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Exchange visit on sustainable forest management in Kyrgyzstan (October 2017)



Visit of the Regional department of environmental protection



Walnut plantation in Nursery, Achy leskhoz



Meeting with director of Arlsanbob leskhoz,



Walnut forest of forest users, Aslam bob



Fenced area for afforestation and fodder production, Achy



Fruit orchard, Balykchi

From October 22-27th, a delegation of Tajikistan visited Kyrgyzstan, for an exchange visit on forest management in the framework of the regional programme “Sustainable and Climate Sensitive Land Use for Economic Development in Central Asia”, implemented by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) GmbH and founded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The participants were representatives of the State Forest Agency, the Forest Research Institute and the Public Organization CAMP Tabiat. The participants received a unique opportunity to learn about the current state of the Kyrgyz forest sector, the ongoing institutional reforms, practices of the joint forest management approach and about the recently launched World Bank investment project on "Integrated forest management on ecosystems of the Kyrgyz Republic", where one is component is the institutional reform of 14 leskhozes.

The aim of the exchange visit was to learn about the working processes in the forest sector and about the activities of the integrated forest management approach, as well as about current processes of the forestry sector reform in Kyrgyzstan.

Short description of who we visited:

#	Name	Position
1	Mairambek Aliev	Head of the Forest Development Division at the department of forest ecosystem development, State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry, Bishkek
2	Nodir Uzbaev	Deputy of the Forest Inventory Department
3	Davlet Mamadzhanov	Field coordinator of NGO “Lesik Yug”
4	Zhirgal Kozhomberdiev	Pasture specialist of NGO “CAMP Alatoo”
5	Rahat Borbieva	Coordinator of NGO “Agroleed”
6	Zakir Sarimsakov	Consultant of NGO “Lesik Yug”
7	Lyudmila Abdurazakova	Head of the Department for Forest Development at the Jalal-Abad regional department of environmental protection
8	Nuriddin Yunusov	Director of Jalal Abad walnut research institute
9	Murzabekov Almusakh	Director of Achy leskhoz
10	Karimov Sadik	Main forester of Achy leskhoz
11	Choytoev Kanibek	Director of Kyzyl-Unkur leskhoz
12	Pinzarov Keneshbek	Director of Aslam bob leskhoz
13	Aliev Sharikbek	Main forester of Balikchy leskhoz

Delegation from Tajikistan:

#	Name	Position
1	Salohov Zafar	Main specialist of management department, State Forestry Agency
2	Galchabekov Dovar	Young specialist of the Forest Research Institute
3	Asrorov Adham	Main forester of leskhoz Penjikent
4	Mahkamov Kishovarz	Junior specialist of NGO “CAMP Tabiat”
5	Sarkuliev Alimahmad	Field coordinator of NGO “CAMP Tabiat”
6	Pfefferle Nicole	GIZ
7	Munakov Aslam	GIZ

8	Khoilknazarov Sorbon	GIZ
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DAY 1: Bishkek, meeting with the State Forest Agency:

Department of Forest Ecosystem Development

On the first day of the study tour, we visited the Department of Forest Ecosystem Development (DFED) and got acquainted with the current and ongoing institutional changes in the leskhozoes in Kyrgyzstan. The department was established in 2013, and includes seven regional administrations and 50 forest enterprises. According to the head of the Forest Development Division at the DFED, Mr. Aliev Mayrambek Shaikovich, forests cover 4.3% of the territory of Kyrgyzstan and are unique in their structure and ecological functions. The land area of the State Forest Fund is 3.3 million ha, of which 865,000 ha (26%) is covered by forests. Forests of the Kyrgyz Republic are composed by the following four main species: walnut, spruce, juniper and floodplain trees. Among the forests area, one of the most valuable area is the unique walnut forest located in Jalalabad and Osh districts.

Currently, in the framework of the FAO project “Support the elaboration and Alignment of Forest Policy and Action Plan to SDGs and Climate Change Agenda”, a concept of forestry development for the period until 2040 is being developed, along with an action plan for the implementation of this concept for the period 2018-2022.

