



**REFORD network**  
Developments of a Regional Network of Forestry Associations

**Connecting Natural Values & People Foundation**

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# 1 Introduction

A successful forestry sector that includes private and/or communal forests – the so called family forests - requires vibrant forest associations. An important aspect of functional forests associations is networking between the forest users and owners from the Balkan region to enhance the management of family forests.

This paper provides insights in the impacts and lessons learnt of the "Strengthening Sustainable Private and Decentralized Forestry in Kosovo and its region" project of CNVP/Sida on networking for bringing forest management closer to people needs and developments of a regional network. The project is implemented by Connecting Natural Values and People Foundation (CNVP) with financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Netherlands Development Organisation SNV and ran from January 2009-March 2014. The main partners in the project are the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development in Kosovo, Associations of Private Forest Owners (APFO) in Kosovo, municipalities and Kosovo Forest Agency with special focus on Peja, Ferizaj, Prizren regions. Related to the regional level the project partners are the Associations of Private and Communal Forest Owners or Users in Macedonia and Albania as well as the regional forest association network organisation REFORD (Regional Centre for Forestry and Rural Development). The focus areas of project implementation are the region of Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia.

This paper tells one of the seven stories on the project's impacts and lessons learnt of the project. It provides insights in the concepts, project activities, the outcomes and impacts, the challenges and opportunities. The stories function as a background document for learning and further use, capturing the results and experiences. The other six stories include: 1) Organisational set up of the APFO network in Kosovo, 2) Forest Decentralisation in Kosovo, 3) Sustainable Forest management practices (coppice and pre-commercial thinning) for joint forest management, 4) Service provision by forest associations, 5) Wood biomass production and utilisation with Private Forest Owners (PFO), and 6) Gender & forestry.

Private Forests and pastures encompass an important part of the livelihood of rural communities on the South-west Balkan. Often poorer families have a higher dependency on forests and pastures (up to 50%) of their total family income. Although the share of family forests varies from 10-60 % in different countries, they have one thing in common. Their private forests are significant resource for the development of market economy and private ownership. The specific situation in forestry may differ per country but all owners are sharing similar concerns, protecting the family forest interests. Gradually in all the countries associations for family forests (private and communal forest) are established at national and local level. These organisations represent family forest and provide services to the people managing their family forests. The concerns and interest people have for their forests and the developments of the associations at local level brought the need for joining forces and addressing common issues also at a regional level.

This paper provides insights in the development of Regional Centre for Forestry and Rural Development – REFORD a network of private and communal forest associations in the Balkan region. In less than 4 years this umbrella organisation grew from three to seven member organizations representing family forests in the Western Balkan and continues to develop itself.

## 2 History of associations

About 130,000 families in Kosovo, 50.000 in Macedonia and almost 1 million families in Albania own, manage and use their forest forming valuable natural resources for them. To protect the interests of people that own or use forest resources, associations are established in all three countries and further in the region. The establishment and development of private and communal forest associations in the Balkan region only started from the late 90's and first years of 2000. The overall reforms and developments in the region and the specific developments and reforms in the forestry sector in the Balkan region on decentralisation, different ownership and management forms in forestry and sustainable small holders forestry has supported this. National and local associations of private and communal forests owners from Macedonia and Albania, with the support of SNV Netherlands Development Organization, have been cooperating since 2005 in protecting the family forest interests.

Each organization has been supported on organizational development through the (SNV former CNVP) forestry program support aiming on growing in to a strong and functional organization representing the private and communal forestry in their respected countries. The forestry support programmes and especially the CNVP-Sida forestry project provided also the opportunity for a more regional focus and involvement of the Association of Private Forest Owners (APFO) from Kosovo. Developments and cross border activities between the associations for family forests (private and communal forestry) from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia where intensified and more result oriented after 2009 by starting the "Strengthening sustainable private and decentralized forestry" project with financial and technical assistance supported by SIDA-SNV.



**Figure 1: Meeting in Kosovo**

At the end of 2008, just before the project started, the association in Kosovo was quite small. In Macedonia, NAPFO (National Association of Private Forest Owners) was still very young with local structures that were gradually growing from 2006 onwards. In Albania the developments were already further with a more developed structure of associations at local, regional and national level for communal forestry. Through their regular communication, intensive sharing, learning and experiences exchange on the forestry reform processes, the regional linkages between the associations became very strong.

