

Annual Project Progress Report

Project title:	Towards decent work for people with disabilities in Turkmenistan: transforming social enterprises into meaningful training and employment opportunities
Award ID:	00097775
Project ID:	00101359
Implementing partner(s):	Blind and Deaf Society of Turkmenistan
Period covered in this report:	January-December 2022
Date of last Annual Report:	20.12.2021
Date of the last Project Board meeting:	14.02.2022
Date of last Quality Assurance and rating:	21.12.2020 Implementation (undp.org)

1. Project Performance

Please state the expected Output of the Project, set indicators and corresponding CP Outcome (as per project document/AWP):

Project Output 1:

Capacity of the BDST to help its members gain access to quality vocational training and decent work increased

Output indicators:

- 1.1 The number of employed BDST members by gender
- 1.2 The number of trained BDST members by gender
- 1.3 Growth of income among target BDST members (%)

Output targets (2022):

1.1. Developing and presenting capacity building plans and business strategies for marketing activities for the three selected enterprises

1.2. Training on employment of people with disabilities

a) Were the indicators and output achieved? Yes No Partially

b) If no or partially, please explain why?

All targets under this output were achieved in 2021. However, this output is expected to be fully completed in 2023 following the modernization of the BDST training-production enterprises in the cities of Ashgabat, Mary and Turkmenabat under Output 2 and training of staff to operate new equipment under Output 3, when new jobs will be created making it possible to report on the number of employed BDST members by gender and the growth of income among target BDST members.

Project Output 2:

Three selected Training and Production Enterprises (TPEs) of the BDST modernized and reequipped

Output indicators:

- 2.1 Number of enterprises refurbished and re-equipped with new modern equipment that meet the needs of people with disabilities
- 2.2 Number of new jobs created for people with disabilities

Output targets (2022):

- 2.1 Assessment of the existing capacity and development of recommendations for procurement of sewing equipment for two sewing workshops of BDST in Mary and Turkmenabat.
- 2.2 Conduct accessibility checks and develop recommendations for two sewing workshops of BDST
- 2.3 Carrying out major repairs of production areas in selected workshops of the BDST
- 2.3 Procurement and installation of equipment at three selected workshops of the BDST in Ashgabat, Mary and Turkmenabat

a) Were the indicators and output achieved? Yes No Partially

b) If no or partially, please explain why?

This Output was partially achieved due to the low capacity of the local market and the situation with the country's COVID-19 related lockdown that led to the protracted procurement of printing equipment as a result of the low response from the international companies to bid in the time of pandemic, as bidders would have to purchase printing equipment not from one but different manufacturers and commit to arranging onsite commissioning of equipment and onsite training of personnel. This challenge necessitated the modification of specifications of printing equipment, changing the requirement for equipment commissioning by the supplier from onsite to online and re-announcing the tender for the third time. Given the fact that the cost estimate for major overhaul of the BDST workshops exceeded the original budget, the bill of quantities for reconstruction of three workshops was also revised to fit in the original project budget for these activities, which also led to the delayed start of procurement of civil works.

Project Output 3:

Transformation plan for selected enterprise to become sustainable models of vocational skills training, supported employment and transition to an open market employment for people with disabilities.

Output indicators:

- 3.1 An appropriate training curriculum developed
- 3.2 Number of people with disabilities who have received professional training based on gender
- 3.3 Availability of a Transformation Plan

Output targets (2022):

- 3.1 Training of personnel of three selected enterprises on operation and maintenance of new equipment
- 3.2 Develop a manual on apprenticeship (hiring, induction training, on-job training, accessibility of workplace) for newly hired blind and deaf people under mentorship of BDST production specialists
- 3.3 Develop partnerships to promote vocational education and employment for people with disabilities
- 3.4 Raising awareness of the social model of disability and inclusive approaches

a) Were the indicators and output achieved? Yes No Partially

b) If no or partially, please explain why?

This Output is yet to be fully achieved in 2023 as activities under this Output related to vocational skills training, supported employment and transition to an open market employment for people with disabilities were not initialized in 2022 due to the late start of procurement of new equipment and concerns of budget overruns on purchase of new equipment and major overhaul of the BDST production facilities under Output 2.

2. Progress Reporting

Please summarize the main achievements during the project cycle:

The project continued into 2022 slightly behind the agreed timeframe mostly due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the low response from international bidders, as well as the limited number of qualified national experts in the local market, resulting in the late start of activities related to assessment of production capacities and recommendations for procurement of printing and sewing equipment for the three production workshops.