According to the Government Decree № 482, all state forest fund land is handed over to local people for short-term period (1 year) or long-term ones of up to 49 years. The selection process of a tenant is announced through newspapers. The tender decision is not up to the leskhoz director but other members of aylik motu, and the pasture committees are as well having a vote. Every tenant leasing walnut forest pays 1000 Kyrgyz Som per ha per year according to the contract. The first 5 years is a probation period with the possibility to prolong to 49 years. Currently, 25'000 tenants are involved in forest management throughout Kyrgyzstan. The forest and pasture lands are distributed to local population on the base of a tender/competition.



Meeting with DFED, Bishkek



Meeting with NGOS, Bishkek

Similar to the JFM approach in Tajikistan, the Community Based Forest Management (CBFM) is practiced in the south of Kirgizstan, as one of the tools for Forest Management,

but according to our Kirgiz colleagues CBFM was not always successful. They think the JFM decree does not have a real authority. Also, the local population was not ready for the approach, because the forest area is not sufficient for big number of local population.

The population of Kyrgyzstan is dependent on forest and pasture resources, such as fruits, timber, firewood, grazing area, and hay. However, a steady population increase and increase in livestock numbers, ineffective management and challenges related to climate change have put the sustainable use of these resources under great threat. Therefore, a gradual transition to innovative and adapted principles of management in the forest sector in order to stimulate the sustainable and rational use of available resources with the participation of local communities, taking into account expected climate change impacts, is needed. A gradual reform of the forest sector with broad participation of all stakeholders will ensure achievement of environmental, economic and social objectives in this sector. As part of reforms in pilot leskkozes, councils of joint forest management (CJFM) have been established.

Some main results from the reform:

- A consultative coordination council (CCS) at national level has been established;
- Regulations for pilot leskkozes have been developed;
- Councils of joint forest management have been established;
- The economic function of leskkozes are being transferred to the private sector for improving local people's livelihood.

Meeting with International organizations and NGOs in Bishkek JICA, WB, RDF, FAO and Kirgiz NGOs (CAMP Ala-too, Agroleed, Lesik-Yug):

CAMP Ala-too supported the establishment of JFMC, which were supported by GIZ, but developed and approved by the State Agency for forestry. JFMC is the platform for discussion and give recommendations for decision making for leskkozes. It consists of representatives from the pilot leskkozes, ayil okmotu, pasture committees, forest/pasture users, local communities, NGOs, international organizations and other stakeholders.

Lesik-Yug: situation in leskkozes before the project – high number of livestock and low survival rate of forest plantation. Activities:

- fencing of rented plots,
- provision of plantation materials from nurseries (each pilot leskkozes has nurseries)
- contract conclusion with 69 households,
- support to afforestation 20ha according to leskkoz plans
- plantation of tree seedlings in haymaking areas

DAY 2-5: Exchange visit to the project implementation area Jalal-Abad

Short project description

In Jalal-Abad, in the south part of Kyrgyzstan, GIZ in collaboration with the consulting company UNIQUE forestry and land use, and with four local NGOs (Lesik-Yug, AgroLead, RAS JA and CAMP Ala-too), is implementing the project "Community-based management of walnut forests and pasture in Southern Kyrgyzstan" financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The project duration is from 2014 to October 2017

2018. The project supports state agencies and local communities (forest offices, pasture communities, local self-government) in developing joint management plans for natural resources. Besides encouraging the introduction of the national forestry reform, this management plans will help to establish a balance between the roles and responsibilities of different actors involved in forest and land management.

The main elements of the project are:

- a) piloting the integrated sustainable management of pastures;
- b) afforestation and cultivation of high productivity and climate resilient forest plantations;
- c) alternative income generation and value chain development

Meeting with local NGOs and project partners:

Representatives of NGOs presented their project activities, existing problems, results and achievements.

