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From mountain value chains clustering approaches to integrated landscape management: reflection on an innovative framework, tools and strategies to be implemented in the Gora project (Northern Montenegro).

Mountain ecosystems in Montenegro provide vital services, including water, forest, carbon storage and cultural values. They are at the same time particularly vulnerable to climate change. Small-scale producers are particularly vulnerable to climate shocks as they rarely have the means to anticipate and adapt to these accelerating changes. The multiple impacts of climate change on production systems go beyond drought and heat cycles. Income instability, limited social capital and poor infrastructure are additional barriers that constrain the adaptive capacity of poorer producers in northern mountainous areas of Montenegro.

Gora will seek to address these vulnerabilities through a comprehensive approach, first looking at increasing the resilience of mountainous livelihoods, by replicating the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Rural Clustering and Transformation Project (RCTP)'s rural clustering approach. The success of RCTP in bringing together all the stakeholders of selected commodities translates both in the stable source of income resulting from the outlets negotiated through the clusters, and in the increased social capital, by enabling these local actors to work together in identifying common priorities and goals.

Under its second component, the project intends to leverage the social capital built under the first component to engage all local stakeholders in collectively mapping the key climate vulnerabilities of the local landscape through an integrated landscape management approach. This participatory mapping will take a close look at women, youth and minorities perspective on the local landscape. The resulting local climate resilient landscape strategies will highlight priority areas for resilient investments in green and grey infrastructures protecting both the landscape and livelihoods. Such investments would include the climate proofing of portions of uncategorized rural roads and creation of water storage, at critical points to ensure the breakage of runoff and reduction of erosion risk. Resilient pastoral practices and biotechnical measures will also be piloted in a strategic manner, to restore degraded areas, protect infrastructures and increase water infiltration. These investments will result in a better management of the water flow at ecosystem level, aiming at an enhanced infiltration and water storage upstream, in summer pastures, for reduced runoff and soil conservation downstream. The prioritization of infrastructure will also include livelihood criteria, in relation with priorities identified at cluster level.

Finally, the third component of Gora will aim at mainstreaming mountain adaptation strategies, using the experience of the project to develop detailed vulnerability analysis and maps for all targeted municipalities, and supporting them in developing municipal rural climate adaptation strategies to reflect climate adaptation priorities. Additionally, support will be provided to the National Council for Sustainable Development as a key space to discuss adaptation in Montenegro: a dedicated working group on Mountainous Areas will be established, to act as an arena where mountain adaptation solutions can be discussed and capitalized.

Bibliographic references