



drynet

www.dry-net.org

No. 8

August 2011

News from Drynet

A global initiative giving future to drylands

Drynet is a project of 15 organisations from all over the world. They work together to combat land degradation

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Drynet Update

Welcome to the eight issue "News from Drynet"; a newsletter from the Drynet network on local concerns and views on drylands. You are now reading the first newsletter which is part of a new series of newsletters in Drynet Phase II. This issue provides additional information about the content of the project and its launch in Bolivia last January. Furthermore, the focus of this newsletter is on intercultural dynamics. Working in an international network such as Drynet, with network partners coming from different countries, cultures and contexts can create challenges in

communication, working culture and different expectations. In order to make the future Drynet collaboration more efficient, ten of the network partners participated in a training on how to manage cultural dynamics in a joint project or network such as Drynet. A particular section in this newsletter elaborates on this training, sharing lessons learnt and next steps for the network. Lastly, this newsletter sheds light on the first lobby activity in Drynet II: the CRIC 9, held in Bonn, Germany. Drynet was strongly present and this issue will highlight some of the most important information about this event.

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

 **Both ENDS**
Environment and Development Service



**DRYLANDS
COORDINATION
GROUP**

PSO capacity building in
developing countries




group foto

Drynet II

Drynet II 'A springboard to promote resilience in drylands' officially started its second phase on January 1, 2011 with the financial support of the Swiss Development Cooperation and PSO Netherlands. In this second phase, the Drynet program continues to provide a unique opportunity for 15 CSO's around the globe to work together to promote the interest of dryland communities and dryland ecosystems.

In three years of existence, Drynet I has come a long way and achieved a range of results in the field of dryland issues, such as building strong CSO partnerships, developing capacities, and impacting policies. In order to follow up on this work, and sustain results, Drynet II will continue strengthening national platforms for coordination and collaboration regarding sustainable development in drylands (capacity building), articulating local concerns in national and international policy processes (advocacy) and acting as a knowledge hub for local knowledge and research (knowledge sharing).

From the 18th to the 21st of January, Drynet II held its kick-off meeting in the surroundings of the beautiful Amboro National Park, near the city of Santa

Cruz, Bolivia. This meeting brought together a range of Drynet members (10 in total) from all over the world. The opening ceremony of this event was attended by Cesar Altamirano, the representative of the UNCCD focal point in Bolivia. He addressed the importance of CSO input in national planning, referring to the fact that in Bolivia, Drynet achieved that 50 CSO's have given input in national planning.

The first two days allowed the network to reflect, discuss and take important decisions on our work as a network in Drynet II. During one morning session, the network reflected on lessons learnt from Drynet I and ambitions for Drynet II. Moreover, we discussed the structure and governance of the network. In this second phase, the network structure will be slightly adapted by setting up a lobby group, a fundraising group and Advisory Board, next to the Secretariat and the Steering Committee. During the meeting, the roles, responsibilities and composition of the different groups were defined. By setting up this different network structure, we hope to create a stronger and well-organized network in which roles and responsibilities are clearly divided amongst the network members.



Field visit

Besides our project meeting, we also visited the laboratory of the Bolivian partner PROBIOMA who works intensively on biological pest control and land restoration. Field visits and exchange are extremely valuable in an international network, as network members have the chance to learn and share amongst each other. This can be truly inspirational! The next 2 days were followed by an intensive network training. The following section provides two articles on this theme.

The meeting has been an inspiring experience for all of us. There is a vibrant network and members look forward to continuing to work with different stakeholders on dryland issues in Drynet II. We can say that Drynet II has been launched and the network is on track.



project meeting



project meeting

"Imitate the birdsongs of the lands you journey to" (Tamachek Proverb)

By their very nature, NGOs work within multicultural contexts characterised by attitudes, representations, visions and values that can disrupt or delay NGO activities, generate incomprehension, and even lead to mutual rejection. Such behaviour is rarely analysed, and almost never addressed with anticipation and prevention strategies.