Please follow the link to access their presentations:

<https://forestry-tj.klink.asia/dms/documents/groups/42?page=3>

The main objective of involving NGOs into the project activities is sustainable forest and pasture management, biodiversity conservation, adaptation to climate change, conservation of natural resources and increase of income of local people.

The PO "Lesik-Yug" supports the project implementation with technical consultancy for the local population and leskhozoes and the development of their capacity. More than 65 hectares in the territory of six leskhozoes have been fenced and walnut trees have been planted. Sixty nine agreements between leskhozoes and forest users have been concluded for the re- and afforestation of state forest fund land. The tenants are supported in using innovative methods of water supply, improvement of seeds and planting material, and are equipped with tools and mechanisms (a cultivator and the necessary materials for nurseries). Forest specialists selected mother trees that are growing very well for which they then use the seeds for future plantation. These trees are called "plus" trees and receive some sort of a passport to document their data. In the area 10-15 in each leskhozoe (around 70 in total) potential plus trees have been identified. At the breast height of the tree a white strip is painted and they are marked with a number which is registered in a special journal. The undergrowth of the tree is then cut. In the future, seeds are collected from the tree, and planted separately from others. These high quality seeds will be used for afforestation.

During spring time of this year, the seeds from the "plus" trees have been planted in plastic packets with a closed root system, in order to obtain a reliable, highly productive planting material. Further, a method of vegetative propagation by a grafting method for walnut has been introduced. Additionally, the cultivation of fast-growing tree species has been supported as an alternative source of firewood and building material. In order to disseminate the knowledge and experience to other forest users, trainings for forest rangers and tenants on sowing and planting of valuable trees and shrub plants were conducted. Additionally, ToTs

for teachers in 20 schools of the pilot region have been conducted in order to improve environmental awareness in schools.

Three hydraulic ram pumps have been purchased by GIZ for the construction of irrigation systems and were installed in Arslanbob, Achi and Kyzyl-Unkur. The coordination of this work on irrigation is done by Lesik Yug. For the regional forest protection station the biologic pesticide “**Lepidocid**” (*Bacillum Thuriqensis*) was purchased. Lepidotsid is intended for the protection of crops against caterpillars of lepidopterous insects (gipsy moth, cherry slug, silkworms, geometrids, listovertka, scoops, moths, white butterflies, etc.). Additionally, individual fences were installed in order to help preserve the natural renewal and rejuvenation of plantations on forest plots.



Meeting with a head of Division at the regional department environmental protection, Jalal-Abad



Meeting with different NGOs in Jalal-Abad

CAMP Ala-too

Representatives of CAMP Ala-too acquainted the participants with their project activities and with a new model for pasture management, which is piloted in the south of Kyrgyzstan. The project is working with six leshozes and one forest reserve, with an area of 26'000ha.

In collaboration with the leshozes and pasture committees, the testing of a new pasture management model has been started. The model is the result of an intensive discussion process, facilitated by experts, involving the staff of the forest offices, and representatives of the pasture committees and the district and village administrations. The responsibility for monitoring pastures on State Forest Fund Land (SFF land) remains with the forest offices, while annual pasture use rights are transferred to the pasture Committees.

The object of the project is that selected communities in southern Kyrgyzstan use sustainable forest and pasture management models to protect biodiversity, facilitate the adaptation to climate change, support the conservation of forests and improve incomes of the local population.

The following main successes and challenges of the pasture management model were identified:

Successes:

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- later start of the grazing season on SFF land (earliest starting date is the 25th of May)
- resting places during cattle movement is strictly restricted to designated areas
- clearly indicated number of livestock on the pasture tickets
- negotiations between two areas, Bazar-korgon and Toguz-Toro, have been facilitated in regards to sharing pasture areas, as there is insufficient pasture land in Bazar-korgon
- more than 50 training-seminars on sustainable pasture management have been conducted

Challenges:

- Within the existing pasture management system the local communities are legally not able to participate yet in the management activities. This process is under discussion, but going very slow. The leskhozoes hesitate to involve additional parties in the process.
- 50-70% of the pasture land is already degraded due to overgrazing
- lack of concrete plans for pasture management on SFF land
- no financial mechanism to incentivize sustainable pasture management on SFF land
- conflicts among pasture users over land resources
- limited partnership between leskhoz and pasture committee
- unregulated grazing due to lack of a grazing norm
- overgrazing due to a large number of cattle
- lack of a pasture monitoring system

AgroLead

The Public Organization AgroLead presented their value chain development activities within the GIZ / UNIQUE project.

