



UNITING FOR LAND RIGHTS IN ALBANIA

HOW OUR MEMBERS ARE CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE

INTERNATIONAL
LAND
COALITION



On December 31st 2018, the Albanian Government (through the Council of Ministers) approved a National Forestry Policy document directly influenced by the inputs of the ILC's country platform in Albania, known as the National Engagement Strategy (NES). The document signifies a **commitment to gender justice and inclusive decision-making.**

TATIVE COORDIN
COMMITTEE



THE NES PLATFORM was able to establish itself as a key figure and gain official governmental recognition by creating strong linkages between the grassroots and the policy-making levels. Since 2013, the NES has been spearheaded by the National Federation of Communal Forests and Pastures of Albania (NFCFPA), and guided by a National Coordination and Consultative Committee (CCC) bringing together various stakeholders (CSOs, IGOs, Ministers, Ministries, MPs, academic institutions).

By working in synergy with other actors serving the Albanian forestry sector (namely the World Bank and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and the CNVP foundation), the NES has been able to bring about significant outcomes in forest policies, management practices,

and in working towards people-centred land governance. The cross-cutting gender framework of the NES and its linkages to the work of ILC's strategic partners and members have also helped the Albanian government and municipalities recognise the importance of female actors in the forestry sector. These efforts have led to the better management of forests and natural resources, as well as a significant increase in women's participation in decision-making processes (120 Forests and pastures user associations (FPUA) have increased the participation of women in their boards).

In response to a legal requirement affecting the management of forest and natural resources by Local Government Units (LGUs), NES Albania also assisted the production of the first annual forestry management plans in four municipalities.

The NES, through its CCC, conducted technical measurements and adapted participatory approaches to benefit local communities while developing LGU capacities. As of 2019, some 30 municipal plans are under revision or have been granted approval by the Ministry of Environment.

Further achievements of NES Albania encompass the scaling-up of pathways, from four pilot forest management plans to a nationwide application of such models; the decentralisation of natural resource governance- by bringing local governments and forest users to the forefront of decision making; and the dissemination of the Albanian experience in the Balkan region.

NOTABLE OUTCOMES

LOBBYING FOR INCLUSIVE FORESTRY LAWS: SHAPING POLICIES THROUGH EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY

Since 2014, NES Albania and its platform members provide guidance to the government on key forest legislations—including the draft Law of Forests and Pastures, the 2016 Administrative reform, and the Moratoriums on Forests and Hunting. To date, the NES' Consultative and Coordinating Committee (CCC) has produced over 18 lobbying and advocacy documents regarding forestry laws, sub-acts, and policies.

The NES recently influenced the formulation of a new draft Forest Law, with the first stage of the lobbying process leading to the rejection of a 2016 Draft for its failure to address user rights. The NES then advised the incorporation of user-rights in the subsequent National Forestry Policy Document (which serves as a basis for the new draft Law) through several position papers and letters addressed to the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Environment, and Members of Parliament, among others.

After years of lobbying and advocacy efforts involving local, national, and global actors- the CCC's efforts culminated in the inclusion of community user-ship rights in a gender- sensitive National Forestry Policy Document, which was approved by the Council of Ministers on Dec. 31st, 2018. This process marked the first time in 30 years that a forestry policy document was drafted by the Ministry of the Environment and approved by the Council of Ministers in Albania.

The new draft law is currently in the first stages of formulation, and the NES continues to contribute to this process.



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We as members of the Parliament have approved the Forest Policy Document that was prepared with the contribution of the CCC and NFCFPA. One of the most important elements of this document is the transfer of ownership to local communities. We have seen the successes of local forest management. These management practices are incorporated in the approved policy document. I consider this kind of cooperation between the Committee, the NFCFPA, the Government, and the Parliament very useful.

