

Clean energy solutions and women engagement in Yagnob, Tajikistan

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Is the project a case of...:

- State-initiated co-creation
- Entrepreneur-driven co-creation
- Grassroots-based co-creation*

**For an elaboration of the typology, please consult the GOGREEN theoretical framework p. 25.*

Integrated case analysis

1) Background, history, and national, regional, and local contexts of the case

Tajikistan (Republic of Tajikistan) is a landlocked country in Central Asia, bordering Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. It is very mountainous, as more than 90% of the country is covered by mountains. Meanwhile, its position also renders the country highly affected by earthquakes, landslides, mudflows and other natural risks. The country population is ca. 10 million people, spread over a total area of ca. 143,100 km². The population speaks Tajik (Persian group) and is quite religious, represented mostly by Sunni Muslims, in parallel with a large Ismaili community in the Pamirs. Tajikistan is the poorest among the CIS countries and consequently relies heavily on remittances from labor migrants, mainly men working in Russia and other countries, which make up a large share of household income. Key sectors include agriculture (especially cotton and subsistence farming), hydropower, and aluminum production, export of precious metals. Unemployment and underemployment remain high, particularly for young people and women. The country's main environmental challenges relate to climate change and its associated negative consequences, such as melting glaciers, water scarcity, natural disasters, severe land degradation, deforestation, and industrial pollution.

Mountain communities in Tajikistan face a number of challenges which causes their poverty and underdevelopment. Many villages still lack access to centralized heating, electricity, and internet. These obstacles force them to cook and heat their homes using traditional methods. The main problem facing mountain communities in this region is the energy crisis, which leads to the destruction of vegetation (trees and shrubs) for firewood, followed by land degradation, soil erosion, and a reduction in the food supply for wild and domestic animals, all of which adversely impact the local environment. Furthermore, the quality of life of local residents is also low, as collecting and preparing firewood is labor-intensive, difficult, and risky work, often performed by local women and children. Cooking on traditional wood-burning stoves, which produce smoke, leads to various respiratory diseases. These factors adversely impact the health and welfare of the villagers, especially women.

Tajikistan has a traditional, patriarchal social structure, particularly in rural areas. Traditional stereotypes about women's role and place tend to put severe restrictions on their rights and opportunities to make the difference and make their voices heard. They are only seldomly involved in making decisions regarding local development plans and this involvement is mostly more formal. Gender stereotypes have an impact on the education of rural girls. Early marriages, poverty, remoteness of schools and universities, as well as the factor of family values (traditional patriarchal views) are just a few reasons why girls drop out of education or do not continue it. For example, in the village where the project was implemented, most women do not have higher or even basic education.

Women and children are most severely affected by energy poverty. In particular they use a lot of time for collecting firewood and manure as sources of fuel. Their health is also heavily affected by smoke from inefficient traditional stoves using firewood, dried manure, and, if affordable, coal. This deprives them of their possibilities for better education, social life, and individual development. Many women lack basic information and knowledge about their rights and opportunities and the important role they can play in the overall development of their communities. Furthermore, many mountain communities in the country generally live in poverty, with limited resources, and are quite isolated. The lack of infrastructure, proper roads, and electricity dramatically reduces the quality of life for rural communities and significantly increases their burden on nature.

This current gender project, "Clean energy solutions and women engagement in Yagnob" 2024-2025, aims to engage local women from remote mountain communities of Tajikistan in sustainable use of natural resources, promote energy conservation practices, and enhance women's voices in community development, with the goal of empowering women, building resilience, and adapting to the climate crisis. Long-term, the project aims to strengthen energy-efficient behavior patterns within the community by raising awareness among women-participants and their families, relatives, local authorities, and future generations, as women traditionally raise children. With some modifications, the project is a continuation of the "Clean Energy and Women on the Roof of the World" project, which the NGO "Little Earth" began implementing in 2015 in the mountainous regions of the Pamirs. Since 2022, the successful project has also been continued in the Yagnob Valley, Sughd region, where mountain communities live in similar difficult conditions and face challenges to sustainable development. Local residents live without electricity, forcing them to destroy sparse vegetation around them, leading to land degradation, loss of biodiversity, depletion of forage for livestock, and other environmental problems.

The choice of the focus area for this project was not accidental, as the energy, climate, and economic situations of different communities vary from region to region. Food security, access to roads, access to medicine or electricity can be different also depending on the community's location, its distance from the cities, and the harsh mountain conditions in which they live. The Yagnob Valley and its residents are particularly in need of local environmental projects aimed at both improving the social situation and engaging residents in sustainable resource management and adaptation. Traditionally, several small settlements or villages in the mountainous regions of Tajikistan are united into jamoats¹ – special administrative units. The jamoat has its own council, which acts as a local government body and is responsible for the life of all villages within the jamoat, resolves rural issues, develops plans for the future, etc. Unfortunately, local women are not represented in this body and cannot influence decision-making and the development of their communities, although many issues concern natural resources, subsistence farming, fuel for cooking and heating households, precisely those areas in which women are most involved.

The project and its objectives were developed specifically to address the concrete needs and challenges of remote mountain communities with their unique way of life. To enhance women's role in the sustainable future of their communities, the project aims to provide them with knowledge about energy efficiency, renewable energy, and women's rights. It also aims to distribute resource-saving technologies, including solar energy equipment, conduct training workshops, and strengthen their voices at the village and jamoat level by organizing a series of meetings with representatives of local authorities. The project has also received international attention, as it has been presented to a global audience through the partners and donors: Mountain Partnership, Centralasiengrupperna, and the Central Asian environmental channels. It was widely discussed at various international forums as adaptation and gender-sensitive project and an example of addressing environmental challenges by strengthening the capacity of local

¹ Jamoat - it is an administrative-territorial unit (rural community) in Tajikistan, which includes several settlements.

women. Many project components were also adopted by other Tajik NGOs and widely replicated in other regions of Tajikistan.

2) The aims of the project and the sustainability problems that it seeks to address

The provision of equipment and knowledge reduced energy poverty, unsustainable environmental practices and increased the scope of women's participation in decision-making in the local communities. Project implementation addressed a number of Sustainable Development Goals, including number 1 (No poverty), 7 (Affordable and clean energy), and 13 (Climate action).

The project included a survey of participants about their energy needs, followed by a series of theoretical training sessions on natural resources and gender equality, practical training on energy-efficient equipment and sustainable solar solutions, and the distribution of solar shower bags (each participant already received energy-efficient equipment sets in 2023). The 2024-2025 project also included a series of meetings between women participants and local authorities aimed at increasing women's participation in decision-making at the village and jamoat levels, who are engaged in a collaborative problem-solving process aimed at identifying how their local needs can be met through various interventions. For example, in the second half of 2025, the project selected three ideas developed jointly with local women for practical implementation: the construction of a solar greenhouse, the creation of a small solar-powered sewing workshop, and the creation of a public bathhouse equipped with a year-round solar water heater. These ideas were presented to local authorities for consideration and implemented with community contributions, including buildings for a sewing workshop and a bathhouse, as well as some of the building materials for a greenhouse.

