

Translation sample: Russian into English

By Elena Donch

Note: This is Kyrgyzstan's entry for the UNDP's Equator Prize 2019. Unfortunately, it has now been removed from the UNDP's website, which is why I am unable to present the original text in Russian.

## Public Fund 'Rural Development Fund' (RDF)

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### About the Nominated Initiative

**Year established:** 2003

**Location:** 720005 Kyrgyz Republic Bishkek, ul. Geologicheskaya 11, Office 1, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

**Web site:** <http://www.rdf.in.kg>

**Organization type:** Social Association or Organization

**If other, please, indicate:**

### Final proposal:

Strengthening of the local communities' capacity for improvement of the economic situation by preserving traditional knowledge, protecting biological and cultural resources based on the ABS mechanisms.

### Short Description of the Group or Organization:

The RDF is a non-profit organization established in 2003. Its mission is to support local initiatives to reduce poverty and boost economic growth in rural areas. The RDF works in the fields of climate change research, natural resource management, preservation and revival of traditional knowledge in animal husbandry, agriculture and rational management of pasture resources. It works to increase the capacity of local initiatives and supports their implementation. The goal of the nominated project is to promote traditional knowledge, and to strengthen the respect for the area's biological and cultural diversity through the efforts of the local communities. All of this is to be achieved by providing information, technical and financial support to the sub-grant program for small projects, and initiating a dialogue on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization (ABS). The activities are aimed at 1) exploring implementation opportunities for a system of Access and Equitable Benefit Sharing in local communities by informing the public about ABS and the use of genetic resources; 2) creating favorable conditions for establishing a dialogue between all stakeholders to facilitate its promotion in the country; 3) changing the views of the authorities and the general public on the importance of sustainable use of resources on a fair and equitable basis. The natural ecosystems of Kyrgyzstan are of great importance for the region and serve as powerful stabilizing factors not only for the country, but for all of Central Asia, which is why extinction of any one species poses a direct threat to the existence of all other species and the ecosystem as a whole, including humans. Resources are often exploited in a very harmful way, especially by commercial intermediaries. Harvesting of plant genetic resources (PGR) often leads to loss of biodiversity. Furthermore, lack of understanding of the value of PGR and the absence of a legal framework or clear mechanisms for handling PGR lead to biopiracy. With dramatic changes in climate and growing poverty in rural areas, local communities increasingly rely on local resources and need to protect their rights to these resources. The communities view them as an inseparable part of their ecological and cultural system. They do not have a voice in how the resources are used, and the benefits of such use are not shared with them. The uniqueness of this initiative lies in the fact that the issue of genetic resources and the importance of their preservation had never been recognized as an important issue by the local communities, no measures had ever been taken to raise awareness among the local population.

Therefore, one of the objectives of the project was to educate the communities and to involve their populations in the issues of conservation and access to genetic resources. Most of the GRs are of interest to different organizations that use them as material for developing various products in

pharmacology, food industry, cosmetology, and landscape design. Most of the valuable plants are not cultivated, but collected in the wild, often uncontrollably and using barbaric methods that disregard the basic rules of the process. Afterwards, the local communities were never returned the products made from the genetic material of their biological resources and products stemming from the knowledge of the local population. There was no proper experience exchange between end users and local communities, and no compensation was offered for exploitation of local resources and the locals' knowledge of the properties of certain resources. In this, our organization established partnership with the National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic, the State Environmental Agency, the representative of the Nagoya Protocol in the country, and the Kyrgyz Government.

**Ecosystem:** Forests, Mountains

**Activity type:** Ecosystem protection, sustainable use of natural resources, Access and Benefit Sharing Agreement, awareness raising and education

**Element of sustainable development:** Work and livelihood, Food Security, Education, Sustainable Communities and Disaster Risk Reduction

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## LOCAL NATURAL SOLUTIONS FOR CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### Impacts

#### Impact on Climate

**Please describe how the initiative functions in a changing climate. How does the initiative reduce vulnerability to climate-related pressures or help fight climate change?**

As a result of climate change, many plant species will not be able to adapt and will disappear. Therefore, our efforts are aimed at ensuring the stability of conservation of biodiversity, reducing the risks of extinction of the endangered species and species listed in the 'Red Book'. The RDF conducted a plant inventory using the custodians of traditional knowledge (TK), identifying and evaluating TK for conservation purposes. Efforts are also aimed at strengthening the resilience of ecosystems and increasing the contribution of biodiversity to carbon storage through conservation and restoration of nature by local communities, which mitigates the effects of climate change and facilitates adaptation (corresponding to Aichi 15). Through popularization of local initiatives and implementation of small project grants, the educational work contributed to the tightening of measures against poaching, protection of ecosystems by the local communities' own efforts, reduction of direct pressures on biodiversity, and promotion of sustainable use.