Mr. Besnik Baraj, a Member of the Parliamentary Committee on Productive Activities, Trade and Environment; Member of the CCC



CHANGING PRACTICES: ENSURING EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF MUNICIPAL FOREST AREAS THROUGH PARTICIPATORY FOREST PLANS

The 2016 administrative reform requires all local government units (LGUs) to produce annual forestry management plans, yet majority of the LGUs lack resources to do so. The CCC (chiefly NFCFPA, LGUs, the Faculty of Forestry Sciences, and the CNVP Foundation) assisted four municipalities with the drafting of annual forestry management plans. Using a participatory approach with the aim of developing LGU capacities, local actors were consulted in the process, involved in the conduction of technical measurements, and trained on GIS and GPS systems.

The pilot plans and best forest management practices were shared with 30 municipalities in three district level meetings. The events drew the participation of local and national stakeholders, including the Ministry of Environment, the

Administration of Protected Areas, the Environmental Inspectorate, the National Agency for Support of Local Self-Government as well as members of the working group drafting the Forestry Policy Document. In attendance were also two Members of the Albanian Parliament (also part of the CCC) who spoke highly of the work done by the NES at local and national levels. The meetings received the media attention, and were showcased by local outlets.

In 2018, the CCC conducted a comparative analysis to gather empirical evidence to demonstrate the value of local forest management practices to relevant stakeholders. The study investigated the state of forests in relation to management types- spanning local users, municipal oversight, and public lands.

FORESTRY AND WOMEN: RAISING AWARENESS, SUPPORTING LOCAL ADVOCACY, AND MONITORING PARTICIPATION

A significant increase in women's participation in decision-making processes (120 FPUAs have increased the participation of women in their boards) has been confirmed and attributed to the cross-cutting gender framework of the NES and the linkages with the work of ILC's strategic partners and members-the World Bank, SIDA, and the CNVP foundation. These efforts have helped the municipalities recognise the importance of female actors in the forestry sector.

The NES also provides support to local lobbying efforts in the framework of gender-justice. In 2018, the NFCFPA successfully supported protests in three villages in the Bulqizë Municipality, where local women had been calling for the cancellation of a government concession contract affecting the forests in their communities for over three

years. The NFCFPA outlined the legal and technical arguments against its implementation and facilitated discourse by holding briefing meetings with Parliamentarians, the Ministry of Environment (members of the CCC) and local government representatives. The government abandoned the contract following a meeting between the Ministry of Environment and the Bulqizë protest women.

The NES conducts periodic monitoring of women's participation in the activities and institutional life of Forests and Pastures Users Associations (FPUAs), as well as of the lawful recognition of women's property to land and forests user-ship rights in the framework of the WB grants programme. This is the first time such data is being produced- serving as a baseline for future development efforts.

KEY RESULTS OF NES ALBANIA 2014-2019

- 1 Establishment of a Multi-Stakeholder Consultative and Coordinating Committee (2014):** The NES consolidated an inclusive space for democratic participation in land reform through the Consultative and Coordinating Committee, which includes both national and local governments, non-government partners, academia, and IGOs.
- 2 Formal Requests for Inputs: Albanian Government incorporates NES positions in Forestry Reform Process (2016-ongoing):** NES Albania conducts local level consultations and analysis to inform policy dialogue and influence Forest Law formulation at the national level. The CCC produces concrete recommendations both upon government request and for advocacy activities.
- 3 Influencing the Inclusion of Forest Community User-Ship Rights in New National Policy Document on Forests (Approved Dec. 31st, 2018):** In 2018, the NFCFPA delivered three position papers to policymakers seeking the recognition of local user-ship rights over forests, and provided the working-group responsible for drafting the new Forestry Law with a document outlining the importance of legalising such rights. The resulting Forestry Policy Document, approved in December 2018, is both gender sensitive and inclusive of user-rights.
- 4 Supporting Local Women's Protests in Demanding the Cancellation of a Government Concession Contract,** NFCFPA supported protests in the Bulqizë Municipality, where local women were lobbying for the cancellation of a government concession contract affecting the forests in their communities. The contract was cancelled following a meeting between the Ministry of Environment and the Bulqizë protest women.
- 5 Reinforcing the Balkan Forestry and Pastures CSO Network:** The NES co-organised several regional meetings and formulated a common position paper on regional forest ownership and user-rights in the framework of EU integration (2015)
- 6 Strengthening the Awareness of Roles and Responsibilities in Newly Formulated Municipalities:** The NES Albania supported the drafting of four participatory municipal forestry management plans to address local firewood needs and to promote best practices regarding forest management at local, administrative, and ministry levels through participatory research approaches and trainings. These pilots are used as models, and by 2019, more than 30 municipal annual plans are to be addressed by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment.

