information more effectively in different branches of agriculture, land arranging, forestry, natural resource planning, archeology, fishing, urban surveying, hydro technical and other activities. Sakrebulo's land arrangers and representatives of CBOs and local self-governance (total 25 persons) attended this training. The APLR handed orthophoto plans and cadastral maps (1:5000 and 1:1000 scale) to local self-government representatives. CBOs were additionally provided with maps (1:2000 scale). With that result cadastral activities of the project were completed.

5. TRANSFER OF PASTURE LAND TO CBOs

As a first step, borders of pastures existing on the territory of target villages were identified and cadastral information on pasture land for each village was compiled. In the case of Sakraula, village residents were using alpine pastures, however with some limitations, as this land falls within the territory of Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park. After the relevant information was researched concerning the usage of mentioned land, meeting with the local residents was held to inform them about their rights and obligations pertaining protected territories of Georgia. Therefore, according to the orthophotos and based on the field works pastures have been identified for each village. Having such data, community organizations possess complete information about pastures within their village area.

The training on principles of village pasture management was carried out. It concerned pasture management principles and non-agricultural land use and management. Training was attended by CBO and local self-government representatives.

In accordance with Georgian legislation, the land in high-mountainous regions can be in ownership of the village. Proceeding from the above, in project selected two high mountain villages – Sakraula and Mekvena meetings with the residents of each village and CBO representatives were held. They were instructed on issues re pastures transfer to ownership and associated benefits for the local population. Also meetings were organized with the chair persons of Tskaltubo and Bagdati Land Management Rayon Office. As a result of consultations, in Sakraula and Mekvena pasture land has been transferred in village ownership and rights registered in Public Registry. At informal ceremony registration certificates were handed to communities. Therefore, this stage of the project has been successfully completed.

6. ESTABLISHING PRIVATE ARBITRATION IN VILLAGES

Private arbitration is an effective, cost and time efficient tool of resolving civil disputes. Therefore one of the important objectives of the project was to facilitate establishment of private arbitration in villages.

As an initial step, all the necessary arbitration related documentation was prepared. Thereafter APLR staff organized meetings with each CBO in order to inform them about private arbitration and alternative dispute resolution means, its effectiveness and convenience. Persons were identified that will continue work on arbitration issues. Each CBO selected one arbitration secretary. They were instructed on respective issues. Later training was provided to facilitate qualification of selected persons as arbiters. Package of arbitration documentation was handed out to arbiters and secretaries and thorough information on arbitration procedures was provided. Trainees received sufficient knowledge to start arbitration activities.

After the preparatory activities were completed and cases to be discussed at the sessions identified for each community, arbitration sessions were carried out.

In total, 18 disputes have been resolved through arbitration in project selected villages.

As a result of successful realization of this component of the project, CBO representatives have skills and sufficient expertise to resolve disputes through arbitration. They are ready to continue activities independently.

Kutaisi branch office remains committed to providing technical assistance to CBOs in their arbitration activities.

7. IMPLEMENTATION OF MICRO-PROJECTS

During trainings and meetings with CBOs and local citizenry, many problems became apparent, the resolution of which had vital significance for each village. Residents of the village were asked to prioritize their concerns and come up with some projects realizable through our assistance. CBOs were trained how to mobilize community and develop action plan for the project. As a result 5 micro project have been selected from the list identified by rural residents. Budget for each project should not have exceed 1.200 USD.

The following micro project have been identified and successfully realized in target villages:

Sakraula

In the village Sakraula massive cut down of the forest caused water abundance of the river Sakraula and change of the river-bed. As a result, water flooded village inner road and half of the village were at risk of being left without road leading to village. Besides, it was a single road to forest and pastures. The village had the cable bridge over the river Sakraula in danger of being destructed because of alteration of river-bed.

Within the micro-project, 2 bridges connecting remote sides of the village were constructed. With efforts of CBO "Kiknavcleti" and local population third bridge was also repaired. Besides, route to cemetery has been cleaned and rehabilitated. As local population note, the restoration of the cable bridge has great importance for the village. They will access their land parcels more easily that are located on the other side of the river. Apart, they will have access to pastures. Because bridges were damaged, population had to cross the river that would make their way to parcels and pasture difficult, especially when the water in the river was abundant.

Mekvena

In the Village Mekvena dispensary was restored and provided with the energy and water. It will provide services to 5 villages, 860 residents. Within the project 1 doctor's room, two station rooms, 2 bathrooms and 3 corridors were repaired. As a result of consultations with the head of Tskaltubo Health Care Department, doctor has been appointed to serve local population and work 5 days a week.

Dimi

In the village Dimi, cut down of the forest caused landslip, which resulted in inoperability of inner village roads, houses. Repeat of the landslip was anticipated. Therefore, fencing of 15 ha acacia forest was urgent need for the community, so that it would be protected from cattle and cut down.

As a result of micro project, fencing of the forest with barb wire has been accomplished. Besides with the initiative of the CBO Dimi within the project football stadium (80*50) was constructed and drinking water well was made. Therefore actually three micro projects were implemented.

Fencing of acacia forest will generate income for the local population. Therefore project has economic significance. After fencing, the cattle will not be able to damage newly flourished acacia crop and it will reproduce in quantity easily. Population makes prop for vineyard from acacia tree. These props are highly demanded in Georgia. Besides, more households will be involved in beekeeping which is one of the important source of income for local population. In addition nearly 200 households were supplied with the drinking water and in future CBO Dimi plans to rent football stadium to children's sport-sanative centre.

Banoja

In Banoja it was considered to restore the water main for drinking water. Within the project source reservoir was constructed, while local self government purchased water reservoir with 60 tons capacity. Through that reservoir water source building will be connected to central main. The project was vitally important for local population. As a result of water main rehabilitation 200-250 households of the village Banoja are supplied with drinking water.

