



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
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**The International Treaty**  
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES  
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

**Views, Experiences and Best Practices as an example of possible options for  
the national implementation of Article 9 of the International Treaty**

*Note by the Secretary*

*At its [second meeting](#) of the Ad hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights (AHTEG), the Expert Group agreed on a revised version of the [template](#) for collecting information on examples of national measures, best practices and lessons learned from the realization of Farmers' Rights*

*This document presents the updated information on best practices and measures of implementing Article 9 of the International Treaty submitted by Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) - Nepal on 31 July 2019.*

*The submission is presented in the form and language in which it was received.*



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## Template for submission of

### Measures, Best Practices and Lessons Learned from the Realization of Farmers' Rights as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty

#### Basic information

- Title of measure/practice: Community Seed Banks
- Date of submission: 31 July 2019
- Name(s) of country/countries in which the measure/practice is taking place : Nepal
- Responsible institution/organization (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s) and contact person)  
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- Type of institution/organization (categories): NGO/CSO
- Collaborating/supporting institutions/organizations/actors, if applicable (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s))

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## Description of the examples

### Mandatory information:<sup>1</sup>

- Short summary to be put in the inventory (max. 200 words) including:
  - **Implementing entity and partners:** Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD)
  - Start year : 2003
  - 
  - **Objective(s):** The main objectives of establishing a community seed banks includes i) promoting on-farm conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, ii) providing easy access to quality seeds and planting materials of divers crop species and varieties to the local community and iii) promote farmers' rights and food sovereignty
  - **Summary of core components:** The core component of a community seed banks includes
    - i) a well-functioning farmers' group/organization,
    - ii) a few trained human resource/members who can handle seed and planting materials carefully, conduct seed production and regeneration activities regularly
    - iii) maintaining various data base and records in a proper way,
    - iv) a good physical infrastructure, v) a self-financing mechanism that generate a certain amount of resource for operating community seed banks in a sustainable manner and
    - v) linkage and collaboration with local, provincial government and stakeholders.
  - **Key outcomes:** As a result of the establishment and scaling up of a number of community seed banks in Nepal, more than 1000 local varieties of nearly 65 crop species have been conserved on farm by various community seed banks supported by LI-BIRD. The community seed banks supported by LI-BIRD are also producing nearly 200 ton quality seeds of popular improved varieties and making it available locally. More than ten thousand households are accessing different types of seeds form community seed banks annually.
  - **Lessons learned (if applicable):** Community seed banks is not only a physical structure nor a technical matters. Empowerment of individual farmers and group operating community seed banks is key. In order to establish a well-functioning community seed banks, the facilitating organizations should pay adequate attention for developing a self-financing mechanism during the project period so it can be a sustainable.
- **Brief history (including starting year), as appropriate :** LI-BIRD facilitated the establishment of a community seed bank (CSB) for the first time in its history at Kachorwa village of Bara district in the Central Terai, Nepal, as a part of a global project called Strengthening the Scientific Basis of In Situ Conservation of Agricultural Biodiversity in 2003. This project was globally coordinated by Bioversity International (then IPGRI) and in Nepal, the project was jointly implemented by LI-BIRD and NARC from 1998 to 2006. Till the end of 2018, LI-BIRD has supported establishment of 23 CSBs in Nepal, 5 in Sri Lanka, 13 in Bangladesh and 3 in India. There are 46 active community seed banks in Nepal as of Dec 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> This mandatory information is required in order for the measure/practice to be included in the Inventory.