2019

CCC participation in **PUBLIC HEARING ON NEW DRAFT LAW** (upon government's invitation) and recommendations on the implementation progress of the Forest Policy Document

2018

APPROVAL OF THE NATIONAL FORESTRY POLICY DOCUMENT by the Council of Ministers (31st December); Cancellation of a Government concession contract in the Bulqizë municipality (intended as a long-term user-right contract for land plots, instigated by the Ministry of Environment and the private sector)

2016

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM reduces Local Govt. Units (LGUs) from 374 to 61; decentralisation of forest management with 80% of forests transferred from national to local govt. bodies; Rejection of Draft Forestry Law (for failure to address user-ship rights) thanks to CCC advocacy efforts; Govt. requests NES inputs; Ministry of Tourism and Environment approves Annual Municipal Forest Management Plan in Dibër; Increased women's participation in decision-making: 130/240 in FPUAs (54%)

2017

DRAFTING OF ANNUAL MUNICIPAL FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN in Belsh municipality; Piloting of Annual Municipal Forest Management Plan and development of 2 forestry models in Has municipality

2015

FORMULATION OF WORKING GROUP for the preparation of comments and suggestions regarding the new forestry law (specifically, the forest transfer process) as a result of a Government request for NES inputs

2013-14

NES ALBANIA STRATEGY FORMULATION; Formulation of a national-level Consultative and Coordinating Committee (CCC) to guide NES

2011

The **ILC GLOBAL LAND FORUM (GLF)** and Assembly of Members held in Tirana, Albania

2012

ILC SUPPORTED PROJECT: Strengthening Sustainable Communal Forestry and NES Formulation in Albania; The Tirana Declaration (formulated in GLF) leads Albanian Prime Minister to announce (January) the decentralisation of 90% of forest ownership as key Government objective

2007

ILC SUPPORTED PROJECT: Sharing knowledge on Participatory Mapping for Forest and Pastures Areas

