



# WOMEN AND EARTH

Tajikistan



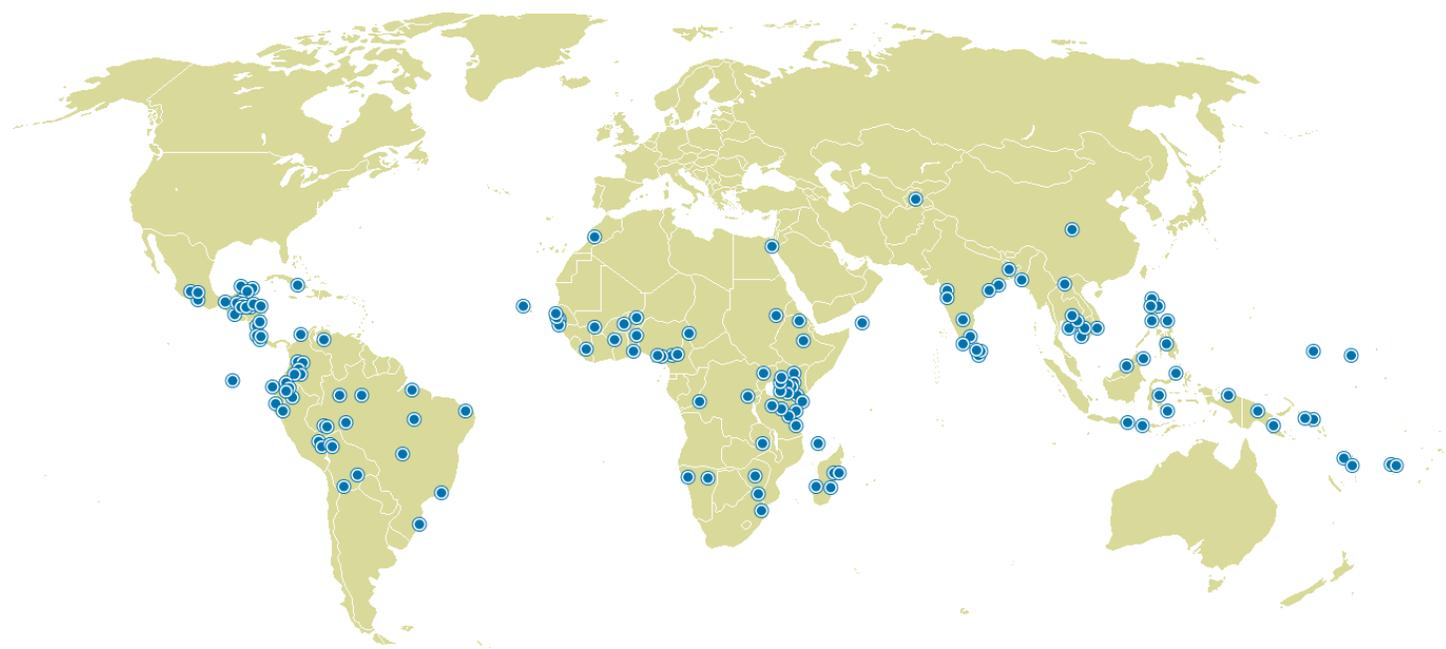
## Equator Initiative Case Studies

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# WOMEN AND EARTH

## Tajikistan

### PROJECT SUMMARY

Women and Earth works to attain access to land for landless farmers, support diversified farming methods, and promote the conservation of biodiversity through responsible natural resource management. Over 2,000 landless farmers have received land parcels as a result of the group's advocacy, and solar vegetable dryers, solar-powered greenhouses and energy-efficient ovens have been provided to poor households.

The group has also established twelve 'field schools' where it teaches eco-agriculture techniques. These 'field schools' produce over 1,000 tons of vegetables annually. Two community orchards contain over 10,000 trees, mostly traditional varieties of apple, pear, grape, apricot and peach. Diversification of crops has prevented land degradation, strengthened food security, and improved local incomes. Over 30 'seed banks' and 30 'revolving funds' have been launched to create opportunities for local entrepreneurs, with a percentage of resulting revenues reinvested into community works projects, including in health and education.

