

GODERDZI ALPINE GARDEN

A LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Mid-Term Evaluation



ALCP | Alliances Lesser
Caucasus Programme



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Cooperation Office
South Caucasus





Goderdzi Alpine Garden Project

Project implementer:
Batumi Botanical Garden



Project purposes:

- Plant conservation and research
- Supporting eco-education
- Development of rural tourism sector

Project Outcomes:

- Key visitor attraction developed
- Employment opportunities for locals
- Market for local products



Project supporters:



INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH

The ALCP program in Ajara Region decided to conduct a mid-term analysis of the Goderdzi Alpine Botanical Garden, the complex multi-stakeholder intervention, it initiated and facilitated from 2015. This intervention is a long term project, and has involved and will broadly affect many different stakeholders on many levels. However it has not yet generated impact directly.

For a market development programme it can be challenging to evaluate and justify investment in long term projects. Therefore the programme decided to use a *Stakeholder Analysis* to review the development of the intervention and assess its current sustainability.

The key questions of the study included:

- How much influence / involvement do the stakeholders have? What are the stakeholder's interests and expectations from the project.
- Is the project realistic and sustainable?
- What was the ALCP role in it?
- What are farmers' expectations regarding the project?

In-depth interviews were carried out with 16 farmers and 9 other main stakeholders; representatives of central government, local government, business / private sectors, NGO and foreign experts.

The figure below shows the entire process of the research using the ***Stakeholder analysis tool***;

Project Documents
Reviewed

Stakeholders
Identified

Stakeholders
Interviewed

Stakeholders
Interest / Power
Identified

Stakeholders
Analysis Report
Complied



ABOUT THE PROJECT

Background

The *Rural Tourism Market Analysis* (ALCP 2014) conducted in the inception phase of the new ALCP programme in Ajara region, a region famous for its beauty and bio diversity as well as for the tourist hotspot of Batumi, identified the potential of rural tourism to provide an opportunity to diversify and improve the local economy and benefit small scale farmers. Done well it can play a significant role in the sustainable development of rural areas, enhancing conservation, environmental awareness and custodianship and providing market opportunities for local farmers who live there. In 2014, constraints to realizing this opportunity included poor understanding of environmental conservation and the economic opportunities it can provide, poor understanding of the value of biodiversity; lack of clear focal points or attractions for tourists to 'go to' and appropriate tourist infrastructure and a lack of information available to tourists on rural tourism opportunities beyond superficial marketing from Batumi. It was clear that small piece-meal initiatives such as the few guest houses that had been supported to that point, could not give the sector the boost and focal point it needed. The pro poor opportunity of a large scale focal point bringing together and highlighting the value of the region's beauty, biodiversity and local culture was identified. Stimulation of the rural tourism market and growth in the sector would bring opportunities for market access for compliant livestock products and synergize with private sector (dairy, meat and honey) and local government (WEE, DRR and Conservation) ALCP initiatives.

Goderdzi Alpine Garden (GAG)

The idea for the construction of the Goderdzi Alpine Garden (GAG) came from a meeting between the ALCP and the Batumi Botanical Garden (BBG). An idea had been floating for years but was finally set in motion by the facilitation of ALCP. The project aims to collect local plant species, conserve and preserve endangered species, support eco education and restore the subalpine forest line, stimulating development of the local rural tourism sector.



PROJECT PLAYERS AND ACTIVITIES

GAG will open in August 2018

100%

₾ 2,270,000
of funds Already raised



6 Staff members working in the GAG

Salaries are allocated by Batumi Botanical Garden

Type of contribution

1. Capacity building, Garden Arrangement & infrastructure development, Design, Communications (Gas, electricity), Operational/Administrative
2. Garden design, Administrative/ Capacity building, Construction, Assets, Meetings & Conferences
3. Garden arrangements & development
4. Administrative, Fund raising for construction & development
5. GAG promotion/ Information dissemination, Garden arrangements & infrastructure development
6. Garden project development & publicity, Infrastructure development (Road, and other)
7. Capacity building (training, planning and management Garden) & Research, Garden arrangements & development
8. Garden arrangements & infrastructure (building children's playground)
9. Garden arrangements & infrastructure (picnic area and paths)