2006

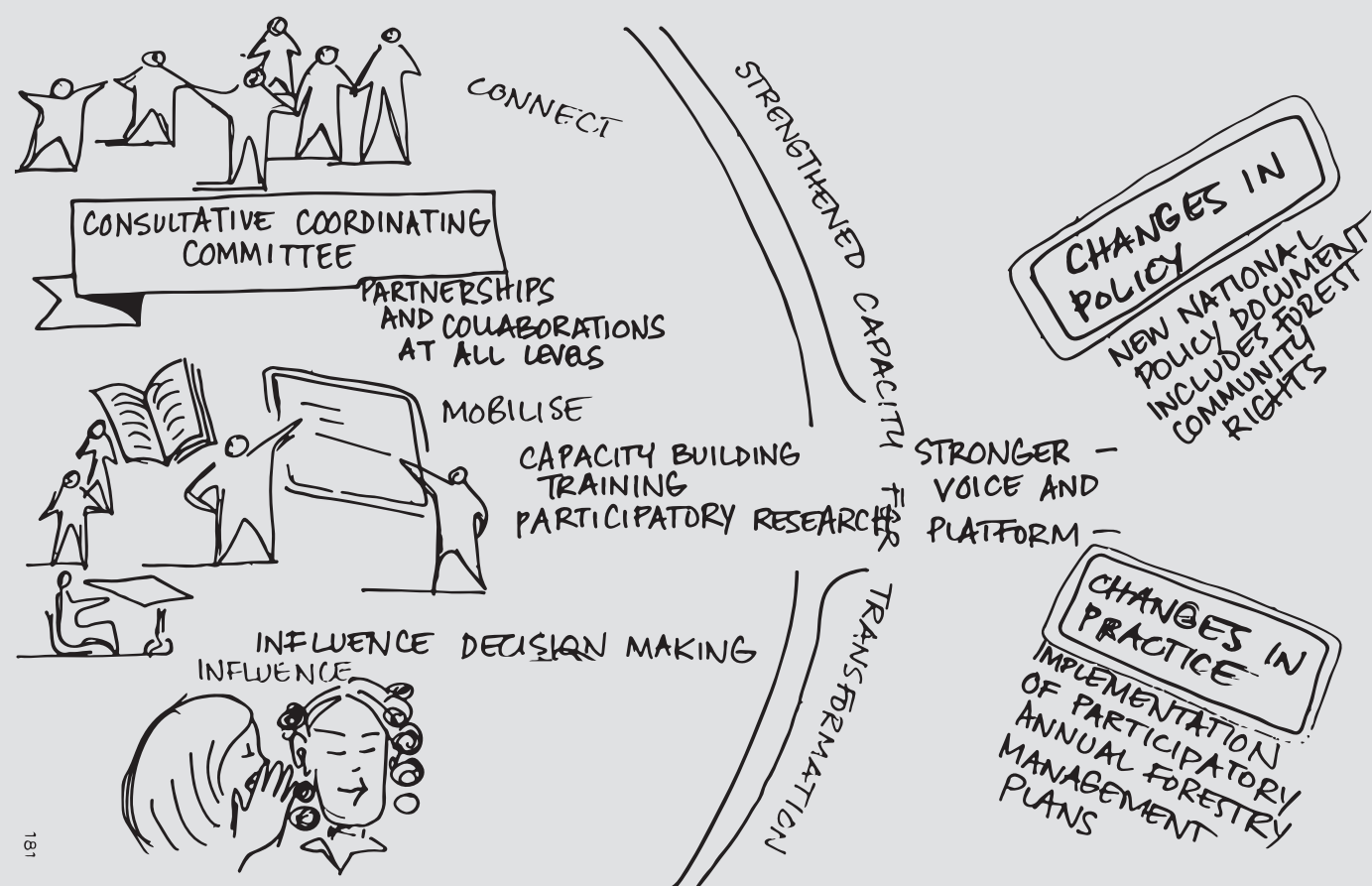
THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF COMMUNAL FORESTS AND PASTURES (NFCFPA) FOUNDED. ILC supported project: Enhancing Tenure Security through Support to Communities to Improve the Laws on the Transfer of State Public Propriety to Communes

THEORY OF CHANGE

The Consultative and Coordinating Committee has fostered partnerships and collaborations at all levels (Connect), and ensured technical support, capacity building, and participatory research processes aimed at enhancing the know-how of stakeholders (Mobilise). NES members influenced decision making by contributing to the approval of the national forestry document. Throughout the years, the CCC has provided numerous inputs and on-going technical assistance in drafting and implementing forest laws and management plans.

The NES Albania Contribution Analysis outlines and corroborates evidence that the platform has made significant progress towards all three of its strategic objectives outlined in its 2014-2017 strategy document, which include:

- » Establishing a Consultative and Coordinating Committee (CCC) to influence the formulation of policies, decisions, and an institutional framework on land and natural resources for the benefit of rural people- and to further disseminate the Albanian experience in the Balkan region
- » Bettering the management of land, forestry, and pastures by improving the capacity of local government units and forest and pasture users' associations and federations, while increasing the number of women involved in decision-making processes
- » Ensuring secure user rights for rural families and traditional users through participatory processes based on successful experiences



I consider it a big achievement to have the faculty of forest scientists, the Ministry [Environment], and civil society around the same table. Within the Albanian context, it is not easy to have these stakeholders discussing the development of the [forestry] sector. For me this is one of the great achievements that this [NES] platform has achieved.

