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giz
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A COVID-19 RESPONSE PROJECT

RESTORATION OF RIPARIAN ZONES IN ARMENIA



ARMENIA
TREEPROJECT
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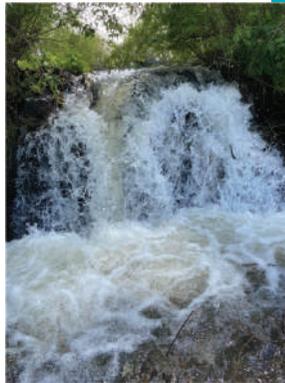
ESAC
"Environmental Sustainability
Assistance Center" NGO

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has had serious economic and social consequences in Armenia. While the long-term adverse effects of the pandemic remain to be assessed, it is apparent that the existing vulnerabilities on the path to Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 are already increasing.

The project “Restoration of Riparian Zones in Armenia” is commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH jointly with the partner Ministries. The RA Ministry of Environment is the political partner and the responsible body of the project. The RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure is a key partner that leads coordination at the regional and community level.

The project cooperates closely with Gegharkunik regional administration, local self-government bodies, and “Sevan National Park” SNCO under the RA Ministry of Environment.



The project supports the Government measure #15 aimed at countering the social consequences of COVID-19 pandemic in Gegharkunik region of Armenia by providing temporary employment and income to individuals most affected by the social and economic consequences of the pandemic, while concurrently addressing environmental problems. In the framework of restoration of riparian zones, willow cuttings are planted by local community members in the riparian zones of the rivers flowing into Lake Sevan, along with cleanup of riverbeds, riverbanks, and other nearby areas.

The local supporting partners of the project are **Armenia Tree Project (ATP)** NGO, “**Environmental Sustainability Assistance Center (ESAC)**” NGO, “**Blejan**” environmental, social, business support NGO, and Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Development of Communities (**ISSD**) NGO.



Criteria for Planting Site Selection in Riparian Zones

The riparian zones for planting willow cuttings have been identified according to the following criteria:

- eroded, inclined, and steep riverbanks, where soil restoration and reinforcement are most needed;
- absence of competing interest in using the riparian zones for agricultural purposes;
- sufficient natural humidity and adequate drainage to promote successful rooting and growth of the cuttings;
- support of the local self-government bodies and apparent readiness of the communities to protect the planting sites.

Target Groups

Gegharkunik region has been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, in part due to its relatively high proportion of migrant workers having lost job opportunities because of the pandemic.

Gegharkunik residents most affected by the pandemic are seasonal migrant workers, low-wage workers and the unemployed, informal workers and other socio-economically vulnerable groups, agricultural producers with declining income, and recreational, food, and tourism industry workers facing unemployment. The project created equal opportunities for participation by all adult residents.



Throughout the spring season,
520,000 willow cuttings
were planted in the riparian zones
of Masrik, Argichi, Gavaraget,
and Karchaghbyur rivers flowing
into Lake Sevan by
249 project participants
from the adjacent communities.

During **2021** autumn planting,
480,000 additional willow
cuttings will be planted.

The Restoration of **Riparian Zones
in Armenia** project aligns well with
the initiative of the RA Government
on improving the protection of Lake
Sevan, supported also by the Europe-
an Union in Armenia (**EU4Sevan**).



The project contributes to Green Recovery and the 10 million trees initiative aimed at restoration of ecosystems in Armenia.

Implementation in Spring and Summer, 2021

In April - June, 253 individuals from 10 communities (Tsakkar, Lichk, Artsvanist, Lusakunk, Khachaghbyur, Karchaghbyur, Martuni, Nerkin Getashen, Geghgovit, and Vardenik) of Gegharkunik region took part in the riverbed and riverbank cleanup efforts on rivers flowing to Lake Sevan through the administrative areas of the mentioned communities. A total of 229,4 tons of waste was removed, and 283 kg of recyclable waste were collected and transported to recycling facilities. Prior to starting the cleanup activities, all participants took part in trainings on waste collection, recycling, sorting, safety, and other relevant topics. In addition, more than 100 active residents and change-makers of Gegharkunik region took part in additional practical trainings on conversion of waste into a resource or a source of income. They made handcrafted accessories and other useful secondary items from recyclable waste collected from the riparian zones, which were exhibited near Artsvanist riverbed.