After the water main is in use, CBO Banoja plans to introduce tax on water consumed. The income will be used for water main maintenance and repair.

Persati

In one of the village of Persati – Shubaani elementary school (4 levels) has been repaired. Since 1968 no repair works have been done to this school. Roof was damaged, west side of the building did not have windows, and instead it was covered with cellophane. 17 children were in school at that time. Three teachers and one guard were working. 3 classrooms, Director's cabinet, teachers' room, hall, school outdoor facade were repaired, parts of the damaged roof were changed and rain pipes were installed, in some rooms floor was changed and painted. West facade of the school was extremely damaged. For years rain has been devastating the wall. It was dangerous for children to have classes in rooms adjacent to this wall. Now that the school is repaired elementary level students will have opportunity to go to the local school, and not to school of other village that are number of kilometers away.

Through implemented projects, communities gained confidence of successful self-help problems resolution. They are aware of community mobilization principles as they have been involved and actively participated in each stage of micro projects' implementation. They were duly informed about planned activities, budget for each micro project, were actively involved in selection of priority needs that could be addressed within the project, identification of resources needed to accomplish the objectives and development of action plan. Field trips to project affected villages were made by APLR Kutaisi office representatives to examine results accomplished as a result of project implementation and to assess the environment created after the project closure. Overall, population of target villages enjoys substantive social and economic benefits of the implemented projects and strives to increase its long-term effect.

8. INFORMATION COVERAGE

8.1 Publication of Information in Magazine of the APLR

The magazine "Mitsis Mesakutre" (*The Landowner*) is published by the Association. It is disseminated country wide. Target readers of *Landowner* are farmers and landowners. 4 articles have been published in the *Landowner* regarding the ILC funded Project activities:

- "Endowment for Community Mobilization Initiatives in Western Georgia", magazine "*Landowner*", #1, November 2003;
- "First Meetings", magazine "*Landowner*", #2, February 2004;
- "There is some hope" magazine "*Landowner*", #7, June 2004;
- "Money Spent for the Benefit of the Village Needs Volunteers" magazine "*Landowner*", #11, November 2004.

These articles received resonance among readers and especially farmers addressed us for additional information.

8.2 Dissemination of Information through Press

Public Education Group has been actively coordinating information dissemination about the Project in press. Press-releases were prepared. The CBO Manual has been advertised. Below is the list of articles published in Georgian print media about the Project activities:

- Newspaper "Axali Taoba", June 2, 2004 – Community Based Formation in 5 Villages of Imereti;
- Newspaper "The Messenger", June 8, 2004 – New Hope in the Village;
- Newspaper "Kutaisuri Versia" September 2004 - Foreigners are Financing, You Do!
- Newspaper "Akhali Taoba", October 20, 2004 - Bagdati Residents are Complaining about the Lack of High-Rank Visitors.

8.3. TV clip

APLR contracted the TBC-TV studio to prepare TV clip documenting ILC funded project activities in Western Georgia. During September and December Public Education Group coordinated TBC-TV's visit to West Georgia to shoot activities implemented by the CBOs of project selected villages in Bagdati and Tskaltubo raions. Local population was interviewed pertaining implemented projects. After the text for the clip and program itself has been prepared, it was dubbed in English. As considered by the contract, the clip was wired on Georgian TV. 20 copies of Georgian and English versions of TV program in CD format were prepared to be disseminated by APLR among interested organizations. Out of this number, 10 CDs will be sent to ILC office and can be used for dissemination among partners.

8.4. Web-page

APLR website covered ILC funded project activities on regular basis. Generally, information was published about entry of highland pastures into ownership of Sakraula and Mekvena community; implementation of micro-projects in Imereti villages; issuance of the manual for CBOs. Lastly, CBO Manual both in English and Georgian was uploaded at APLR website.

9. CONCLUSION

As described in the report above, all components of the Project on Endowment for Community Mobilization Initiatives in Western Georgia have been successfully realized. The project has made good progress in supporting the set of objectives, as:

Assistance to the rural population in formation of community organizations. Through establishing local CBOs and preparing operational Charter, communities have been assisted in mobilizing their own resources for local projects. Local communities have enhanced access to various services that community organizations may provide.

Publication of CBO Manual. CBOs have been provided with the manual compiling valuable information of great importance to acting, or just developing CBOs and not only them. The Manual can serve as a hand-book for stakeholders with interest in community empowerment and development issues.

Technical Assistance to CBOs in Project addressed issues. Through trainings skill and legal knowledge were provided to target beneficiaries. As a result of training and experience that community organizations were supplied through project activities, they can act as a training resource for the community, channel to development resources, as well as informational resource for other CBOs working in West Georgia.

Transfer of cadastral information to CBOs and local self-governance. Cadastral information has been provided for improved land use planning and resource development. With the digital plans available communities have information about village borders, borders of private land parcels and parcels issued in use, pastures, forest and other information.

Transfer of highland pastures into village ownership. Pasture land in two highland villages has been registered under local community ownership; Now that community organizations are owners of pastures, they are in position to regulate area and supervise representatives of self-governance in order to prevent illegal tax collection and land distribution.

Establishment of Arbitration. Project affected rural population has been introduced to effective and efficient ADR service and disputes have been resolved; This way, the village population is able to resolve disputes on the spot, to spare time and expenses and avoid problems associated with lengthy, costly and complicated court cases.

Implementation of Micro-projects. Through CBOs micro projects have been implemented socially and economically benefiting local citizenry. Priority needs identified by the community at that moment have been met, in addition community members were involved in each stage of decision making, to ensure