

QUALITATIVE REPORT ON THE TEACHING MODULE

Introduction

The Focus Groups Survey in Ajara, 2014, revealed that wild animal attacks, mainly bear and wolf, on the cattle was one of the constraints in livestock husbandry. There was no data management system and mechanisms to face the issue on the municipal level. In 2015, ALCP facilitated the Black Sea Eco Academy (BSEA) to conduct the [*Baseline Survey of the Human Wildlife Interface in the Autonomous Republic of Ajara*](#).

The survey revealed negative attitudes of farmers towards wild animals and low awareness on the benefits that wildlife confer in relation to developing Ajara as a rural tourism destination, where biodiversity and wildlife conservation play such an important role. The farmers tried to deal with the problem by themselves and did some preventive activities independently with the traditional remedies.

Following this research, next step was to develop the *Teaching Module for Conservation Education for Schools in Ajara* by the BSEA with the programme facilitation, to contribute for positive understanding and overcoming the fear of wild animals with the profiles of each animal, their life, habits and statistical information. The module consists of 20 lessons for 9-12 grade schoolchildren. In November, 2016, the BSEA conducted information trainings and demo lessons on usage of the module for 200 teachers from all five municipalities of the region and sent out electronic versions.

Methodology

30 teachers have already included the information from the module in their lessons and conducted open lessons. It's been in the process for 5 months, thus 20 (7 male) teachers were interviewed to find out the initial outcomes of using the study module materials.

Findings

- Biology and geography teachers have integrated information from the teaching module in their lessons with 9-12 grade students. They have even showed a video on conservation and facilitated the discussion on protection of wild animals; on why they get aggressive and how to behave in the case we meet them. The students asked many questions and were actively engaged in the discussion process in the class.
- As wild animals' attacks on the agricultural products and cattle happen quite often, it is very sensitive issue for the local residents in the villages. So, in the beginning while talking about the importance of wild animals and their protection, and not killing, students expressed the negative attitudes, because many of those students' families were damaged due to the attacks, but after the information provided, they started to think differently and look at the issue from the different perspective. They started to think about the ways to solve the problem with the available resources.
- The students are now more informed; they started to discuss the issue that has led to the changing of their attitudes. They have some new ideas about creating special groups that will move in villages and use the methods, like making noises, fireworks to scare the animals out of the villages.
- The module information has boosted discussion not only among students, but other residents of the villages in so called *birjas*
- As the teachers stated the module contains new information for them too, that makes their lessons even more interesting, with more discussion and interest from the students. The teachers are continuing sharing the information.

- The module has been used by the UNDP environmental project *Junior Rangers* in Mtirala National Park. Within the project, groups have been created with 60 schoolchildren of 4 schools, aged 10-15 years. They were taught about the surviving in the nature, camping, opening tents, and also rules in case of meeting with wild animals. The same project will start in Matchakhela Valley and Kintrishi Protected Area continuing using the module materials.

Challenges

- As the lessons last only for 45 minutes, teachers are not able to fully integrate the information from the module and just use some of it, if it matches a topic of the lesson.
- The module was introduced to the students through open lessons which were organized once and teachers don't plan to do the same next year if it is not required.
- The open lessons were given after finishing the school lessons and not all of the students were present, as it was not obligatory.