- **Core components of the measure/practice (max 200 words):** In order to establish a well-functioning community seed banks, a well-functioning farmers' group/organization is a must. It can be a farmers' group, a cooperative or a local NGO of farmers. The group should have a strong realization of the importance of PGRFA for current and future food and nutrition security and role of quality seed to improve production and productivity. A few trained human resource/members who can handle seed and planting materials carefully, conduct seed production and regeneration on a regular basis is a central component of a community seed banks. Maintaining various data base and records in a proper way is also equally important. All these activities cannot happen without a good physical infrastructure whether a rented one or community owned building. A self-financing mechanism that generates a certain amount of resource for operating community is key to sustain a community seed bank. The facilitating organization should also help develop a good collaboration with local, provincial government, national Gene bank and other stakeholders.
- **Description of the context and the history of the measure/practice is taking place (political, legal and economic framework conditions for the measure/practice) (max 200 words):** In general, farmers in developing countries are gradually moving towards cultivation of improved varieties, using imported hybrid seed and adopting improved technologies and practices, particularly in the accessible areas, such as the tarai and mid-hills of Nepal. In order to meet the growing demand of food to feed the ever-growing population, reduce poverty, increase food and nutrition security and reduce the trade deficit, the Government of Nepal has focused on developing strategies, policies, plans and programs towards commercialization of agriculture through engagement of private sector and cooperatives and through connectivity development. Therefore, the Nepal's extension system is oriented towards promoting the dissemination of high input responsive agricultural practices and technologies. On the other hand, the majority of farmers in Nepal are not aware of the importance of conservation of local crop diversity for current and future food and nutrition security. As the cumulative effect of various factors, local varieties cultivated by farmers during generations are being disappeared from farmer's fields and the natural habitat. The number of households cultivating local varieties, the number of local varieties and the area covered by local varieties are shrinking. In this context, community seed banks approach promoted by LI-BIRD together with support from national and international organizations, has been successfully promoting conservation and use of local varieties, providing easy access to diverse types of seeds and planting materials thereby increasing income.
- To which provision(s) of Article 9 of the International Treaty does this measure relate
  - Art. 9.1
  - Art. 9.2a
  - Art. 9.2b
  - Art. 9.2c
  - Art. 9.3

Other information, if applicable



- Please indicate which category of the Inventory is most relevant for the proposed measure, and which other categories are also relevant (if any):

No.	Category	Most relevant <sup>2</sup>	Also relevant <sup>3</sup>
1	Recognition of local and indigenous communities', farmers' contributions to conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, such as awards and recognition of custodian/guardian farmers		
2	Financial contributions to support farmers conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA such as contributions to benefit-sharing funds		
3	Approaches to encourage income-generating activities to support farmers' conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA		√
4	Catalogues, registries and other forms of documentation of PGRFA and protection of traditional knowledge		
5	In-situ/on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA, such as social and cultural measures, community biodiversity management and conservation sites		√
6	Facilitation of farmers' access to a diversity of PGRFA through community seed banks <sup>4</sup> , seed networks and other measures improving farmers' choices of a wider diversity of PGRFA.	√	
7	Participatory approaches to research on PGRFA, including characterization and evaluation, participatory plant breeding and variety selection		√
8	Farmers' participation in decision-making at local, national and sub-regional, regional and international levels		
9	Training, capacity development and public awareness creation		√
10	Legal measures for the implementation of Farmers' Rights, such as legislative measures related to PGRFA.		
11	Other measures / practices		

- In case you selected 'other measures', would you like to suggest a description of this measure, e.g. as a possible new category? \_\_\_\_\_
- Objective(s) \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>2</sup> Please select only one category that is most relevant, under which the measure will be listed.

<sup>3</sup> Please select one or several categories that may also be relevant (if applicable).

<sup>4</sup> Including seed houses.