All project activities represent small, sustainable solutions to improve the quality of life of local residents, helping them adapt to resource scarcity and climate change. A greenhouse, built for a selected families using nearly 90% local materials, utilizes passive solar energy, enabling the planting of seedlings and other vegetables and herbs in the harsh mountain climate. This construction partially addresses food security and diversifies the local diet, while also allowing the owners to sell seedlings and seeds to neighboring villages. To open a sewing workshop, off-grid solar system and electric sewing machines were purchased and installed. The workshop provides employment for 4-5 local women, who can now take orders and earn a small income. The first in village public bathhouse, powered by a solar water heater, has also improved sanitation and living standards in the community. Distribution of solar cookers, shower bags and energy-efficient stoves significantly reduce the cutting of local trees and shrubs using as firewood for everyday cooking and heating water, thereby reducing the pressure on local resources. The videos produced during the project offer some insights about the life of the Yagnob community and local women².

Clean energy solutions and new knowledge improve resilience and provide multiple benefits to vulnerable families, including sanitation and health conditions improved, indoor pollution reduced, fuel consumption decreased, and the workload is lightened. The Project positively contributes to local ecosystems and landscapes protection – saving around 80 tons of wood per year and reducing annual carbon dioxide emissions by around 200 tons³. The project's broader goal is to change local community behavior patterns over the long term, making them more autonomous and energy efficient. Therefore, an important component is knowledge about sustainable resource use, particularly how to reduce firewood consumption, the collection of which requires hard labor for residents and leads to local deforestation. As women raise their children and interact with relatives and neighbors, new knowledge and useful resource-saving equipment can be passed on to future generations. Another key mission of the project is to enhance women's potential and their participation in the further sustainable development of their communities.

² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGohaWf_Ekl <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RClim7TggEo>

³ This information was taken from the Little Earth's document "Annual Narrative report"

3) The participants and their interaction and communication in and between meetings

40 local women from 6 target villages—Piskon, Dehbaland, KiriYonte, Tagichanor, Pularavot, Kashe, all of which are located on the territory of national natural and ethnographic park in Yagnob valley – became the main target group. Members of their families (around 200 people) and the local authority (10 people) became the secondary beneficiaries. Two families in the village of Makhtimayn benefited from the construction and use of a solar greenhouse (11 people), 5 local women benefited directly from an equipped solar-powered sewing workshop, and approximately 50 indirect potential clients. Another 50 direct beneficiaries from among the local residents benefited from the public bathhouse opened as part of the project. In total, the project benefited over 100 direct and approximately 300 indirect beneficiaries.

The project was developed by the Tajik NGO "Little Earth" and was realized in partnership with district authorities, the National ethnographic park administration, and local jamoat authorities. All activities and mutual roles were outlined in the project in advance and discussed with local authorities before implementation stage. "Little Earth" is fully responsible for developing all programs and materials, conducting all trainings, and ordering and delivering energy-efficient equipment specified in the project. The NGO prepared in advance a calendar of events and its own business trips to focus villages, which were also discussed with local authorities and future project participants. The "Little Earth" carries out all preparatory work and conducts informational activities during the project. The organization is also responsible for all financial expenses for the project, which are strictly planned within the budget.

Planned project trainings and seminars, as well as equipment distribution meetings, consultations with local authorities, and women's initial participation in village councils, were held in the presence of "Little Earth" team. NGO personally facilitated all project events, delivered materials and office supplies, provided seminar participants with lunches and dinners, etc. The "Little Earth" can sometimes delegate to local authorities the task of collecting additional information, conducting additional participant surveys, or conducting small extra monitoring without the direct involvement of facilitators, that is, without its own involvement.

The role of regional authorities and the park administration is to review the proposed project, which was implemented in the territory under their jurisdiction, and therefore they must grant permission for its forward implementation. Subsequently, the main interaction occurs primarily with jamoat representatives, who help compile lists of vulnerable families and select project participants, assist in finding training locations, and select the best time for all activities (as during the season, rural residents are usually busy working in the fields and grazing livestock). Local authorities constantly mobilize local residents to participate in project activities, as well as participate in some of them, advise NGO representatives, and, when possible, give interviews to visiting journalists, etc. After the successful completion of the trainings, district authorities later met with the rural women participants to jointly discuss their proposed initiatives and further involvement of women in decision-making⁴.

Since remote communities receive minimal government aid, and large international organizations rarely work in such harsh conditions, local authorities readily accept any assistance in the form of equipment, technology, materials or other benefits that will help improve the difficult lives of local residents. Therefore, it is easier for a local NGO to collaborate with remote communities than to implement a project in the capital or other big city, where officials are corrupt and often seek personal gain from the project.

In turn, the project participants themselves contribute their time and energy to training sessions, consultations, and practical seminars. They share their feedback on their participation in the project and

⁴ This step was also planned as part of the project to gradually empower local women

are required to keep records of their fuel consumption before and after receiving the energy efficient equipment. The project envisions that in the near future, women will be able to free up some time from firewood collection and devote time to self-development and participation in village councils, further enhancing their voice and potential.

Other project beneficiaries, the solar greenhouse recipients and the owners of the public bathhouse, as well as the owners of the solar sewing workshop, contributed buildings for the bathhouse and workshop, respectively, and local residents contributed part of the local materials for the construction of the greenhouse and their labor in installing the equipment. The remoteness of Tajik mountain communities implies that they are isolated from central communications and big cities, meaning that people live in poverty and have access to limited natural resources at a high altitude. Furthermore, the local government characteristically has no additional funds to support project activities. Therefore, their contribution is often expressed in non-material assistance in the form of time, their participation, labor, and provision of premises.

It should be noted that the entire project is being implemented in partnership between civil society, governmental sector and representatives of indigenous people⁵ (mountain community of Yagnob Valley): NGO - local government - local community. There is no involvement of academic or private sector in the project. According to the project plan, "Little Earth" orders equipment from a company in Dushanbe, orders printing of materials, and purchases construction materials strictly under contracts. Therefore, small commercial firms only carry out certain orders and receive payment for them. Therefore, commercial firms are hired to perform specific functions related to the project's goals and objectives.

Communication with the local community was typically maintained through a jamoat representative or responsible person from the village council, who mobilized all direct participants. Mobile connection was used for communication, although not all villages in the Yagnob valley have mobile coverage. However, local government representatives travel to the district center or even the capital on business much more frequently than their villagers, so they generally maintain regular contact with the "Little Earth". Most physical meetings take place within the focus villages, directly on the project sites. The project does not usually include travel expenses for local authorities in Dushanbe, where the "Little Earth" office is located, but if local authorities travel to the capital on business, additional meetings are also held.

4) How often do they meet, and do they communicate between meetings?

Since the focus villages are relatively isolated and located close to one another, many of the project participants are neighbors, distant relatives, or even close relatives. Being close neighbors, they frequently interact in person - if they are from the same village, this happens almost daily, especially while working in the fields, herding livestock, or during holidays. This close communication facilitates the rapid and effective exchange of knowledge and experience.

