



RESOLUTION

A four day International workshop on “*Sharing knowledge on Participatory Mapping for Forest and Pasture Areas -Combining different mapping techniques to address policy challenges in the management and use of forest and pasture lands*”, took place in Tirana, Albania from May 27th to May 31st, 2007.

The workshop aimed to:

- (i) Exchange knowledge among participants on practices and methodologies for mapping users’ rights in rural areas, with a specific focus on forest and pasture lands.

- (ii) Increase understanding of the methodological challenges related to the policy context of replicating/scaling up local innovative solutions to mapping users’ rights, with a specific reference to the Albanian context.

- (iii) Contribute to the international debate on the potential of mapping as a tool for participatory land rights’ registration.

The workshop was attended by national and international organizations, experts and policy makers, such as International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD); Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); World Bank (WB); ILC; Dutch Development Organization (SNV); Albanian Parliament (AP) members; Ministry of Environment, Forest and Water Administration (MEFWA); Ministry of Interim-Local Government (MI); Albanian NGOs; Environmental and Forest Agency (EFA); Mountain Areas Development Agency (MADA); Agriculture University – Forestry Science Faculty; Humboldt University, Berlin; participatory mapping experts from various countries and provinces, including Canada, Germany, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Macedonia, Kosovo and Spain; members of the National Association of Communal Forest and Pasture; National Association of Communa Head; Trans-Boundary Wildlife Organization; Members of Forest and Community Associations; and of the Agriculture Journalist Association, amongst others.

Based on the workshop and field visit discussions, the participants developed and agreed the following resolution:

1. After 1996, the government of Albania began the transfer of approximately 40% of state forests to local government units on the basis of long-term use rights. Nowadays, in many areas in the vicinity of villages, forests have been well protected by communities, and have consequently regenerated. This has greatly increased the villagers' awareness as well as their management and decision making capacities. Yet despite this progress, the legal framework leaves room for improvements in defining and clarifying the present and future relationship between the people and their surrounding natural resources.

Through this resolution the workshop participants conclude that:

- (a) Policy makers should recognize the composite spectrum of property rights arrangements on communal forest and pasture land;
- (b) It is important to improve the bylaws for the transfer process and management of communal forests and pastures;
- (c) Communal Forest and Pasture Users Associations and communities themselves should be privileged partners in the process of amending the Forest Law and in the preparation of regulations derived from it.

2. The experiences shared and presented at the workshop confirm how environmental degradation and impoverishment have been most profound where rights are vaguely defined and where neither the State nor local communities are in a position to uphold rights and responsibilities. By contrast, the situation is very markedly better in those areas with very well defined boundaries and user rights.

3. Increasingly evidence from various parts of the world, as demonstrated by some recent ILC – IFPRI research, shows that commons can often guarantee a basic safety net, especially for more vulnerable groups, thus buttressing poverty reduction strategies. Irrespective of whether long-term use and ownership of forest and pastures is communal or individual, people demand the recognition of their rights as they can best secure certainty for now and in the future.

4. The transfer process in Albania is currently incomplete. The transfer of forest and pasture should be considered complete only with the registration of the title and the title-holder's possession of the registration document, together with an accompanying map. This last step should be integrated into current Albanian

legislation by working more closely with IPRO (Immovable Property Registration Office). In this scenario, property titles can pave the way for increasing farmers' interests in managing natural resources in a sustainable manner, and consequently in inducing sustainable income generation activities.

The participants conclude that there is a need:

- (a) to complete the legal framework for the transfer of communal forests and pasture lands to the ownership of villages and local government; and for their sustainable management by local communities;
- (b) to prepare policies that stimulate income generation from communal, village and individual forests and pastures, including from non-timber forest products, and propose ways of using incomes for the benefit of local communities.
- (c) Participants believe that the transfer process will be most successful if it follows all the necessary steps, from community participation in decision-making and the preparation of management plans, to property registration at IPRO.
- (d) Participants recommend the design and implementation of a joint pilot scheme by Ministry of Environment, User's Associations and villagers to derive policy lessons that are applicable on a larger scale.

5. As the Local Government, in the context of decentralization, is undertaking a greater role in the future of the country, including through the transfer of natural resources and their management, the participants conclude that:

- (a) The level of responsibilities for the Local Government Units in the overall transfer process must be singled out clearly, especially regarding the definition of rights, responsibilities, as well as returns (including revenues). It is equally important to define the relationships of rights and responsibilities between Local Government Units, Forest and Pasture Users' Associations and communities.
- (b) There is a need to strengthen the capacity of local government to handle the transfer of natural resources, to manage conflict resolution mechanisms, as well as in the preparation of legal mapping and registration bases.

6. Participatory mapping and the preparation and implementation of management plans are key elements in community development. There is a current tendency for communities to seek to extend their territorial control rather than improve their natural resources management capacities. Communities should be seen as the main

custodians of local knowledge and the main actors for mapping and the preparation and implementation of management plans. The participants conclude that:

- (a) Participatory mapping should not become simply a negotiation tool on boundaries between government and communities, but the map-making process should help identify – under the principle of informed consent – responsibilities of communities for conservation and management of the land as an everlasting natural resource;
- (b) Communities and government should consider forest, pasture and other natural resources as having a great potential for income generation – including from timber and non-timber options (i.e. eco tourism and environmental services);
- (c) It has been demonstrated that community participation in the whole process of transfer establishes more faith and buttresses sustainability in the management of natural resources. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of Forest and Pasture Users Associations in order to make them capable of carrying out sustainable and profitable management of natural resources;
- (d) Participants recommend the formulation of “simpler” Forest and Pasture Management Plans to better match villagers’ capacities and needs. Such plans at village level can more appropriately refer to the customary use rights that regulate access and use of those resources.

7. Workshop participants recognized that the International Workshop brought to light a number of similarities that exist in the challenges and opportunities that forest dwellers are facing worldwide. In almost all cases the recognition of locally existing expertise has been a fundamental step towards making participatory management and planning a successful exercise for improving people’s lives. Participants recognized that Albania hosts a wealth of local expertise on forest and pasture management, and that further steps towards more sound participation by citizens could finally transform challenges into opportunities for the country.

8. Workshop participants finally decided to make this document available to the Parliament of Albania, the Government of Albania – the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Water Administration, Ministry of Interior, Council of Europe –Delegation in Albania, and the World Bank Mission in Albania.