



LEAD4SHIRAK

ARMENIA/SHIRAK

ADC Contract Number: 6549-00/2020

EU Identification Number: ENI/2020/418-154

ANNUAL REPORT #1

Reporting Period: 01/10/2020-30/09/2021



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EUROPEAN UNION FOR ARMENIA



Austrian
Development
Cooperation

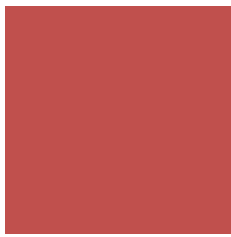


Austrian
Development
Agency



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Advisory Board
ADA	The Austrian Development Agency
ADA CO	Austrian Development Agency Coordination Office
ADC	Austrian Development Cooperation
CB	Capacity Development
CLLD	Community Led Local Development
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DoA	Description of Actions
EGSIM	Environment, Gender, Social Impact Management
ELARD	European LAG Association of Rural Development
ENRD	European Network for Rural Development
EU	European Union
EUD	Delegation of the European Union to Armenia
EUR	Euro
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GALAG	Georgian Association of Local Action Groups
GTC	Gyumri Technology Center
IMPACT	Increasing Migrants' Potential to Act for Development of Armenia
IP	Implementation plan
ITT	Indicator Tracking Table
LA	Local Authorities
LAG	Local Action Group
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEAD	Action Document for Local Empowerment of Actors for Development
LEADER	Links between the rural economy and development actions
MTAI	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure
NEAR	Directorat General Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OC	Outcomes
RA	Republic of Armenia
SSC	Strategic Steering Committee
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme



Project Synopsis

Project Title	LEAD4Shirak, within Local Empowerment of Actors for Development (LEAD) Programme
ADA Contract Number	6549-00/2020
EU Identification Number	ENI/2020/418-154
Implementers	Austrian Development Agency (ADA)
Target country(ies) and region(s)	Republic of Armenia (RA) Shirak region
Type of contract	Contribution Agreement
Start of implementation period	01.10.2020
End of implementation period	30.09.2024
Implementation period in months	48 months
Annual report # and Reporting period	Annual report #1 01.10.2020-30.09.2021
Total amount of EU contribution	EUR 3,496,717
ADC/ADA co-financing contribution	EUR 1,000,000
Other contributions	NA
Reported to	Delegation of the European Union to Armenia 21 Frik Street 0002 Yerevan
Reported by	Office for Technical Cooperation of the Austrian Embassy, Gayi 1, Gyumri Technology Center, Gyumri, Shirak Marz,



1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The LEAD4Shirak Project is part of the EU Local Empowerment of Actors for Development (LEAD) Program which takes its inspirations from the EU LEADER¹. The aim is to enhance local socio-economic development through a multisectoral approach involving local authorities, private sector and Civil Society Organizations.

In mid-January 2021, the Project became operational and with the successful recruitment of staff and the establishment of the office in the Gyumri Technology Centre /Shirak region. Main results achieved are 1) the implementation of a broad information and awareness raising campaign on the LEADER approach, 2) the definition of territories to establish two Local Action Groups (LAGs) in the Shirak region, 3) the commitment of public and private sector representatives to join the LAGs, 4) the elaboration of a regional analysis including a baseline assessment of the Shirak region and 5) the development of the handbook on the LEADER steering structure and delivery system.

The work on the elaboration of the Local Development Strategies in the two LAG areas has been kicked off. An exchange visit of LAG members to Georgian LAGs was organized. Some activities have been affected by the delayed Project start, but are now on track, e.g. the set-up of the financial management system is in process, ongoing trainings of LAG members have been started and the first LEADER conference is planned for November 2021.

Activities carried out during the reporting period (01.10. 2020 – 30.09. 2021)


The **stakeholder consultation process** started with a review of the existing stakeholder list and mapping of Shirak's communities to be visited for introducing the Project and LEADER approach. Besides that, meetings with the Regional Governor, the heads of departments of the regional administration, NGOs, youth clubs and activists in Shirak marz took place.