In Kosovo, the first national association was established in 2005 with support from FAO, which figured more as a contact point for some villages. In 2009, when the CNVP/Sida forestry project started in Kosovo, private forestry was still hardly organized. A small private forestry association existed with less than 50 private forest owners at national level. Through the project the private forestry sector gained momentum. The project worked on the legal basis and made it possible for PFOs to establish and register

independent entities at municipal level as APFO. In 2010, 9 local associations with 330 members were established in addition to the national association. In 2011, the number of local associations increased to 16 with 640 members, while the national association was reorganised and became the National Association of Private Forest Owners (NAPFO) as network and umbrella organisation representing the local associations. In 2012, the number of members of the 16 associations increased to about 3,600 while the establishment of additional associations was in process. The project has established associations in all municipalities (16) of three regions in Kosovo, while an additional two are in process outside of these regions.



**Figure 2: One of the meetings to improve internal structure in NAPFO Macedonia**

In Macedonia in 1997 a group of private forest owners established APFO - Association of Private Forest Owners in Macedonia. In 2006 APFO was still a small association with about 35 members and mainly focused on lobbying for legal adjustments to support private forestry. From 2006 onwards APFO supported by the SNV/CNVP forestry programme improved its internal structure by having one head office in Berovo, 5 regional offices, 25 branches and increased the membership to over 1600 members. Through these new developments APFO became a national association representing all private forest owners in Macedonia (NAPFO) with a main mission to address and protect the private forest owners and users individual and common interests. With the continued support of the CNVP/Sida project NAPFO was able to further strengthen its capacities. Effective lobbying brought for the first time some positive changes in private forestry. A significant policy achievement was the active involvement of NAPFO in process of coming to the new Forest Law in 2008 which was amended in later years. NAPFO was included as one of the main stakeholders in the process. Through their lobby NAPFO managed having the possibility for licensed forest engineers to provide forest services.



**Figure 3: One of the early meeting of the Communal Forest Association in Albania**

In Albania, the first Albanian Forestry project started in 1999 within the framework of the decentralization process and the support to the forestry sector. This project of the World Bank and the Albanian Government guided the establishment of the first Forest and Pasture Users' Associations (FPUA) for Communal Forests. Besides direct investments in improving forest and pastures lands, the project also provided a wide range of activities that supported the intensification of the political reform and improving the process for rights of use and ownership of forests by local communities / individuals and especially FPUAs, as the main actor for the communal forest management. FPUA of Communal Forests are representing rural families and collaborating with local governments. This process was very much linked to the transfer of ownership of communal forests and pastures from the State to the Local Government Units. This took place in 2008 and is continuing in which local government units provide the communal forest and pastures in user rights to the people and with management and representation from the FPUAs. Currently there are over 250 established and functional FPUAs in 250 communes in Albania, organized in 10 Regional Federations (Diber, Tirana, Korça, Kukës, Berat, Puka, Shkoder, Gjirokaster, Fier and Vlore). These Associations and Federations are represented at national level by the National Federation of Communal Forests and Pastures (NFCFP). All the FPUAs are registered in the court. Related to membership, as per the statute all the members of the community that make use of the communal forests and pastures are automatically members of the association. The establishment of the National and Regional Federations was supported by CNVP and Sida in the framework of several forestry projects among which the CNVP/Sida Kosovo and Regional Forestry project from 2009 onwards.

The CNVP/SNV Sida Forestry project for Kosovo and its region supported the organisational development on each of these three organizations aiming to grow in to a strong and functional organization representing the private forestry in their respective countries. The project provided an opportunity for more regional focus with numerous cross border activities between the associations for private and communal forestry from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. Through their regular communication, intensive sharing, learning and experiences exchange on the forestry reform processes, these regional linkages between the associations became very strong.



**Figure 4: REFORD is established by the National Association of Private forest owners from Kosovo and Macedonia and the National Federation of Communal forests from Albania**

In 2010 the associations that cooperated together and gradual formed their network felt the need of following their good collaboration and decided to register the Regional Centre for Forestry and Rural Development. REFORD was established as result of long and good cooperation between them in consultation and under the mandate of National Association of Private and Communal Forest Owners from Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo, and is supported through the CNVP – Sida forestry project.

