



SATOYAMA
INITIATIVE



SAFEGUARDING WETLAND ECOSYSTEMS AND PASTORAL COMMUNITIES IN THE KYRGYZ MOUNTAINS / SDM 2022

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Background information:

- Son-Kul Lake has been included in the International List of Wetlands of the Ramsar Convention (2011).
- Son-Kul Lake is the largest high altitude freshwater lake in central Kyrgyzstan and has great importance for nesting and summering place for waterfowl: 131 species registered, 17 are listed in Red Book of Kyrgyzstan, 18 - in Red List of IUCN, 11 - CITES and 6 - Bonn Convention.
- Son-Kul Lake has unique ecologically, socio-culturally and naturally distinctive SEPLS. Natural capital of this area are natural resources, wetlands and pasture ecosystems.
- The lake is important for maintaining the livelihoods of pastoralists and is also a popular camping site for tourists.
- The site is archaeologically significant for its burial mounds, stone monuments and stone hearths.
- Naryn region, where Son Kul Lake is located, historically is one of the poorest regions with over 30% of local population living in poverty who directly dependent on natural resources and biodiversity, already suffer from environmental degradation, climate change and natural or man-made disaster risks.

Existing problems and challenges



SDM Project: Safeguarding wetland ecosystems and pastoral communities in the Kyrgyz Mountains

The overall aim of the project is to empower local communities of Cholpon rural municipality to sustainably manage, protect and preserve the wetland ecosystems of Son Kul Lake, which is one of the International Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA).

The project's objectives:

- Build capacity and raise awareness of local communities on effective use, management and preservation of SEPLS (Son Kul Lake's) unique wetland mountain ecosystems.
- Strengthen resilience and livelihoods of local communities.



Key achievements/results: Area-Based Conservation Measures/Ecosystem Restoration - 1

- Promoted effective conservation and management of state protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)/ICCA through participatory mapping and monitoring of wetlands and biodiversity (Son-Kul wetlands/waterfowl, flora/SEPLS) by the local community members in close cooperation with scientists of the National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic (NAS) and staff of Karatal Zhapyryk State National reserve.



Key achievements/results: Area-Based Conservation Measures/Ecosystem Restoration - 2

- Community Biodiversity Protection Group (CBPG) (16 eco-activists/community leaders) is formed and trained for monitoring and preserving SEPL (Built capacity of representatives of Cholpon rural municipality, heads of 8 villages, community leaders, deputies of the local council by providing trainings on the following themes: “Biodiversity of Son Kul Lake: main problems and ways of solving them”, “Management of SEPL of Son-Kul Lake”, “Advocacy/Ecological rights”, etc.).



Key achievements/results: Knowledge Co-Production, Management and Uptake - 1



A broad educational and informational campaign was conducted at the local and district levels on the ecological and economic importance of natural resources/wetlands:

- Conducted a forum-theatre with the participation of schoolchildren, eco-activists, village leaders;
- Published and distributed informational materials about the importance of preserving Lake Son-Kul were developed (42 Maps of Son-Kul flora and fauna/Birds of Son-Kul distributed among 11 local schools, video clips, documentary film "What will happen to Son-Kul in 50 years?" <https://youtu.be/hI25KrOC3So>).



Key achievements/results: Knowledge Co-Production, Management and Uptake - 2

Conducted **4 dialogue sessions** with participation of 115 representatives of **local authorities, women council, youth council, local activists**, incl. 69 men and 46 women, where issues related to main threats to natural resources in the Son Kul area were discussed and measures and solutions on their protection were determined.



Key achievements/results: Institutional Frameworks and Capacity Development/Institutionalization

- Thanks to capacity building and awareness raising, local residents, representatives of local authorities and deputies of the local council have increased responsibility and better understanding of the importance of restoration of SEPLS of Son Kul Lake.
- Community Biodiversity Protection Group is formed on a municipal level; the group members were trained on the basics of participatory approach and methods to identify the needs and problems of different groups of the population, develop priorities and effective ways to solve them.
- Community Action Plan (CAP) was developed as a result of a joint analysis/assessment, identification of threats and problems that strengthen Son Kul SEPLS and ways to solve them. The CAP becomes a part of the Plan of Socio-Economic Development of Cholpon municipality.
- Thanks to the increased awareness and active participation of deputies of the local council, some funds are allocated from the local budget for restoration of the pilot zone in the Son Kul Lake area in 2023. Through participation in project activities (information sessions, community festivals, trainings, public discussions, etc.), representatives of the district administration of the Kochkor district of Naryn region got better understanding the importance of preserving Son Kul Lake and scaled up the experience of Cholpon municipality to other municipalities of Kochkor district and throughout Naryn region. This is particularly important for Naryn region that specialized on massive animal husbandry.
- Currently, Kochkor district administration together with Cholpon municipality are working together on a project proposal and is negotiating with Naryn regional administration and Development Fund of Naryn region to finance some activities of the Community Action Plan on restoration of Son Kul pilot zone.

Key achievements/results: Sustainable Value Chain Development/Income-generating activities

- Members of 24 local households improved their skills in income-generating activities and mastered their skills in business planning/value chain development.
- Out of six project proposals submitted, 3 value chain projects were supported for income-generating activities (sewing workshop, beekeeping and horticulture), which are alternative activities to reduce pressure on pastures through the transition from animal husbandry to other types of livelihoods.
- The sewing workshop, which was supported by the project, expanded economic opportunities for local women, shepherds' wives. Three sewing machines were purchased. An additional three girls were involved in the work of the sewing workshop (a total of 7 women and girls work in the workshop), who improved their livelihoods due to the expansion of the sewing workshop and increase in orders from local residents.





- The 2nd project supported beekeeping. The Algozhoev family repurposed their livestock activities for beekeeping activities. 10 beehives were purchased.
- The 3rd project supported development of blackcurrant horticulture. 623 currant shrubs of three local varieties were purchased.
- The importance of supporting these pilot projects is that they help demonstrate alternative sources of livelihoods as opposed to animal husbandry, that it is possible to develop a business that does not harm the biodiversity and degradation of the Son Kul Lake ecosystem. This is especially important for changing the mindset and behavior of local community members who have been engaged in traditional animal husbandry for decades.

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Thank you for your attention!