In January 2011, DRYNET network partners came together, with the support of the Swiss Development Cooperation, in the city of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, to launch DRYNET II. On this occasion, partners sought to improve the global network's performance, by looking beyond technical and financial issues to address governance and internal communication. This was the objective of a capacity building workshop on Managing Cultural Dynamics conducted by an intercultural communication specialist, Jitske Kramer (<http://www.humandimensions.nl/>).

The workshop began by bringing to light intercultural difficulties experienced by network partners. Examples included: the use of a single working language - most frequently English - amongst groups with variable degrees of fluency in this language; the stereotypes that we project upon others when we do not understand their behaviour or when we make hasty judgments such as "that is just the way they are"; and also the unfruitful recourse to "common sense", when common sense, precisely, is intimately shaped by our heritage and differs greatly, say between a village in

the Sahel and a city like Amsterdam. This initial exploration uncovered a few precarious beliefs such as the belief that of course we are tolerant, the belief that differences can be overcome in a few meetings, or the belief that simply using common working methodologies will enable each partner to adapt. Nothing could be further from the truth.

"DIVERSITY IS NOT THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE DIFFER ONE FROM THE OTHER. DIVERSITY IS THE WAY THAT WE USE OUR SPECIFICITIES." *Ola Josep*

Every person is in certain respects...
 ... like all other people → humanity, universal level
 ... like some other people → cultural level
 ... like no other person → personal level, uniqueness

Cultural diversity is characterised by the differences between individuals' visible features (clothing, appearance) and invisible features (standards, values...). These differences express themselves through language, attitudes, behaviours, experiences, and expectations that - over and above palpable differences such as function, age or gender - mutually generate very detrimental automatic judgments about what is considered "right", and what is considered "wrong". How can we overcome these judgments? First, by being aware that when we work within an intercultural network and give life to a cultural dynamic, we

enter into a process of destabilisation when our expectations are not satisfied. When we understand the psychological and emotional consequences of this destabilisation, we can seek to find a new equilibrium.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OVERCOMING EXCLUSION AND MISUNDERSTANDING

Regulate Exclusion Mechanisms.

Exclusion can be very subtle or can become a form of discrimination. Special attention should be given to the signs that denote the presence of power games and the formation of small groups.

Prevent and Resolve Intercultural

Misunderstandings. Such misunderstandings can be caused by different, often unconscious, interpretations of universal concepts and realities such as respect, leadership, punctuality and responsibility. It is not so much a case of collectively defining "how things should be", but rather of being particularly attentive to different cultural interpretations so that the agreements that are reached will respect each network member's unique qualities.

MAIN SUCCESS FACTORS FOR MANAGING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Scientific studies have shown that the performance of intercultural groups and networks is either significantly higher or significantly lower than that of monocultural networks. The difference lies in the group or network's ability or inability to create an intercultural dynamic. What principles can be applied for successful performance? ▶

► **Trust:** cannot be decreed, is based upon positive intentions, clarity, mutual recognition, interaction and cooperation.

Loyalty: is the result of a shared sentiment of belonging to the network and adherence to common objectives. It helps to have a degree of flexibility when there is too great a divergence between loyalty and religious, ethnic or regional sensitivities.

Participation: fostering participation is the best way to avoid the potential trap of integration, in which conformity between individuals, and to the project, becomes a requirement. Participation favours richness and diversity of talents and implication in decision processes.

Cultural Dialogue: network members speak openly to each other about their cultural differences so that they can identify misunderstandings before they become problematic, and become closer to each other. This is the key factor that will foster trust, loyalty and participation.

Cultural dialoguing tries to overcome the cultural distances. In such dialogue, it is a waste of energy to try and determine which cultural approach is the best – rather we should see where everyone is standing and how we can reach each other. Cultural dialogue uses a triple perspective: my perspective, your perspective, and the middle, observing perspective. You can never do everything “your way” and you don’t want to do everything “my way”, which means that sometimes you have to find and agree on a “new way”.