The **study on the legal status of LAGs in Armenia** (commissioned by UNDP/ FAO) proposes that Local Action Groups should be first set up as informal partnerships which should be turned into formalized partnerships (e.g. NGO, cooperative) at a later stage. Alternatively, a new law on the legal status of LAGs needs to be adopted. The Project contributed to this study with an analysis on the impact of the legal status of LAGs on their eligibility to access funds and to join international cooperation projects.

To start the **process of establishing LAGs**, a series of community meetings were held. The Project commissioned a **regional analysis and integrated baseline assessment** which provide an update of the socio-economic situation of the Shirak region including environmental, gender and social aspects. The LAG areas were defined based on a community development index, existing economical and traditional relations as well as co-operations between communities. Potential members of the **two Local Action Groups** (one in the North and one in the South of Shirak marz) have expressed their interest to join the LAG. Women are highly represented under LAG members with a share from 39 %-51 %.

To ensure local ownership from the beginning, the process of elaborating the LAG's organizational structure and functioning is highly participatory. Two kick-off workshops on the **LEADER steering structure and delivery system** were conducted with the participation of representatives of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MTAI), the Ministry of Economy, regional administration as well as potential LAG members. The functions of the governmental, regional and local levels in the LEADER steering structure were discussed.

¹ LEADER is a French acronym and means "Links between actions for the development of the rural economy" with the aim to support rural projects generated at the local level with the involvement of local rural actors from public and private sector.



The elaboration of the **participatory Local Development Strategies (LDS)** has started with the LAG members. The Project team has prepared a work plan for the LDS elaboration process, its envisaged structure and the organization of the work including the consultation process with the wider communities of the two LAGs. At the same time the set-up of the **organizational structure and functioning of the two LAGs** has been initiated, which will result in the signing of the partnership agreements of LAG members.

The official launch of the EU LEAD program took place in March 2021 with the presentation of the Project's main aim and activities. The focus of the **regional launch** event of LEAD4Shirak Project in July 2021 was put on the engagement of local stakeholders and community members. A **communication and visibility plan** was developed outlining up-coming communication activities and creating the Project's visibility standards. A Facebook account has been established for immediate communication of Project news. The awareness raising and information campaign is ongoing through various media channels and participation in public events.

To ensure a regular exchange of information and align common activities a **coordination mechanism** with the twin project LEAD4Lori & Tavush and Increasing Migrants' Potential to Act for Development of Armenia (IMPACT) project has been established. The joint **Strategic Steering Committee (SSC)** met for the first time in April 2021. The **Advisory Board (AB) for LEAD4Shirak** is under establishment which will provide strategic guidance and endorse grant applications.

Activities planned for the upcoming reporting period (01.10. 2021 -30.09.2022)

The LAGs will be supported to further develop their organizational structure by signing **partnership agreements** and electing **LAG boards**. The recruitment of **LAG managers** and establishment of **LAG offices** will be supported by the Project to facilitate the full functioning of the LAGs. A capacity needs assessment will be carried out among LAG members, followed by a training plan and implementation of trainings for LAG members.

By applying a bottom-up approach the Project team will further facilitate and provide technical support to the **elaboration of the Local Development Strategies**. A practical guide on the establishment and operation of LAGs as well as the LDS development process will be developed. The guide will be made available for further use by potential future LAGs in Armenia.

The establishment of a 3rd LAG is envisaged. The initiative for this 3rd LAG should mostly come from the communities which are not yet in a LAG. Awareness raising and information sharing on the two existing LAGs will create interest and engagement. For this work a 3rd field advisor will be hired.

The grant scheme for local projects will be launched in the beginning of 2022 after a thorough information campaign for potential applicants on the opportunities and requirements to receive funds. The boards of the LAGs will take part in the assessment of proposed projects. The Project support the LAGs in the design and implementation of the **information campaign** regarding the grant scheme support for local projects in the LAG areas.

Technical assistance will be provided to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure to establish a **governance structure** (focal point / managing authority) for LEADER as part of its territorial development policy. Together with UNDP/ FAO the **national LEADER network** will be supported to ensure ownership and the sustainability of the LEADER approach in Armenia. An **advocacy plan** including activities to build the institutional capacity and structures on the governmental and regional level will be elaborated.