Village council and jamoat representatives live in the same focus villages, while district authorities are located a further away. Jamoat and district representatives meet with each other, local authorities report to district officials, and travel to obtain medicines and other necessary goods or food. In general, other men in the community are also more mobile; as mentioned, labor migration to other countries is common in Tajikistan. Men from rural areas, where there is no work, are especially likely to migrate in search of work; they mainly become cheap labor because they lack sufficient education and skills. Women, on the other hand, mostly remain at home; many rural women are unable to leave their villages throughout their

⁵ Yagnobis are representatives of both the indigenous population and the small peoples (ethnolinguistic minorities), in modern Tajikistan, Yagnobis are often counted among the Tajiks, but historically and ethnoculturally they are considered a distinct minority group.

lives. Women were rarely able to move a village closer to the center or to the city because their children, who have managed to build a life in a new place, invited them.

5) The role and forms of knowledge sharing, coordination and joint problem-solving

Insofar as “Little Earth” is a small-scale operation that does not have access to large finances, it does not engage in large infrastructure projects that require numerous permits, approvals, and other financial and bureaucratic procedures that a public organization does not have, although it can partner with other stakeholders, drawing attention to the challenges of mountain communities, their vulnerability to natural disasters, underdevelopment, and the need for sustainable solutions. Instead, “Little Earth” primarily focuses, in its capacity as an environmental NGO, on finding practical solutions appropriate for the local setting, such as transferring knowledge or specific technologies to communities to improve their lives through a more environmentally friendly approach. For example, “Little Earth” aided the Yagnob villages by providing solar and energy efficient equipment, installing off-grid solar photovoltaic systems, sharing knowledge, and finding small sources of income for local residents or creating new job places through its small projects. These projects characteristically involve a high degree of collaboration, involving a close interactive dynamic between the NGO and the recipients. The training and lessons have to be adapted to the local context, for which reason they also must inquire about the local conditions of the mountain communities. The placement of the infrastructure, such as photovoltaic systems, also require familiarity with the local area, which is partly provided by the village community and partly by the local authorities.

The project is small-scale in both funding and implementation time, but its results are visible within the first few months, even after initial training sessions and a series of meetings that expand the knowledge of the participating women, their families, and local authorities. District-level meetings and consultations with government representatives provide the women participants with first-of-its-kind experience and allow them to speak out and be heard on a new level. Training sessions on gender, natural resources, renewable energy, and energy-efficient technologies provide participants with essential knowledge about the importance of preserving local vegetation and alternative solutions, including solar technologies, which allow local residents to partially cover their daily fuel needs for cooking and heating water without access to centralized electricity. The combination of knowledge, practices, and equipment brings about a number of changes in community life that partially address local environmental and social issues.

This project may also be construed as a continuation of previous, collaborative developmental projects executed in the Yagnob valley. For example, the creation of a solar powered mini sewing workshop and a communal shower (public bathhouse) equipped with a solar water collector were proposals made by local women who had previously participated in the project's activities. Suggestions were collected and discussed during trainings, interviews and meetings with beneficiaries and local activists. The ongoing dialogue are thus central mechanisms through which such developmental projects are iteratively developed through rounds of intervention based on prior instances of joint problem-solving.

6) The relation between consensus and conflict and the handling of the latter

Due to a number of structural features of Tajikistan, both economic and legal, as well as due to other objective reasons (small eco-NGOs are often not welcomed by the central government for their position and criticism of certain actions that destroy local ecosystems), this type of partnership “NGO - local government – local community” is a more flexible and effective form of interaction for achieving the set goals. This partnership lacks high-ranking officials who, on the contrary, often slow down the progress of a project, take a long time to issue permits, rarely respond to letters or calls, or even ignore them. All practical activities take place in remote areas and are aimed at improving the lives of a specific focus group and the environment.

However, even in such a close partnership, minor conflicts arise. The most frequent conflict in the project concerns the selection of the list of participants and their families who will receive certain benefits, both material and non-material, as part of the project. The "Little Earth" team delegates the selection of the neediest participants to the jamoat authorities, which, based on certain criteria, independently discusses with village residents and determines the list, which is then submitted to the "Little Earth". The NGO cannot independently select the neediest participants because it lacks detailed information about the families' circumstances; this decision is made at the village/jamoat level, but since all villagers live in extreme poverty, other residents feel resentful that they were not selected.

In such cases, the NGO can only promise to continue the project and subsequently reach out to other participants and their families, as project funding is limited, and the NGO communicates in advance the exact number of participants it can reach. A similar conflict previously arose when the "Little Earth" worked with mountain communities in the Pamirs, where the NGO also implemented numerous projects over many years and was ultimately able to reach a large number of families, attract additional donors, and repeatedly extend the women's project.

7) The role and form of leadership: lead actor, steering group and/or collective leadership

The NGO "Little Earth" is the project developer, initiator, and also the steering committee for coordinating all project activities, as well as for reporting, and monitoring. All activities are personally supervised by the "Little Earth" team, with their direct participation. The NGO itself is a small organization of 3-4 people. For this project, the participants also additionally hired a trainer specialized on gender issues, who helped them build a more effective approach to the local women, improve communication within the group, and strengthen women's voices at the basic level. Project initiators must obtain consent/approval in advance from the district and jamoat authorities to implement the project and coordinate all activities and future trainings. The "Little Earth" team plays a leading role in the project, providing clear action plan and technical support, as well as all necessary resources. When constructing and transferring material goods to the community, the contribution of local residents is discussed in advance; this could include construction work, physical assistance, part of building materials, etc.

Local authorities submit a list of vulnerable families that qualify as potential beneficiaries, as well as assist in community mobilization and organizing all meetings. Since the villages are remote and the mobile connection is extremely low, they are responsible for gathering participants and other local stakeholders (forestry department, the land committee). Jamoat authorities also help in choosing locations for conducting trainings and meetings.

For their part, the project participants, while very busy with their farming, also free up their personal time to participate in all project activities. They commit to calculating fuel costs and providing feedback during the project's progress and post-implementation monitoring. The most active women-participants voluntarily can participate in subsequent "Little Earth" activities and projects. This project demonstrates a truly collaborative partnership model, where each party understands their role and benefit. Therefore, joint, coordinated efforts make it possible to complete the entire project cycle within 1-2 years, taking into account the isolation of the mountain community and the inability to reach the focus villages during certain months due to climate conditions.

8) The temporal unfolding of the co-creation process: major shifts and ups and downs

The project is currently scheduled for completion at the end of 2025. Local residents are finishing building their own solar greenhouse, for which they have already received all the materials and instructions. It will be owned by two local families, benefiting them by growing vegetables and seedlings starting in February-March. The transfer of all equipment, materials, instructions, and consultations for this phase have also

been completed. The project was developed with a specific, compact list of planned activities and also included the opportunity to implement smaller initiatives chosen by the project participants (creation of a public shower, a salt sewing workshop, and construction of a solar greenhouse). Nearly all events were held according to the calendar, taking into account any potential schedule deviations due to working in mountainous conditions.