Stepping Stone Model

"WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT FINGERS BUT TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A FIST"

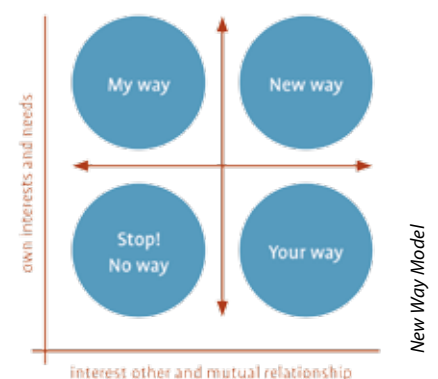
To be able to find new ways, the Cultural Stepping Stones model can be used. This model provides an overview of the psychological process that occurs during an interaction between two “cultural strangers”. There are three phases:

1. The first cultural stepping stone deals with emotional reactions to the unknown, or the ‘cultural shock’. It is called the *Opening Up* phase. To further explore the situation, it is key to be open to differences, explore misunderstandings, reframe negative feelings and judgements into a more neutral, or positive attitude,

2. The second phase, *Exploring*, requires a curious and open mind. Judgements should not be emphasised, and it is not a matter of who is right; rather the situation should be explored from different perspectives. That of our own, the others and that of mutual interaction,

3. The next step in this process is the step to create solutions for those matters that need to be resolved (*Creating Phase*). Solutions should be created to work well with the differences. Key here is to combine the similarities, and bring together differences.

The way of dealing with differences is essential when working in intercultural teams: thinking out of the box and looking for ‘new ways’ to cooperate are key to a successful intercultural team. People need to open to new realities and step away from conventional thinking such as ‘who should adapt to whom’, ‘wrong or right’ and ‘either, or’. The assignment for our team is to look for such ‘new ways’ in matters where we find our collaboration is still suffering from misunderstandings or we want to further improve participation.



Patrice Burger, CARI, Sanderijn van Beek, Both ENDS.

This article was inspired by:

CULTURAL DYNAMICS - The Cultural Stepping Stones model, Jitske Kramer, HumanDimensions. January 2011. / Managing Cultural Dynamics' is the English translation of the Dutch book: 'Normaal is anders!', by Jitske Kramer, ISBN/EAN: 978-90-814494-1-0

All pictures © Jitske Kramer, HumanDimensions, except for Lewis model: © Richard Lewis.

Website: www.humandimensions.nl/en

Training "DRYNET: Effectively sharing experiences across cultures" by Jitske Kramer.

Overcoming challenges for Drynet as a global virtual team

Working in international, and as such also intercultural- setting can provide many opportunities; opportunities that can unleash amazing positive energy, creativity and innovation. Unfortunately it can also lead to cultural misunderstanding and rejection, undermining effective cooperation in international teams (Kramer, 2011). As NGO's and CSO's we often take it for granted to work in culturally diverse teams, without taking into account that cooperation between cultural strangers might evoke questions and emotions. Such processes are rarely analysed, and almost never addressed with anticipation and prevention strategies. The DRYNET network members chose to do so in order to improve especially our communication within the network, and our sharing of information and experiences.



THREE CHALLENGES: TIME, GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL DISTANCE

As mentioned above, generally speaking, international teams with members located in different places around the globe, face three kinds of challenges. The first challenge is time distance. This means that people work with different time zones. To be able to literally talk to each other, it is important to have an overview of the times people are

available. The trainer has introduced to us the *global time planner*. This tool allows a global virtual team to make an overview of who is available at what time. Besides the fact that this tool can be very practical, it also helps to visualize time distance. We found out that if our Bolivian member wants to contact the member in Pakistan, there is only one particular hour in a day that both partners are available, due to extreme time differences. It is also recommended to include in the planner the most important holidays of each region and information about weekends. In Mauritania for example the weekend is on Friday and Saturday, so we will not plan any conference call on a Friday from now on.