Mrs. Sheza Tamcini, CNVP Senior Advisor

THE ALBANIAN CONTEXT

The Albanian forestry sector has undergone drastic reforms during recent years towards decentralised forest management, yet it has failed to recognise user-ship and ownership rights of local communities, especially with regard to women's economic empowerment and the sale of non-timber forest products. For over 5 years, a draft law on forests and pastures has been under consultation, awaiting finalisation before government approval. SIDA and the CNVP foundation (both CCC members) have committed to assisting the Ministry of Environment in this process.

The 2016 administrative-territorial reform reduced the number of local government units from 364 to 61, which brought about positive impacts on the Forestry sector, such as the transfer of over 80% of forests from national to the new local government units (LGUs) and heightened cooperation.

The government further approved several amendments to the previous law (Forest law no.9385 of 2005) in the light of the reform. However, the forestry sector continues to face conflicting interests and uncertainties. As the administrative reform brought about decentralised forest management, it also assigned greater responsibility to the newly formed municipalities-many of which are under-resourced and under-staffed, lacking adequate planning capacities, professional staff, infrastructure, and tools.

The 2016 Moratoriums on Forests and Hunting further exposed the implications of the new legislative changes on municipal forest management; although they aim to improve the state of forests and fauna, they obstruct the provision of firewood by local communities and hinder rural women's progress towards economic empowerment.

ILC IN ALBANIA

The ILC has a long-standing relationship with its members in Albania, including the Transborder Wildlife Association (TWA), and the National Federation of Communal Forests and Pastures of Albania (NFCFPA). Prior to the formulation of NES Albania in 2013-2014, the ILC supported and collaborated with the NFCFPA through several projects and initiatives, dating back to 2006. This working relationship has fortified capacities for transformation on

both local and national levels- most notably through the NES process. By building upon existing synergies with other local and international actors (mainly the WB and SIDA), the NES platform has brought about a conducive environment for change with tangible results including notable changes in policies and practices alike.

STRONGER –
VOICE AND
PLATFORM –

CHANGES IN
PRACTICE
IMPLEMENTATION
OF PARTICIPATORY
ANNUAL FORESTRY
MANAGEMENT
PLANS

WE COULDN'T DO IT ALONE!

LINKING EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHER INITIATIVES PURSUING RELEVANT GOALS IN THE COUNTRY

The IGO members and Strategic Partners of the ILC- the World Bank and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)- not only form part of the CCC, but have for long been engaged in the Albanian forestry sector and played a key role in financially and technically supporting policy formulation and implementation-including the formulation and approval of the National Forestry Policy Document and the draft Forestry law.

The World Bank and SIDA are furthermore both working towards the inclusion of women in local decision-making bodies in the Albanian forestry sector. By collaborating and building on the strengths of other members and strategic partners, the NES contributed to ensuring gender justice in relation to land (Commitment 4) by raising awareness and by monitoring women's participation in decision-making through FPUAs.

The increase in women's participation in decision-making processes (120 FPUAs have increased the participation of women; 11 Regional Federations have ~30% women in their boards) is attributed to the cross-cutting gender framework implemented by strategic partners, ILC members, local and national stakeholders- most notably the World Bank, SIDA, and the CNVP foundation. These efforts have helped the municipalities recognise the importance of female actors in forestry related dialogue. Current NES efforts aligning with existing synergies include the implementation of the approved policy document, the re-drafting of the forestry law and scaling-up efforts to strengthen the Balkan regional CSOs network on forestry and pastures.

“I am thankful to all these important international institutions (WB, SIDA) for their cooperation with NFCFPA and the CCC. These actors have contributed to the preparation of strategies, and brought positive experiences to Albania and as the reality shows, such practices have been successfully implemented.”