### 3 REFORD establishment

While sharing similar challenges about private and communal forestry the three associations were exchanging and building their relationships. Using the existing local organizations and their capacities they initiated discussions about joining forces in addressing concrete common issues and finding solutions on regional level. The CNVP/Sida forestry project provided a platform for this vision and encouraged the associations to start structuring their regional ideas.



**Figure 5: REFORD Assembly meeting, Kosovo, June, 2011**

Based on their common issues and their experience the associations started to work on the establishment of a regional network organisation. They formed a temporary working group with representatives from all associations involved. They intensified the discussions about registering a non-governmental organization that will act as their umbrella organization. Based on associations request the project team, the project advisors, reviewed the terms and conditions for registering an NGO in the three different countries Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. The three associations chair persons agreed that terms for establishing an umbrella organization are most acceptable in Macedonia.

REFORD was established in 2010 by the associations of Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. By 2014 REFORD has expanded its network up to 7 national level member associations from the region and functions as a representative of private and communal forest from the Balkan.

By the end of 2010 a seat country was chosen, initial structure and form of a network organization was prepared. To fulfil legal requirements, establishment of NGO needed physical entities to be presented in front of Macedonian Central Unit for registration. The associations decided to give the mandate to project team to facilitate the registration which would allow establishment and time to further structure the organization. The project team drafted the structure, vision and mission of the network. The name Regional Centre for Forestry and Rural Development (REFORD) was chosen and a new non-profit organization was registered in December 2010 in Skopje, Macedonia. The REFORD secretariat is located in Skopje with the delegated authority to facilitate and represent REFORD.

In the spring of 2010 on the Assembly meeting held in Brezovica, Kosovo was decided that official members of REFORD are only legal entities. REFORD is a network organisation of which only other organisations in the field of family forestry can become members. To address this in the end of 2011 through two preparatory meetings the member associations from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia discussed about the organizational structure, statute, election bodies and other issues that needed improvement. On the Annual meeting held December 2011 in Albania the associations from Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo voted for changes in the Statute and formed new board with proper representation of members.



**Figure 6: REFORD coverage in the Balkans**

Following the invitation from the Association from Macedonia the PFO organization from Bulgaria and Montenegro were invited to join the meeting. On this meeting the Association from Bulgaria was accepted as a new REFORD member. This was the turning point where the network started growing with new members and expanded its coverage. After few months the Association from Montenegro joined and in 2013 the NAPFO of Croatia and APFO of Republica Srpska from Bosnia-Herzegovina became REFORD members.

The Associations from Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Croatia and Republica Srpska from Bosnia-Herzegovina are contributing significantly to strengthening of the network and sharing of knowledge and experiences in Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and Rural Development (RD) issues.

## **4 REFORD network functioning**

REFORD is an organization committed to encouraging and development of rural communities in the Balkan region. REFORD acts as a network of affiliated organizations aiming to provide better living conditions to rural communities through sustainable management of natural resources. Given the socio-economic possibilities for rural



development in the European region, noticing the differing availability of natural resources, the installation of a networking organization on these subjects is considered an asset is the main reason for the establishment of REFORD.

In order to ensure an appropriate representation of different family forestry related stakeholders REFORD encompasses representatives of private and communal forest owners organizations in the region and other family forestry or rural development related organisations and others who are committed to sustainable development, acknowledge and follow the vision and principles of the organization.

#### **4.1 REFORD strategic goals**

REFORD – as stated in its statutes – is an expert and networking organisation aiming at rural development using natural resources in a sustainable way. The main goal of REFORD is to contribute to the development and providing services to rural communities in the Balkan region who are dedicated to their own development, dependent from sustainable use of natural resources in their area of living.

REFORD aims to be an umbrella organization for all private and communal forest owner associations in the region. Strengthening its position in the wider Balkan region REFORD strives to become recognized service provider in the fields of forestry, rural development, natural resource management and biomass utilization (especially wood biomass). While expanding the network further through the region REFORD is improving the position of private and communal forestry and contributes to enhance rural economy and life of local people.