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background and Context	4
Key Activities and Innovations	6
Biodiversity Impacts	8
Socioeconomic Impacts	9
Policy Impacts	10
Sustainability	11
Replication	11
Partners	12

### KEY FACTS

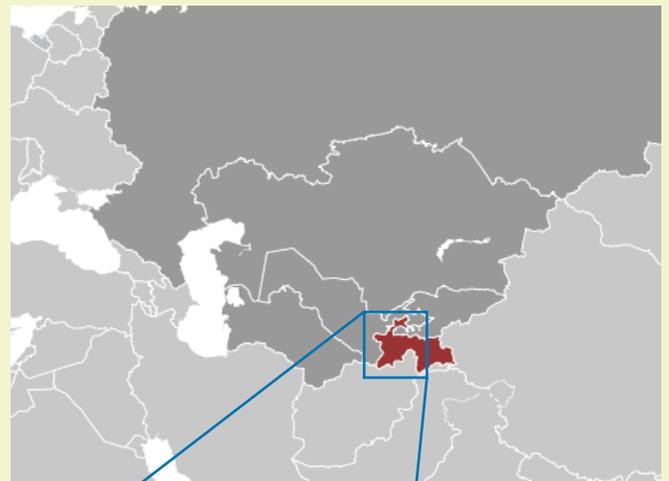
EQUATOR PRIZE WINNER: 2012

FOUNDED: 1999

LOCATION: Rural regions throughout Tajikistan

BENEFICIARIES: Over 2,000 women and landless farmers

BIODIVERSITY: Preservation of native agrobiodiversity



# Background and Context



Women and Earth (Zan va Zamin) is a grassroots organization that works to attain land tenure security and property rights for landless farmers, introduce diversified farming methods, and promote the conservation of eco-agriculture landscapes. The organization maintains a particular focus on advancing the rights of women. It was founded in 1999 by a small group of women activists in response to the challenges facing women in the region during the collapse of the Soviet Union and the civil war that would follow.

Tajikistan gained independence in 1991, but faced complex socioeconomic challenges due to the Soviet Union's collapse. The country was also engulfed by political division and violence between 1992 and 1997 in a civil war that killed over 60,000 people (mainly men) and displaced over 700,000 more. The physical infrastructure of the country was largely destroyed. Healthcare, education and employment services deteriorated, became anaemic or altogether vanished. As a consequence, Tajikistan, which was already the poorest of the Soviet Republics, became the poorest country in the world outside of Africa, with nearly the entire population living below the poverty line.

Today, the spectre of poverty and economic isolation still haunts Tajikistan; more than 45 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. In a population of 7.4 million, 73 per cent live in rural areas. As such, agriculture is an important contributor both to the national economy and to local livelihoods. Although Zan va Zamin is based in the capital city, Dushanbe, the organization carries out its work primarily in rural regions, particularly border zones. Much of the organization's work takes place in the southern and eastern parts of Khatlon Province, in the districts of Vose, Shuroobod, Muminabad, Chovaling, Hamadoni and Farchor. Zan va Zamin fills a significant void in service delivery and development programming in the region; Khatlon Province borders Afghanistan, and, because of the risks of operating there and the country's own struggles with armed violence, few international NGOs and virtually no national NGOs operate there.

## *Land tenure, property rights and women in Tajikistan*

Women in Tajikistan face a number of obstacles that limit their ability to climb out of poverty, many of which begin with an inability to security property rights and tenure over the land they work. The majority of women in the country earn their livelihoods from the agricultural sector. As a result of the civil war, as well as high emigration rates among men who travel to Russia in search of gainful employment, an unusually high proportion of households in Tajikistan are headed by women. These households tend to be worse off financially than male-headed households, in large part because of the hurdles women face to securing land tenure, or having land held officially in their name. This also has implications for the ability of women to access financial services, which often use land as collateral for loans or credit.

The difficult task of converting state-owned land to privately-held land began soon after Tajikistan gained independence. For individuals and households, land withdrawn from the collective farms offered an opportunity to become legally titled land owners, officially called dekhkan farmers under Presidential Decree No. 522, 1996. Additionally, the Land Code grants every family the right to receive a household plot. These household plots are common throughout the former Soviet Union and served as important food security buffers when poverty rates increased sharply during the transition period.

Technically, women and men are treated equally under the law. The two most substantial hurdles to land tenure security for women are awareness and cultural norms. There is an extremely low level of awareness amongst women on land rights, the land reform process, and the legal entitlement to cultivate private land. This lack of awareness is compounded by customary cultural norms, which often trump any formal legal protections or provisions women may have. In Tajikistan, women do not traditionally play a role in the management of property. Although women often have access

to land through their husbands and families, they are rarely legal holders of any official land title. Although land may be acquired through state allocation or inheritance, all land is still technically owned by the state, leaving no markets for alienable property rights. As traditional inheritance practices favour sons over wives or daughters, women rarely inherit land.