The project takes into account the force majeure risks associated with working in the mountains, including severe weather conditions, frequent avalanches, mudflows, rockfalls, possible road closures beyond normal weather conditions, as well as conflicts and difficulties in obtaining project funds. These risks may lead to the delay or postponement of some planned project activities. All risks are considered and described in the project application.

In this project, the “Little Earth” faced the destruction of a section of the only road leading to the focus villages in the valley. In late winter, a powerful avalanche hit the road, partially damaging the roadbed. Later, when the snow melted, a mudflow hit the road, isolating the focus area for almost three months while road clearing and repair work was carried out. Such disruptions to focus village travel are common practice in the mountains. Therefore, a minor shift in the activity plan cannot significantly impact the project's progress. The important thing is that all planned components are completed within the stated timeframe, and all steps are coordinated with both donors and project participants.

9) The most important governance factors (may include factors other than those in focus in this project)

One of the key governance factors is a targeted approach to the needs of specific remote communities. This approach is developed based on the climatic and geographic conditions of the area, the state of the environment, the obvious problems and the degree of degradation, as well as the needs of the local community. As local residents exert significant pressure on the environment, so it is necessary to address them specific ways to comprehensively change the situation. Therefore, improving the environment through working with local community, who live far from civilization and rely on the natural resources around them, is the core of this case study's approach. Furthermore, the technologies introduced to mountain communities represent absolute innovations for these remote areas. Much of the knowledge gained during the trainings is also new and useful for project participants. Demonstrations, distribution of equipment and knowledge, and recommendations for incorporating this approach into local action plans are a soft power for strengthening mountain communities and transforming them into more resilient ones.

10) The generated outputs and outcomes

- a) Reducing the use of firewood and other fuels by introducing solar and energy-efficient technologies to each participants' family
- b) Reducing pressure on local nature by reducing vegetation clearing
- c) Reducing CO2 emissions through using solar energy for cooking and heating water
- d) Improving the quality of life of local residents by reducing the arduous labor of collecting firewood, freeing up time for self-realization
- e) Reducing respiratory diseases in local residents through daily using solar technologies (smoke-free)
- f) Strengthening the capacity and empowerment of local women by transferring knowledge and skills to enable them to participate in local meetings and make decisions at the village level
- g) Improving the future environment by integrating energy efficiency models into the local action plan and further steps for potential reforestation

- h) Strengthening the future sustainable development of the community through successful experience of working in partnership with other external partners and donors, and technical assistance from specialists

11) Lessons learned about the conditions for co-creating green solutions

First and foremost, to develop a project for a specific area and community, it is necessary to conduct a preliminary study to identify problems and possible solutions, as well as assess the feasibility of all project activities. If possible, interview representatives of various groups: local authorities, residents, foresters, environmentalists working in the region, etc. Small NGOs often lack the additional resources to conduct such research before the project development stage, and this presents a significant challenge. Visiting some remote regions sometimes requires a full-scale expedition, with all the risks and challenging conditions at high altitude.

However, a preliminary analysis can be conducted in collaboration with other partners—scientists or environmental NGOs with experience in the field or working in the same area. Meteorological and satellite data can be processed, scientific publications analyzed, etc. The Little Earth team has long been working in Tajikistan's mountain communities, introducing various types of knowledge, solutions, and equipment that help communities become more resilient. Not all equipment is suitable for use by local residents. Additional training and demonstrations on the proper use of a solar cooker, solar shower, or pressure cooker may be required. In some communities, the introduction of other energy-efficient technologies may be necessary. When working with a female target group, it is necessary to allocate additional time and engage a dedicated trainer to build trusting relationships that allow local women to share their opinions and real situations. All these nuances and differences are taken into account when making adjustments and improvements in subsequent stages of the project.

In addition to participant feedback, engaging the media, and testing various technologies, post-monitoring is also used to identify the project's strengths and weaknesses. This allows for a more objective determination of which components were more or less effective after the project's completion. Also, as noted above, an NGO often can't reach an entire community at once within a single small project, but typically continues to work with the same community for several years, gradually reaching almost all families in need, and, whenever possible, engaging activists from previous stages to develop their potential, improve dialogue within the community, and identify new paths to sustainable development.

Scoring and analysis of governance factors

1. Perceived importance of biosphere conditions

QCA score:

0

0.33

0.66

1

Scoring confidence:

Low confidence

Medium confidence

High confidence

Data sources:

Interviews

Documents

Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

First of all, all project participants and partners were informed in advance of the project's primary environmental and social mission: improving the environment in the project area through targeted engagement with the local community. Respondents confirmed the presence of a distinct environmental component during interviews. However, the project application and reports do not include an in-depth assessment of the extent of land degradation, biodiversity loss, individual species, or other specific biosphere indicators. The project initiators noted that a detailed analysis of soils, forests, and other

biological and botanical conditions would require specialized expertise, expeditions, time, and significant investment during the project development phase, which a small NGO lacks.

Nevertheless, the project’s goal is to reduce vegetation destruction in the region through the introduction of various technologies and alternatives. The report also provides specific figures on CO₂ emissions saved during implementation. A set of preventive measures against deforestation and related problems was designed using a community-based approach. Moreover, the knowledge disseminated by the “Little Earth” team is directly related to sustainable resource use, energy efficiency, and the importance of restoration.

Taking into account respondents’ opinions, as well as project documentation and media articles, the project has a fairly pronounced environmental component. However, there is no clear evidence that this environmental component actively enabled the collaborative processes themselves. While environmental considerations were central to the project’s framing, they were not a key motivational driver or the primary lubricant for collaboration.

2. Legislation, programs, and formal goals

QCA score:

- 0
- 0.33
- 0.66
- 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
- Medium confidence
- High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
- Documents
- Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

During interviews, the project initiators mentioned numerous national and international climate strategies, nationally determined contributions, the National Adaptation Plan, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the law on renewable energy use, which they took into account when developing specific energy-efficiency and adaptation measures. However, the project application itself mentions only certain Sustainable Development Goals with which the project aligns. Articles and posts by the “Little Earth” team do not make specific reference to the project’s alignment with multiple strategies and climate programs. An important element, however, is the practical integration of new knowledge, technologies, and women’s voices into the local action plans of the focus community, which supports the relevance of the measures taken.

During interviews with the project developers, two documents were highlighted in particular: the National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2030 and the Action Plan of the National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change (2025–2027). These documents emphasize the need for long-term adaptation, including for rural and mountainous populations, strengthening resilience, and drawing attention to energy needs, food security, infrastructure, and health. The national plan also involves the development of local action plans for regions, which directly affect mountain communities and shape the directions of their development.

Project beneficiaries themselves were unable to name any specific laws or policy documents, although after the project they gained more concrete knowledge about processes occurring at global and local levels. It is worth noting that life in mountain communities is isolated and difficult, and awareness of national climate policy is virtually nonexistent. More broadly, citizens in Tajikistan are poorly informed about environmental and climate legislation. Thus, while these laws and formal goals were central reference points for the work of the “Little Earth” team, they did not discernibly shape collaborative relationships with local communities and authorities.