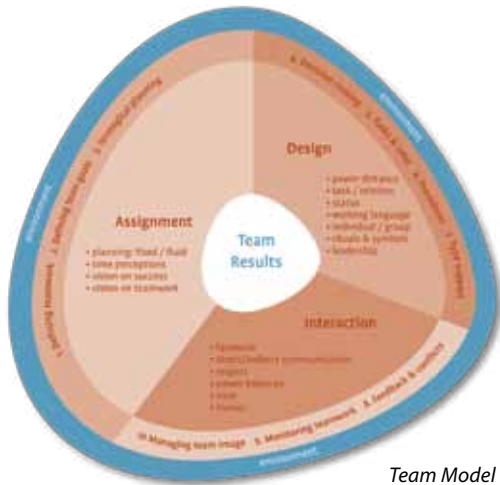


The second challenge entails the geographical challenge. Every team needs a heartbeat to keep the team going and connected, to share why you work together and give each other motivation and inspiration. Silence can be a great threat for teamwork and can seriously undermine its performance. Being physically apart from each other, global virtual teams don't meet each other frequently for an informal chitchat that can provide this heartbeat. These global teams need to create a kind of 'virtual coffee machine'; a way to make sure people feel connected to each

other and keep on sharing their passion, their successes, their questions and concerns. During the training, we shortly discussed the idea of how to establish a *heartbeat* for the Drynet network. What would work for our team to keep the heart beating, and keep the inspiration of the network alive? We came to the agreement to share monthly inspiring stories, which remind us of our common goals, dreams and inspirations.

Thirdly, global virtual teams face the challenge of cultural distance. In intercultural teams, people with different cultural backgrounds might have different interpretations about the meaning of success, or teamwork, working methods and leadership. This may cause cultural misunderstandings. The training addressed some of these culturally sensitive topics in the field of teamwork. "Vision of teamwork", or how you see teamwork, for example can vary from personal, informal relationships within the team, to business- oriented contact based on hierarchy. Perceptions about timing and planning which are important elements in strategic planning of a team can also be culturally determined: Is planning tight and detailed or is the team less rigid with deadlines? Other interesting elements include issues related to team design such as the decision-making structures. In some regions, decision-making tends to be consultative based on a democratic management style, where the voice of each team member has equal importance, while in other parts of the world, this is rather authoritarian, in which power is more concentrated with one or a few team members. Related is the source of status; Age, ►

▶ gender and class guarantees status in certain cultural contexts, while in others status is something which can only be achieved by performance rather than ascribed. Lastly, interaction and communication is a crucial element in teamwork. The training allowed us to openly discuss these sensitive topics as a first step in bridging the distance.



Team Model

A WORLD OF CULTURES

According to Lewis, cultures can be divided into three main categories, as follows:

- *Linear-active*, plan ahead step by step, separate the social and professional, confront with logic, put truth before diplomacy, polite but direct, respect officialdom, limited body language,
- *Multi-active*, very emotional, display their feelings, people orientated, interweave the social and the professional, do several things at once, flexible truth, feeling before facts,
- *Reactive*, listen most of the time, are polite but indirect, must not lose face, never confront, have subtle body language, very people orientated, are patient and put diplomacy over truth.



Lewis Model

Subsequently, the world can be roughly divided according to these three cultural types and any in-between types. Furthermore, Lewis argues that the cultural types have different communication styles associated with them. By discussing and reflecting on our own cultural profiles and the associated dominant patterns in communication, the team gained insight into the causes of misunderstandings and clashes that we sometimes experience in the network. If for example a person with a linear active approach writes an email, which is punctual, short and to the point, this can be interpreted by someone from a multi-active culture as rude and impersonal. On the other hand, a multi-active person that sends an email which is not punctual, tedious, not explicit and emotional, might be considered as unclear and non-professional by someone who is linear active oriented (Kramer, 2009). Simply experimenting with and role-playing about these different communication styles helped the team in a playful way to accept the differences.

THE GOLDEN RULES FOR COMMUNICATION

In order to further help DRYNET to communicate effectively and respectfully as a global virtual team, we created some "Golden Rules" during the training that we all considered to be guiding for our communication activities. As we need to be aware of different cultural dimensions that can lead people to make different interpretations of the same reality, we defined two general Golden Rules:

- Always begin with a positive point of view, for example "it is that they cannot, not that they do not want to". Consider the possibility that there has been a misunderstanding,
- Try to be humble and patient, and let yourself be surprised rather than troubled. Keep refocusing on the reason for your being together, and regularly send out messages that will inspire the group.

