



Food and Agriculture  
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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 Southeast Asia Regional Initiatives for Community Empowerment (SEARICE) on 1 August 2019.*

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



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### Basic information

- Title of measure/practice

*Establishing Resilient Community-managed Seed Systems*

- Date of submission

July 31, 2019

- Name(s) of country/countries in which the measure/practice is taking place

Cambodia and the Philippines

- Responsible institution/organization (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s) and contact person)

Southeast Asia Regional Initiatives for Community Empowerment (SEARICE)  
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Contact person: Normita Ignacio, Executive Director

- Type of institution/organization (categories)

Non-government Organization

- Collaborating/supporting institutions/organizations/actors, if applicable (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s))

Department of Rice Crops, General Directorate of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Cambodia)

Shrer Khmer (Cambodia)

Regional Field Offices and Municipal Agriculture Offices of the Department of Agriculture (Philippines)



## 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
  - Start year
  - Objective(s)
  - Summary of core components
  - Key outcomes
  - Lessons learned (if applicable)

Southeast Asia Regional Initiatives for Community Empowerment (SEARICE) considers the empowerment of farming communities at the forefront of agricultural production as the most sensible way to making local seed systems resilient. Thus, SEARICE projects include the development of community managed seed systems as a key outcome of its various projects. For the purposes of this documentation, however, we describe only the initiative implemented in the project 'Building Resilient Community-Managed Seed Systems towards Climate Change Adaptation' in the Philippines and Cambodia (2013-2015), in collaboration with government units in each of the participating countries. It made significant contributions towards the technical empowerment of farmers in 55 project communities in seven (7) and nine (9) provinces in Cambodia and the Philippines, respectively. The capacities of 1,546 men and women (832 or 53%) farmers to manage crop genetic diversity and strengthen their local seed systems to adapt to the changing climatic conditions have been enhanced through Farmer Field Schools on community managed seed systems. Previously disadvantaged farmers, they too have been organized to gain social and political influence, actively assert their rights and interests and pursue activities collectively to develop further their resilience to the impacts of climate change.

- Brief history (including starting year), as appropriate

The project was implemented in the Philippines and Cambodia from July 2013 up to June 2015 building on the accomplishments of its predecessor similar project, i.e. the Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation (CBDC) project. It serves as an expansion of CBDC as it was implemented in other communities and provinces in Cambodia and Philippines. But it builds on the existing knowledge and skills of FFS facilitators in the two countries, who helped in training more FFS facilitators and thereby multiplying the impacts faster and at a bigger scale.

- Core components of the measure/practice (max 200 words)

Core components of the initiative include a) climate vulnerability assessments of the project communities, conducted through focus group discussions and participatory rural appraisal; and b) capacity building which allowed farmers to learn crucial skills to collect, conserve, and rehabilitate traditional varieties and develop new ones through participatory plant breeding (PPB) and participatory varietal selection (PVS) which are conducted in farmer field schools.

Another important component of the project was the capacity development of partner institutions in facilitating a farmer-centered development initiative. Coupled with this capacity enhancement was the

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



development of tools and methodologies for assessing community vulnerabilities, facilitating experiential learning processes on securing local seed systems, and policy advocacy.

Another key component of the project was policy advocacy, principally on the strengthening of local seed systems and the recognition of men and women farmers’ contribution in policy formulation as part of climate change adaptation and sustainable development strategies. In the National Seed Policy development of Cambodia for instance, efforts were made to integrate farmers’ rights to seeds. These inputs to the Seed Policy came out as a result of the National Seed Forum in 2014, organized through this project and participated in by key stakeholders including smallholder farmers.

- 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)

Farming communities are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. But in their hands also rest the key in mitigating such impacts. Only, farmers need support to enhance their potential to address their own vulnerabilities through capacity building that leads to the development and adaption of crop varieties that are suitable to their needs, development of community-managed seed systems, and empowerment demonstrated by their ability to make informed decisions, self-determination, and speaking out for themselves.

One of the biggest hurdles among small farming communities is the lack or limited access to plant genetic resources. Without access to PGR, farmers will not have as much choices for varieties to use in their farms, leaving them content with using varieties that may not be suitable to the conditions of their area, resulting in plants that may not be able to withstand climatic conditions, which in turn result in limited to no harvest. SEARICE thus ensures that in its projects, having such access is a key outcome.

- 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>
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<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).



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)

a) to provide men and women farmers with knowledge and skills that will enable them to adapt to the impacts of climate change;

b) to establish resilient farms through conservation and development of agricultural biodiversity that will contribute to food security;

c) to facilitate ongoing learning of national research and extension systems to strengthen their support roles in community-managed seed systems;

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



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d) to affect policies towards the recognition of the rights of men and women farmers over local seed systems and support of their participation in policy formulation and inclusion of their working methods/approaches as part of national climate change adaptation and sustainable development strategies

- Target group(s) and numbers of involved and affected farmers<sup>5</sup>

The projects reached out to 657 farmers (321 women or 54%) in 22 farmer field schools conducted in the Philippines, with 1,500 farmers attending the farmer field day (FFD) and gained access to the seeds resulting from the FFS trials. In Cambodia, the project involved 889 farmers, 487 (or 55%) of whom were women. A total of 1,229 farmers took part in the FFD and gain access to the seeds resulting from the FFS trials.

