

Public Awareness Workshop on Stori HPP Cascade

TITLE: Stori HPP Public Awareness Workshop with the communities of Telavi and Akhmeta districts, Kakheti region.

DATE: 14.06.2011

VENUE: Alvani Secondary School Building

Speakers:

Neal Gruber, HIPP Project, Black & Veatch, Professional Engineer
Mariam Bakhtadze, Environmental Specialist, Deloitte, HIPP Project
Avtandil Lomiashvili, Engineer, Deloitte, HIPP Project

Facilitated by:

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Background:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Hydropower Investment Promotion Project (HIPP) supports development of a minimum 400 MW in new, run-of-the-river hydropower stations in Georgia. This project is managed by Deloitte Consulting. As part of this program, HIPP has identified a cluster of project sites along the Tskhenistskali River. HIPP is now conducting pre-feasibility studies for two projects with a total capacity of 50.9 MW. These two HPP sites are on the River Stori in Kakheti region along villages: Lechuri, Pshaveli, Laliskuri (Telavi municipal district) Zemo-Alvani and Qvemo-Alvani (Akhmeta Municipal District).

The HIPP team is preparing basic technical studies to evaluate the technical and economical feasibility of the projects. As part of this process, public awareness workshop was held in Qvemo-Alvani Secondary School with the communities of the above-listed villages to ensure their involvement at the early planning stage, identify areas of community concern, and gather feedback from local residents.

The project profiles, HIPP information leaflet and special brochure on Stori HPP Cascade, also, USAID energy map were used as supportive documentation. Meeting agenda, advertisement, list of participants and photos are attached to this document as illustrative materials.

Aim of the Workshop:

- To increase awareness of local communities on small and medium run-of-the-river hydro power plans and promote their support to such activities;
- To inform local community the goal of the project and ensure their involvement at the early planning stage;

- Identify community concerns regarding the possible development of the project and gain their feedback; ensure positive attitude towards the project and increase cooperation perspectives between public and project developers.

Workshop Process:

The purpose of the meetings was to provide information and get the opinions of the locals related to the project. The date, place and the scope of these meeting was preliminary informed and agreed with Telavi and Akhmeta Municipalities during HIPP team field visits. Meeting date and venue were agreed with local Municipalities; Public workshop was announced through advertisements and distributed to the both municipalities as well as distributed through electronic media sources (CENN mailing list). HIPP team facilitated attendance of both municipality members on the workshop. Totally 42 community members were attending the workshop (attached see list of participants).

During the workshop HIPP team members provided information about the project in general, and discussed technical characteristics of the proposed HPP project as well as possible environmental and social impact. Issue that project will not create significant impoundment causing displacement of adjacent population was stressed during the workshop.

The HIPP team stressed the importance of public participation at early project design phase. Participants have been asked to express their opinion/attitude towards the project in general as well as impact on environment and socio-economic conditions of their household.

The municipality representatives mentioned a few considerations about the project impacts both environmental and socio-economic point of view.

Key issues/concerns raised by community members were as follows:

- Implementation of the social projects (e.g. new roads, small-scale grant financing programs) for the impacted community;
- Local benefits of project; Community members were interested whether they could benefit from the low electricity tariffs;
- Increase of local employment level;
- The project territory belongs to Tusheti National Park zone. Will this issue be considered during the planning and implementation process? Touristic routs should arranged (including horse riding paths) and the community members asked to support them in developing tourism infrastructure as they see great potential of revenue increase from tourism development if their roads were acceptable;
- Project implementation process would include removal of forest cover on certain territories. The community members were interested how and where would this woods be used as it is the main mean of heating and cooking for locals;
- The project site includes the only way connecting Alvani villages (Kvemo (low) & Zemo (upper) Alvani) to Tusheti National Park. This road is used by local population to bring sheep up to Tusheti pastures. Accordingly, in early spring and late autumn the way is fully

occupied by sheep migrations. These issues should be closely considered during the project implementation.

- Few questions were asked about the landslide risks and previous experiences with similar types of projects such as Khadori HPP, which greatly harmed the population living in Pankisi Gorge. Due to frequent uninformed release of the water from reservoir cause impact on downstream population and land users (water floods their agricultural lands and homes). Community members are concerned by this fact and expressed hope similar developments would be avoided due to reasonable studies, but if still the Projected HPPs have such negative impact, who takes responsibility for that?
- Project site is near ancient cultural monument – Torghva Castle. Construction works (e.g. explosions) may cause hazard to this monument. It is also important to consider this issue during Project implementation process.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Stori public awareness workshop outcome is as follows:

- Generally, community's attitude towards the project development is positive; Community members think they could benefit from development of project in case the project developers properly consider their concerns/suggestions and watershed characteristics. On the other hand, community members are willing to cooperate with HPP project developers. From operation of the HPP local population expects to receive new job opportunities;
- It was agreed that future development of the project would be further discussed with the community members.

Other Needs and Suggestions

For ensuring participatory attitudes and practices in HPP community it would be reasonable to contact the most active members of the community on a regular bases in parallel with the project development and inform them about possible environmental and social implications.

The table below shows the public awareness meeting in Alvani Secondary School.

Table 1. *Pictures of the public awareness workshop*