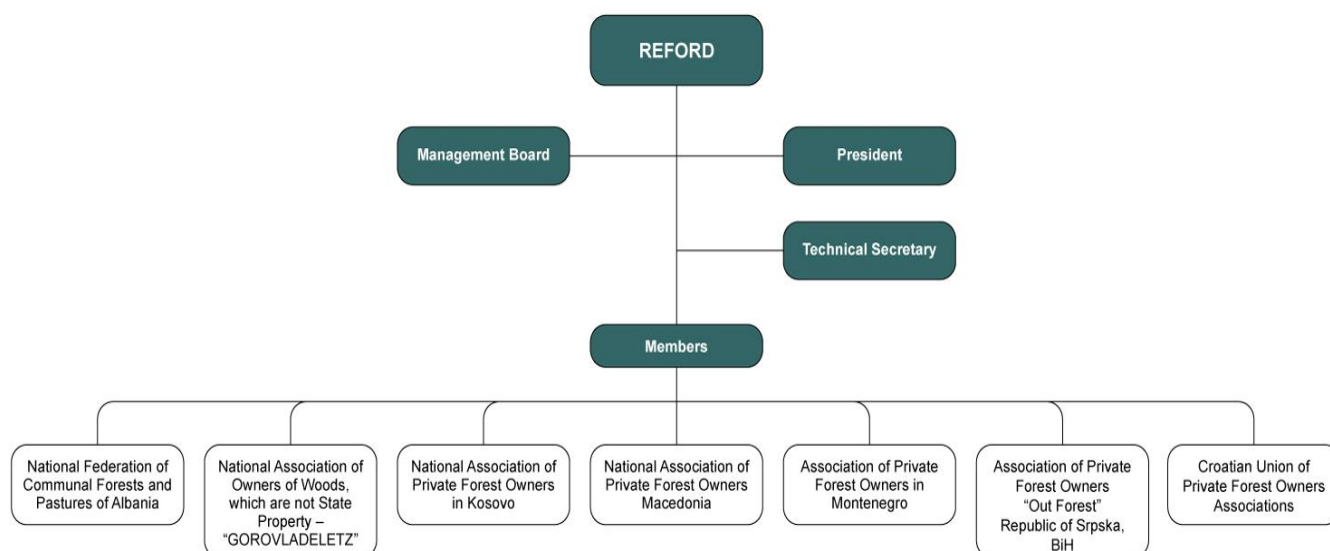


**Figure 7 Group picture during the FAO Technical Workshop on Voluntary Guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests**

REFORD is becoming a strategic partner to other networks and service organisations in Europe related to rural development and forestry and build alliances to support the interest of sustainable private and communal forestry. More is elaborated further in the chapter on REFORD's main developments.

## 4.2 Management structure

Currently the REFORD network has 7 members including the national associations of private forest owners of Macedonia, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Croatia, Republica Srpska from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and national association of communal forest and pastures of Albania.



