



GEF Small Grants Programme

1<sup>st</sup> project: Cultivation and Propagation of Medicinal Plants (MAR/SGP/OP3/22) &  
2<sup>nd</sup> Project: Solar Powered Herbal Tea Production (MAR/SGP/OP5/Yr2/CORE/CC/12/01)

**Project No:** MAR/SGP/OP3/22 & MAR/SGP/OP5/Yr2/CORE/CC/12/01  
**Grantee:** Association Pour l'Education des Enfants Defavorises (APEDED)  
**Location:** Chemin Grenier  
**SGP Contribution:** US\$ 25,397.49 for MAR/SGP/OP3/22 - & US\$50,000 for MAR/SGP/OP5/Yr2/CORE/CC/12/01  
**Cash Co-Financing:** US\$ 41,910 (for both projects)  
**In-Kind Co-Financing:** US\$ 11,828 (for both projects)  
**Project Duration:** MAR/SGP/OP3/22 – 15 Months & MAR/SGP/OP5/Yr2/CORE/CC/12/01 – 1 year  
**Number of people served:** 20 directly and 28 indirectly  
**Focal area:** Biodiversity and Climate Change

**Background**

In 1996, Anooradah Pooran founded the Association Pour l'Education des Enfants Defavorises (APEDED) in response to the closure of textile factories that had resulted in the loss of jobs for many women and men. Upon losing their jobs, many became unable to afford to send their children to school. Mrs. Pooran established the APEDED as a school for disadvantaged children, to provide access to education they had otherwise been unable to afford.

**Project Objectives and Key Activities**

By 2007, the effects of job loss and poverty in the region were still being felt and Ms. Pooran decided to establish a medicinal plant nursery on the roof of the APEDED school, so that women could attain the financial autonomy they had been lacking, while also preserving native species.

With this purpose, APEDED applied to SGP and with its technical and financial support, established a nursery that employed women to harvest the plants for herbal tea cultivation. INNOVATION: Until this project, local

medicinal plants were only cultivated in backyard gardens or sold as fresh or dry leaves by one supplier on the main local market in Port Louis. The main activities and innovations in this project were the setting up of a greenhouse where around 20 women undertook the cultivation of the medicinal plants. Members of the association were sensitized about the different properties of the medicinal plants. Training were provided to them on the drying and packing of the leaves for their commercialisation and also in the use of the machines and equipment used for the drying and packaging processes. Through this project the women have been empowered in several ways. They were able to proudly speak of their project to the media. Moreover, this project has helped to revive the use of medicinal plants and motivate people to use traditional medicinal plants for relief of certain illnesses. This helps in preserving the very sensitive biodiversity of the island as well as keeps traditional knowledge alive.

After the success of the first project and increase in herbal tea sales, the organization saw an increase in energy use and decided to innovate by using renewable energy. For this purpose, in 2012, the association got a second grant from SGP to install solar panels on the roof and use renewable energy for their operations. In this second project, APEDED raised a second floor to the existing building from its own funds and applied to SGP for purchasing and installing photovoltaic solar panels. The Central Electricity Board (CEB) granted the association the



permission to produce its own electricity through the Small Independent Power Producers Scheme of the Government of Mauritius. As the association faces an increase in the demand for its medicinal and herbal teas, it is thus able to reduce its cost of production while decreasing its impact on climate change. At the same time, the association is increasing its revenue by selling the surplus electricity produced to the CEB.

### **Environmental Impact**

As a result of this first project, APEDED cultivates diverse medicinal plants found on the island. One of the objectives of the project was to revive the use of medicinal plants and motivate people to use traditional medicinal plants for relief of certain illnesses. Useful information and anecdotes were gathered from the elderly in the village. The fact that people are progressively becoming more health conscious and seem to be increasingly aware of the beneficial effects of medicinal plants and traditional cures is an encouraging sign and bodes well for the success of this project. It is to be noted that following this project over 10,000 families have taken the initiative for setting up a medicinal corner in their own gardens. This helps in conservation of the very sensitive biodiversity of the island.