3. Relative openness of public governance paradigms

QCA score:

- 0
 0.33
 0.66
 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
 Medium confidence
 High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
 Documents
 Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

It should be noted that this project is a strong example of decentralized, collaborative solutions. In remote regions, small communities are often left to face their problems alone and are systematically neglected by higher-level authorities. Education levels are extremely low, and children in these regions often do not receive even basic schooling. Schools are under-resourced, and there are not enough teachers. Consequently, local residents struggle to address energy, food, and other challenges, which increasingly puts pressure on nature. For small, remote mountain communities that are disconnected from centralized systems and directly dependent on natural resources, only local, sustainable solutions are viable. However, without knowledge, appropriate technologies, and technical assistance, communities will not be able to cope. Low living standards, limited education, and traditionally large families also contribute to underdevelopment. Even where natural resources are sufficient, local residents may lack the knowledge to use them sustainably and often remain passive in restoration efforts.

Formally, the central government does not hinder the implementation of effective social and environmental projects in the country. National strategies explicitly emphasize the role of civil society and non-governmental organizations, as well as the importance of involving more women in social development processes. In practice, however, many organizations face significant obstacles to implementing, or even obtaining approval for, projects that are non-political and aimed solely at improving social and environmental conditions. These obstacles most often include corruption at various levels, officials' limited competence, weak responsiveness to open dialogue for various reasons, and the central government's low interest in small-scale projects in remote areas. As a result, many environmental NGOs have closed, while others struggle to continue operating. In this case, the partnership is realized with local authorities without central intervention, which likely contributes to their high level of interest, as they are themselves part of the community.

All approaches, methods, and measures within the project are transparent and open to the wider public. The project initiators aim to share information openly, frequently giving interviews and public speeches and sharing findings with colleagues. This is also reflected in the replication of similar projects by other NGOs in other regions of Tajikistan. The project is open to monitoring by donors and researchers, and to evaluation by independent journalists, including those invited on a "Little Earth" trip to cover project progress and local living conditions. Many interview participants confirmed this. Thus, while the project has benefited from relative openness within a decentralized collaborative arrangement, openness is not a constitutive feature of the public governance paradigm itself. Rather, these are spaces of exception in which NGOs can operate and succeed in advancing their development objectives.

4. Formalized institutional channels for citizen participation and community mobilization

QCA score:

- 0
 0.33
 0.66
 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
 Medium confidence
 High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
 Documents
 Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

The project was based on an established, traditional community structure governed by local authorities and a village council, as well as regular village meetings where community issues were addressed. The integration of new knowledge and approaches, the selection of participants, decisions on new project stages, and other components were discussed during regular village meetings, with additional meetings held when necessary.

Local meetings and local action plans were incorporated into the project framework to enable a soft and effective intervention. This intervention combined new knowledge, practices, and equipment to improve the quality of life of local residents and reduce anthropogenic impacts on the environment. Village meetings also served as a useful mechanism for engaging local women in discussions and decision-making processes.

Community mobilization for project participation was organized by local authorities using the same institutional channels used for other rural community activities. They also prepared the community for the project by refining initial goals, selecting vulnerable participants, and discussing potential collaboration and expected benefits with them. Although most tasks were formally the responsibility of the “Little Earth” team, it is important to consider the remoteness of the mountain community, the lack of electricity and internet, and the generally low levels of education and awareness of sustainable development issues. In this context, local contribution and participation were significant.

Overall, the NGO effectively used the traditional governance structure of Tajikistan’s mountain communities, as well as the existing close ties among local residents. Given the lack of alternative communication channels, these pre-existing institutional arrangements for community mobilization were indispensable to the collaborative process. Implementing this type of project nonetheless involves challenges, especially when major components cannot be delegated to the community. Over time, however, it is expected that project experience will help residents and local authorities initiate similar projects more independently in the future.

5. Mechanism for ensuring top-down government and bottom-up social accountability

QCA score:

0

0.33

0.66

1

Scoring confidence:

Low confidence

Medium confidence

High confidence

Data sources:

Interviews

Documents

Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

Similar types of development projects have been implemented for a long time in various mountainous regions of Tajikistan. All project activities are outlined in advance in the project application and implementation plan and are fully aligned with national legislation, donor requirements, and agreements with local authorities and project participants. All project expenses and beneficiary participation are documented in lists, programs, agreements, and other project documents, and are fully accountable to national regulatory bodies and project donors. Community participation in the project is entirely voluntary, but residents themselves seek inclusion on the list of vulnerable beneficiaries, as the project provides participants with useful household equipment, new knowledge, and opportunities. The NGO “Little Earth” also has a number of internal documents (not mandatory, but preferable), including the “Internal rules and regulations of financial and administrative management of PYEO ‘Little Earth,’” which regulate accountable processes such as business trips, events, procurement, financial limits, salaries, and fees.

During implementation, the NGO is required to comply with national laws and submit forms and reports to the Ministry of Justice, the Tax Committee, the Pension Fund, and the Social Security Fund. It must also adhere to internal travel regulations and follow the project plans and budgets approved by donors. Financial documents must be provided to donors and national regulatory agencies, and sometimes to external auditors. Information reports must also be provided to donors and, in certain (less detailed) forms, to the Ministry of Justice. Relationships with the community are less formal: the NGO signs an internal memorandum of partnership and agrees in advance on the general assistance it can provide. The NGO follows a pre-agreed action plan but does not provide financial reports to the community, as it is accountable to the relevant government agencies and project donors. While reporting requirements are integral to both the operations of “Little Earth” and the project more broadly, based on government and funder requirements, they are not tailored in a way that clearly supports the collaborative processes.

6. Strategic agenda-setting by means of translation

QCA score:

0

0.33

0.66

1

Scoring confidence:

Low confidence

Medium confidence

High confidence

Data sources:

Interviews

Documents

Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

Information in the project application states that project implementation seeks to advance several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), and SDG 13 (Climate action).

The project includes a wide range of measures that constitute sustainable solutions, including the use of renewable energy sources, particularly solar energy; energy-efficiency measures; increased access to education; measures to empower women; and measures to address poverty and improve the quality of life in mountain communities.

The Sustainable Development Goals themselves are less important to local residents than the conditions for their survival and the potential to improve their own lives and those of their families. A key component of dialogue between the NGO and local communities is a focus on rationalizing the use of local resources such as land, vegetation, and water. This means that the NGO’s task is to explain the importance of preserving and restoring the resources on which the community relies, introduce more efficient resource-management practices, and offer ideas for future vegetation restoration.

It is difficult to expect residents of remote communities to engage with global, or even national, policy frameworks, as they live in poverty and always focus on their own problems and needs. However, even small-scale projects indicate that the local community is generally interested in broader issues, is willing to discuss and receive information, and is willing to contribute to the achievement of community-level goals as much as possible. In practice, while the “Little Earth” team makes substantial efforts to translate the SDGs into concrete, locally relevant issues and solutions, the SDGs do not appear to be an important driver of the collaborative processes, given limited local interest in broader policy frameworks.