Electronic mail is the most utilised means of communication, and, as such, generates the most misunderstandings. In order to overcome these, we



- ▶ discussed Golden Email Rules such as:
 - Title should be there, explicitly, making clear what the email is about,
 - Say when you would like the other to acknowledge receipt,
 - Put a timeframe at the bottom of the email ("we expect your answer in no later than x days"),
 - In case of no reply - skype, or otherwise phone,
 - In your expectations, think of when the message receiver has time to work on your mail instead of when you want the other to answer,
 - Carefully choose whether you reply to all or just to the sender,
 - Make sure that in the office someone else can read your mails when you are on holidays, in the field, part-time working or whatever,
 - Install autoreply if you are in the field or on holidays to inform the others, if you are not able to apply to the golden rule above.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This training has created space for our network to address and discuss intercultural dynamics; a theme that has not been explored by our team before. It allowed us to reflect upon ourselves as an intercultural and often virtual network and gave us insight in complex dynamics that underlie cross-cultural teams. Questions like "how do we keep track of each other when we are back in our own countries" were key questions raised, and often becoming aware of one's own routines, assumptions and judgements was an eye opener. We established the drynet heartbeat, allowing us to keep refocusing on the reason for drynet being together. Differences in communication styles were discussed, resulting in the development of a set of 'golden rules' for our communication. By doing such exercises, we have grown as a team, both professionally and personally.

Patrice Burger, CARI, Sanderijn van Beek, Both ENDS.

This article was inspired by:

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International Agenda 2011

Drynet partners will be represented in each of the coming events.

September 20th • 2011

UN General Assembly High-level event on addressing desertification- New York:

The United Nations General Assembly, by its resolution 65/160 adopted in December 2010, decided "to convene a one day high-level meeting on the theme, addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

October 10 - 21 • 2011

COP 10 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification will take place in October 2011 in Gyeongnam, Korea.

November 28 - December 9 • 2011

COP 17 UNFCCC is to be hosted by Durban, South Africa, from November 28 to December 9, 2011

CRIC9 prepares the upcoming Conference of Parties to be held in Korea

CRIC ANALYZES THE COUNTRY REPORTS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NEW MODALITIES APPROVED BY COP9

From 21 to 25 February 2011, the 9th Session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CRIC9 – UNCCD) was held in Bonn, Germany. The session was attended by representatives of 144 countries, 14 intergovernmental organizations and 32 civil society organizations. CRIC9 analyzed with unprecedented thoroughness the Convention signatory state reports submitted using a standard reporting format. From this exercise emerged the need to simplify submission and validation templates and reporting guidelines, as well as to evaluate and compile best practices



CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS MEET THEIR OBLIGATIONS BUT LAMENT BEING UNDER-REPRESENTED

Among civil society organizations (CSOs) accredited to the UNCCD, out of 124 requests, budget constraints allowed sponsoring the attendance of only 18 delegates. In accordance with decision 5, COP9, on revised participation procedures, two DRYNET members (ENDA – Emmanuel Seck and CARI – Patrice Burger) were nominated by their peers as their representatives for the selection panel. A total of 32 CSOs were present, including those covering their own costs such as Groupe de Travail Désertification and Drynet, or Réseau Sahel Désertification, recent newcomer to the Convention. The participating CSOs however declared that this number was clearly insufficient, taking account of the number of CSOs working in the field. They further deplored having to compete with state participants for financial support to attend the session, under the same «special budget».

The three above mentioned networks contributed in varying degrees to the exchange of information among CSOs concerning the UNCCD process and their respective activities. They further cooperated to a more efficient organisation of CSOs interventions through several interventions in the agenda adopted by CRIC.

Two side events:¹

- First, the meeting organised by GTD (French Working Group on Desertification) focused on the current insecurity in the Sahel in order to challenge the UNCCD on this critical issue,
- Second, the debate organised by RESAD and DRYNET on CSOs' «Best practices», in response to CRIC agenda, part of which was presented during the Open Dialog Session (ODS).²

¹ In parallel with CRIC agenda, each day combat desertification activists organise open meetings from 1pm to 3pm and from 6pm to 10pm

² Open Dialogue Session between country Parties and NGO's, facilitated by the Secretarn

