

Restoration Cases Flagship Collection

Case #8: Forest and Landscape Restoration for livelihoods and biodiversity in the Shouf, Lebanon



Restoring agricultural land in the Shouf. Source: <http://www.mediterraneanmosaics.org/gallery/>

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In brief

Overview

The Lebanese government initiated an extensive forest and landscape restoration (FLR) project in the Shouf Biosphere Reserve (SBR), Lebanon. The SBR spans ~50,000 ha of mountainous topography along the Mount Lebanon range. Home to a quarter of Lebanon's remaining cedar forests, it is highly diverse with a mosaic of different land covers created by a long history of traditional agrarian practices. Restoration was initially undertaken to restore and conserve the region's biodiversity but quickly evolved to include economic and social goals given the needs of the region. The Al-Shouf Cedar Society (ACS), formed originally to manage the Shouf biosphere reserve, was the main implementation partner. By piloting forest restoration and management interventions that provided synergistic environmental, social, and economic benefits, they demonstrated how FLR could address many challenges the region was facing.

Exemplary Practices

The ACS made exceptionally good use of pilot projects and demonstration plots. Pilots for each type of intervention were implemented with the appropriate stakeholders to demonstrate outcomes. Demonstrating results encouraged farmers to restore terracing and plant trees on private lands, changed government management regimes of overstocked secondary forests, and influenced policy to facilitate future interventions. Building capacity and providing support for all relevant groups at each step of the restoration process was essential to success: for example, they provided support for producing high-quality tree seedlings all the way through finding markets for tree-based products. A three-tiered governance structure with a larger coordinating body, a general implementation and management body, and local stakeholder groups allowed the project to promote policy change and remain coordinated while ensuring that each intervention met local needs.

Key lessons learned

- ◇ *Pilot/demonstration sites were essential for bringing local people, policy makers, and donors on board with activities and promoting their spread.*
- ◇ *FLR should be economically sustainable and costs should be recovered.*
- ◇ *Provide continuous support (technical and financial) from beginning stages to when an intervention can be self-sustaining.*
- ◇ *Promote continuous capacity development by “training the trainers” to teach peers.*
- ◇ *Restoration is an iterative process, learning by doing and using applied research to achieve success.*
- ◇ *Interventions should have economic, social, and environmental benefits that go hand-in-hand and should be demonstrated from the beginning.*