



## IUCN CAUCASUS COOPERATION CENTER

### *Facilitating Stakeholder Participation in Protected Areas of Georgia*

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



*Photo by: IUCN CCC*

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.



*Photo by: IUCN CCC*

- **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.

### Project Duration

March, 2009-December, 2010

### Donors and Partners

The following project was implemented within the framework of the Eco-Awards 2009 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).

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