### *Cash crops and monoculture*

In addition to lacking secure legal tenure over their land, women are often forced to grow unprofitable cash crops such as cotton. In Tajikistan, cotton accounts for 90 per cent of agricultural exports. Many smallholder farmers are required to produce cotton as a condition of retaining their legal status as dekhkan farmers. This requirement not only creates overdependence on a single crop, but cotton is famously inedible. Farmers are then restricted in their ability to cultivate crops that would strengthen food security, improve nutrition, and boost local livelihoods.

### *Zan va Zamin – Women and Earth*

Zan va Zamin evolved to address these challenges, and was created with the explicit goal of reducing poverty and conserving native agro-biodiversity. Among its main objectives, this pioneering community-based organization aims to: provide legal support and ensure land access for rural women (the majority of whom are landless farmers); improve food security and increase local incomes; support local initiatives that preserve agro-biodiversity as well as traditional knowledge and practices; and promote farmer self-governance through the formation of associations and cooperatives. The organization's staff includes women farmers, experts in grafting and orchard cultivation, and Tajikistan's first woman PhD holder (in plant genetics).

Zan va Zamin has grown to become a highly respected organization, known for substantial accomplishments in land tenure securitization, women's rights, sustainable farming and biodiversity conservation. In addition to providing legal advocacy and support services for individual women, the organization also defends the collective resource rights of rural communities in situations of conflict with local authorities and the national government. The running of the organization is carried out by a team of administrators and programme officers who oversee various project portfolios (e.g. Conservation of Biodiversity and Traditional Knowledge; Agriculture projects; and Protection of Forest Food Resources). The organisation is overseen by a Chairperson who answers to an Executive Council and General Assembly.

The organization's mission guides the selection of projects, which first and foremost, focus on decreasing poverty by supporting rural women in agriculture and conservation of biodiversity. Potential project activities are identified through needs assessments conducted in communities, where community members themselves identify priority problems. Together with community members, Zan va Zamin develops solutions to these problems, and proposals for funding are submitted to donor organizations such as The Christensen Fund, Act Central Asia, Helvetas, or Fauna and Flora International, whose missions and objectives align with those of Zan va Zamin. Throughout a project's lifespan, women from the communities where Zan va Zamin works are kept involved through communication with communities' informal leaders and local activists.



*“Each of us can do something to conserve Earth’s biodiversity and we have to do it.”*

*Sabagul, Zan va Zamin Facilitator, Chovaling District*

# Key Activities and Innovations



Zan va Zamin is first and foremost a women's organization. All of its programs and activities are undertaken with women in mind and with the goal of developing women's rights. More specifically, the organization focuses its efforts in three broad areas of programming: tenure securitization and land access; the conservation of biodiversity and preservation of traditional knowledge, and the creation of farmer associations and cooperatives.

## *Tenure securitization and land access for women*

To date, Zan va Zamin has helped more than 1,200 women gain legal title over their land. This rather remarkable achievement has been achieved through a combination of advocacy and awareness-raising. In addition, the organization has trained 50 women in farm management, the conservation of agro-biodiversity, and livelihoods diversification. By supporting women farmers to stay on their land, and helping them secure legal title in the absence of husbands who have emigrated, Zan va Zamin has also created a platform to revive traditional eco-agriculture practices. This has had the spill-over benefit of improving local food security.

Additionally, the organization has helped reclaim more than 300 hectares of land in Hamadoni district for agricultural use; this land was previously swamped by rising groundwater. The organization mobilized a grassroots movement of local farmers to clear and clean the clogged drainage systems that were at the root of the rising groundwater problem. To date, more than 10,000 meters of the drainage system have been cleaned, reviving the land, restoring a measure of agricultural productivity, and reducing incidence of waterborne diseases.

## *Biodiversity and traditional knowledge*

Soviet industrialised agriculture aimed to move Tajikistani farmers away from traditional mixed fruit and cereal farms to large

monoculture plantations (specifically, cotton). This transition served to weaken the connection between Tajikistani farmers and their land, reduce agro-biodiversity, threaten a number of native crop and fruit varieties, and had a deleterious effect on traditional knowledge systems and ecologically adapted farming practices. Zan va Zamin is working to reverse this process. The organization promotes the cultivation of native crops that are able to withstand Tajikistan's harsh and varying climate and fulfil the food security and nutritional needs of the local population.