7. Construction of narratives about successful multi-actor collaboration

QCA score:

- 0
 0.33
 0.66
 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
 Medium confidence
 High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
 Documents
 Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

All respondents reported successful experiences from prior and current partnerships involving collaboration between local government, NGO, and civil society. This suggests that even small but concrete efforts can provide new impetus for further development. This could be observed throughout Tajikistan, as many similar successful projects have been implemented in different parts of the country and continue to have local-level impacts. The collaborative project formats characteristic of these development initiatives offer specific steps, starting with identifying challenges and needs, then providing knowledge, equipment, and other tools to support greater sustainability. Step by step, these projects improve local residents' awareness and energy-efficiency skills, free up some of their labor time, and create small income-generating opportunities or support the development of new agricultural methods. Applied knowledge helps local residents feel more motivated and engaged, and even modest material benefits can significantly change community attitudes toward the environment.

For example, one barrier to women's participation in community life is patriarchal stereotypes. In a previous similar project, men opposed allowing women to join a short, organized study tour to learn about successful women's practices or potential jobs. However, when men saw the benefits of women's engagement in tourism, handicrafts, sewing, or vegetable canning, rather than the arduous daily work of collecting firewood, they became more supportive of women's participation. The project framework does not directly challenge established stereotypes or provoke conflict, but it helps women become more confident and knowledgeable and begin to reflect on environmental issues. In a previous project implemented in the Pamir region, the first and only female participant was able to enroll in university after completing the project. She was no longer afraid to express her opinion or travel outside her village. She also received equipment that improved her family's quality of life and helped convince her husband to allow her to attend university.

8. Building or harnessing institutional platforms and arenas

QCA score:

- 0
 0.33
 0.66
 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
 Medium confidence
 High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
 Documents
 Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

No special digital platforms were used in the project's implementation, except the Zoom platform and email correspondence to coordinate project activities and reporting with donors. The local context of mountain communities requires working far from the digital world, as residents lack access to electricity and the internet. In practice, project participants and partners cannot be connected through modern technology. Instead, the project relies on traditional structures, and community participation follows long-established ways in which people have come together to address common problems, such as natural disasters, building roads and schools, and digging canals. Coordination of project processes was carried out by the initiators directly, both from the "Little Earth" office and on the ground, through village meetings and documentation.

All in-person seminars with participants took place in the focus villages, in designated public houses. For presentations, “Little Earth” brought a laptop, a whiteboard, flipcharts, and other stationery, and printed questionnaires and other handouts in advance. When possible, the NGO also provides local residents with older equipment that is being phased out, such as computers, printers (which can be powered by off-grid systems), whiteboards, and related items. This is typically done in accordance with internal organizational procedures when the NGO is able to purchase more modern equipment. In this way, the village meeting house becomes better equipped for community use and future meetings.

In conclusion, while the project had access to basic meeting facilities and standard communication channels that provided a central space for convening meetings, coordinating activities, and deliberating joint problem-solving processes, these arrangements did not provide additional institutional support that actively enabled collaboration.

9. Provision of access to blended financing

QCA score:

- 0
- 0.33
- 0.66
- 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
- Medium confidence
- High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
- Documents
- Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

The project donor is an international organization with a clearly defined mission and accountability structure. The project was fully funded through a grant. All project criteria and activities were discussed and agreed upon between the donor and the NGO in advance, during the application process. As a rule, funding is earmarked, and other donors can support only small additional activities as supplements to the main project, provided that their missions and goals align and that they have a mandate to work in Tajikistan.

More broadly, the most common practice among tajik NGOs is to rely on grants from international donors or foundations, as the government does not support grassroots environmental organizations, the tax burden is high, and civil society organizations face significant bureaucratic pressure. Given the nature of external grant funding, different donors rarely support the same project. Typically, each project relies on a single primary funding source, which limits sustainability. At the same time, due to the very low standard of living and the broader regulatory environment, membership fees and other forms of self-financing are virtually nonexistent among NGOs in the country.

10. The capacity to leverage support from authorities to enable local collaboration

QCA score:

- 0
- 0.33
- 0.66
- 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
- Medium confidence
- High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
- Documents
- Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

As for local authorities, as mentioned earlier, they are among the project's key partners, supporting project activities and mobilizing the community. However, there is no support from the central government. If project activities are carried out in accordance with national legislation and reports are submitted to the relevant government agencies, this can be understood as the formal basis on which the NGO maintains a relationship with the state.

District authorities in the Yagnob Valley also provided assistance and later met with project participants, which helped raise the project's profile to the district level. Thus, the ability to leverage support from authorities applies not to higher-level institutions, but to local authorities who are directly involved in the collaborative project. In principle, higher-level authorities are reachable, but in practice engaging them is often impractical and can potentially become a barrier to implementation.

11. Inclusion and empowerment of relevant and affected actors

QCA score:

0

0.33

0.66

1

Scoring confidence:

Low confidence

Medium confidence

High confidence

Data sources:

Interviews

Documents

Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

All respondents noted the importance of choosing a focus area of remote mountain communities, where development programs are rarely implemented due to harsh climates and limited infrastructure. Local residents live below the poverty line and often lack electricity, communication services, healthcare, and employment. The project's focus on women participants, a particularly marginalized group in these communities, underscores the importance of external engagement and demonstrates that women are equal members of the community, capable of contributing valuable ideas and participating in meaningful community transformation processes toward sustainable development. Historically, many communities in Tajikistan have been strongly patriarchal, with men making decisions and women confined largely to housework and childcare. As a result, women have limited access to education, resources, and decision-making. This project partially addresses these issues.

By working through female participants, the project identifies new opportunities to influence community practices and strengthens the link to environmental concerns. Men are less likely than women to use stoves at home to heat water and cook food, and they are less involved in laundry and other household work. As a result, during initial consultations about future projects, men often express different views than women and are less aware of specific fuel consumption patterns. Women are also more likely than men to collect and prepare firewood. "Little Earth" concluded that many changes in the relationship between the community and the environment can be implemented more effectively through women. Women readily share their experiences with new equipment and knowledge with neighbors, relatives, and children. They also migrate for work far less frequently, meaning that by remaining in the community they can more effectively influence local development. However, they often lack the knowledge, experience, and skills to do so, as well as the time that could be freed from arduous labor.

It is also worth noting that women from vulnerable families were very active in the project and were interested in receiving benefits that could improve their living standards. Seminars and training sessions also provide rare opportunities for informal community gatherings, where women can dress up and leave the home, taking a break from household work. Over time, local authorities also began to view women as more equal members of the community, as women were central in attracting project support and attention to the village.

12. Clarification of interdependence vis-à-vis common problem and joint vision

QCA score:

- 0
- 0.33
- 0.66
- 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
- Medium confidence
- High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
- Documents
- Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

The case provides a clear example of a targeted approach and a set of measures implemented in a specific focus area, taking the primary beneficiaries into account. As described above, the project's roles could not be replaced by other stakeholders, nor would it have been possible to implement the project in this context without the participation of each party. Recognizing the need for clear, coordinated action, flexibility, and mutual respect, the partners jointly achieved the planned results and completed the project's key stages as intended, enabling the parties to continue their mutually beneficial collaboration. The need for collaboration therefore figured prominently for each participating stakeholder, with a shared understanding that the project was a joint effort based on reciprocal interdependence.