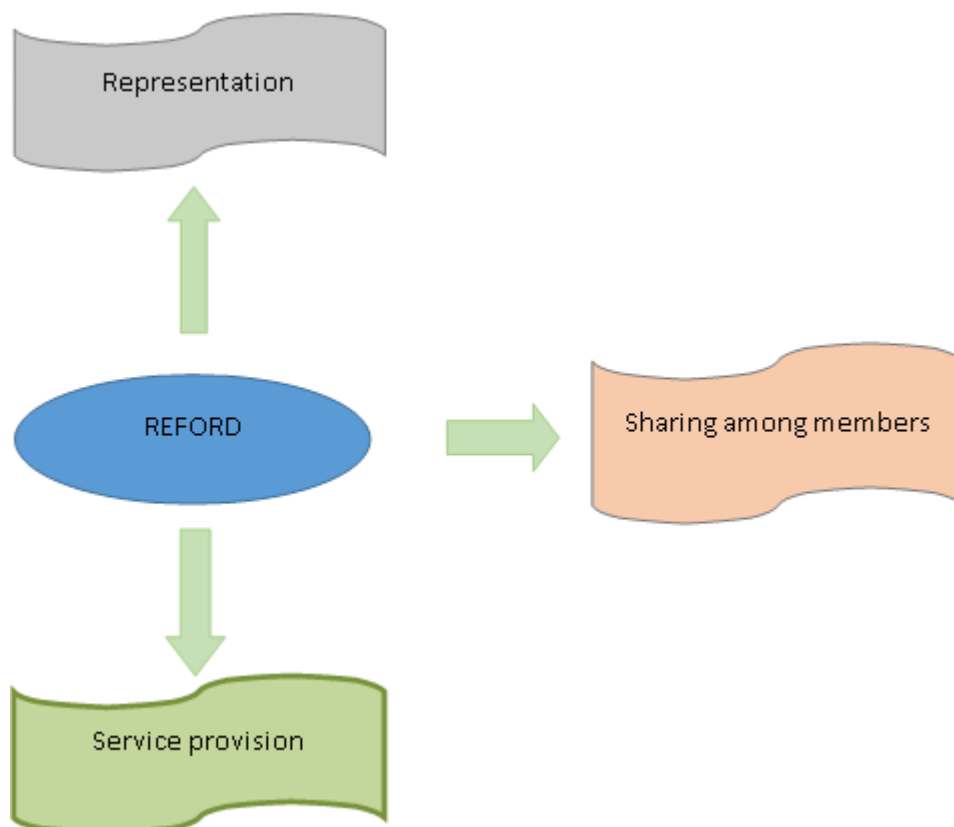
**Figure 8 REFORD's organogram**

REFORD functions as a non-profit organization having its highest decision body the assembly of the organization. The Assembly is formed by the member organisations through delegates representing the member organisations. The Assembly elects the management board and its president. The organization is gradually building its structure in having a small strategic secretariat of 2-3 persons at regional level, well-structured part time engaged national coordinators of the member organisations and a flexible pool of experts from the network with expertise on institutional development, organizational strengthening, sustainable forest management, rural development, training and economic service provision.

Following the most economic and practical solutions for REFORD administrative functioning the Management Board agreed that CNVP could fulfil the technical secretariat role and provide technical advice.

## 4.3 Roles and functions

The situation in forestry may differ per country but all family forestry owners and users are sharing similar concerns and interest regarding their family forest. Therefore REFORD's main functions (see scheme below) are representation, sharing of knowledge and provision of services for family forests and their associations.



**Figure 9: REFORD main roles**

Representation is one of the key functions of REFORD as a network. The role of REFORD to represent the interest, ideas, attitudes and needs of family forestry and the private and communal forest owner organizations from the region in front of other relevant organizations, institutions and development agencies working in the field of interests of REFORD. The network of REFORD is supporting the associations in their lobbying and advocacy efforts for family forest and rural development in the interest of rural communities.

Service provision is important to support the associations in their development and being able to provide services to the actual private and communal forest owners and users and rural communities. Many people lack proper information on forestry and forestry developments, there is no vocational training for forestry. Specific forest management services or other economic services are limited available, or at high costs, or not adapted to the needs of family forests. REFORD and its associations being organisations established directly by its members – the family forest owners and users – are having a mandate to fill this gap.

Sharing of knowledge and experience and joint learning is an important aspect provided by the REFORD network. The member associations are through the REFORD network able to gain from the different experiences and share among themselves in support of the representation and service delivery role.

This is elaborated in which REFORD is working for creation of wider mutual interest, and the basic goal is contribution to rural development using natural resources in a sustainable way, focusing on (as stated in the statutes):

- Sharing knowledge and working methods;
- Augmenting and strengthening social and economic power;
- Executing projects; and
- All other activities that can be helpful to achieve its aim

The realization of the basic goal of the Association are provided through the following activities:

- Education of the rural communities (trainings, consulting);
- Contribution to the development of the private and communal forests;
- Promotion of practice for sustainable management of the forests;
- Promotion of initiatives from the RD (consolidating land, development of the production chain, renewable energy sources, agro-forestry, non-wood products from forestry, farmer forests);
- Integrated management of the natural resources, focusing on the economic development of the local communities;
- Administration of projects in partnership with the local communities;
- Lobbying and advocacy in the interest of family forestry and rural development to relevant institutions and authorities;
- Consultation and dialogue with local governments and national institutions about forestry and RD issues, concentrating on private and communal forest management;
- Cooperation with local government units, other NGOs, national institutions; and
- Making strategic linkages with other similar networks and organisations on forestry and rural development in Europe.

#### **4.4 Service delivery of associations and REFORD**

Service provision is already an established practice in REFORD's network and the services are in line with the support for the member organisations and their needs. REFORD is capturing and building the capacity within the member organisations and strengthen their roles through the following activities:

- Organising workshops, seminars, study visits for the benefit of all members. The aim is to strengthen the capacity of our network in service delivery.
- Sharing training modules on SFM and NRM (Natural Resource Management), conducting field visits and deliver trainings among its members.
- Establishment and support of minimum one local training centre in each country focusing on forestry and RD issues. Currently there is only one vocational training centre established in Albania, Diber.