A PLENARY DIALOGUE BETWEEN COUNTRY PARTIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY: AN INITIAL SUCCESS



During the 23 February 2011 open dialogue session (ODS), chaired by the Cuban Representative and facilitated by P. Burger (CARI), attendants had the opportunity to listen to five excellent presentations made by the following civil society activists:

► Mr. Valentin Ciuboratu, Executive Director at NGO *BIOS*, Moldavia; Mr. Subrata Bhattacharyya of *Gramin Vikas Trust*, India; Mr. James Calvin of *Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development*, Trinidad and Tobago; Mr. Moussa Halilou, Coordinator CNCOD/RESAD in Niger and Ms Stéphanie Faure of *GTD*, France. The subjects covered were, respectively:

- the issue of traditional knowledge and how to facilitate its flow between researchers and local communities,
- a success story in targeting the poor through rehabilitation of unproductive land in agricultural areas,
- two Caribbean experiences from Belize and St Vincent and the Grenadines, on capacity building and partnership, respectively,
- the strengths and weaknesses of the UNCCD reporting framework (*PRAIS Portal*),
- an analytical report on French CSOs working mostly in developing countries on matters of land degradation, putting forward recommendations for improving UNCCD implementation.

Attended by an unprecedented wide audience of country Parties, these interventions generated several positive reactions, particularly – as one participant said – «by clearly identifying actions that need to be carried out and multiplied». This exercise revealed the enhanced quality of local communities' involvement and expertise, both at field level and in international decision-making instances such as **UNCCD**, <http://www.unccd.int/cop/cric9/menu.php>

Finally, the three networks called for:

- A strengthened technical and political dialogue between country Parties and civil society organizations
- A clear definition and delimitation of areas of intervention to combat desertification
- Establishing and using quantified objectives for UNCCD



Stephanie Faure (CARI / RESAD)

Pastoralism in the drylands – the way to rational pasture use



The project "Sustainable management of pastoral resources to improve rural livelihoods and preserve the ecological integrity" is implementing under the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, UNDP / GEF and GIZ. The project is a part of the "Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management". The objectives of the project are focused on: the use of Kazakhstani grazing lands as a source of animal products for consumption and processing; preservation of ecosystem integrity, ensuring stable income and poverty eradication among the most vulnerable population. In the course of the project in 4 rural communities of Zhambyl district, Almaty region there were established "Zhaylym committees", which represent the interests of the pasture users and the public and set the terms and conditions regulating the use of pastures.

As a result 17 pilot projects were implemented to address the priority problems that were identified during the study and that needed urgent solutions aimed at combating land degradation, rangeland management and improvement of pastoral infrastructure. The particular terms and modes of use of pastures have been specified for each project area. The measures undertaken by the project contributed to the revival of pastoralism. In the past year 26,500 sheep, 1,870 head of cattle and 700 horses were moved to remote lands. As a result a gain in weight showed over 350 tons for the grazing season in four rural communities. The measure enabled to reduce significantly the load on near-village pastures.

Bakhtiyar Sadyk, National Project Manager, etc. c-Agricultural Sciences, Bakhtiyar.Sadyk@undp.org



Cross-border initiative for sustainable land management and conservation of mountain ecosystems by local communities

The project “Sustainable land management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai mountains” (PALM) is an integrated and cross-border initiative for Central Asia. The project aims at solving the problems associated with land degradation, ecosystems, poverty and sustainable development of mountain areas of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It is focused on arrangement of favorable environmental conditions in these areas that would enable conservation of the local wildlife and ensure mitigation of the negative impact caused by the local population. The project is funded

by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations University. Today, one of the most important results of the project is the development of a cross-border strategy of sustainable land use management and plan of action in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai. For the approval by the main parties in the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of land-Pamir and Pamir-Alai has been signed between the

CEP (Committee on Environmental Protection) under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and SAEP&F (State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry) of the Kyrgyz Republic, Hukumat (regional administration) of the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous region of Tajikistan and the State Administration of the Osh Region of the Kyrgyz Republic and Hukumat of the Jirgatal rayon. The further efforts in this project shall be focused on implementation of measures to assist in the promotion and implementation of planned measures identified in the Strategy and Action Plan.

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