Since the initiative began, the total area under cotton production has decreased while the cultivation of traditional fruits and native crops has increased. Over 10,000 saplings of traditional fruit varieties have been distributed among community members in the Muminobod and Khovaling mountain regions and in the Khamadoni area. These trees have been nurtured and propagated in communal nursery gardens. Twelve community orchards have been established which feature traditional varieties of apples, pears, grapes, apricots and peaches. Not only do the orchards serve to strengthen food security, they have also been used as demonstration plots or learning sites for other communities, farmers and schoolchildren.

Indeed, a central dimension to the work of Zan va Zamin is the preservation of traditional agricultural knowledge. The group operates under the belief that the reintroduction of traditional practices, evolved over generations of farming and adaptive landscape management, is the most effective way to conserve agro-biodiversity. Zan va Zamin works with traditional knowledge holders to ensure that effective agricultural practices are documented and can be passed on. This enterprise has been undertaken and achieved largely through twelve 'farmer field schools', operated by the organization to teach and replicate traditional eco-agriculture methods. The schools work with 200 farmers, both men and women, and produce over 1,000 tons of vegetables per farm annually, including cucumbers and tomatoes.

### *Farmer associations and cooperatives*

Prior to the formation of Zan va Zamin, farmers had very little bargaining power when selling their produce. Even with improved agricultural diversity and on-farm productivity, farmers were subject to not only market fluctuations, but the often unfairly low prices set by middle men. To address this problem, the organization has helped organize women into farmer associations and cooperatives, which has, in turn, drastically improved the bargaining power of smallholder farmers. To date, more than 300 farmers have organized themselves into self-help groups. Together, these farmers produce and deliver over 2,000 tons of agricultural products to market every year. These associations afford them an opportunity to collectively set conditions for the sale of their produce.

### *Revolving funds and adaptation to climate change*

Another innovation of Zan va Zamin has been the creation of 30 seed funds and 20 revolving loan funds for farmer associations in the Hamadoni, Vose, Parkhar and Muminobod areas. In a country where access to credit and loan services is limited, particularly for women,

these revolving funds fill an important void and create space for small-scale enterprise to grow and thrive. Any profits generated from revolving fund investments are shared; 20 per cent is returned to the community coffers, while 80 per cent is used to cover household needs. These funds have improved food security and socioeconomic resilience, and are particularly vital to women who are not the legal title holders of the land they farm and therefore cannot use land as collateral to apply for loans through regular banks.

Other activities have increased the capacity of local communities to adapt to climate change, including through training on energy efficiency measures; the construction of solar greenhouses for the production of early spring vegetables like tomatoes, cucumbers and onions; and the establishment of information centres on climate change where farmers can access materials on mitigation and adaptation strategies. Food producers have also benefitted from the distribution of solar vegetable dryers and energy efficient ovens. To date, the organization has constructed 10 communal greenhouses, distributed 12 solar vegetable dryers, and set up 12 energy saving ovens.



*“Patience, belief and commitment are necessary to change the world for the better.”*

*Nigina, Zan va Zamin Programme Officer, Dushanbe*

# Impacts



## BIODIVERSITY IMPACTS

Historically, Tajikistan and the surrounding region were extremely important to world agriculture. It was in the mountainous regions of Central Asia that many of the fruits, vegetables, nuts and grains that make up modern diets were first domesticated. Many of the crop varieties indigenous to the region, as well as the traditional practices of harvesting them, have become endangered. Zan va Zamin is among the organizations leading efforts to revitalise this rich agricultural heritage. A main pillar of their work is biodiversity conservation through the protection and promotion of native varieties of fruits and crops, and associated traditional knowledge.

### *Agrobiodiversity and loosening the grip of monocultures*

Zan va Zamin has been a stalwart advocate for moving away from the Soviet era cotton monocultures that still dominate Tajikistan's agricultural sector, a national land management strategy that creates overdependence on a single cash crop, has reduced agricultural diversity, which limits the capacity of the country to provide sufficient food security for its population, and which puts farmers at the mercy of the global price fluctuations of a single market. The organization has participated in the reorganisation and diversification of three large cotton farms, and widely promotes more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable agricultural practices. Its activities have resulted in a 2,500-hectare reduction in the area under cotton production in the Khamadoni area of Khatlon Province. This shift has reduced the pace of land degradation – a persistent problem in the region – as well as the use of chemical pesticides, weed killers and fertilizers.

