



Kyrgyzstan

## Greenhouse Entrepreneurs Improve Income and Nutrition

*“Several of the greenhouses we helped to construct have expanded their production and work in a sustainable way. There is a constant stream of income and consultation provided to local farmers. As a result, local residents can buy their vegetables locally in Naryn city instead of importing them at a much higher price.”*

Arslanbek Miiashev, Executive Director, Mountain Societies Development Support Program

### Greenhouses foster local entrepreneurship and improve nutrition

The Naryn region is a mountainous area with high poverty rates and a local population heavily reliant on agriculture for their income. Farmers here have limited options for vegetable production due to the climatic conditions, and in the winter months many families find themselves in a vulnerable situation, living on a diet of meat and potatoes. Seeking to overcome these limitations, and improve diet and income, Mountain Societies Development Support Program (MSDSP) proposed the construction of a greenhouse, in collaboration with local farmers in Naryn city.

To foster local ownership and entrepreneurship from the outset, local farmers were invited to apply for the project. Selection was based on a set of criteria which included the viability of the proposed site, access to irrigation water, the ability to contribute financially and a willingness to work with groups of women farmers. The chosen lead entrepreneur, Joldoshbek Satybaev, contributed 62 percent of the costs of materials and

In 2016, the Mountain Societies Development Support Program (MSDSP) won third place in the GDN Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP) Award Competition. MSDSP was founded in 2006 by the Aga Khan Foundation and aims to improve the quality of life of Kyrgyzstan's remote and mountainous communities. The GDN funds were used to support a greenhouse project in the Naryn region, part of a larger program on nutrition and entrepreneurship among women and youth. The project was implemented by a team consisting of Jyldyz Suleimanova (MSDSP Naryn Branch Manager), Arslanbek Miiashev (MSDSP Executive Director), Toktobek Soodaev (MSDSP Engineer) and Chyngyz Kalykov (MSDSP Monitoring and Evaluation Associate).



construction for the greenhouse, which was built in 2017.

Great progress has been made in a short period of time. The greenhouse is in full production and a second round of cucumber produce has been sold on the local market. Joldoshbek is providing regular practical consultations to groups of women farmers interested in vegetable production. The entrepreneur has also managed to create some local market linkages; Joldoshbek entered into negotiations with the local campus of the University of Central Asia, to supply them with fresh vegetables. This was a significant achievement as the University has 140 students to feed. In the future, the aim is to diversify production to meet the nutritional needs of the students.

### **Creating Impact at Scale**

The greenhouse approach has been used in other projects run by MSDSP, which have resulted in several independently functioning greenhouses in and around the city of Naryn. According to Arslanbek Miiashvili (MSDSP Executive Director), "several of the greenhouses we helped to construct have expanded their production

and work in a sustainable way. There is a constant stream of income and consultation provided to local farmers. As a result, local residents can buy their vegetables locally in Naryn city instead of importing them at a much higher price."

The success of their project has also been recognized by other organizations operating in the area, such as UNDP and USAID, who have adopted and scaled up the solar greenhouse approach within their own projects. Marc-Antoine Adam, the designer of the project, sees this as an important part of MSDSP's efforts in the region: "Our role is to pilot and develop a project locally, and then others can replicate its success."

MSDSP hopes to develop the greenhouse project further by strengthening greenhouse management through training in areas such as pest management and humidity control, and by starting livestock and fruit production. "One of our missions now is to improve greenhouse management and further demonstrate to local residents that vegetable cultivation is possible in these type of climate conditions. New projects we would like to work on address malpractices in livestock keeping ... and promotion of mother stock nurseries for



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apples and apricots, to improve productivity and quality standards”, explains Miiashev.

### Supporting innovations in development

GDN believes that development ideas such as the greenhouse approach need to be supported and their findings disseminated internationally so that development players within different sectors can learn from them. Miiashev puts it perfectly, “We applied to demonstrate our approach to others and were very proud that experts recognized our work as an example of good practice internationally. Although ... our grant was small, our project shows that entrepreneurs can do a lot with a small investment and achieve a lot of impact.”

#### Award

Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project, 2016

#### Sources

Aga Khan Development Network. “Agriculture and food security,” Aga Khan Foundation. <http://www.akdn.org/where-we-work/central-asia/kyrgyz-republic/agriculture-and-food-security-kyrgyz-republic> (accessed October 15, 2018).

#### Interviewees

Arslanbek Miiashev (Executive Director, MSDSP), Marc-Antoine Adam (Partnerships and Program Development Director, Aga Khan Foundation) and Jyldyz Suleimanova (MSDSP KG Branch Manager)

#### Author

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#### Key words

greenhouse, Kyrgyzstan, nutrition, poverty, mountain climate, entrepreneurship, income, small-scale farming

#### Images

From first to last:

A special coating being applied on the greenhouse to help with the severe cold in the mountains, MSDSP.

The owner of a Chinese-type solar greenhouse at his work place, MSDSP.

Representational photo, Pexels.

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This is one of nine stories produced in partnership with Aidenvironment to document the outcomes of GDN's awards and medals program, generously supported by the Government of Japan, the World Bank for implementation and a host of donors over the years for the medals.

### About the Global Development Awards Competition

The Global Development Awards Competition is an award scheme that identifies talent, supports the career advancement of researchers in developing countries, and funds innovative social development projects, implemented by NGOs, to benefit marginalized groups in the developing world. Since its inception in 2001, the competition has supported more than 340 individuals, research organizations and NGOs with roughly US\$3.8 million worth of awards, placing it as one of the most important global competitions targeting development and research. It currently has three categories of awards: Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development (ORD), Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP), and Japan Social Development Fund Award (JSDF). The Medals for Research on Development (MRD), funded every year by a

different pool of donors, were discontinued in 2015. Over the years, the competition has built a community of excellence among researchers and development practitioners. The Global Development Awards Competition receives annual funding from the Ministry of Finance, Government of Japan. The World Bank manages the trust fund that makes these activities possible.

### About GDN

The Global Development Network (GDN) is a public international organization that supports high quality, policy-oriented, social science research in developing and transition countries, to promote better lives. It supports researchers with financial resources, global networking, access to information, training, peer review and mentoring. GDN acts on the premise that better research leads to more informed policies and better, more inclusive development. Through its global platform, GDN connects social science researchers with policymakers and development stakeholders across the world. Founded in 1999, GDN is currently headquartered in New Delhi.

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