

## 1. When the organisation was established, by whom, and its key purpose and aims?

The organization was founded in 1999 by a group of women activists to contribute to the resolution of Tajikistan's social and economic issues following the fall of the Soviet Union and the brutal civil war that followed.

*Zan va Zamin* ("Women and Earth") aims to reduce poverty and preserve native agrobiodiversity by carrying out activities in the following categories:

- Providing legal support to ensure access to the land for rural women who are landless farmers, thereby increasing their income and their families' food security;
- Supporting local initiatives aimed at preserving biodiversity and agrobiodiversity and the related traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of local communities in the mountain area Khatlon oblast Tajikistan;

The organization defends the interests of rural communities in issues related to natural resources management before the local authorities and the Tajik government.

## 2. The organisation's main achievements have been since the beginning, and in the last year?

**From beginning:**

### **a. Access to land**

From beginning to date, *Zan va Zamin*'s support has helped over 1,200 women receive their share of land, and over 50 women leaders have been trained to manage farms. By supporting women farmers to stay on the land, often in the absence of their husbands who have emigrated, *Zan va Zamin* is bolstering local food security and reviving Tajikistan's traditional eco-agricultural practices.

In addition, *Zan va Zamin* has helped reclaim for agricultural use over 300 ha of land that had previously been swamped by rising groundwater. *Zan va Zamin* organized a collection of community resources to clean the collector and drainage systems. Ten thousand meters of the drainage system have been cleaned to date, bringing land back into agricultural use, increasing local food security and nutrition, and reducing the incidence of contagious diseases, including malaria, that were related to the increased humidity of the swampy land.

### **b. Conservation biodiversity:**

- Over 10,000 saplings of rare local fruit varieties, especially variety of apples were distributed among community members in the Muminobod and Khovaling mountain regions and in the Khamadoni area, to be nurtured in communal nursery gardens. 22 community orchards with a total area of 18 ha have been established featuring rare varieties of apples, pears, grapes, apricots and peaches. These orchards serve as an example for other communities and as a training platform for school-age children, strengthening their ties with the ancient agricultural traditions of their nation and teaching the importance of biodiversity.

## **Socioeconomic Impacts**

### **D. Empowering women**

- Through Women and Earth's advocacy and support, 2,000 landless farmers have been assisted in securing the parcels of land they were entitled to, 1,200 of whom were women, among them many single mothers and widows of civil war victims. Where previously, many of these women worked on cotton plantations receiving low wages and no social benefits, they are now empowered to manage their own farms, earn income and meet their families nutritional needs.
- Over 50 women have been trained to manage farms, and a further 500 women have been involved in tasks aimed at preserving local agrobiodiversity, growing local varieties of beans, fruits and other crops, and practicing traditional crafts.

- **Valuing local traditional knowledge**

As well as the more tangible socioeconomic benefits of Women and Earth's work, the organization has done a great deal to boost the value of local, traditional agricultural knowledge. This has created a sense of pride among holder of this knowledge and expertise which for many decades was undervalued and neglected. Women and Earth have proven very successful at attracting recognition and respect for the custodians of this knowledge through its Farmer Field School, where the knowledge is passed on, and through retreats and awards that the group organises. In many cases, local elders did not consider their wisdom valued or valuable until they were acknowledged and recognised by Women and Earth. Now, these elders have become respected in their communities as they teach younger students how to revitalise local agricultural traditions. Women and Earth established 4 Community Centres of conservation of Biocultural diversity for sharing information and education on traditional knowledge.

