



UN Joint Programme: Sustaining Livelihoods Affected by the Aral Sea Disaster

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER 1'14 – Winter ISSUE

Dear colleagues and partners!

We are happy to introduce the first edition of our quarterly electronic newsletter covering our activities conducted over the first quarter of 2014. In this feature you will find out about our achievements in improving income generating opportunities, including the implementation of business projects on livestock development and production of fish and agricultural products, as well as the project on creation of visit center in the most vulnerable areas of Karakalpakstan. Apart from that, we present the completed projects on provision of access to drinking and irrigation water, electricity and basic social infrastructure. Our newsletter also covers the events on promotion of PAL (Practical Approach to Lung Health) strategy fostered to improve the capacity of primary healthcare workers in rural health facilities and enhancing the quality of provided health services to rural population.

We would appreciate to receive your valuable feedback.

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UN Joint Programme Team in Karakalpakstan



Latest Updates:



Building Public Awareness on World TB Day

World Tuberculosis Day, falling on March 24th each year, was spent this year with a slogan "The Youth of Karakalpakstan will fight TB". The UN Joint Programme also participated in the event in order to build public awareness about tuberculosis among the population of Karakalpakstan. Together with the Ministry of Health of Karakalpakstan, youth organization Kamolot, Médecins Sans Frontières and Nukus State Pedagogical Institute, the UN Joint Programme co-organized an event aiming at reaching young students that are about to become teachers one day.

200 students gathered in the auditorium of Pedagogical

Institute to hear what the medical professionals and UN volunteers have to say about the disease that impinges on us all. The students were given the latest information of the disease, how to recognize the symptoms and to prevent it. All participating students got brochures about TB and they had an opportunity to get acquainted with TB patients' life at an art exhibition that was held simultaneously at the hall of the Institute. The event ended with questions and answers session on TB and the most knowledgeable students were awarded with small gifts. Many students informed that they were eager to volunteer too in the battle against tuberculosis in their communities.



Reviewing results and planning for 2013



During the period of January 13-17, the Programme hosted International Expert in order to conduct the mid-term evaluation and review of the UN Joint Programme activities. This evaluation process was conducted in consultation with national and regional partners. The aim of this important activity was to review the process made and ensure partners are on track towards achieving the strategic development results, and allow for the exchange of valuable perspectives and feedback.

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United Nations Trust Fund
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While visiting Karakalpakstan, the International Expert had a chance to meet with mixture of Programme partners at regional, district and community levels. Exchange of opinions on the process and suggestions were brought up by partners to further foster the programme activities. During the visits to Kanlikul and Shumanay districts the meetings were held with project beneficiaries, where they have shared their own experiences of working with the Programme and about the changes that have taken place with the support of the Programme.

This sort of events are key for the UN Joint Programme as it helps to assess how sustainable and meaningful the project was for beneficiaries. Therefore, evaluation is not just about demonstrating success, but most importantly it is about learning and finding the things that matter. This in fact helps the programme to continually improve project activities for the benefit of the targeted audience.

Key Results of UN Joint Programme in Karakalpakstan for 2013

Short Video Presentation has been developed on the Programme Achievements for 2012-2013 stepping towards sustaining livelihoods of the population in Karakalpakstan - mainly affected by the Aral Sea environmental disaster by creating income generation opportunities for vulnerable groups, fostering initiatives on improvement of social infrastructure facilities and strengthening their health status.



Enhancing Economic and Food Security

Aspects of Water Management

The Climate Change can be considered as one of the important issues that have impacts in many aspects of human security. For instance, it has very negative effects for sustainable economic growth, especially in the agriculture sector. Therefore, considering that Karakalpakstan located in the lowest reaches of the Amudarya river, its arid climate, and the effect of the Aral Sea's desiccation calls for deployment of innovative ways for further sustaining and increasing the productivity of the agriculture sector. Thus, a training course entitled "Water Resources Management and Plant Protection" has been held in Nukus on February 17-19, 2014 for representatives of Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources at regional and for the farmers from Kanlikul, Shumanay and Muynak districts of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The event has been organized within the frames of the UN Joint Programme's cooperation with MASHAV – the agency for international development cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel. During the training course, international experts have presented the issues which are essential for our region such as a rational use of water resources, drip irrigation and other water-saving technologies, new methods of plant protection, information on major pests and vegetable crops diseases as well as measures on their prevention and control.



