

## Partnership with the local communities

The aim of ECF is to create a win-win solution in terms of both nature protection and socio-economic development objectives. To achieve this, the scope of the "Conservation Agreements" is being developed in a combination of two interconnected approaches

**1. Conservation planning** including a landscape plan setting conservation objectives and priorities and geographically or thematically limited land use or resource use plans in partner communities, such as forest management, pasture management, wildlife management, urban development plans. These plans will be discussed in the framework established by the FPA (see below) process in order to secure high level of local participation in the development of the plans in order to get a same understanding of the approach, and to discuss and to agree on the way forward (e.g. to develop and agree the menu of measures and cost norms).

**2. Financial Participatory Approach (FPA)** conducted in partner communities. Each FPA cycle is adapted to the respective programme phase (data collection & analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring) and serves to mobilize local communities, to integrate their knowledge and experience into the programming of the partnership, to set their own objectives, to develop their own organisation and to enhance their ownership. The main tools of FPA are: contests

and awards; capitalisation; training, learning and exchange visits; and media involvement.

The rural populations in all three corridor regions still largely depend on subsistence farming for their survival, leading to high pressure on common natural resources such as forests and pastures. Since the end of Soviet Union, the breakdown of the system of subsidies and collective farming has led to rural decline and widespread rural poverty. The local economic development and sustainability of resource use is largely hampered by the uncertain land tenure, with most land owned publicly. Young generations are looking for job opportunities in the urban areas, but the share of population employed in agriculture is still very high compared to developed countries. Modern rural development programmes and farming support systems are now being developed in the three countries and it is important that nature conservation and environmental concerns are integrated into these policies early on.

Because of the existing land tenure structure, it is expected that most beneficiaries of ECF will be community based organisations and only few individual landowners. Key to the success of the partnership is the ability of local communities to organise themselves, successfully pursue their mission and deliver the results under long term conservation agreements.

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**KFW**



The Caucasus is one of the most important places in the world for biodiversity due to its location between Europe and Asia, its diverse landscape and climate, and the historic connection between its peoples and nature. WWF has been working to protect nature in Caucasus for a quarter of a century. In partnership with the governments of the region and international donors it has successfully strengthened and expanded the network of protected areas in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan and secured the conservation of endangered species such as the Caucasian leopard and Goitered gazelle.

The purpose of the Eco-Corridors Fund for the Caucasus (ECF) is to secure the ecological stability of the region by linking protected areas and securing sustainable land use through contractual nature conservation. The partnership aims both to conserve the

biodiversity of the Caucasus and to increase incomes for the local rural population.

WWF will sign Conservation Agreements with local partners for a period of up to 10 years with clear, achievable objectives and easily measurable performance indicators. Payments under these agreements will ensure that opportunity costs for a biodiversity-focused management of land are covered, and that the sustainable land use practices are applied. In order to provide security and a long term perspective to the beneficiaries, the total funds under the agreement will be deposited in the savings account and released gradually as the required activities are implemented. The beneficiaries will be free to use the proceeds from the Conservation Agreement according to their own needs and priorities.

**GOPA**  
WORLDWIDE CONSULTANTS



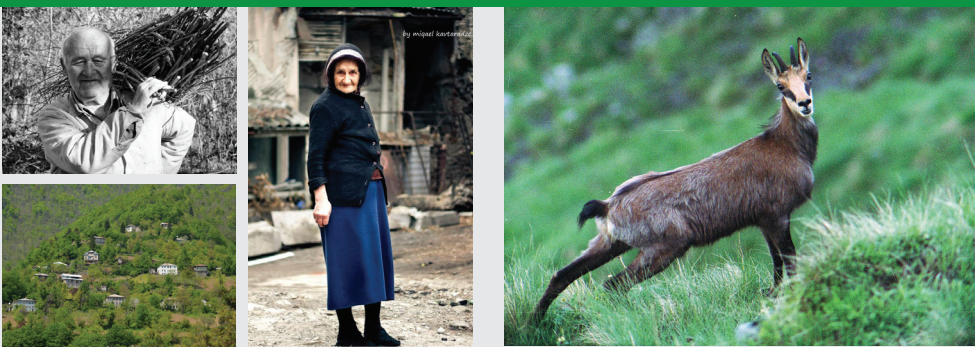


The pilot phase of the ECF is implemented in three priority ecoregional corridors with funds provided by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through KfW Development Bank. The consortium of GOPA Consultants, DFS and HessenForst are providing consulting services for the implementation.