- Location(s) and geographical outreach

In the Philippines: Pangasinan, Camarines Sur, Bohol, Negros Oriental, Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon, Cotabato, Lanao Del Norte, Misamis Occidental, and Negros Oriental.

In Cambodia: Siem Reap, Battambang, Kampong Thom, Pursat, Kampong Channang, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng

- Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice

The total project cost was around USD450,000 with staff time as counterpart of local partners.

- How has the measure/practice affected the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture?

a) There has been a dramatic increase in rice diversity in the project sites. A total of 117 segregating lines, 38 stable lines, and 25 upland rice varieties were introduced in the project sites in the Philippines while 2 segregating lines, 4 stable lines from SEARICE, 6 old releases from the government of Cambodia and 10 varieties from the Mekong Delta Development Research Institute (Vietnam) were introduced to the partner communities in Cambodia for FFS trials. The project likewise contributed to the establishment of resilient farms by giving farmers access and control to quality seeds. More than 3,000 farmers have enhanced access to good quality seeds.

b) Farmers were capacitated to develop varieties that will adapt to their local conditions and make them more resilient to climatic challenges.

c) Groups of farmers that pursue activities collectively to develop further their resilience to the impacts of climate change were organized

d) There have been some supportive government programs and local policies towards the recognition of farmers' rights principally on the strengthening of local seeds systems.

- Please describe the achievements of the measure/ practice so far (including quantification) (max 200 words)

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



In addition to the achievements mentioned in the previous sections, around 1,500 farmers now have the basic skills to develop varieties that will adapt and make them more resilient to the challenges of drought, flood and saltwater intrusion into their farms. They should be able to continue developing their own varieties based on their needs and preferences even when they face new challenges in the future. The project also impinged on policies towards the recognition of farmers' rights and managed to amplify discussions on relevant farmers' issues on the roles and rights of the farmers to seeds.

An equally major achievement of the project was the headway made in transforming the partner institutions, mostly from government, to accept farmers as co-innovators and equal partners in the food security and climate change agenda and in making the people behind these institutions champion the cause of Participatory Plant Breeding and rally behind the active push for farmers' rights. Most notable to mention are the continuing institutional support in the form of financial and staff provision from the institutional partners to spread out these efforts to other farming communities within their jurisdiction even after the project life.

- Other national level instruments that are linked to the measure/practice
  - a) National Seed Policy of Cambodia
  - b) Seed Industry Development Act of the Philippines (RA 7308)
- Are you aware of any other international agreements or programs that are relevant for this measure/practice?
  - a) Convention on Biological Diversity
  - b) Nagoya Protocol
- 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).

It was important that farmers saw the importance of securing their local seed systems including establishing their own community seed banks in order for them to withstand events that may threaten their crops and still be able to plant again because they have kept surplus amount or seeds exactly for these situations.

Involving agricultural extension workers and/or agricultural technologists on technical and farmers issues allowed the extension workers and agricultural technologists to have a broader understanding of issues and equipped them to facilitate discussions of both technical and farmer-centered issues.

Two years however were very short to ensure institutionalization of PPB at the local community level. The project being new and innovative, it encouraged farmers to form themselves into organizations to continue their journey in improving and/or developing varieties that increases their capacity to cope with challenges of climate change. More inputs are needed to make these organizations become more cohesive and able to sustain the journey of managing community seed and food security. If not sustained with proper orientation,



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guidance and support, the current organizations may cease to exist. The push for institutionalization of community-managed seed systems can only be realized through a strong support for community organizations, thus more interventions are needed for this.

Moreover, community seed banking, community seed registries, participatory plant breeding, policy advocacy etc. will only get off the ground with real farmer/community empowerment and this is done only through collective community action. Thus, community organizing is critical for the institutionalization of all project gains.

- What challenges encountered along the way (if applicable) (max 200 words)

The lack of recognition on the capacity of farmers to breed new crop varieties made relevant government institutions unwilling to provide pre-breeding materials to farmers. Worse, those who recognized the potential of farmers as breeders were unwilling to provide segregating materials to farmers because of their desire to release the new varieties as their own innovation for proprietary reasons. In the Philippines, where the law mandates the devolution of agricultural services to local government units, the political bias of the local chief executive (whose term security is only three years) complicates the matter of mainstreaming and sustainability even more. The short two-year duration of the project called for creative ways to ensure sustainability or at least increase the chances of it. Along this end, several partnership schemes were tried out.

- 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)

There is a need for a long-term commitment from all the actors involved, including the donors, for this kind of initiative since the results will take time to be completely realized. While partnering with national departments and ministries will tend to hasten mainstreaming, a lot of transformational capacity development is necessary. The initiative is heavy on processes, which are equally important with the content for desired transformation to happen. Openness and willingness to collaborate among the different stakeholders, i.e. farmers, government institutions, research institutions, and civil society organizations, are key to the achievement of the objectives.

### **Further information**

For more information on this practice and other related projects, you may visit:

[searice.org.ph](http://searice.org.ph)

[searice.org.ph/building-resilient-community](http://searice.org.ph/building-resilient-community)