Mr. Besnik Baraj, Member of the Parliamentary Committee on Productive Activities, Trade and Environment; Member of the CCC

CHANGES IN
POLICY
NEW NATIONAL
POLICY DOCUMENT
INCLUDES FOREST
COMMUNITY
RIGHTS

STRONGER –
VOICE AND

LESSONS LEARNED

The case of Albania confirms ILC's theory of change in that working towards people-centred land governance necessitates the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform where civil society, grass roots organisations, national and local government representatives come together to discuss and join forces in working towards a common goal and vision. The participation of key national stakeholders such as the Ministry of Environment, the National Agency for the Support of Local Self-Government, and in particular the local forest-user groups and communities ensured an evidence-informed process during the policy formulation phase. This in turn guaranteed that the approved document includes measures for strengthening the institutional and administrative capacities of local governments regarding forest management, as well as the transfer of forests rights over to local communities and women.

ILC's Good Practice¹ for NES Albania outlines the lessons learned over the years 2013-2014/ NES implementation. The document explores how NES Albania was able to ensure inclusiveness and equal participation through the CCC, reaching a shared agreement on purpose within the NES core group; navigating relationships with national policy authorities; achieving long-term legitimacy for the multi-stakeholder platform.

¹ The ILC's Database of Good Practices is an initiative that documents and systematises ILC members and partners' experience in promoting people-centred land governance



MEET OUR MEMBERS

The CCC is composed of 11 actors, four of which are ILC members (NFCFPA, TWA, CNVP, World Bank). Other actors include representatives of the Albanian Parliament, Ministry of Environment (MoE), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the EU Delegation (EU), the Faculty of Forestry Sciences, as well as representatives of civil society organisations such as the Forest Regional Federations of the Korçë, Kukës, and Fier districts, the Livestock Entrepreneurs Association of Albania, and the Center of Studies and Consultations "NATURE".

Women represent 30%–35% of the CCC. The NFCFPA acts as the NES host organisation, providing organisational support for the implementation of the NES work plan. All activities are implemented under the responsibility of the NFCFPA, and in collaboration with the CNVP Foundation and TWA. The coordination of the activities at national level is conducted by NFCFPA, while local-level activities are organised in collaboration with the Regional Federations of Forests, TWA and local government.

The CNVP Foundation provides financial and technical support for several NES activities, spanning the organisation of multi-stakeholder meetings at local level and drafting municipal forest plans and activities with local women. The participation of stakeholders like the World Bank and SIDA leverages the platform as their involvement in the forestry sector through previous cooperation with NFCFPA, the CNVP Foundation and the Albanian Government) aligns their pre-existing synergies and priorities with those of the CCC and NES.

70%–80% of NES activities are led by CBOs and 20% by CBOs and IGOs. The community-based organisations are engaged in NES activities at both local and national levels. At the national level, around 250 Forests and Pastures Users Associations (FPUAs) are represented through the CCC by NFCFPA and three Regional Forest Federations (Kukes, Korça and Dibër)

STRATEGIC PARTERS AND CORE DONORS



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NES

NATIONAL
ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGY

National Engagement Strategies - often referred to as "NES" - are multi-stakeholder platforms set in motion by the International Land Coalition (ILC). They are led by national actors, and include ILC members and partners to promote the Coalition's joint goal of people-centred land governance.

NES platforms are helping to simplify and unpack land governance complexities by setting priorities and suggesting solutions to some of the most difficult land-related issues in a country. NES platforms are promoting collaboration and bridging the gap between government, the private sector, civil society including grassroots organisations, international agencies, traditional authorities and academia.

All ILC members have the opportunity to set up national platforms with the technical and financial support of the ILC.

These platforms use ILC's 10 commitments to people-centred land governance as their compass, while promoting the Voluntary Guidelines for Land Tenure (VGGTs) and the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa.

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