To provide an alternative to monoculture, Zan va Zamin has sought to reintroduce and protect traditional (and typically threatened) crops that are better adjusted to local conditions and which have been adapted over generations by farmers to thrive in the demanding climate of Tajikistan. As a result, more than 20 rare, native varieties

of apples, pears, grapes, apricots and peaches – all of which were at risk of being lost in favour of commercial varieties – are now being protected. The organization has helped to establish communal nurseries, gardens and orchards; through these, it has distributed more than 10,000 native seedlings.

### *Linking biodiversity, traditional knowledge and education*

The organization also prioritizes the reintroduction of traditional knowledge in its activities, and demonstrates a clear link between successful conservation outcomes, the revival of traditional land management practices, and education and awareness-raising efforts. In combination, these three dimensions provide a solid foundation on which local collective action can be most effective and sustained over time. By organising retreats, granting awards and giving holders of traditional agricultural knowledge the opportunity to share it and teach others, Zan va Zamin is not just promoting crop varieties to strengthen the local economy and agricultural sector, they are embedding an appreciation for the value of traditional knowledge that was ignored and neglected for decades under the system of industrialised agriculture that prevailed in Soviet Tajikistan. Conservation efforts have also focused on threatened varieties of native nuts and fruits in protected forests (zacaznik) of Childuchtaron.

Education, training and awareness-raising are central to the organization's activities and to its model of sustainability. Many farmers in Tajikistan are unaware of the multiple benefits of growing native crops or of diversifying their production base. Through twelve 'farmer field schools', the organization offers an ongoing series of training sessions that teach smallholder farmers how best to use local crop varieties, and under what conditions they are most likely to flourish. Many of the crop varieties that are being reintroduced by Zan va Zamin have evolved and been adapted over time to cope with the harsh and varying climate of Tajikistan. Several have drought-resistant and cold-resistant properties, which help to

increase agricultural outputs and strengthen local food security. The organization also uses these schools and trainings to promote organic farming methods and reduce the volume of chemical products (fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) used by local farmers, which damage the natural environment and seep into ground water. Through Zan va Zamin efforts, rural communities, with women in the lead, are learning the importance and value of conserving local agro-biodiversity and the contribution traditional knowledge can have for both livelihoods, food security and ecosystem health.

## SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS

### *Empowering women through property rights*

A 2009 World Bank report found that female-headed households in Tajikistan were 28.6 per cent more likely to be poor than male-headed households. Civil war and migration have heightened Tajikistan's proportion of female-headed households, and these families face numerous, systemically embedded barriers and disadvantages. By focussing primarily on women, and improving their access to land and participation in natural resource management decision-making, Zan va Zamin is working to remove some of these obstacles and empower local women with the agency to be positive drivers of environmental, economic and social change.

The most notable socioeconomic impacts from Zan va Zamin work have been in the area of land tenure securitization; the organization has successfully brought women into the fold of the formal legal system in Tajikistan by advocating for women's property rights. To date, the group has helped more than 2,000 landless farmers secure formal title to the land they work, 1,200 of whom are women, among them many single mothers and widows of civil war victims. Previously, many of these women worked on cotton plantations and received low wages and no social benefits. They have each now been empowered to manage their own farms, earn higher incomes and meet the food security and nutritional needs of their families.

### *Training and access to credit and loan services*

The organization also actively provides training and capacity building to local women. To date, more than 50 women have been trained in sustainable farm management, and a further 500 have participated in trainings around agro-biodiversity conservation; the cultivation of local varieties of beans and fruit; and traditional arts and crafts. Hands-on training and capacity building workshops are complemented by revolving funds and seed banks, which give local women access to credit that was previously hard to secure. The vast majority of local and national banks require collateral to access loans, and many rural farmers do not qualify for this asset-based lending.

The revolving funds operated by Zan va Zamin then afford local women the chance to start small businesses and to access funds that, while small, are often catalytic. In addition, having access to a source of small loans gives households the security of a financial safety net between harvests and increases their resilience to unexpected expenses and income shocks.

### *Food security and improved incomes*

The revival of traditional crop and fruit varieties has had a positive impact on household food security. Together, the twelve 'farmer field schools' produce over 1,000 tons of vegetables each year, which is distributed to local markets. By promoting native food varieties over cotton monoculture, food shortages have been reduced and farmers and their families now have access to a varied diet of locally produced fruits, vegetables and grains. As a result of Zan va Zamin activities, the average annual income of participating farmers is USD 1,560, well above the national average. Improved income has led to improvements in community wellbeing, with families investing more readily in local infrastructure, household healthcare needs, clothing, school fees and textbooks.