Training participants have obtained knowledge on advanced technology and agriculture methods, learned approaches and skills on efficient usage of water resources, increased crop productivity, protection of plants and harvests from pests and diseases. Successful implementation and regeneration of water saving technologies and efficient irrigation will enhance income and food security of the rural population, also benefiting to improvement of the environmental stability in the region.

Investing in women fundamentally strengthens families and societies

Women and girls' economic empowerment and creating an enabling environment for them is one of the top priorities of the UN Joint Programme in Karakalpakstan. That is how the Programme started to support the idea of the group of young rural girls from the Kanlikul district who were keen to come up together to create a business initiative through establishing sewing shop in the district. Based on the business plan they have developed, the UN Joint Programme has procured and delivered 6 sewing machines with table stands for further development of their sewing shop. This initiative aimed at creation of more favorable conditions at the rural level to produce national and children's clothes, as well as to meet the growing needs of the local population and create income sources for rural girls and women in Kanlikul. Indeed, this sort of grass root initiatives are further ensuring the economic security for the target population through creating new job places.



On February 21, 2014 an opening ceremony of the new sewing workshop has been held in Kanlikul district, where initiators of this sewing shops who now own the private enterprise “Kanlikul Moda”, representatives of district Khokimiyat and UN Joint Programme staff have participated. During the ceremony, the Director of the enterprise, Ms. Aliyeva expressed her deep-felt gratitude and confidently stated that now they have aim to increase the production capacity higher and perform more complex orders considering the fact, that the newly received machines have diverse functions of sewing clothes and enhances the quality of produced goods. An enormous work is awaited ahead. The enterprise staff has a new, more global and long-term objectives.

Establishment of demonstration plots in agriculture

Spring is a high time for rural dehkans and farmers of Shumanay, Kanlikul and Muynak districts to take preparatory actions on plant cultivation. The agriculture sector is the area where majority of rural inhabitants are involved and one of the key sources for maintaining households’ food security. To this extent, the UN Joint Programme has been supporting rural communities by introducing new agriculture technologies adaptable and applicable for this area due to the fact that the Aral Sea crisis has multidimensional negative effects that decrease the productivity of the land because of water salinity, soil erosion, climate change and desertification. This process if not handled properly might make the communities vulnerable for different human insecurities.



Aimed at mitigating those insecurities, the UN Joint Programme has established a team of experts and agriculture extension agents through capacity building trainings in cooperation with UNESCO, MASHAV and GEF’s Small Grant Programme. Trained extension agents are now playing a crucial role in sharing their expertise and knowledge with other dehkans and farmers in their own communities.

Meanwhile, the Programme is supporting the establishment of 4 demonstration plots in its pilot districts where the drip irrigation system is being applied for cultivating fruits seedlings such as apples and apricots and vegetable crops such as tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins, peppers, eggplants, etc. While, creating those demonstration plots the participants are being trained on more efficient ways of fertilizing the land, watering through drip irrigation systems and sustainable land management techniques. Those demonstration plots will serve as a source of learning for others in those communities.

In order to ensure the transfer of good quality of knowledge to the demonstration plots' beneficiaries and partners, the Programme is engaging specialists from the Kazakhdarya Forestry Department, Council of Farmers, Karakalpak Branch of Scientific-Research Station on Experimental Forestry and experts from the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources.

From theory to practice

Equipped with necessary theoretical knowledge and skills local farmers with the support of the UN Joint Programme, moving to practical work. Yesterday, in Kanlikul district, in one of the demonstration plots the work has done on establishing the drip irrigation system that will help now to use the water more efficiently and increase the volume of harvest. It was inspiring to see many community people coming to the field and volunteering to set the system and learning on this new approach for this specific community.



Partnership is crucial in sustaining resilient livelihoods

One of the objectives of the Joint Programme is creating income generation opportunities for ensuring economic security for vulnerable groups in the target districts. This is done through ensuring access to finance and capacity building for target community inhabitants. In order to accomplish this and further strengthen the collaboration and ensure smooth transformation of knowledge and skills on the human security approach to regional and local government, the selection committee to review the potential business projects to be financed by the project is created by the Council of Ministers of Karakalpakstan. The committee consists of representatives of the Hakimiyats of the target districts, Ministry of Agriculture, Chamber of Commerce, Business Women Association, Women's Committee, Farmers Council of Karakalpakstan and the Programme staff. The representatives of UNWOMEN in Uzbekistan and MSF office in Nukus are also taking close partnership in this. The review committee tasked to review and assess the business projects to be financed by the Programme for creation of demonstration plots and small scale business projects. This approach also creates favorable conditions to ensure transparency, accountability and selection of the good quality proposals submitted by the potential project beneficiaries.