Service provision from associations to their members, especially business services is an important topic. The associations are increasingly focusing on service provision to members (private and communal forest users). In the past period support is provided on several aspects of service provisions and the associations have prepared (business) plans and priorities. Firstly services directed to capacity strengthening such as information, vocational training, awareness and extension were developed. The service provision on vocational training (modules, ToT and delivery), information, and awareness is going well. Good regional sharing has provided an opportunity for fast development of these services. REFORD provided a platform for the development of these services, especially for vocational services. There is a high need for such capacity building and there are no other institutions besides the Associations and REFORD providing such vocational training services directed to rural communities and local experts related to family forestry and rural development. The second group of services are economic services related to forest management practices, marketing, project or subsidy application etc. Different countries have different paths of developments regarding service provision of business services in forestry.



**Figure 10 Delivering training for private forest owners in Macedonia**

In Kosovo a start is made with developing management plans for small scale private forest, while in Albania forest management planning through forest parcel plans and some wood products business plans started. Developing business services for owners and users provided a direct service requested for by people and is linked to the development of the associations as this is an important role of the associations and is important for the associations own financial sustainability.



**Figure 11 Representation of PFO's on a Regional Conference**

The development and provision of these economic services has only started. Several services are identified and developed as described above, but provision of these only started recently. REFORD is supporting the (further) development of such services in cooperation with the associations. The challenge is to develop this further.

#### **4.5 Financial sustainability**

Financial sustainability is a critical issue for the associations and REFORD. The structure of REFORD is established using the capacity within the member associations. As a network organisation only a small secretariat will be needed to keep the network functional. Nevertheless it is important have a sustainable diversified income for REFORD and the

associations to be able to fulfil their role and mandate. In the last REFORD annual Assembly meeting this issue is discussed and a general statement was made concluding the priority to assure financial sustainability of the PFO associations and the network.

There are different opportunities, varying from country to country for its importance, to assure financial sustainability:

- Membership fee
- Economic service provisions (paid for services)
- Donors funds from projects
- Funds from Ministries in public private partnership (still lobby needed)
- Project implementation

Currently the main income for the associations is derived from donors via projects. This is logical since support was needed in the start and set up of the family forestry structures. Dependence on such support however should not remain long term and needs to be diversified with other sources and gradually taken over by other sources. Depending on the level of development of the associations; membership fees and project implementation is providing already some income.



**Figure 12 REFORD facilitating FAO regional workshop "Supporting non-State forestry in South East Europe"**

Economic service provision is one of the major income sources for long term financial sustainability. Good examples exist indicating that provision of economic services (paid for services) could be one of the most important roles that the network offers. This needs still to be developed further and practiced at a large scale.

To obtain income from services, it is requesting a different focus of the associations. Many of the associations started for the need of lobbying for legal changes to improve private and communal forestry. A lot is achieved in the frameworks of private and communal forestry, next to a continued reform and development of the sector it is needed to focus on the service delivery towards the people and rural communities. Within this both capacity services (no-paid for services<sup>1</sup>) and economic services (paid for services<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> Capacity services are in general no paid for services, such as awareness, information and vocational training. In the future it is expected that for some vocational training people will be able and willing to (party) pay.

<sup>2</sup> Economic services are services related to direct management of the natural resources, marketing of forest products, subsidy or project application. PFO are making direct request for these services in their interest, gaining direct benefits from these services and therefore pay for these services.

REFORD as a network with its associations is supportive to development of these services. Through sharing, knowledge development, learning from experiences and direct practice REFORD facilitates the development of services. REFORD is herewith fulfilling its role in line with the REFORD strategy to become a functional network able to represent and provide service in line with its mission.

REFORD as unique and only network of private and communal forest owner organizations in the region has good strategic position for business development. There are development and organizational funds available in Europe mainly focused on cooperation, networking and social inclusion in all aspects of the society. REFORD as network organisation addressing these aspects is very plausible and liable to apply and use available funds for further strengthening of its work and achievement of its strategic goals. Additional funds are increasingly available regarding specific themes such as RD, climate change and renewable energy. This kind of project implementation through the REFORD network is further building the capacity and ability to represent family forestry and provide services. The first results were made already with a small project of the Norwegian Embassy in Macedonia and a regional cooperation with FAO on the organisation of Regional Conference for Family Forestry.