### *Improvements in health*

The revival of traditional land management practices, as well as the proliferation of organic agriculture, has also had positive impacts on population health. On top of the nutritional benefits that come from simply having more food available, both in quantity and diversity, the organization coordinated the reclamation of more than 300 hectares of land in Hamadoni which had been flooded and swamped by rising groundwater, an action that reduced incidence of malaria and other waterborne diseases which had spiked in the region due to the degradation and disrepair of local drainage systems. To date, Zan va Zamin has overseen the cleaning of more than 10,000 metres of drainage pipes, which has brought the land back into agricultural use and helped to control the spread of contagious diseases.

### *Resilience to climate change*

Zan va Zamin work has also served to strengthen the long term resilience of communities to climate change, as well as natural disasters like floods, mud slides and earthquakes. The revitalisation and reintroduction of traditional crops has furnished farming communities and households with an assortment of grains and fruits that have been adapted over generations to thrive in the extreme climate of Tajikistan. Temperatures frequently exceed 40°C in summer and drop as low as -25°C in winter. Improved agricultural productivity and agro-biodiversity are also parts of the organization's adaptation model, as surplus food stocks are stored for lean times and unexpected climate shocks.

Three education centres operated by Zan va Zamin – in the Hamadoni, Parkhar and Vose areas of Khatlon Province – provide community members with an opportunity to discuss issues related to climate change, including the challenges they are likely to face and ways to increase their resilience and adaptability. Several participating farming communities are in the process of developing local action plans that map out strategies for how they intend to respond and adapt to climate change. The organization has also overseen the distribution of solar powered dryers, solar panels and energy efficient ovens to a number of communities. These are significant tools in a country where energy shortages are commonplace.

## 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 holders of this knowledge and expertise which for many decades was undervalued and neglected. Zan va Zamin has been highly successful at attracting recognition and respect for the custodians of this knowledge through its 'farmer field schools', where the knowledge is documented, shared, and exchanged. Equally noteworthy, Zan va Zamin has established four community centres for the conservation of bio-cultural diversity, where information on traditional land management practices is exchanged. In many cases, local elders did not consider their wisdom valued or valuable until they were acknowledged and recognised by Zan va Zamin. Now, these elders have become respected in their communities as they teach younger students how to deploy local agricultural traditions to meet modern challenges like food insecurity and climate change.

## POLICY IMPACTS

Zan va Zamin has become one of the most respected civil society organizations in Tajikistan. The organization advises the government on a number of issues and is regularly included in consultations on various facets of national strategies and action plans. Through dogged and strategic lobbying and advocacy, Zan va Zamin has managed to bring women's rights to the fore of national dialogues on development and poverty reduction, and raised the profile and participation levels of women in the social and political life of the country. Importantly, this has meant greater involvement of women in decision-making on natural resource management and the governance of environment and development projects.

In 2003, Zan va Zamin conducted a survey of women working on cotton plantations which was revealing of the systemic challenges confronting women in the agricultural sector and across Tajikistan. The findings of the survey were presented to the government and were reported on widely throughout the country. Since that survey, Zan va Zamin has been invited to participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of key national policies, including the 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). In these various policy formulation processes, the organization has undertaken studies, organised roundtable discussions and conferences, and, most importantly, promoted the involvement of civil society and grassroots organizations in the implementation of key strategic objectives.

The group was also requested to assume a leadership role in the development and implementation of a national government programme 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'. More specifically, Zan va Zamin helped to author a chapter titled, 'Land access for village women'. Through this and other provisions, the organization 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. This advocacy and policy engagement was instrumental to securing land plots (and legal land titles) for more than 1,200 landless women farmers.

Since 2004, Zan va Zamin has been a member of the Working Group on Implementation of Land Reform, coordinated by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Land Committee of the Government of Tajikistan. The organization also holds membership in an alliance of environmental NGOs in Tajikistan, which come together to discuss and prepare common recommendations on issues of relevance to environmental and ecosystem health.

Since 2011, Zan va Zamin has been involved in the revision of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), specifically on access and benefit sharing (ABS). The group took part in a regional seminar organized by the UNCBD Secretariat in Turkey. Since 2009, Zan va Zamin has been a member of the National Steering Committee of the UNDP-implemented GEF Small Grants Programme in Tajikistan.