As a result of the second project, APEDED became the first NGO to use renewable energy as an electricity source for sustainable livelihoods. The organization installed 48 photovoltaic panels (a type of solar panel) covering 72 square meters of the school roof that currently generate 14,360 kWh of electricity annually. About 10,000 kWh are sold to the grid to generate US \$6,000, 10 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduced, and 52 trees saved as a result of the installation each year.

### **Socio-Economic Impact**

This project has provided women with jobs and empowered them to protect their biodiversity while also improving their livelihoods. The project has enabled the 20 mothers to earn a livelihood, thereby contributing to the overall household budget, and allowing them to have the necessary fund for their children's school materials.

The organization was able to start herbal tea production starting at 1,000 pieces a month and now exceeding 8,000 and estimated to double by the end of 2014, with customers reaching from France to China. APEDED now runs a community-driven small company which is conserving biodiversity, producing its own electricity from renewable sources, earning income from sale of excess to the grid and above all providing green jobs directly to 20 women and indirectly to 28 **people** from whom it buys medicinal plants. The quality of life of these mothers has improved and they have been empowered. They can speak with the media and elaborate about the health benefits of their teas with the public at local and international fairs.

The greenhouse portion of the project is complemented by the school, which now provides about 60 disadvantaged children with an education they were otherwise unable to afford or access, as well as food, clothing, school supplies, and extracurricular engagement.

The cultivation of medicinal plants contributes to the health of the population, which may learn of uses of the plants in treating ailments from the APEDED programme. It is to be noted that since 2013, APEDED is also selling its dried herbal and medicinal leaves to international entities engaged in the production of teas and other para-pharmaceutical products under other brand names.



12 women and 16 men are also able to earn a regular income through the “Buy Back Leaves” programme, through which APEDED sells to these men and women medicinal plants, and APEDED will later purchase leaves from these men and women to produce their herbal teas.

### **Policy Impact**

The association made use of a new government scheme supporting small businesses in generating renewable energy sources, to develop a more environmental friendly energy supply system.

### **Youth Engagement and Participation**

Approximately 150 children each year receive an education from APEDED which they would otherwise be unable to attain.

### **Gender Mainstreaming**

The women, who had been jobless and dependent on welfare, have gained self-confidence by being employed in the tea cultivation. They are able to contribute to the family income, and have a greater voice in the community, now speaking to local and sometimes international media outlets.

### **Replication and up scaling**

The project originated with a school, but grew to include a greenhouse and sustainable herbal tea enterprise employing disenfranchised women.

### **Lessons learned**

This initiative has successfully shared its knowledge with other local community based group. A system of “Buy Back Leaves” has been set up since 2011, in which the communities are encouraged to cultivate medicinal plants and afterwards, APEDED buy the leaves from them, thus contributing in conserving endemic medicinal plants.

Through APEDED’s sensitization campaign, over 10,000 families have now a space for medicinal plants in their garden or terrace and they understand the importance and values of traditional medicines.

### **Awards**

In December 2015, Secret Grand Mere Ltd, the small enterprise registered by APEDED was the first winner of the “Small Enterprise Award for 2015 National Inclusive Business Award (NIBA)”. In June 2015: Winner of the “Gender and Climate Change Award” by Gender Links 2015 at the National Summit of Gender Links on the SADC Gender Protocol. On August 22nd, 2013, Enterprise Mauritius bestowed APEDED with the “Emerging Exporters Gold Award”. For her work with APEDED, Ms. Pooran is the recipient of the 2013 “Green Africa Award” in the category of “Highly Commendable Award—African Women for Change”. She has also received an award in recognition for her success in mixture of medicinal plants from the “Global Forum of Natural Products” from the Zoology department of the University of Rajasthan. In July 2012, she was awarded a trophy for her commitment towards vulnerable women and children, by the Rotary Club and Kiwanis of France and in May 2012 the “Gender Links Award” at the national level in the “Local Economic Growth” category. In 2011, she also won “The Pride of India Leadership Award” from the Government of India and the GOPIO.