#### **4.6 Gender in the REFORD network**

Forestry is still mainly associated with timber and hard physical work, including: tree inventories in remote areas, handling of chain saws, timber extraction and so on, and therefore, the forestry sector still often regarded as a men's domain, dominated by men. As a consequence, women's participation in decision-making processes over forest resources remains largely insignificant. However, forests have much more to offer than timber alone and likewise work in the forestry sector is more diverse than logging trees with chain saws. Women do have a role in forestry. When family forestry is reviewed it appears often to be full household engagement including men and women. It entails many different products and activities. The role of women is not reflected proportionally in formal participation, decision-making and governance. Enhanced gender equality in the forestry sector will contribute to a more sustainable multi-purpose forestry.

The importance of gender equality is recognised by the REFORD and the associations in all the three countries of Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. Several measures have been taken at the national level to promote gender equality. In 2004 Kosovo endorsed its law on gender equality. Macedonia followed suit in 2006 with a law on equal opportunities for women and men. And in 2008, Albania launched its law on gender equality in society. All laws require a minimum representation of women in public institutions (30% in Albania, 40% in Macedonia and Kosovo). However, there is a large gap between legal frameworks and customary rules. The latter still impede and slow down women participation in planning and decision making processes, with hampers further women economic empowerment.

Gender equity is taken in to account in REFORD's network. The Board Members from Kosovo and Bulgaria are female and since autumn 2013 a new female President from Albania has been elected. For further review on gender equity in private and communal forest associations from Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia reference is made to the Gender and Forestry story as one of the other seven thematic stories made within the CNVP-Sida forestry project.

## **5 REFORD main developments**

The CNVP-Sida forestry project had a specific component for regional cooperation for private forestry development. Coming from the transition of communist centralised

economy to democratic open market economy there were no institutional contacts and cooperation at regional level. The project's objective was to facilitate the cross border cooperation between the stakeholders especially the family forestry associations from Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia. The good collaboration resulted in establishing a regional umbrella organisation REFORD representing interest of and provide services to private and communal forest owners and users from the Balkan region.

The main aim of REFORD is bringing the collaboration between the Balkan family forest associations on a higher level, creating more opportunities and improving the services they provide to the people. Compared with the situation in 2009, when the project started, the biggest development is that a functional regional private and communal forestry network exist. Network members effectively exchange and cooperate on joint learning and development of forestry practices and methods and jointly address and advocate relevant private and decentralised forestry issues.



**Figure 13: By 2013 REFORD increased its membership to 7 member organizations**

## **5.1 REFORD results**

Overview of REFORD's main results:

- Building capacities for a functional networking organization;
- Expanding network of PFO associations;
- Linkages with other organisations: FAO, CEPF, ILC etc.;
- Vocational training development and service delivery;
- Promotion of different forest products;
- Lobby for inclusion of forestry in RD policy (at EU and country programmes);
- Representation of family forestry in the region;
- Promotion of wood biomass for production of renewable energy.



**Results:**

- REFORD has a functional organization structure. Annual and management board meetings are regularly organized and communication with member organizations is as well regular.
- REFORD network is expanded and representing now 7 national associations of family forest from the Balkan from 7 countries. It has good promotion activities and is on a good track for increasing the member associations in future, currently is in discussion with Association of PFO's from Greece.
- Excellent working relations where established with few international organizations. REFORD actively participated on regional conference on forest certification and the 15th International Symposium on Legal Aspects of European Forest Sustainable Development;
- Number of SFM Trainings where organized and REFORD significantly improved its capacity strengthening. A business plan for NAPFOM was prepared and the network started supporting its members for provision of more business oriented approaches for improvement of their own sustainability.
- By several engagements on preparation of programs for subsidy applications REFORD supported its member organizations in inclusion of forestry measures in the EU policies;
- The network lobbied and represented the family forestry interests by organizing few international events like the Non-state conference supported by FAO and the IUFRO conference.
- REFORD was engaged on renewable energy and agro forestry initiatives in Macedonia as well preparing a study for possibilities to use wood as renewable energy.

## 6 Challenges and Opportunities

The associations for private and communal forestry in the different countries are still growing and developing. REFORD as their regional network for family forestry is a young structure that is gradually growing. The whole forestry sector in the regional and proper inclusion of family forestry and sustainable forest management needs further attention.