# Sustainability and Replication



## SUSTAINABILITY

The organization is funded by international donors, small grants from the Tajikistan government, and small contributions from the organization's members. Strong relationships with a number of different donors reduce reliance on any single funding stream. For certain activities and specific projects, Zan va Zamin members contribute a portion of the cost (anywhere between 5 and 20 per cent). Examples of this member-driven funding in action include the cleaning of drainage systems, the construction of green houses, and the creation of revolving funds. These revolving funds are themselves a pillar of the organization's sustainability model, as they allow members access to small amounts of catalytic funding. The funds have typically enabled farmers to make investments into land management needs and equipment. They also facilitate a decentralized model of ongoing project delivery, whereby local innovations and actions can continue without continuous, direct input from the organization.

The training dimension of Zan va Zamin work has a similar effect. Rather than simply promoting the cultivation of native fruits and grains, the organization provides training to ensure that farmers have the knowledge and expertise necessary to cultivate these crops successfully over the long term. The twelve 'farmer field schools', community nurseries, and fruit orchards provide a platform where knowledge can be passed on from older community members – and the holders of traditional agricultural knowledge – to younger farmers. In addition to ensuring that farmers are adequately trained, this system fosters intergenerational relationships within rural communities. Critically, Zan va Zamin has cultivated a strong sense of community ownership over its work, which has in turn led to the accumulation of social capital. Community members have a stake and are highly invested in seeing the organization grow and succeed. All projects designed and implemented by Zan va Zamin are community-oriented and designed to respond to community needs.

## REPLICATION

The organization's primary instruments for replicating its sustainable land management and organic farming practices are its twelve 'farmer field schools'. At these training sites, farmers learn from community elders. Traditional knowledge on resilient crop varieties and high-yield, environmentally-responsible agricultural practices are shared through workshops and hands-on demonstrations. This has been a highly efficient and effective mechanism for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange. To date, more than 500 farmers have received training in how to cultivate sustainable eco-agriculture landscapes.

The group has also benefited from a significant amount of media exposure and coverage. This has helped to raise public awareness of the organization, its landscape management practices, its emphasis on rights-based approaches, and its broader suite of activities. In this same vein, Zan va Zamin has self-published a number of brochures and newsletters designed to publicize their work and which have been deployed to good effect. This has included a number of manuals on the imperative (and practical application) of renewable and alternative energy sources – namely, solar energy to dry fruits and vegetables and to produce early-spring vegetables and greens – in rural Tajikistan.

More formal mechanisms for best practice replication have been the farmer-to-farmer exchange visits. The peer-to-peer model has been used to transfer knowledge both domestically and internationally, including with Potato Park in Peru and Indigenous Terra Madre in Sweden. Domestically, the organization hosts local exchange visits, which offer farmer-led training and use demonstration plots, as well as multi-stakeholder roundtable discussions that bring together farmer federations, women's groups, local government and national government. More than 20 farmer collectives have expressed an interest in replicating the Zan va Zamin model in

other regions of Tajikistan. The association is also well-represented in national and international policymaking circles. Zan va Zamin was a key contributor to a national roundtable on food security and also participates in both the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity and the International Women's Network on Biodiversity.

## PARTNERS

**Local Associations:** The main partners to Zan va Zamin are local civil society organizations. The organization works with these groups on knowledge exchange and the uptake of best practice in sustainable land management. Partnerships with 'Khamkori Bakhti Tarakkiet' and 'Ganchi Tabiat' are based on information exchange, the study of best practices, and the sharing of experience gained in promoting sustainable livelihoods while conserving biodiversity. On matters related to alternative energy, Zan va Zamin collaborates with the public association 'Malaya Zemlya'. Another partnership with 'Mekhrangez' women's group involves collaboration on farm-related matters and women's empowerment. Active collaboration with local partner organizations keeps Zan va Zamin attuned to emerging innovations, opportunities for fruitful exchange, and the evolving needs of farmers working on the ground. Zan va Zamin is also a member of an alliance of ecological NGOs in Tajikistan that come together periodically to discuss and prepare common recommendations on issues of ecological importance.

**Government Institutions:** Zan va Zamin partners with the 'Bogparvar' scientific and research institute (Research Institute of Horticulture), the National Genetic Resources Centre, and other government institutions that add value to their development model. Partnership with these institutions involves information exchange, expert consultation services (in both directions), collaboration on relevant conferences, and the development of joint documentation and public statements about biodiversity.