### Policy Impacts

- In 2003, Women and Earth conducted a survey of women working on cotton plantations, which demonstrated the extreme difficulty of their situation. The findings of the survey were reported widely throughout Tajikistan and were presented to the government. Since then, Women and Earth has been invited to participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of key national policies including Tajikistan's National Development Strategy (2005-2015), the Poverty Reduction Strategy in the Republic of Tajikistan (2007-2009) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy in the Republic of Tajikistan (2010-2012). Women and Earth conducted studies, organised round table conferences, and promoted the involvement of civil society in the implementation of key strategic policies. Women and Earth's participation in the development of the National Development Strategy was as part of a 'collaboration group' of 14 civil society organizations from throughout Tajikistan.
  - Women and Earth also participated in the development and implementation of a government program entitled: '**Main direction of the government policy on ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the Republic of Tajikistan in 2001-2010**'. In particular, the contributed to Chapter IV: '**Land access for village women**'. Alongside UNIFEM (now incorporated into the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) and the 'Sitora' organization, Women and Earth has lobbied successfully for the introduction of amendments and additions to the Land Code of the Republic of Tajikistan, concerning women's access to land.
  - Women and Earth from 2004 was a member of Working Group on implementation Land reform organized by UN FAO and Land Committee of Government Tajikistan.
  - Women and Earth are a member of club ecological NGO-s of Tajikistan, where discussing and preparing common recommendation on important ecological issues of Tajikistan, legislation initiatives and others.
  - Since 2011, Women and Earth has been involved in the revision of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), in particular, on mechanisms regarding access to genetic resources and the fair distribution of associated benefits.

### Partners

- **Local Associations:** Women and Earth's main partners are local civil society organizations with whom it collaborates on exchanging knowledge and best practices. Partnerships with NGO-s 'Khamkori Bakhri Tarakkiet' and 'Ganchi Tabiat' consist of exchanging information, studying best practices and sharing experiences gained in terms of the preservation and development of biodiversity. **Government Institutions:** Women and Earth partners with the, Institute Botany Plant Physiology and Genetics Academy of Sciences RT and 'Bogparvar' scientific and research institute (Research Institute of Horticulture), the National Genetic Resources Centre and other government institutions. Partnership with these institutions involve information exchange, the provision of expert consultations on matter to do with biodiversity, joint

participation in activities and conferences, and the development of joint documentation and statements about biodiversity.

- **International NGOs:** Since 2003, Women and Earth has been a partner of Christian Aid, The Christensen Fund is another major partner and funder of Women and Earth. Women and Earth was also long term partner of Swiss Organization Helvetas, Fauna and Flora International, Norway Forestry Group.

### **3. *Zan va Zamin* Women and Earth's In the last our activity. and in the last year?**

**During last 3-5 years we concentrated our activity on the following directions with supporting the Christensen Fund:**

1. Support and re-granting local community organizations on conservation and valorization biocultural diversity in their place through presenting small grants in the mountain districts.
2. The assistance for implementation of Nagoya Protocol on access to genetic resources and application mechanisms ABS system in our country with engagement the main stakeholders – traditional knowledge -holders, research institutes, representatives NGO-s, commercial organization and others.
3. Restoration famous pomegranate gardens in the past and now forbidden in Shurabad district.
4. Creation database and digitations the samples of herbarium plants found by the Academy of Sciences RT

#### **The main achievements:**

4. The central role of stewards of biocultural diversity and traditional knowledge in maintaining BCD strengthened through official grant support for their ideas and initiatives;
5. Broad awareness raised about the potential of Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) as a tool for conservation of ecosystems, protection of traditional knowledge and creating sustainable livelihood;
6. Frameworks of ABS implementation mechanisms in the country developed and suggested for the adoption at the national level;
7. Famous Dashtijum pomegranates varieties saved from disappearance with at least 4-5 local varieties on 50-80 hectares and Shurobod pomegranate gardens restored in an area of 100 hectares, including a collection garden 2 hectares and a nursery on 0.5 hectare;
8. The national Herbarium restored and fully operational, meeting the needs of 21st century research.

- **How many other staff members and volunteers are there?**
- 6 staff, about 20 members, and 11 volunteers.
- **Zan va Zamin won the UNDP Equator Prize in 2012 –**
- Last 6 years we much worked on conservation biodiversity and agrobiodiversity, climate change, food sovereignty, engagement rural women for conservation biocultural diversity. And attracting Young generation and rural women.

We are legally registered organization in Tajikistan in Ministry of Justice Republic Tajikistan.