Since the Programme launch in 2012, the review committee meeting was held 10 times approving more than 80 different types of the small and medium business projects/ demonstration plots and social projects in the field of agriculture, livestock, poultry and fish farming, sewing shops, greenhouse, bee farming, craftsmanship, small size food production such as bakery shops, tourism development and therefore creating more than 90 new working places in target communities.

The photo collection presented illustrates different meetings held by the review committee where potential project beneficiaries come to present their business projects/ideas and answer to questions of the committee members. Good tradition now is also the fact that review committee are mobile and Programme holds them not only in Nukus but also in the districts to be closer to communities and also visit the potential project sites. Participation is a key element of any partnership and sustainability!

Mainstreaming improved healthcare practices in primary health:

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS HELP TO TACKLE TUBERCULOSIS

To ensure an effective implementation of the Concept of institutionalizing volunteerism in the area approved by Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, UN Joint Programme "Sustaining livelihoods affected by the Aral Sea disaster" works in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Women's Committee, Nukus Branch of Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute, "Makhalla" Fund and Nurses Association of Karakalpakstan, higher education institutions and Hokimiyats (local and district level authorities) of the target districts of Karakalpakstan



Community volunteers' involvement in the health care and basic services area is a globally widespread approach to address challenges especially in the rural areas. United Nations have been involving them in Karakalpakstan since 2009. With government's and local CSOs' strong ownership, it is a promising way to reduce the serious effects of the Aral Sea Disaster on the lives of population of the region.

NUKUS, February 3-15, 2014 within the UN Joint Programme "Sustaining livelihoods affected by the Aral Sea disaster", the first 85 volunteers were trained on prevention of tuberculosis and other respiratory infections as well as to improve their coaching skills. Two intensive weeks of trainings gave tens of volunteers a valuable and memorable experience. During the two weeks 85 community volunteers from various districts of Karakalpakstan were given an opportunity to become first-line trainers on the UN Joint Programme's effort to fight tuberculosis and other lung diseases in the region. The professional medical trainers of the Ministry of Health of Karakalpakstan and the UNDP/UNV coached community volunteers and gave them the latest information on prevention of tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases. The emphasis of the trainings was set on their coaching skills, since these first-line trainers will use their knowledge once they travel back to their regions as health messengers.

The next step of this health promotion project will be regional trainings that will take place in Muynak, Kegeyli, Karauzyak, Shumanay and Nukus districts later this year. The certificated volunteers will held as many as 71 trainings for 1500 volunteers around the region and teach them what they learned from the medical professionals. The training included information on how to prevent tuberculosis, multi-drug resistant tuberculosis, asthma, COPD and other respiratory diseases, the latest statistics of the diseases, coaching and success stories of volunteering projects around the world.

“Through volunteering I understood what UN work is. I was encouraged to start my own business as a sewer. I can warmly recommend volunteering to everybody”, commented recently certificated volunteer Dilbar Koshpanova from Shumanay district, who participated in UN Joint Programme's health promotional training in Nukus town. The community volunteers will be using training modules and materials such as calendars and flipbooks that have been created by the Joint UN Programme in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

STRENGTHENING LUNG HEALTH IN DISTRICTS

The first district trainings under title “We will strengthen lung health” were completed in Karauzyak and Muynak districts on April 1, 2014. The trainings were conducted under supervision of experienced trainers from the Ministry of Health of Karakalpakstan and UNDP/UNV. The trainings were part of the UN Joint Programme to improve the livelihoods of people affected by the Aral Sea disaster and it is meant to increase the knowledge of people about tuberculosis and other lung diseases.

The courses were attended by representatives of all VCCs in the districts who will continue to work with the effort actively. The trainings were conducted in the form of presentations and videos about tuberculosis, acute asthma and other pulmonary diseases. Lung diseases manifest as long cough. Each course was held in the form of games and quizzes. With the information given at the workshop the community volunteers will campaign throughout the area.



At the end of the workshops 533 participants from target districts were awarded with certificates and volunteering materials, caps and bags, as well as protective tools such as respirators and sanitary gels. Participants expected to make a great contribution to the development of health promotion in their region.

“I will personally consult my college teachers that I want to hold this training at my college. After all, my friends also need to know what I know. We all must fight against lung diseases”, tells 2nd course student Dilfuza Baltabaeva at a Karauzyak college.