**International NGOs:** Since 2003, Zan va Zamin has been supported by Christian Aid, who provide organizational support and capacity building assistance in the design of effective programming. After an initial two year partnership commitment, Zan va Zamin and Christian Aid signed a long-term partnership contract which has Christian Aid supporting on securing women's access to land, educating rural communities on their land rights, mobilizing women's self-help groups, and eco-agriculture training. Additional partners to the initiative include The Christensen Fund, Helvetas, and Fauna and Flora International.

**United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):** In early 2011, Zan va Zamin received a grant of USD 32,320 from the UNDP-led Tajik-Afghan Poverty Reduction Initiative Project (UNDP-TAPRI) funded by the Government of Japan. This funding was used to implement cross-border and capacity building activities among 1,770 peasant farmers of Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The key focus of the cross-border initiative was to enhance the capacity of farmers on both sides of the Pyanj River to overcome the challenges of poverty, unemployment and a poor economy.



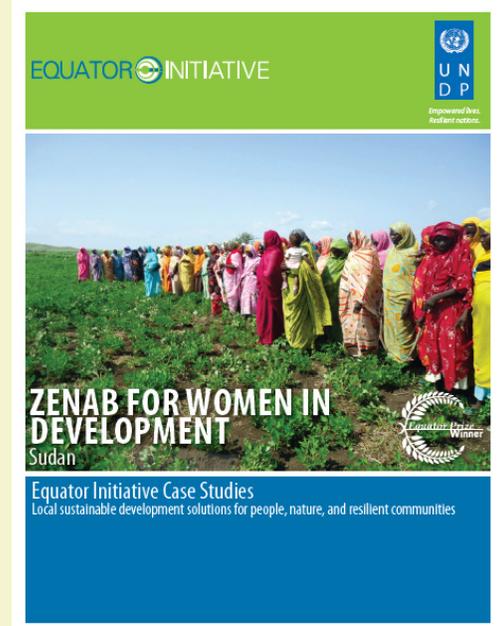
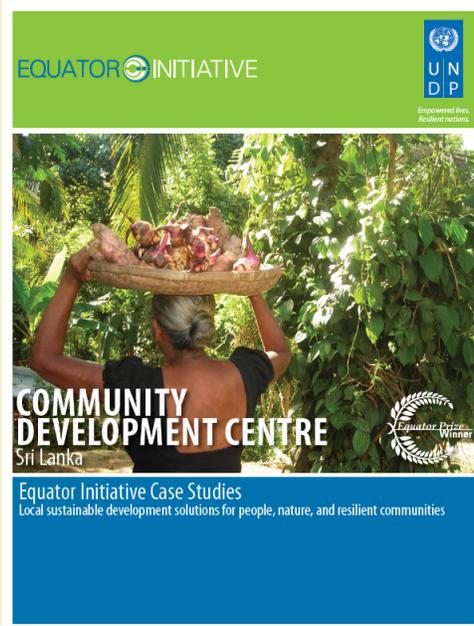
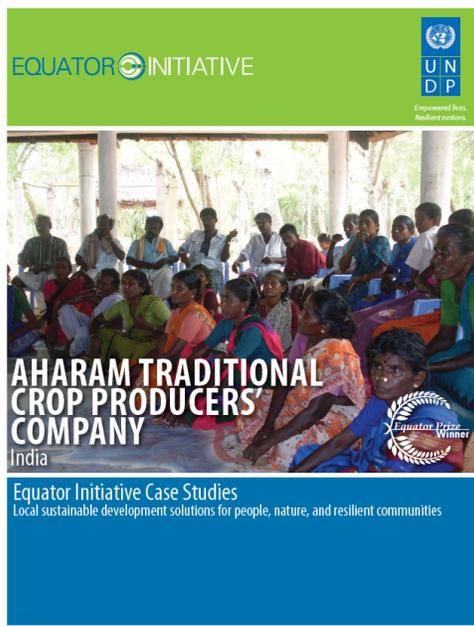
*“Policy makers must use their best efforts in their countries and around the world to prevent the destruction of natural resources.”*

*Kaybony, Farmer, Hamadony District*

## FURTHER REFERENCE

- Women and Earth Equator Initiative profile page: [http://www.equatorinitiative.org/index.php?option=com\\_winners&view=winner\\_detail&id=165&Itemid=683](http://www.equatorinitiative.org/index.php?option=com_winners&view=winner_detail&id=165&Itemid=683)
- Shahriari, H, Danzer, AM, Giovarelli, R and Undeland, A (2009) Improving Women's Access to Land and Financial Resources in Tajikistan. World Bank Group Gender Action Plan.

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