A Project Board Meeting was held on 14 February 2022 that decided to slightly refocus activities under Output 3 with the view of achieving a long-term result in terms of transforming the BDST three social enterprises into a sustainable model of vocational training for people with disabilities. The project donor was consulted and the updated AWP was provided to the donor.

The implementation of project activities for 2022 took place against the background of COVID-19 restrictions that impacted not only the work of national but also Chinese experts who were able to provide only distance support.

Despite the above challenges, the project managed to complete three international tenders and sign contracts with international companies on supply of equipment and major overhaul of three BDST production facilities that are expected to be finished in 2023.

In this regard the project was no-cost extended until the end of 2023 to complete the project activities under Output 2 related to the purchase, delivery and installation of new printing and sewing equipment and major overhaul of three production facilities of the Blind and Deaf Society of Turkmenistan, as well as activities under Output 3 related to vocational skills training, supported employment and transition to an open market employment for people with disabilities, which were not initialized in 2022 due to the concern of budget overruns on purchase of equipment and major overhaul of the BDST production facilities.

The project will receive the second tranche from the donor in early 2023 to fund the remaining project activities. The late allocation of the second tranche is due to the fact that the Project was able to reach 80% delivery of the first tranche (as the main condition for release of the second tranche) only by the end of the 4th quarter and sent the request to the project donor to allocate the second tranche at the end of the 4th quarter.

Project Output 1:

All targets under this output were achieved in 2021. However, this output is expected to be fully completed in 2023 following the modernization of the BDST training-production enterprises in the cities of Ashgabat, Mary and Turkmenabat under Output 2 and training of staff to operate new equipment under Output 3, when new jobs will be created making it possible to report on the number of employed BDST members by gender and the growth of income among target BDST members.

Project Output 2:

The project completed assessment of production capacities and provision of recommendations for reconstruction and procurement of equipment for the BDST social enterprises in the cities of Ashgabat, Mary and Turkmenabat with the support of national and Chinese experts. Recommendations for accessibility checks were also provided by Chinese experts in writing based on the Chinese experience and international practice.

Following the assessment of production capacities, the project held international tenders and signed contracts with international companies for procurement, delivery and installation of sewing equipment for the sewing workshops of BDST TPEs in Mary and Turkmenabat and printing equipment for the cardboard-printing workshop of the BDST TPE in Ashgabat. Training of BDST employees on operation and maintenance of new equipment will be held by national consultants after delivery and putting into operation of new equipment in 2023. The achievement of this result has been delayed because UNDP received technically and financially non-compliant proposals from bidders in the first two rounds of tenders.

Following the assessment of production capacities of the BDST cardboard-printing workshop in Ashgabat and sewing workshops in Mary and Turkmenabat by national and Chinese experts, the project held an international tender for civil works at these facilities. An international company was selected for all three facilities. A major overhaul of the facility in Ashgabat was started in 2022, while a contract for the remaining two facilities in Mary and Turkmenabat will be signed in 2023 following the allocation of the second tranche from the project donor. The achievement of this output has been delayed owing to the longer-than-expected period of hiring national experts and provision of feedback by Chinese experts, as well as the need to revise the scope of reconstruction for the Ashgabat printing workshop because of concerns of insufficient funds in the budget for this activity.

Project Output 3:

The achievement of this output has been delayed owing to the late start of work on re-equipment and reconstruction of the BDST cardboard-printing workshop and sewing workshops which is to be followed by contracting national experts for development of training programmes and support training of BDST TPE employees on operation and maintenance of new equipment as well as contracting national experts for review of the existing gaps and development of recommendations to promote vocational education for people with disabilities at the state level and review of the existing gaps and development of recommendations to promote employment of PWDs in the open labor market by the state-owned and private organizations, taking into account the social model of disability.

At the same time, the project managed to establish and maintain a dialogue with all relevant national stakeholders on the topic of promoting education and employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the open labor market as part of two round tables in 2021 and 2022.

3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The project strengthened capacity of 66 members of the BDST from the cities of Ashgabat, Mary and Turkmenabat, of which 43 are female members, who enhanced their knowledge and learned international experience of barrier free employment, social security and protection of the rights and interests of people with disabilities. The training was delivered by 6 certified trainers-members of the BDST, of which 4 are female members, trained earlier by the Chinese experts from the Chinese Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (CFPA) and Chinese Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) in the course of the intensive six-day online Disability Equality Training (DET).