- Target group(s) and numbers of involved and affected farmers<sup>5</sup>
- Location(s) and geographical outreach
- Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice  
Community seed banks are diverse in terms of its function, size and scope, governance and management, physical appearance, technical aspects (e.g., seed storage facilities and, techniques). It also cannot be established in one go. In order to establish a well-functioning community seed banks, facilitating organizations need to support for three to five years minimum. This means, the amount of resources needed for establishing a community seed bank can also be vary depending on the scope, function, locality and modality. It can be started with a few hundred thousand dollar but our experience suggest that about 50 thousand USD per community seed bank should be allocated for establishing a viable community seed bank.
- How has the measure/practice affected the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture?  
Among the many activities being carried out by the community seed banks, conservation of agricultural biodiversity is a core function. Based on available data, 14 community seed banks supported by LI-BIRD have conserved 1066 local varieties of 62 crop species. These community seed banks have adopted various methods for regenerating seed annually. While some community seed banks establish and manage collectively diversity blocks of major crops such as rice and finger millet, the responsibility to produce seeds of other crop varieties is given to an individual farmers associated with the community seed bank. Seed producer farmers are selected carefully based on the interest in and suitability of varieties on their land. At least two to three farmers are identified for each variety to assure that the return of seed to the community seed bank after the crop is harvested every year is sufficient. With technical support from and its partners, some community seed banks are involved in participatory plant breeding using local variety as a parent and some are involved in landrace enhancement.
- Please describe the achievements of the measure/ practice so far (including quantification) (max 200 words)
- Other national level instruments that are linked to the measure/practice
- Are you aware of any other international agreements or programs that are relevant for this measure/practice?
- Other issues you wish to address, that have not yet been covered, to describe the measure/practice

### Lessons learned

- Describe lessons learned which may be relevant for others who wish to do the same or similar measures/practices (max 250 words).  
The experience has demonstrated that community seed banks are effective institutions for conserving local varieties and providing easy access to diverse types of seeds and planting materials to farmers. Experience has indicated that when conservation activities of local varieties are coupled with income generation activities, community seed banks can operate more successfully in the long run. Another important lesson is that the establishment of a community seed bank can best be started when community people are convinced about its roles in seed security, food security and conservation of

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<sup>5</sup> Any classification, e.g. of the types of farmer addressed, may be country-specific.





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valuable plant genetic resources. Likewise, the establishment of a CBM fund and its mobilization for conservation of rare and threatened local varieties and for income generation is an important strategy to sustain the process.

- **What challenges encountered along the way (if applicable) (max 200 words)**  
In community seed banks across the country, a number of local crop varieties have been collected and conserved by farming communities, but proper characterization and evaluation of those collections are largely yet to be done. Science-based technical guidelines for managing community seed banks do not yet exist despite almost 30 years of practical experience. The National Agrobiodiversity Policy has been in place in Nepal since 2007, but there are no acts or guidelines that support its implementation. Furthermore, our research and extension system are promoting improved varieties and technologies without considering the loss of genetic resources. There are no incentives from the government of Nepal to support community seed banks and the farmers who have been conserving valuable plant genetic resources on-farm.
- **What would you consider conditions for success, if others should seek to carry out such a measure or organize such an activity? (max 100 words)**  
The conditions for the success of the measure includes, i) community seed banks should be managed by a legitimate farmer organization ii) development of a local resource persons so that the system created will be functional even after the external support is pulled out, iii) seed quality determines the success and failure of any seed business including community seed banks. So the community seed banks should use improved seed storage technologies, iv) documentation of crop species and varieties and associated information and traditional knowledge, v) development of self-financing mechanism viz. community biodiversity management fund and seed fund as a regular financial resources generation mechanism.

#### **Further information**

- Link(s) to further information about the measure/practice

Community Seed Banks In Nepal: Past, Present, Future

[http://www.libird.org/app/publication/view.aspx?record\\_id=85&origin=results&QS=QS&f1\\_4417=Pitambar+SHrestha&union=AND&top\\_parent=221](http://www.libird.org/app/publication/view.aspx?record_id=85&origin=results&QS=QS&f1_4417=Pitambar+SHrestha&union=AND&top_parent=221)

Community Seed Banks In Nepal: 2<sup>nd</sup> National Workshop Proceedings

[http://www.libird.org/app/publication/view.aspx?record\\_id=309&origin=results&QS=QS&sortfld\\_221=Date&reversesearch=true&top\\_parent=221](http://www.libird.org/app/publication/view.aspx?record_id=309&origin=results&QS=QS&sortfld_221=Date&reversesearch=true&top_parent=221)