Stakeholders

1 Batumi Botanical Garden

Status: Local Government
Stakeholder: External
Contribution: 206,964 ₾

2 Alliances Caucasus Programme ALCP

Status: NGO
Stakeholder: Internal
Contribution: 269,734 ₾

3 Adjaristskali

Status: Business
Stakeholder: External
Contribution: 250,000 ₾

4 Batumi City Hall

Status: Local Government
Stakeholder: External
Contribution: Non-monetary

5 Department of Tourism of Ajara (Ajara Tourist Products Development Agency)

Status: Local Government
Stakeholder: External
Contribution: Non-monetary

6 Khulo Municipality

Status: Local Government
Stakeholder: External
Contribution: Non-monetary

7 Munich Botanical Garden

Status: Foreign partners, expert
Stakeholder: External
Contribution: Non-monetary

8 Foreign investor

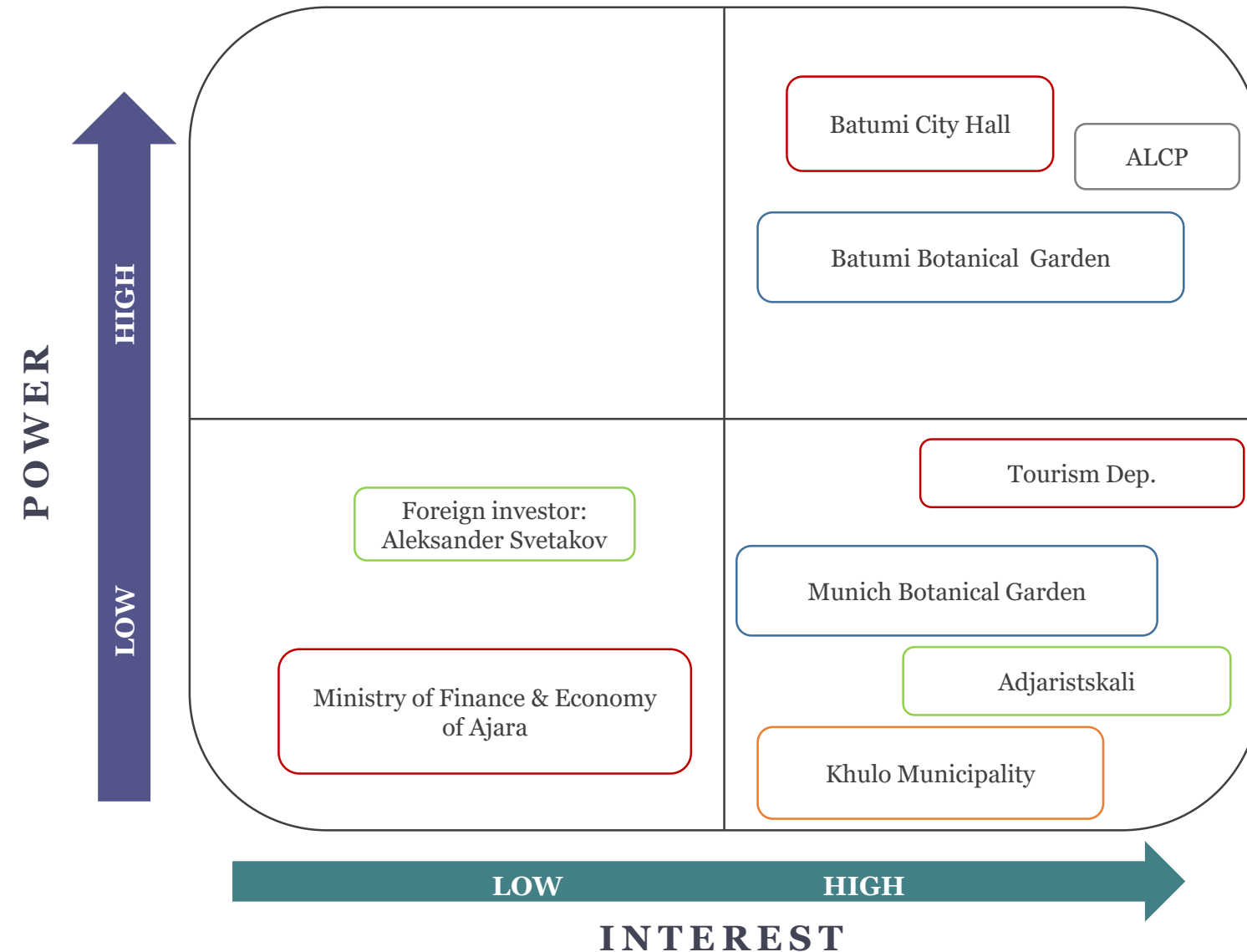
Status: Business
Stakeholder: External
Contribution: 1,200,000 ₾

9 Ministry of Finance and Economy

Status: Government
Stakeholder: External
Contribution: 343,000 ₾*

INFLUENCE AND POWER

Stakeholder Matrix



The two dimensional matrix shows the position of the project stakeholders, determined by power and interest criteria within the scope of the project. The matrix shows governmental sector's high power and interest based on its main decision making capacity in scope of the project.