Project Risks and Issues

The project Risk Log is maintained throughout the project implementation to capture potential risks to the project and associated measures to mitigate risk. The Project Manager shall maintain and update the Risk Log and ensure that risks are identified,

communicated and managed effectively.

A number of potential risks are listed below.

Description of risk	Type and category	Risk management actions	Current situation
Lack of BDST operational capacity and resources to effectively respond to the fast changing business environment, obsolete training facilities and production equipment	Operational	Assessment of existing capacity and development of an institutional development strategy for BDST and new business strategy for its social enterprises	Completed Assessment of the BDST existing capacity was provided, institutional development strategy and business strategies for the BDST three social enterprises were developed and shared with the BDST senior management for further use and guidance.
Limited local market capacity/limited number of international bidders/restricted cargo shipments across borders due to COVID-19 pandemic	Operational	Tenders for procurement of equipment and civil works were completed with some delay for objective reasons. Delivery of equipment and completion of civil works for BDST one social enterprise is expected by the end of January 2023 and for the other two social enterprises by the end of May 2023. A project extension was requested to enable the project to complete the remaining project activities relating to operationalization of new equipment and implementation of training of staff to operate new equipment	Ongoing Project extension no-cost was requested.
International travel restrictions because of COVID-19 pandemic	Operational	Shift activities involving international experts to online mode as much as possible.	Completed International experts have effectively provided online and distance support to BDST capacity building activities. Further support will be provided by the international experts in a similar mode with the same quality for the remaining project activities.

Delays in inception of Project (setting a structure, recruitment of staff and experts/consultants)	Project management and implementation	Identify the direction of the approval process (steps, deadlines, agencies, required documents); Organise informational meetings/ round tables with key government officials (MFA, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, Education, etc.); Review/evaluate the detailed work plan and set priorities; Develop criteria for hiring staff and experts (based on the project work plan) and conduct pre-selection (use human resources from previous projects and initiatives).	Completed
Change/rotation of employees in organisations concerned	Political and diplomatic	Enlist support from organisations (at the management level, building the capacity of a large group – the national advisory group and beyond, communication meetings/materials for all employees.	Completed Two round tables marking International Day of Persons with Disability were conducted, discussing challenges facing PWDs in Turkmenistan and ways to address them.
Resistance to work together from organisations of people with disabilities, vocational training institutions, business and the public sector	Political and diplomatic	Organise a series of communication meetings, workshops, and round tables on general issues: access to quality vocational education and employment, to demonstrate positive lessons and benefits	Ongoing The project is to contract national experts and hold a series of workshops on education and employment of PWDs
Low adaptability of targeted people with disabilities to new conditions	Social	Actively involve targeted people with disabilities in the project implementation; tailored training activities for smoother adaptation of target groups.	Ongoing Disability equality training was conducted. Manual on apprenticeship of newly hired blind and deaf people will be developed. Trainings to operate new equipment will be conducted

4. Lessons learned and follow-up steps (if applicable)

Please provide the lessons learned and further steps after the project's closure.

Major procurement activities such as procurement of equipment and civil works through international tenders need to be planned for and implemented at the outset of the project to have sufficient time for their completion given the traditional limited capacity of the local market and limited number of international bidders willing to bid for complex procurement cases. On their part, UNDP procurement team needs to take a proactive

approach to such complex procurement cases and guide/provide training to the project team on every step of procurement process to ensure compliance with UNDP procurement rules and procedures.

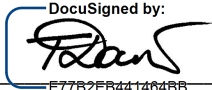
5. Transfer of Assets or other related matter

Please state on any past or future transfer of assets made within the project cycle (Attach list of equipment, cooperation frameworks with beneficiaries, etc.)

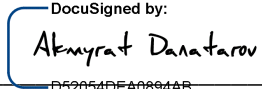
N/A

6. Financial management

Budget item	Total approved in 2022 (in USD)	Expenses + commitments	Budget utilization in % to planned
Component 1	0	122	0
Component 2	1 178 660	728 420	62
Component 3	46 159	9 511	19
Project management	123 622	24 517	19
Total delivery in 2022	1 348 441	762,574	57
In % to total project budget			

Prepared by:  Timur Dosmamedov, Project Manager

Date: 28.12.2022

Approved by:  Akmyrat Danatarov, Programme Analyst

Date: 28.12.2022