The objective is to generate income from the sustainable use of forests. During the project implementation, activities to develop a management plan were carried out and marketing materials developed. Additionally, financial literacy trainings were conducted and access to finance was provided, as well as exchange visits with successful Tajik cooperatives and trainings on sustainably harvesting forest products organized. Currently, the Kyrgyz walnut products have been successfully exported with a Fair Trade certificate and marketed in the Netherlands. In 2013 the cooperative "Kirgiz Tokoy Baylygy" was established, which has 164 members from 5 leskhozoes. This cooperative passed an international audit and received the "Fair trade" certificate. For more detailed information, please follow the link: www.ktbcoop.org.

Every year a walnut festival is organized in Jalal-Abad. The purpose of the festival is to attract public attention to the problems of the walnut forest of the region and to market walnuts, as well as to increase the consciousness of forest users regarding the importance of walnut forest preservation, to attract investment, and to create a positive image of south Kyrgyzstan.

Field visits:

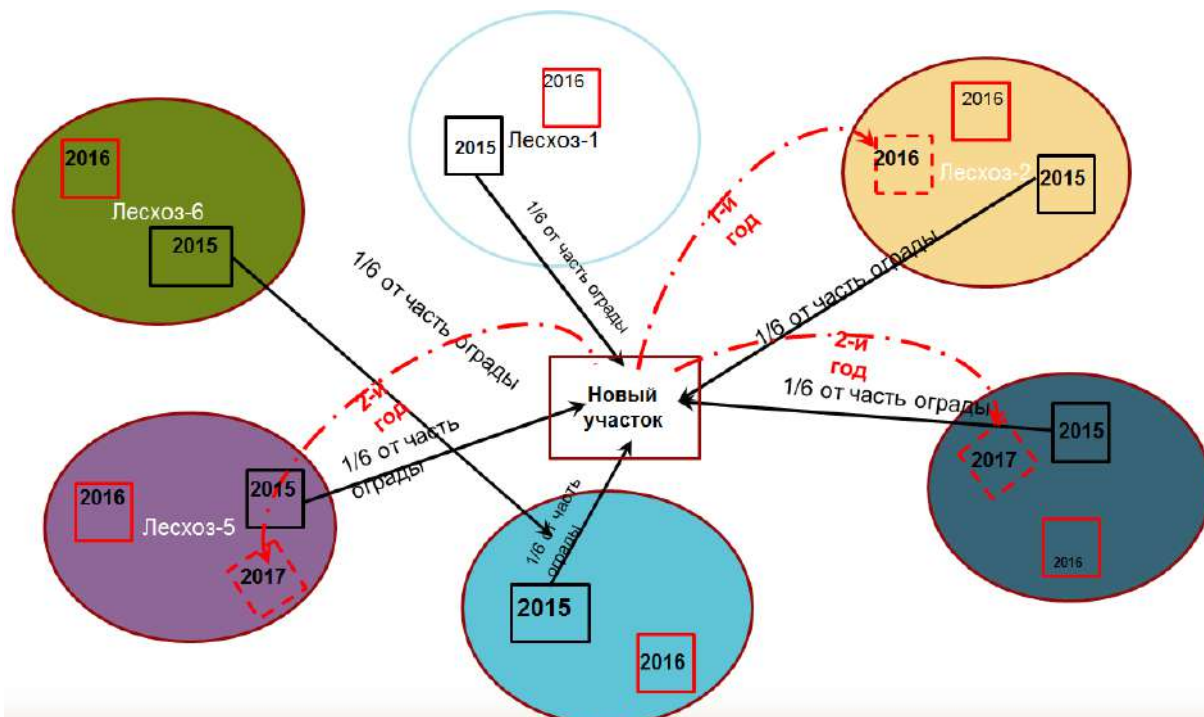
Besides the theoretical sessions, the tour included a practical part, where participants visited the Regional Environmental Protection Agency, the Forest walnut institute and project leshozes in Achy, Kyzyl-Unkur, Arslanbob and Balykchi. The participants got acquainted with activities and approaches (credit system for fencing, wind pump for irrigation, creation of orchards, walnut plantation in bare lands, drip irrigation, effective protection ways of seedlings from rabbits, mice and other rodents etc.). The Forest Institute has four laboratories and a nursery for scientific purposes (dendropark) of 1.5-ha. This is a place where the tree and shrub plantations are grown and carrying out a scientific research work. The walnut forests are mainly located in the south part of the country and more than 20 forms of walnut are growing there. Scientists are working on the preservation and restoration of walnut-fruit forests. They are introducing new varieties of nuts of already sorted species such as Panfilov, Uygur, Jubilee, etc. Productivity and quality of these fruit trees are 15-20% higher than those of their wild counterpart



