

## *Enhancing Sustainability of Tourism Development in Protected Areas of Georgia*

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

Under Eco-Awards 2010, Georgian Tourism Association implemented a project aimed at enhancing sustainability of tourism development in Protected Areas (PA) of Georgia. The project covered Tusheti, Borjom-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



*Photo by: Georgian Tourism Association  
Algeti National Park*

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 Outputs**

- 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.



*Photo by: Georgian Tourism Association  
installing solar systems*

- 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.

### Project Duration

April, 2010-November, 2010

### Donors and Partners

The following project was implemented within the framework of the Eco-Awards 2010 Program. Eco-Awards Program is initiated and financed by BP, on behalf of its oil and gas co-venturers (BTC Co. SCP Co.) and administered by Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF). The project was co-financed by HSBC bank.

### Contact Information

Georgian Tourism Association  
Nata Kvachantiradze/Giorgi Ebanoidze  
18, Melikishvili str., Tbilisi 0179  
Tel: (+995 32) 222 01 95  
Cell: (+995 577) 73 46 86  
E-mail: [info@tourism-association.ge](mailto:info@tourism-association.ge),  
[nata\\_kvachantiradze@yahoo.com](mailto:nata_kvachantiradze@yahoo.com)  
Web-site: [www.tourism-association.ge](http://www.tourism-association.ge)