The ALCP programme is positioned equally to the government as a key initiator of GAG idea along with Batumi Botanical Garden; it plays a leading role in the project implementation and facilitation processes and drives it towards progress. Without the ALCP it is unlikely that the project would have been implemented.

- Government
- Local Government/ Agency
- Business/ Private
- NGO
- Botanical Gardens

INVESTOR ROLES, INTEREST AND MOTIVATIONS IN THE GAG PROJECT

This section shows how the stakeholder's are involved in the project and highlights their interest and expectations in this context.



1. Batumi Botanical Garden



The idea came from BBG who publicised the project and facilitated the involvement of the different stakeholders starting with Batumi City Hall to practitioners from the European countries.

Local plant collection, conservation, preservation of endangered species, support of eco education and the restoration of the subalpine forest line, stimulating the development of the local rural tourism sector

2. Batumi City Hall



ბათუმის მთავრობა
Government of Abkhaz

The BBG used its contacts with the Batumi City Hall (the BBG is operating under it) which provided its support by securing the land (about 10 ha) for GAG development from the Government of Georgia and transferring ownership rights to the BBG in a time efficient manner.

Takes responsibility for preparing and submitting the GAG permit documents. Also, is in charge of raising additional funds for GAG construction and development.

3. ALCP

ALCP

Alliances Lesser
Caucasus Programme

The idea for the construction of the Goderdzi Alpine Garden (GAG) came from a meeting between the ALCP and the Batumi Botanical Garden (BBG). The idea had been floating for years but finally was pushed with the facilitation of ALCP.

Apart from facilitating the development of the project ALCP has been involved in the provision of various activities including Garden Design, Administrative/ Capacity building, Construction, Assets, Meetings & Conferences.

INVESTOR ROLES, INTEREST AND MOTIVATIONS CONT:

3. Adjaristskali



Over the next three years support and assistance in the development of the garden in line with the Company's Social Responsibility Policy which is focused on environmental protection.

2,4,5: The Khulo Municipality



Issued the construction permit for the fence and gates using simplified procedures and within a short period of time, which usually takes few months.

- Khulo Municipality will rehabilitate the access road (3km) to GAG and provide electricity.

- Within the new annual budget, the Municipality plans to provide electricity for the Beshumi resort which is near the GAG and the municipality decided to include the GAG in this plan and provide electricity power lines there too.

To communicate about the GAG and its further impact on local livelihoods. The Municipality representatives are very enthusiastic and constantly highlight the GAG while meeting with locals and giving interviews to the media.

5: Department of Tourism and Resorts of Ajara



GEORGIAN NATIONAL
TOURISM ADMINISTRATION

Placed the GAG in its brochures and maps to be published and distributed in May and will support GAG's further promotion.

As for the future, they plan to add GAG to the tourist destinations of Ajara region and diversify their products. They will also promote the project in future within their communication channels

The Department of Tourism and Resorts of Ajara was involved due to its position in the tourism sector of the region.

3,5,6: Government of Ajara/ Ministry of Finance and Economy of Ajara



The project is greatly supported by the Government of Ajara. The Chairman of the Ajara Government, besides promoting the GAG in his public speeches, introduced the GAG to the Russian investor who was interested in donating to the GAG for the construction of a children's playground, as a continuation of similar multiple projects in other countries. The negotiation process is ongoing.

Furthermore, one of the largest contributors to the project is the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Ajara, it allocated 383,000 Gel from its budget for the construction of paths and a picnic area in the GAG.

It is willing to contribute further, as the GAG meets with the Ministry's infrastructural projects being implemented in Ajara mountainous regions and is linked with the Goderdzi Ski Resort (also financed by the Ministry), forming a Summer-Winter tourism season cycle, which in turn creates sustainable income and tourism sector development opportunities.

3: Munich Botanical Garden



Cooperation in the field of research and training. Recommendations to BBG in proper planning and management/ helping BBG in horticultural works, arranging the alpinarium.

3: Foreign investor: Aleksander Svetakov



Was introduced to the GAG project by the Government of Adjara and was interested in donating (about 1,200,000 Gel) to the GAG for construction of a children's playground, as a continuation of similar multiple projects in other countries. The investor is not directly involved in the facilitation process.

FARMER'S PERSPECTIVES

A large part of the local population from the nearby villages of GAG are informed about the ongoing project. They have positive attitudes and perceptions towards GAG and regard the project as economically beneficial for them and their villages.