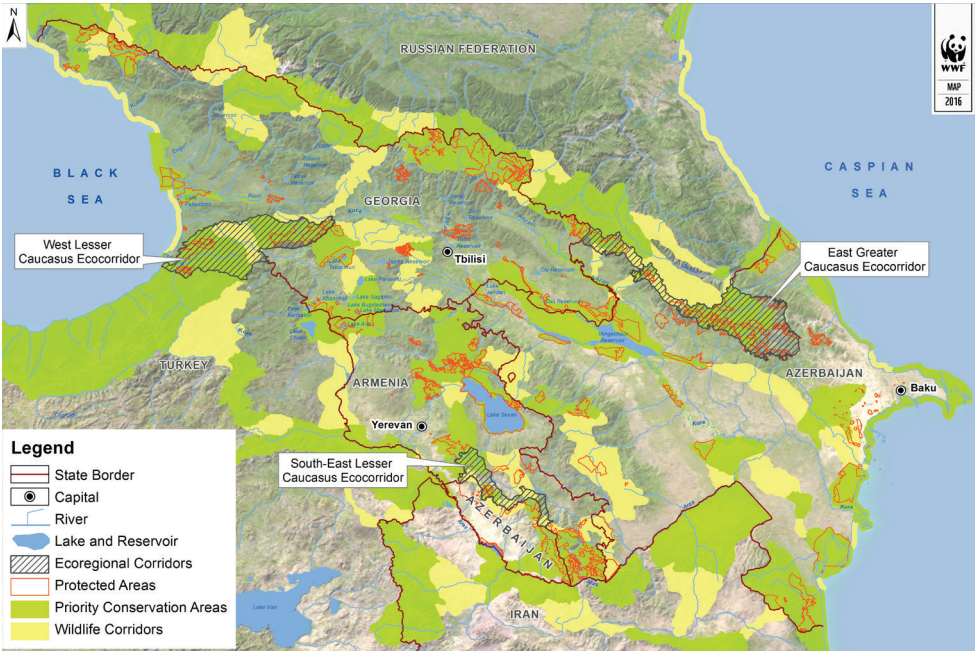
The facility has been designed to be open to other donors, partners and regions. Set-

up and management costs are covered by the initial funding. WWF would welcome the participation of other organisations who wish to support the biodiversity and/or economic development objectives of the partnership.

The three pilot corridors are presented in the Figure 1 and Table 1.



**Figure 1.** Caucasus ecological network as defined in the Ecoregional Conservation Plan, including protected areas and pilot Ecoregional Corridors.



**Table 1.** Three selected corridors with main conservation priorities

Ecological Corridor	Key habitats	Target species	Conservation priorities	Foreseen conservation measures
Southern Lesser Caucasus Corridor in Armenia	Grasslands Woodlands Rocky slopes River gorges	Caucasian leopard Brown bear Bezoar goat Armenian mouflon	Prevent human – wildlife conflict Increase and interconnect the populations of Bezoar goat and Armenian mouflon Reduce the footprint of extensive animal husbandry on grasslands to provide space for wildlife Sustainable management of wild herbivore populations	Community based sustainable grassland management New community conservation areas Community based wildlife management areas
The Greater Caucasus Corridor in Azerbaijan	Forests Grasslands Rivers with gravel beds Gorges Rocky slopes	Eastern Tur Caucasian red deer Caucasian chamois Brown bear	Prevent human – wildlife conflict Restore critical habitats suitable for the three herbivore population Reduce the footprint of extensive animal husbandry on grasslands to provide space for wildlife Prevent over-urbanisation of river gorges Sustainable management of wild herbivore populations	Community based sustainable grassland management New community conservation areas Community based wildlife management areas
Western Lesser Caucasus Corridor in Georgia	Forests Mountain pastures Rocky slopes Rivers	Caucasian red deer Caucasian chamois Brown bear	Prevent human – wildlife conflict Secure expansion of red deer from BKNP to Upper Adjara Secure non-disturbed zones for chamois and red deer within the forest Sustainable management of wild herbivore populations	Community based sustainable grassland management Restoration of habitats suitable for herbivores Community based close to nature forestry Community based wildlife management areas

