

A TURKISH SUCCESS STORY IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: “CAMİLİ BIOSPHERE RESERVE”

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Key Messages/Lessons learnt

- 1-Sustainable development requires balancing the imperatives of improving the livelihood of the local population and preserving biological diversity, and biosphere reserves play a crucial role in achieving this balance.
- 2-Biosphere reserves are the areas that prioritize the needs of local population and nature conservation together, encouraging sustainable development and simultaneously supporting the protection of species, genetic resources and ecosystems.

Biosphere Reserve description

Located within the municipal borders of Borçka District in the Province of Artvin and **declared** as the first biosphere reserve of Turkey, the Camili Basin is an ecological and cultural treasure hidden in Karçal Mountains. The basin, which begins green valleys and reach to high alpine meadows has not been much intervened by human activities. The Basin has temperate rain forests characteristics with a humid climate and an old growth forests that constitutes a large natural ecosystem.

Biological Diversity

Camili Biosphere Reserve contains a wide variety of species and natural ecosystems linked across a considerable range of altitudes (350m-3500m). The particular values for conservation objectives are old growth forests, temperate rain mixed forests and alpine and subalpine ecosystems and aquatic communities. Camili Biosphere Reserve is host to a nearly intact wildlife diversity, which is typical of the area. The

particular values as conservation priorities are genetically pure Caucasian Honey Bee Race (*Apis mellifera caucasia*), Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*), Chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), Caucasian Black Grouse (*Tetrao mlokosiewiczi*), Caucasian Viper (*Vipera kaznakovi*),Caucasian Salamander (*Mertensiella caucasica*),Big Spotted Trout (*Salmo trutta macrostigma*) and migratory raptors.

Historical and Cultural Values

The Camili area has been governed at various times by the Byzantine Empire, the Seljuk Empire, Mongols, the Ottoman Empire, Russians and Georgians. Notable archaeological and historical features in the Camili basin include the Kemer Bridge at the entrance of Efeler village, the Iremite mosque in Maral village, the church in Uğur village, Tamara’s bridge and two old prisons. Due to their isolation, the villagers have retained many old traditions, reflected in their livelihoods, in the design of houses and farmsteads, in the tools and materials they make and use. Traditional dances and old folk

music culture still survive in the area; the villagers have recently formed a Polyphonic Elders' Chorus with a view to preserve traditional songs for future generations.



Figure 1: Location Map of the Camili Biosphere Reserve

Since Camili is a closed basin, the local people **communes** with the forest. Life in the basin is built on combating against the tough winter conditions. Local people rely on natural resources for their livelihood. Human-nature relations are built on traditional knowledge and experiences. The traditional self-sufficient economic structure that longstanding in the Camili basin is closely linked to the forest and the life and depends on the cycles of nature. Relations with nature are provided by activities such as agricultural production, nutrition by using the plants and herbs for the purpose of treatment, firewood and construction wood, livestock, grazing, beekeeping, trout, wild goat and hunting of other wild animals. The continuous interaction between humans and nature in Camili has resulted in a unique cultural landscape and local traditions fitted with the wishes of the community. Therefore, the development of local communities should occur in a way that does not spoil the special characteristics of Camili area. Camili Biosphere Reserve gives a chance to local population to develop a model for sustainable livelihoods. It is now is under their control to establish the right balance between

conservation and development. Thus, maintaining the quality and protection of the Camili region are essential factors. Local culture is in the center of this process and it creates a part of the landscape of Camili. Therefore sustainable development activities in Camili must respect to the local traditions and practices.



Figure 2: The Camili closed basin . Photo by E.Ertürk

BR challenges

- Limited access to the market economy due to the remoteness of the area, harsh weather conditions, lack of transport and high transportation costs. .
- Illegal harvesting of the Caucasian bee (*Apis mellifera caucasia*) and honey
- Invasion of alien bees in the region

Initiatives on SDGs 1, 2,8,11. 12, 15

With the much recognition of new activities in the region like ecotourism, bee keeping, organic honey and hazelnut production and other related practices, the diversity of income generations increased gradually.