EFFORTS TO ENSURE HEALTH SECURITY BY IMPROVING HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

One of the challenges the Aral Sea region faces is the deterioration of air quality that in turn increases a need to prevent and monitor respiratory diseases among the local population. Therefore, based on the consultations held with the local healthcare partners, the Programme with the UNV support has recently procured and delivered some medical equipment such as spirometers to be used by the specialists of the rural healthcare facilities. The delivered equipment measures the volume of air inhaled and exhaled as well as used for testing asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory diseases. Using this type of medical equipment helps to identify the form of cough and exclude the possibility of tuberculosis at its early stage that helps to prevent development of drug-resistant tuberculosis and misuse of antibiotics.



On February 18, the Programme in coordination with the Ministry of Health of Karakalpakstan, organized a training for the representatives and specialists of the rural health facilities of Muynak , Shumanay, Karauzyak, Kegeyli, Nukus, Beruni, Amudarya and Nukus districts, where the methods of using of the delivered equipment were demonstrated. In turn, the rural healthcare specialists obtained all necessary skills and knowledge on proper use of them as well as some techniques on testing, conducting research and developing a database of patients. While, the UNV mainly focuses on educating and preparing community volunteers to prevent TB among the population and ensure timely appeal of local population to the rural healthcare facilities, the Programme believes that supply of medical equipment will ensure that specialists can provide timely and efficient health care services to the rural population to keep up the health security of the population.

Strengthening governance and provision of access to social services:

Access to electricity for Shumanay communities

During conducting the trainings on development of community development plans, employees of the Joint Program have identified a number of social projects such as improvement of access to drinking water, electricity and social infrastructure, including renovation of secondary schools, kindergartens and rural medical points.



Improving the access to electric power to Tajimurat, Sattar, Kattikul and Enbekshi communities of Shumanay district is one of the examples of social projects. Residents of these communities have been experiencing difficulties due to electricity shutdowns as the power transformer was outdated. This situation had been negatively effecting to the living conditions of people, especially women and children.

As a result of collaborative work with relevant parties, the UN Joint Program in Karakalpakstan provided access to permanent power supply by installation of four new power transformers for total amount of 175 273 658 Uzbek soums, thus favorable conditions for 1429 local people have been created in regard to acceleration of MDGs achievement.

Implementation of these projects deepened the confidence of inhabitants that they can resolve any issues by their own regarding the further improvement of the communities. Besides positive impact of these projects on wellbeing of people in regard their general social development and increasing of industrial enterprises for creation of more workplaces, it also ensures the environmental safety by reducing the cuttings of trees and bushes. The electric power providing projects also include the power supply to 6 secondary schools, 7 rural medical points and 3 flour-grinding enterprises which provide social and economic services to local people.

The UN Joint Programme also finished five similar projects in target communities in Kanlikul district in November of 2013, where new power transformer plants were installed to provide more than 4200 local community members. Besides, the UN Joint Programme currently is implementing 4 irrigation water supply projects through installation of water pump stations, also 5 projects on construction of water lines, as well as 3 projects on rehabilitation of the rural health points, including a kindergarten facility. These projects ensure an access to services for 34262 community inhabitants of Muynak, Shumanay and Kanlikul districts.

Access to irrigation water

The rural population of Shagirli, Kipshakdarya and Shege communities in Muynak district is mainly focused on agriculture and livestock development. Each household has their plot lands where they grow vegetables and fruit trees. Community inhabitants are receiving water from Talliq and Kipshakdarya canals. Due to limited water amount in canals, people have been encountering difficulties with irrigation of household land plots. In its turn, this adversely affects to household food security because of low crop production and increases the expenses for food products.



During community development plans formulation workshops of UN Joint Programme at grassroots level this issue has been reflected in the community plan. The Programme has addressed this major priority by procurement and delivery of 3 water pumps these three vulnerable communities with total project budget of USD 68,275.00. Delivery of water pumps has built a confidence and inspired an enthusiasm among community people and they are mobilizing all the efforts towards construction and installation of intake and distribution pipes. This community initiative will enable 612 households in these communities to gain improved access for irrigation water and do farming and gardening in their plot lands to ensure provision of their families with basic agricultural food products starting from this spring.

The UN Joint Programme has established several demonstration plots on pasture management by providing with alfalfa seeds to 33 households and 10 dehkan farmers of these communities in the previous year and planning to create more demonstration plots on gardening by providing fruit tree saplings this spring.