Furthermore, the "Little Earth" team openly shares project details with a wide audience, so other NGOs or international organizations could, in principle, continue working with the same focus group and build momentum for future development initiatives. Successful interventions can become embedded in the repertoire of tools used by other NGOs once they have been shown to produce promising results. These are positive examples of small-scale impetus from organizations to communities, where decentralized solutions help communities become more developed, while also becoming more autonomous and sustainable.

13. Trust-building and conflict mediation

QCA score:

- 0
- 0.33
- 0.66
- 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
- Medium confidence
- High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
- Documents
- Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

The project is largely built on trusting relationships between the project initiators, local authorities, and the community. During implementation, many issues are resolved on the spot. The local community is flexible and welcoming, and women participants are interested in being part of the project, as it improves their lives and offers new opportunities. Many participants may be expressing their opinions for the first time. Several women noted that before the project they had no voice, and that even within their families their opinions were often ignored. The NGO has become an important bridge between local women and local authorities, who respond differently to women when they are more knowledgeable and active. It is also reasonable to say that, without trust in the NGO, local authorities would not have approved work in remote communities. Experience suggests that small-scale projects can build closer and more trusting relationships among partners and participants.

For example, the "Little Earth" team met with local authorities in advance and invited them to consider the project, as the living conditions of particular communities require more targeted assistance than those of communities located closer to large cities or at lower altitudes, or those with access to electricity. Overall, all parties approached the project's objectives with flexibility, taking into account potential risks

and implementation challenges in their specific context. To build trust, particularly with female participants, the NGO also hired a gender consultant who conducts specialized training. This helped participants become more open and trusting and supported better project outcomes. During business trips, the “Little Earth” team spends several days living in local residents’ homes during training sessions or meetings. As a result, the organization becomes temporarily embedded in the community, which helps strengthen relationships among partners. Since planned activities were carried out and promised equipment was delivered, the community has had no complaints about the NGO.

While some aspects of this trust-building appear to have been tacit rather than the result of fully reflexive interventions by the “Little Earth” team, the initiatives outlined above indicate that the team actively supported trust-building and, in turn, mitigated potential conflicts.

14. Use of experimental tools for innovation

QCA score:

- 0
- 0.33
- 0.66
- 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
- Medium confidence
- High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
- Documents
- Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

The innovations introduced into community life were initially divided into two stages. The first stage consisted of comprehensive steps involving the provision of knowledge, theory, skills, and equipment, which had already been identified by the NGO in line with its budget and previous experience. The second stage focused on amplifying women’s voices and taking their opinions into account. Accordingly, the project’s limited budget allowed for the partial implementation of three initiatives proposed by women participants in the focus area.

The initiatives were also selected based on financial criteria and feasibility within a short timeframe, as well as on the expected contribution of local residents. Throughout the project, women’s opinions and feedback were taken into account, but not all ideas could be implemented. Many proposals will be considered in future projects or through further engagement with focus group participants. The project is therefore characterized by clearly defined, pre-planned components and a limited scope for revision and change during implementation. In sum, there was an active incorporation of user-centered design, as the “Little Earth” team proactively solicited feedback through structured activities to tailor support and workshop content. This contributed in a discernible way to the collaborative processes.

15. Ongoing critical self-reflection and learning (i.e., process and/or developmental evaluation):

QCA score:

- 0
- 0.33
- 0.66
- 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
- Medium confidence
- High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
- Documents
- Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

Project information reports for donors, as well as project documents, include evaluations of the effectiveness of implemented actions and final results, and they necessarily take into account the project’s

weaknesses or any unanticipated risks. Project evaluation is important, as are the subsequent actions of participants, particularly their use of energy-efficient equipment, calculations of fuel and time savings, and other quantitative indicators. It is also important to select practical, energy-efficient equipment that local residents find useful and to assess the knowledge gained.

For these purposes, external actors such as journalists from national or international media, tourists, or researchers are often invited during the project. Post-monitoring is mandatory after the project's completion. The "Little Earth" team revisits the focus villages to assess how community life has changed, what results have been achieved, and, where necessary, to provide additional training on equipment use or make other adjustments to address shortcomings. However, relative to the emphasis on soliciting end-user feedback from local communities, it is less clear whether feedback generated through these evaluative processes has discernibly improved the collaborative process.

16. Exercise of facilitative leadership:

QCA score:

- 0
 0.33
 0.66
 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
 Medium confidence
 High confidence

Data sources:

- Interviews
 Documents
 Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this governance factor:

As described above, the NGO is the project's main facilitator and initiator. "Little Earth" team is also responsible for providing resources for all project stages, including travel, trainings and meetings, hiring a trainer, communications, information activities, and reporting. This places significant responsibility on the organization, but it also supports a high level of implementation across project tasks.

The NGO "Little Earth" is an experienced environmental organization focused on local environmental challenges and potential solutions. It has operated in Tajikistan since 1997 and has extensive experience working with mountain communities, climate education, and adaptation. Without "Little Earth," this project could not have been implemented. The organization functioned as the lead actor throughout the project and ensured that implementation progressed effectively. Its central role in the collaborative process is most clearly evidenced by the analysis of the governance factors discussed above.

Outcome variable: Successfully co-created green transitions

The outcome variable 'co-created green transitions' will be scored in two parts. First, 'co-creation' will be scored based on an assessment of whether the participants in the initiative, project or process engaged in collaborative problem-solving that fostered creative ideas and innovative solutions (data will consist of survey data combined with interviews and documents). Next, 'green transitions' will be scored based on an assessment of whether the initiative, project or process has fulfilled or is expected to fulfill its green goals, ambitions and aspirations (data will consist of survey data combined with interviews and internal and/or external evaluation reports, including scientific publications).

The scoring of this variable is done in two parts:

- 1. Is the developed solution based on collaborative problem-solving spurring creativity and innovative solutions?*
- 2. Does the developed solution engender a green transition?*

This scoring should be conducted based on both the survey and complementary green outcome evaluations. Please consult Sections 4.4 and 6.10 in the Research Protocol for more details.

1. Is the developed solution co-created?

QCA score:

- 0
- 0.33
- 0.66
- 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
- Medium confidence
- High confidence

Data sources:

- Survey
- Interviews
- Documents
- Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this part of the governance factor, including the data sources used for the scoring.

It can be argued that, from the beginning, all decisions aimed at improving the community's quality of life, the environment, and long-term sustainable development were developed with consideration of local needs, environmental conditions, and climatic, geographic, and energy-related factors. The "Little Earth" team was the primary developer of the project's solutions, but decisions were discussed and approved with the participation of local authorities and project participants, taking into account the views and input of local residents. The subsequent, in-depth involvement of women participants proved to be a central feature of the project, which also provided access to inputs from the broader village community in the form of the families of the women and the village authorities.