SDG 1, 8 &11: Ecotourism and In House Hospitality (Bed& Breakfast)

In 2000, while the number of tourists who visit the region was nearly zero, this figure has increased to one thousand after **declaration** of the area as biosphere reserve by UNESCO in 2005. After the support of small grant programs within the context of the project entitled “Biodiversity and Natural Resources Management Project” executed by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry” in collaboration with the World Bank and with the support of Global Environment Facility (GEF), the number of family pensions increased to twelve and the number of visitors in the basin increased to 2200 by 2006 and 6500 visitors in 2011 and approximately 30.000 visitors in 2013. Currently, the number of pensions is about twenty five, daily overnight accommodation capacity in the basin is average 450 persons. The family pensions consists of traditional wooden houses with local architecture. Houses are turned into family pensions with little modifications in order to protect local architecture. Pensions provide clean and natural accommodation facilities with warm and welcoming family environment for the guests. Local people are aware of the nature and its protection. Pensions provide locally produced food with a large menu for their guests. Most of local foods are produced by themselves or bought from their neighbors creating an economic circle that provides mutual benefits for all involved. Traditional wooden houses are prepared for accommodation of visitors. According a survey carried out in the Camili basin shows that 99% of the visitors prefer to stay in traditional wooden houses. They explain reasons for that such as the warm and always welcoming family environment, experiencing traditional life style and culture, cleanness and hygiene and locally produced food.



Photo by E.Ertürk

SDG 1, 2, 8, 12 & 15: Beekeeping

Beekeeping has been a part of the economy for hundreds of year in Camili region. However, prior to the research and development projects implemented by TEMA (The Turkish Foundation for Combating with Erosion and Reforestation), beekeeping was carried out by traditional methods and only for honey production. By the projects, specialists determined that the bees in the basin belongs to the highly productive Caucasian bee race which it is one of three most important bee races in the world. Furthermore, researches showed that the genetic structure of the bees has not changed since no migrant beekeepers enter the basin. As the Caucasian bee species lives only in the Camili basin of the country and it is genetically pure, they are also very important for the regional biodiversity. Due to this characteristics of the basin, a special attention was given to this issue in Biodiversity and Natural Resources Management Project and a “Beekeeping Committee” was established under the Environmental Protection and Development Association with representatives from each village and unifying the producers in the region. In 2010, the honey in the basin was certificated as “Organic Product”. In recent years, beekeeping has become a major source for revenue and employment in the basin and it is moving towards a well-known and the best quality trade mark in the sector.



Photo by E.Ertürk

SDG 1, 2, 8, 12 & 15: Agriculture and Animal Husbandry

Nearly each of the families has a farm to supply their needs and particularly they produce beans, cabbage and vegetables. Hazelnut takes an important place among the Camili's agricultural products. Hazelnut of the Camili basin is specially sought and demanded by the markets for its quality and taste. No chemical pesticides are used for nursing of hazelnuts in the region. Therefore, the hazelnut of Camili is considered as organic product.

Practical Outcomes/Achievements

The abovementioned economic activities has created the new job opportunities in the basin, so some activities such as tourism guidance, pension operating, bee keeping, honey production that support sustainable development have developed

Camili Biosphere Reserve, due to with its biodiversity and natural beauties as well as traditional life style hospitality and accommodation facilities, is visited by many tourists from inside and outside of the country. Visited by thousands of domestic and international people, the Camili is a unique place of the country where it is shown that how a right balance can be established between implementing of economic practices and protection of biodiversity and cultural values.

With enabling of protection of unique and rare ecosystems, species and habitats and of support nature friendly economic activities and surveys and monitoring programs carried out by

scientists, NGOs and other related persons or institutions, the Camili basin achieves protection, development and research-monitoring which they are three significant functions of the biosphere reserves. The ecosystem management approach is applied in the zones where development function is used and sustainable use of natural resources is promoted and as a result of this a model to contribute sustainable regional development efforts are built.



Photo by E.Ertürk

Camili Biosphere Reserve with its landscape values, biodiversity, natural resources and local traditional culture, is one of the unique places in the country and in the world. The traditional life style and uses from past to present and kept alive in present, are being maintained through the integrating of modern systems. It is resulted from capability and skills of the community of the Camili basin through the keeping up with the today's conditions by respecting to their past. Together with its difficult field conditions the people in the basin is aware of the significance of nature and its impacts to their life.

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