**Figure 14: REFORD promotion poster**

The main areas of attention for REFORD and its network of family forest associations for further development of family forestry in the region are:

1. Strengthening the REFORD network with further enlarging of the area in the Balkan including other countries.
2. Cooperation exist with several other organisations at regional level. This needs to be further developed to widen the representation role of REFORD and its effectiveness.
3. Long term financial sustainability of REFORD and the associations is needed to be able to continue to fulfil their roles. The dependency of donor project funds needs to diminish while other financing sources (membership fees, paid for services and public private partnerships) need to be further developed.
4. REFORD fulfils the need for awareness, information provision and capacity strengthening for family forestry in the region. Continued sharing and learning at regional and local level is needed, in which REFORD becomes an expertise centrum for family forestry.
5. Assure wide availability of vocational training making use of the capacity and experience within REFORD and support the further development and set up of vocational training centres
6. Economic service delivery (paid for services) to family forests are needed for the further development of the sector. With experience and capacity of REFORD it is well positioned to further develop this. With economic services it can increasingly provide a demand from family forests as well gain increased financing for its own activities.
7. The REFORD through its network has a good opportunity for representation of family forestry and the interest of the rural people. They are recognised as stakeholders and representation partners at national level and increasingly at regional level. Continued lobby and advocacy for inclusion of forestry in rural development programmes, further adjustment of the legislation in support of family forestry is needed.
8. Cooperation with authorities is needed to improve financial support for private and communal forestry from subsidies, taxes and investments in support of sustainable forest management practices.

## **7 Conclusions**

REFORD is young organization functional for over three years. In its short time of existence the organization established itself as representative of family forests coming from private and communal forest owners associations in the region. REFORD presented itself as a functional network on many regional and national meetings, conferences and workshops concerning forestry, rural development and renewable energy. It is representing family forests in the region and is increasingly recognised by others.

The working scope of REFORD in the future will continue to be concerning rural development, sustainable forestry, enhancement of environment and renewable energy (especially woody biomass) in the interest of family forestry and the rural communities. REFORD as a network is representing family forest and its associations at regional level in the Balkan; providing service to family forestry and offers a platform for sharing and learning among the associations.

REFORD has a clear vision of its future developments and desired achievements, securing its place in the region and widening, as strong and reliable network working for enhancement of rural communities and private and communal forestry in every aspect of its development. It will become a functional and efficient network able to represent the areas of interest of its members at national, regional and international level and able to provide services to its members enhancing the capacities and roles of its members to rural communities. It will therefore set up a small and flexible structure aiming at low costs in support of its members and making use of the capacities and structures existing within the member organisations.

REFORD will continue to cooperate with all relevant institutions and organizations working in REOFRD field of interests in order to achieve its strategic goals and vision as well as achievement and fulfilment of needs and goals of its members. REFORD will be a strategic partner for other European and international organisations and institutions in the field of forestry and RD.

REFORD is gradually growing to an expertise centre of family forestry making use of its network, learning and sharing among its members and capacities within the network.

## References

Reference have been made from a short list of REFORD documents:

- REFORD statute;
- REFORD strategy;
- Reports from assembly meetings or activities;
- REFORD website [www.refordcentre.com](http://www.refordcentre.com)
- Photos from implemented activities.

## Abbreviations

APFO	Association of Private Forest Owners
CNVP	Connecting Natural Values and People Foundation
FPUA	Forest and Pastures Users Associations
NAPFO	National Association of Private Forest Owners
NFCP	National Federation of Communal Forests and Pastures
PFO	Private Forest Owners
RD	Rural Development
REFORD	Regional Centre for Forestry and Rural Development
SFM	Sustainable Forest Development



*Working together to grow a canopy of trees providing home, shelter, food, a livelihood as well as a place to wander*

CNVP, a The Netherlands based foundation, is a legacy organisation of SNV in the Balkans. Established through a legal demerger, CNVP will continue the SNV forestry and rural development programme in the Balkans and beyond.

CNVP envisions:

- Local communities achieving their own development goals;
- Maximising the production and service potential of forests through Sustainable Forest Management and locally controlled Natural Resource Management;
- Forests contributing to equitable local economic development supporting rural livelihoods;
- Forests contributing to wider societal interests and values including biodiversity conservation and wellbeing;
- Connecting natural values and people!

**Connecting Natural Values & People**

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