#### Environmental impact

**How did the initiative contribute to preservation of the environment through protection and restoration of the ecosystem and sustainable management of natural resource use?**

The conducted study and the dialogues at the local and national levels were covered in the media. The custodians talked about the importance of traditional knowledge and the genetic resources of the area. The RDF organized workshops presenting the results of studies on the state of GRs in the country. The sub-grant program titled 'The Wealth of the Earth - The Wealth of the People' was an appeal for preservation of the area's natural resources, on which these mountainous communities are highly dependent. As a result, 9 small local projects were launched: a school-based nursery for general resources, a "green class" with an interactive whiteboard, a mini social enterprise for licorice cultivation, a walnut nursery in the mountains that serves as a protective reinforcement against landslides, buckthorn trees were planted at the nature park, a dye plant green house was built.

### Cross-cutting themes

#### Reduced inequalities

**How does the initiative address the reduction of inequalities?**

The importance of traditional knowledge and related genetic resources is noted in the Nagoya Protocol, which emphasizes that access to traditional knowledge and associated genetic resources

carried by indigenous local communities should be based on their prior informed consent or approval. This leads to reduction in inequality and injustice. Indigenous communities have the right to deny access to traditional knowledge if there is a risk that it is impossible to further conserve biodiversity or its sustainable use. Previously, the local Kyrgyz communities did not know about this. The outcomes of the project and the increased public awareness (including among high officials) contributed to the introduction of the ABS mechanism on the use of bioresources and TK in the country. The RDF initiated discussions on conditions and instruments of punishment for cases of violation of the local population's rights and violations of the access regime to genetic resources.

### **Social inclusion**

**Describe how the initiative enables the inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups such as youth, elders, indigenous peoples and other groups?**

Considering the involvement of vulnerable populations in the project, the sub-grant program supported 3 initiatives: 1) people with limited abilities (social enterprise), 2) pensioners and women (walnut nursery), as well as young people ('Currant Alley of Youth'). Members of the Pastoral Network of TK Custodians were also involved - mostly elderly people with the knowledge of conservation and rational use of GRs teaching the philosophy of nomadic culture based on the principle of rational life management, where the environment is intertwined with the principles of resource conservation and the mechanisms of resource control and regulation. Another group that our organization has been working closely with is the socially vulnerable population. They represent a certain threat due to their lack of livelihood, often destroying tons of genetic resources for next to no pay and handing them over to third parties; such earnings do not even cover their work, which, it should be noted, is done inappropriately and leads to large-scale destruction of resources. As part of the project, we have worked to integrate all groups into the initiative and to raise awareness of the need for a proper vision of the problem and setting priorities that will help achieve economic sustainability without harming the environment and our own interests, and that is what the ABS principles mean.

### **Gender Equality**

**How has the initiative empowered women?**

The project addressed the gender issue. It involved women in educational meetings, as they take an important part in raising the young generation. In addition, the RDF launched 9 micro-grant projects supporting initiatives to conserve endangered species of genetic resources, and most of the grantees were women. One of the micro-projects was based on creation of a social enterprise for the female community of socially vulnerable families. The enterprise processes local medicinal herbs, such as licorice, and holds workshops on the proper way of collection of medicinal herbs, as well as educational excursions to the mountains for schoolchildren, women, and young people. Another example is the creation of a greenhouse that demonstrates how to properly cultivate mountain grass dyes, how to root their cuttings, and preserve and increase their numbers. The greenhouse employs women from socially vulnerable groups. The projects are aimed at sustainability and self-expansion. The RDF has developed / adapted and published materials on the use of the country's bio-resources and associated traditional knowledge, explanatory materials on the ABS. These materials were distributed among women. On TV and radio programs, opinions were presented from interviews of women in mountainous regions, which helped reach a larger audience.