Overall, **502 people** from **18 communities** in Gegharkunik region took part in cleanup and planting activities during Spring and Summer out of which **61 %** were women. The restoration works will continue through **December 2021**.



Expected Results

- Provision of short-term employment to at least **750** individuals that have lost all or part of their income due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- Planting of up to **1 million** cuttings in the riparian zones of Gegharkunik region, as a substantial contribution to ecological restoration of river basins in Armenia.
- Participation of at least **500** community members in environmental trainings and events.
- Assessment of methodology, project implementation and results and development of recommendations for further project activities.

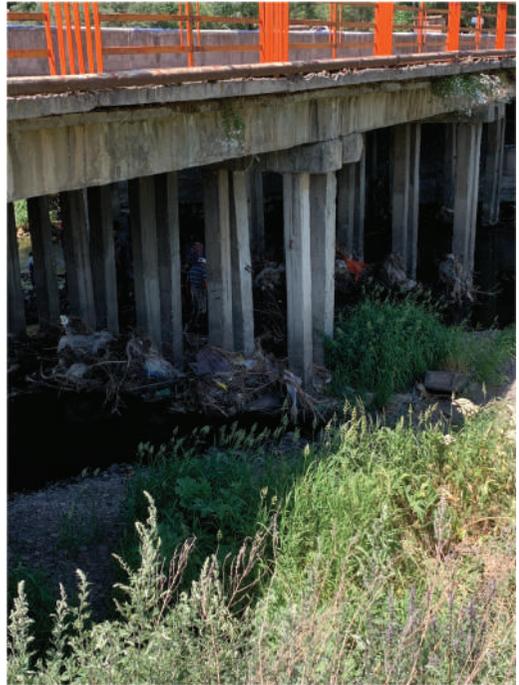


The planting work was authorized by the N749-L Government decision “On approving the organization of works authorized by the Government measure N 15 of neutralizing the economic consequences of coronavirus and on approving the payment procedures to beneficiaries” issued on May 14, 2020.

Long-Term Positive Impacts

The long-term ecological impacts of the project include repaired and rehabilitated riversides and improved spawning habitats for fish, decreased water temperature and evaporation of rivers and streams, and reduction of flooding potential. Among the main socio-economic impacts is the creation of short-term employment with income opportunities for more than 750 individuals from more than 20 communities. There will also be increased environmental awareness of the local population through involvement in ecological rehabilitation work. This restoration will have positive impact on biodiversity, slope protection, and water quality. In the longer term, willow branches can serve as a sustainable source of biofuel (raw material for briquettes).

Significant risks for the project include damage to the cuttings because of early frost and cattle grazing along riversides. Littering of rivers is likely to continue, as well; however, this risk is expected to diminish due to a greatly increased awareness of environmental health in general, and of the apparent benefits of the project.



Sustainability

It is vital to direct joint efforts towards sustaining the initial results of the large-scale activities by the Gegharkunik region communities. Elimination of household waste from rivers and a large population of shade-producing, well-rooted trees will contribute to the remediation of the river and Lake Sevan ecosystems. The Gegharkunik regional administration and the local self-government bodies have a large role to play in the conservation of the riparian restorative layers and in ensuring awareness of the target communities of the importance of environmental stewardship in the region.



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Գերմանական
Կոոպերացիոն
Եվրոպական
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Implemented by
giz
German Development Cooperation

ARMENIA
TREEPROJECT
«ԷՎ ԹԻ ՓԻ» բարեգործական հիմնադրամ

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