Walnut forest institute, dendropark

Especially interesting for participants was the forest tree nursery of Achi leshoz. There many seeds and seedlings on an area of 0.95 ha, like “plus” walnut trees, as well as many varieties of fruit and conifers, are planted for the distribution to tenants. A new method of grafting walnut seedlings has been introduced. The total area of the Achy leshoz is 13750 ha.

In Kyzyl-Unkur leshoz participants got acquainted with an approach, where the project provides tenants with a wire fence. Over the period of 6 years every year tenants gradually reimburse a 1/6 to pay off the provided fence. With these reimbursements a new fence is purchased every year, which is then handed to a new tenant. The most common source of income from a plot is hay making in the fenced area. Before, people bought hay from the market, but since the introduction of the approach they produce enough hay for their own .



Distribution and payments of fences

The selection process of new tenants is quite ingenious. The leskhoz suggests 3 forest plots. The members of the tender commission are from two to three NGOs, from the leskhoz and from the local ayil motu to ensure transparency of the selection. Afterwards the members jointly with the current tenants choose a plot.

DAY 6: Visit to Balychy Leshoz near lake Issyk Kul

In the north part of the country in leskhoz Balykchy local people receive bare land to cultivate fruit tree plantations - on the area of about 2000 ha. Most people are interested in cultivating apricot orchards, as 1 kg apricot can be sold for 40-45 Som. In general people of Balykchy district promote their high-quality goods to Kazakhstan's and Russia's markets.

The leskhoz owns a refrigerator to keep tree/shrub seedlings in a state of hibernation, in order to do summer grafting. Irrigation canals, of a total lengths of more than 2,5 km, were built in the past two years, that enabled afforestation of 200 hectares of desert land. This approach brought good income for the leskhoz.

The demand for firewood is high in the area, but the resources for that are not enough. Since the Balykchy region is rarely covered with forest, forest land are being distributed to the local population as an incentive to increase the livelihood as well as to reduce illegal use of forest resources. According to the main forester of Balykchi leskhoz sanitary cutting is allowed.



Drip irrigation in Balykchi leskhoz area



Lessons learnt for Tajikistan:

Feedback from the participants:

- The idea of a credit system for fencing the pasture and forest areas could be applicable to Tajikistan;
- The use of wind and electric pumps would be too expensive for forest users in Tajikistan;
- The pasture management approach is different, as the main focus of the tenants in Balykchi leskhoz is on the income from fruits, and less on biodiversity, sustainability and adaptation to climate change
- The model for pasture management approved by SFA in Kirgizstan is a good approach. In case of Tajikistan it would be nice to intensify the discussion on a model for pasture management and monitoring.
- The grafting system showed in the research institute was impressive and it could be tested in Tajikistan The biological pest control by Kirgiz colleagues was also impressive