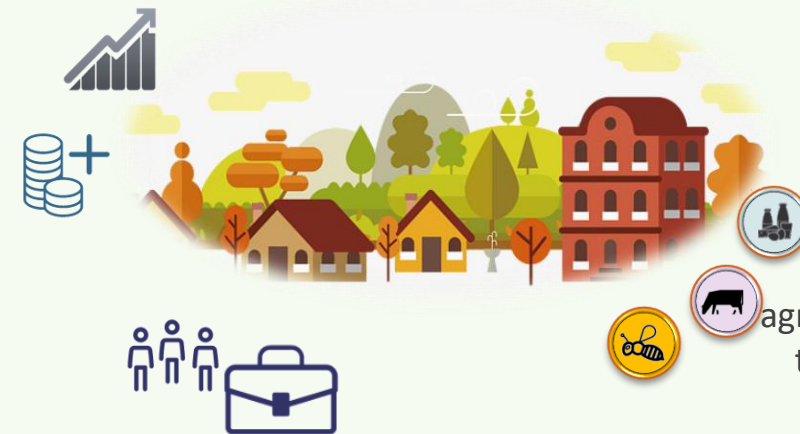
Most farmers see the project as an opportunity to attract more tourists and visitors to the municipality that will create sources for more income mainly through the development of accommodation for visitors and the provision of local products such as dairy and meat. This is motivating them to create/ enhance tourist services. One example is a farmer in Dioknisi village who has already applied for a loan (30,000 USD) from the Bank of Georgia,, to build a guesthouse and keep a small number of improved breed of cows for dairy product production for guests due to his high hopes for the GAG.

Other common responses recorded during the interviews:

- The new **potential market for selling milk and dairy products (i.e. to guest houses)** encourages local farmers to keep their livestock and improve the quality of their cows.
- Additional prospects for **employment**, will encourage young people and family heads to stay in the municipality rather than go abroad (Turkey) or to Batumi to find work
- Opportunities for **developing the municipality**, in terms of infrastructure and economy will prevent migration from the villages.

A few of the interviewed farmers had misconceptions regarding the project, thinking that the GAG area would cover summer pastures of Shkernali, where they have houses and might make them eligible for compensation. However all land holders and users were carefully considered in the development of the project and choice of site.

Opportunity for developing the municipality, in terms of infrastructure, economy...



Additional prospects for employment and development in the municipality

Improved market potential in the agricultural sector due to the opportunities afforded by visitors staying in local accommodation.

"Tourists will be attracted by this garden. They will come and stay and spend some money on food, local crafts and other things. Fortunately, we have such beautiful nature and why shouldn't we use it?"

Female farmer, 45, Maniaketi village

BBG IN THE MEDIA: COVERAGE AS A PROXY INDICATOR OF SUSTAINABILITY

More than 100 articles / news items written about BBG

The project is already being promoted on TV, Radio and social media. The government is actively involved in the promotional campaign and the importance of the project is always emphasized by government representatives.



გაერო

“Alpine Botanical Garden will be opened in summer 2018. The development of the project was started by the Alliances Caucasus Programme funded by SDC and implemented by Mercy Corps – Georgia.”

NEWS

“New Alpine Botanical Garden will cover 10 ha land and will be located in the mountainous Adjara, 2,000 metres above sea level.”

EPN

“Goderdzi Alpine Botanical Garden will contribute to the economic development of mountainous Adjara.”

GT GEORGIA TODAY

“Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, Zurab Pataradze said that creation of subalpine botanical garden will create new perspectives for tourism development in highlands of Adjara Region.”

Original Research questions



Is the project realistic and sustainable



What was the ALCP role in this project



What are farmers' expectations regarding the project

CONCLUSION

Yes it is. In the context of the increased interest and active engagement of multiple stakeholders from different sectors to establish an environmental hub and a new tourist destination in rural Ajara. Goderdzi Alpine Garden shows good potential for becoming a sustainable project once it starts to operate in August 2018. The financial resources have already been mobilized, staff members have been hired and the project seems to have strong support from local officials.

The ALCP has had leading role in terms of facilitating the project. Based on the Results Chain developed by the programme, implementation of activities for the GAG development has been completed and now monitoring will capture expected impact. This research clearly illustrated that without the programme's support the project would not have been implemented in the near future.

Local farmers are aware of the project from meetings and media campaigns and have a positive attitude towards the project and believe that it can bring them some benefits including: playing an important role in strengthening the economy by stimulating markets for local products, raising public awareness about conservation and indirectly benefitting animal husbandry.