The current project aims to increase local participation in decision-making regarding future steps, development, and management. However, this is partly constrained by factors such as low levels of environmental education, remoteness, weak infrastructure, and the lack of electricity and communication services. For these reasons, the organization often extends its partnership with a community beyond a single project. This approach allows it to reach more families in need, consolidate results from earlier phases, deepen post-monitoring, communicate more closely with local residents, and, where possible, address aspects that were missed in previous work.

This also helps explain why the collaborative processes generated creative solutions by drawing on local experience, even if these solutions were not described as innovative. The survey scores reflect a similar conclusion and highlight the importance of empowering participants to support effective collaborative problem-solving processes.

If possible, please insert your survey responses in the table below (in % for each response), including the mean/average % for each survey item.

	Strong. dis.	Dis.	Slight. dis.	Neither agr/dis	Slight. agree	Agree	Strong. agree	Mean
1. Problem-solving mobilized different experiences, and/or ideas and/or forms of knowledge to develop new perspectives					2 (16,7%)	9 (75%)	1 (8,3%)	1,91
2. Through the collaborative problem-solving process, different experiences and/or ideas and/or forms of knowledge have been mobilized to search for unconventional solutions				1 (8,3%)	4 (33,3%)	7 (58,3%)		1,5
3. The collaborative problem-solving process mobilized different experiences, and/or ideas and/or forms of knowledge to search for solutions that go beyond standard/text-book solutions				1 (8,3%)	3 (25%)	7 (58,3%)	1 (8,3%)	1,6
4. The co-created solution breaks with established practices		2 (16,7%)	2 (16,7%)		4 (33,3%)	3 (25%)	1 (8,3%)	0,58
5. The co-created solution disrupts conventional wisdom			2 (16,7%)	2 (16,7%)	5 (41,7%)	3 (25%)		0,75
6. The co-created solution offers new ideas to address the green transition problem				1 (8,3%)	2 (16,7%)	6 (50%)	3 (25%)	1,92
7. I'm supportive of the co-created solution					1 (8,3%)	4 (33,3%)	7 (58,3%)	2,5

8. I'm content with the overall collaborative process of the project			1 (8,3%)		4 (33,3%)	5 (41,7%)	2 (16,7%)	1,58
9. I feel the multi-actor collaboration process was a prerequisite for the success of the project				1 (8,3%)	5 (41,7%)	5 (41,7%)	1 (8,3%)	1,5
10. I'm satisfied by the results of the co-creation effort in terms of expected impact on the welfare of the community			1 (8,3%)	1 (8,3%)	2 (16,7%)	8 (66,7%)		1,42
11. The collaborative interaction in the project has led to an innovative solution				1 (8,3%)	7 (58,3%)	3 (25%)	1 (8,3%)	1,33
12. The actors involved in the project are engaged in collaborative interaction that stimulated creative problem-solving					2 (16,7%)	9 (75%)	1 (8,3%)	1,92
13. The co-created solution meets the proposed goals of the project					2 (16,7%)	10 (83,3%)		1,83
14. The co-created solution will be durable and robust in the long run				3 (25%)	3 (25%)	6 (50%)		1,25
15. The co-created solution is expected to significantly improve sustainability for the whole community					4 (33,3%)	6 (50%)	2 (16,7%)	1,83

2. Does the developed solution engender a green transition⁶?

QCA score:

- 0
- 0.33
- 0.66
- 1

Scoring confidence:

- Low confidence
- Medium confidence
- High confidence

Data sources:

- Survey
- Interviews
- Documents
- Observations

Please elaborate on the reasoning behind your scoring for this part of the governance factor, including the data sources used for the scoring:

At its current stage, the project has already started to reduce the use of firewood and other fuels, as well as smoke emissions, through the use of solar and other energy-efficient equipment. This is confirmed by observations and records kept by project beneficiaries, who track their fuel consumption. The use of available solar energy, alongside new skills and knowledge, also supports practical improvements. A solar greenhouse partially addresses food-related challenges, and a solar-powered sewing workshop creates new jobs. These results point to a local green transition and relate to SDGs 1, 7, and 13.

The number of meetings and consultations between local authorities and women participants, as well as women’s participation in village councils, are key indicators of project outputs. The project also enabled the implementation of small energy-efficiency initiatives proposed by women. In the long term, it is expected that the green transition will extend to a wider group of local residents and have a stronger influence on local authorities. Local action plans are also expected to improve by incorporating specific adaptation and reforestation measures. However, the project has not been fully evaluated by independent researchers conducting a comprehensive assessment of the green transition in this focus area. As a result, whether these effects are sustained and substantial remains an open question.

If possible, please insert your survey responses in the table below (in % for each response).

1. The project:	Yes	No	Don't know
...did not produce any green transition solution			
...is expected to produce/has produced a green transition solution aiming to avoid a worsening in the status quo			
...is expected to produce/has produced a green transition solution aiming to maintain the status quo	3 answers (25%)		
...is expected to produce/has produced a green transition solution aiming to improve the status quo	9 answers (75%)		

⁶ By "green transitions", we mean objectives and aspirations that correspond to at least one of the Green SDGs (SDG 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). The project does not have to refer explicitly to the green SDGs, but the project’s green objectives

Please list all the informants you have interviewed for the case study (list project role + interview date):

PF: "Project facilitator 1, Little Earth"	07/08/2025
PF: "Project facilitator 2, Little Earth"	13/08/2025
PF: "Project facilitator 1, Little Earth"	29/10/2025
F: "Project funder, Centralasiengrupperna"	05/11/2025
"Independent journalist 1 visited the project area"	29/10/2025
"Independent journalist 2 visited the project area"	08/11/2025
PP: "Project participant 1, female villager"	18/09/2025
PP: "Project participant 2, female villager"	18/09/2025
PP: "Project participant 3, female villager"	18/09/2025
PP: "Project participant 4, female villager"	18/09/2025
PP: "Project participant 5, female villager"	19/09/2025
PP: "Project participant 6, female villager"	19/09/2025

Please list all the observations you have made (type of meeting/workshop/etc. + observation date):

Meeting at the "Little Earth" office (offline) 07/08/2025
Meeting with the "Little Earth" coordinator (offline) 13/08/2025
Correspondence sent to the project developers (online) August-November 2025
Meeting with an independent journalist (offline) 29/10/2025
Interviews with project participants (offline) 18-19/09/2025
All other interviews held via Zoom (online) August-November 2025

Please list all the documents you have analyzed (document name + source + year):

Project application (2023)
Project reports: interim and final (2024-2025)
Questionnaires for participants developed by the "Little Earth" team (2024)
Training and meeting programs (2024)

Opinions of some participants on the project's progress, published by the "Little Earth" team on social media (2025)

Information about each training and work done available on the official website of the "Little Earth" (2024-2025)

Articles published by independent journalists about the project in national media (2025)

Videos about the project and its benefits on Youtube (2025)

Additional information from the project developers and donors (2025)

Please note the response rate for the survey/measurement of outcome variable:

100% (12/12)