



Economics of Land Degradation in Central Asia

Экономика деградации земель в Центральной Азии

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ELD CA National teams defined and visited pilot research sites

According to scientific research plans, developed by national teams, national specialists of five Central Asian countries defined pilot research sites and started the implementation of ELD research activities. Seven pilot sites were selected for research, in addition four more pilot sites will be investigated jointly with initiative's partners. In May 2015, national teams prepared travel plans jointly with international specialists.

First travel to the pilot sites took place in the second part of May and throughout June 2015. The main objective of visits was the preliminary investigation of the sites, defining the situation with land

degradation and the main ecosystem services as well as identified the available information and needs for surveys and other field research. As the result of these visits, the travel reports were prepared.

ELD CA initiative presented at the International Water Forum of Mountain Countries

The International Conference "Forum of mountain countries: Water and mountains", devoted to the International Decade for actions "Water for Life" took place in June 8-10th, 2015 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The conference was organized by the Government of Tajikistan with the support of



In these photos (from left to right): specialist on data collection Iroda Rustamova interviews the farmer (Uzbekistan); Lead Economist Rakhmon Shukurov presents at Dushanbe Water Forum (Tajikistan); Team of ELD specialists discusses land degradation issues with shepherds of Erbent village (Turkmenistan). Source: travel reports of ELD country's team.

regional and international partners. The main objective of the forum was to discuss the implementation of the international decade, including development of recommendations and proposals for strengthening activities at the regional level, related to the water, as well as awareness raising of the international community regarding results of activities to solve water issues (more details available at <http://waterforlifeconf2015.org/>)

Members of the country team of Tajikistan, including Rahmon Shukurov, Murod Ergashev and Madina Imaralieva, presented the ELD CA Initiative at this meeting. A day before the main conference, the forum organized the plenary meeting “Inclusion of the Sustainable Mountain Development into the process of political decision-making”. Within the fourth morning session of this plenary, the team leader of the ELD team in Tajikistan presented a key-note presentation “Economics of Land Degradation in Central Asia: approaches, instruments achievements for policy making”. In the subsequent dialogue, participants discussed potential inclusion of the existing experiences in political decision making and the potential role of the mountain communities in improvement of the land resource management.

Results of this forum will be presented at the 70th session of the UN Assembly.

ELD CA National teams defined ecosystem services and their valuation methods

Within the framework of research plans, national ELD teams of all five Central Asian countries defined the main ecosystem services and methods of their valuation. As the result of initial site visits and performed primary research, which included interviews, surveys with local communities and government officials, visits of ecosystem services provision sites, specialist identified relevant ecosystem services and related valuation methods. This was supported by online consultations on valuation methods by ICARDA economist Emmanuelle Quillerou. The regional ELD coordinator Oleg Guchgeldiyev performed face-to-face consultations with ELD specialists in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan during the visits in June 2015.

Beside the methodology of economic valuation, specialists discussed issues of data availability and potential sources for information.



Presently, specialists of five countries develop questionnaires and other materials for the second visit of the pilot sites to perform data collection. Re-visit of the sites is planned for the second part of July until the beginning of August 2015.

ELD CA and UNDP BIOFIN project in Kazakhstan defined the cooperation during the meeting in Astana

In June 24, 2015 UNDP Kazakhstan organized and performed the conference in Astana, devoted to the discussion of the integration of ecosystem services approach into development and implementation of the Green Economy Strategy of Kazakhstan. The conference presented experiences from Vietnam, Mongolia, Russian Federation and Turkmenistan on the use of economic valuation of ecosystem services, national green accounts and other instruments to integrate principles of Green Economy, and discussed their applicability of these instruments in Kazakhstan. Proposals on integrating the results of the ELD CA in development and realization of the Green Economy Strategy were presented in the conference.

During the meeting negotiations between the regional coordinator of the ELD CA and the project manager of the BIODFIN project of the UNDP Kazakhstan took place to discuss ways of cooperation in implementation of the Initiative's research in the republic of Kazakhstan.

In particular, parties agreed to cooperate in researching mountain forests jointly with Turkish colleagues, who will be financed by the Turkish Ministry of Forest and Water Management as a contribution to the ELD CA. Furthermore, discussions on the implementation of the results of initiative in Kazakhstan took place.



On this photo: Gigantic saxaul (Haloxylon) in Bakanak forestry organization (Kazakhstan). Source: travel reports of the ELD specialists' teams

Strengthened the cooperation between ELD CA and partners in the region

Being part of the global ELD Initiative, the ELD in Central Asia is implemented by the network of partners, who work together on achievement of Initiative's objectives. The Initiative binds together international organizations, national and regional specialists, academic and governmental institutions for widening thematic and geographical coverage of the research, as well as awareness-raising and for comprehensive, multi-level implementation of recommendations of the initiative.

Currently the initiative signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a number of organizations and works on implementation of joint research activities.

In **Kazakhstan** negotiations take place to sign the agreement on cooperation with republican forestry division, as well as with Almata provincial forestry division. Specialists of Scientific-Innovative Institute on Forestry by the Kazakhstan Agrarian University actively take part in the initiatives. The Turkish Ministry of Forest and Water Management provided funding for two Turkish specialists, who will be working jointly with the BIOFIN project by the UNDP Kazakhstan. Negotiations are currently ongoing to engage specialists of the regional branch of the ICRAF (International Center for Research on Agroforestry) to research wetlands in Il-Balkhash region.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, the initiative signed a MoU with the American University of Central Asia. Students of the university will participate in the field research of mountain pastures. The ELD specialist's team also performs joint research with Central Asian Regional Environmental Center (CAREC) and German Organization for International Cooperation (GIZ).

In **Tajikistan**, currently the memorandum is being signed between the Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of Tajikistan. ELD country specialists were strengthened by an economist, provided by the German Organization for International Cooperation (GIZ).

In **Turkmenistan**, the successful cooperation with the National Institute of deserts, flora and fauna was established. The Union of Economists of

Turkmenistan is also involved in the research.

In **Uzbekistan**, the research is performed by specialists of the Tashkent Agrarian University, with which the agreement on cooperation was signed.

At the international level, **the Secretariat** of the Initiative works on synchronizing the efforts in the field of the sustainable land management in Central Asian with the large number of the international organizations and projects, such as the World Bank, the Food and Agricultural Organizations and others.



On this photo Collection of the data in Kyzzyrt place, close to the village Tolok, at Son-Kul research site. Source: travel reports of the ELD specialists teams

This is interesting!

Description of research pilot sites in the ELD approach in Central Asian countries

During the first phase of the Initiative's work, country specialists defined the pilot sites for research.

Depending on research topic in each country, pilot site should represent the typical ecosystems and land use pattern not only for the country, but also for the region. In **Kazakhstan**, which possess the largest forest territories and a forestry fund of over 12 million hectares, practically all types of forest

ecosystems in Central Asia are present. For research purposes, Bakanass state forestry agency was selected, which manages desert (*Saxaul*) and riverine forests ecosystems, occupying more than 1.5 million hectares.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, which has the largest territories of the high mountain pastures (45% of total pasture territories), the initiative has selected one pilot site, while two other sites will be investigated jointly with CAREC and GIZ. These sites are located at the Chong-Aksu watershed in the North-eastern part of the country (Lake Issyk-kul), at the Kara-Unkur watershed in the South (Ferghana valley) and at the site of Sonkul Lake (Naryn province).

In **Tajikistan**, where the research is focused at the foothills and low mountain areas (up to 1500 m above sea level), where the main agricultural activities are taking place.

Faizabad region in Rash valley, 50 km east from Dushanbe, was selected as the research site.

In **Turkmenistan**, desert pastures occupy more than 83% of the country's territory and, under sustainable use, can provide the forage for up to 12 million heads of livestock. For the research, three pilot sites with different types of desert pastures were selected: Madau village area in the Southwest of the country (clay desert pastures), Gokdere village in the Northwest (gypsum desert pastures) and Erben village area in Central Karakum Desert (sandy desert pastures).

In **Uzbekistan**, where the research is aimed at the study of the irrigated agriculture, Bukin region of Tashkent district was selected as a pilot area. The region is located in proximity from the capital with significant markets for agricultural products. The agriculture in the region covers the wide spectrum of various types of irrigated agriculture, including cotton and grain production, vegetable and fruit production and other.

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