



ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

United Nations Development Programme, Kazakhstan

00116665 "Supporting the Economic Empowerment of Afghan Women through Education and Training in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan"

07.02.2023



Reporting Period	01.01.2022 – 31.12.2022	
Donor	European Union	
Country	Kazakhstan	
Project Title	Supporting the Economic Empowerment of Afghan Women through Education and Training in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan	
Project ID (Atlas Award ID)	00120475	
Outputs (Atlas Project ID and Description)	00116665, Afghan Women Empowerment project	
Strategic Plan and/or CPD Outcomes	Outcome 2.2: By 2025, state institutions at all levels effectively design and implement gender-sensitive, human rights and evidence-based public policies and provide quality services in an inclusive, transparent, and accountable manner Output 2.4: Triangular development initiatives are in place to support the positioning of Kazakhstan, with a focus on empowerment of women	
Implementing Partner(s)	UNDP Country Offices in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, UN Women, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Education	
Project Start Date	June 2019	
Project End Date	May 2025	
2022 Annual Work Plan Budget	361,782 USD	
Total resources required	361,782 USD	
Revenue received	Donor/EU funding	125,345.5 USD
	Total	125,345.5 USD
Unfunded budget	N/A	
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I. Executive summary

The course of 2022 marked the achievement of numerous milestones, as well as included certain project-specific challenges. Over the reporting period, along with a smooth transition of most Bachelor students to the next grade, the project faced several dropouts. Nevertheless, the issue was duly addressed by providing opportunities for new candidates to pursue an educational path in Kazakhstan. Three Afghan students will be enrolled in the TVET program at Kazakh-British Technical University starting in January 2023. This course of action will enable the project to keep on track toward the indicative objectives and targets.

At the same time, the unfolding geo-political situation in Afghanistan had direct implications for project implementation. The continued escalation of restrictive policies impacted one of the key project objectives – post-educational employment opportunities. Although most of the program graduates decided to continue their education and advance their careers overseas, only a few women returned home. One of them was able to enter the local labor market and is currently employed at UNDP Afghanistan and performs her duties in the capacity of Project Associate. The position meets graduate’s academic degree obtained within the project. This is considered a valid achievement due to restrictions imposed by de-facto authorities.

On a regular basis, UNDP continues to monitor the project graduates and remain aware of their occupations and future plans.

In terms of financial expenditures over the reporting period, 100% of the 2022 target amount has been utilized. The cumulative amount spent in 2022 is \$361,782.

The objective of this report is to present the cumulative results achieved by implementing agency and project counterparts for the reporting period.

II. Background

The overall objective of the project “Supporting the Economic Empowerment of Afghan Women through Education and Training in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan” is to strengthen human capacity development in Afghanistan by increasing women’s access to quality higher education through expanding cooperation with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The Specific Objectives are:

1. Improved higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility system for women in Afghanistan
2. Improved involvement of Afghan women in higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility programmes
3. Enhanced employability of women participating in the higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility programme

The initiative directly contributes to the achievement of the international development agenda, including SDG 4 on inclusive, equitable and quality vocational and higher education and SDG 5 on empowering women and girls by contributing to women’s participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life. moreover, the project contributes to the SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and SDG 17: Partnerships.

III. Progress Review

Expected outputs	Output indicators	Data source	Baseline		Value for the previous year if different from baseline	Target for the reported year	Actual value for the reported year
			Value	Year			
Overall Objective. To enhance human capacity development of women in Afghanistan	Indicator 1. Afghan female population with tertiary education (% ages 25 and older)	UIS, national/higher education and TVET institutions statistics	0,48%	2019	0,48%	0	0
	Indicator 2. Afghan female population with TVET certificate (% ages 25 and older)	UIS, national/higher education and TVET institutions statistics	0,06%	2019	0,06%	0	0
Specific Objective 1. Improved higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility system for women in Afghanistan.	Indicator 1.1. Status of the Selection Committee membership and regulations	Intervention progress reports	Modality under discussion	2019	Modality under discussion	Selection Committee membership and regulations fully functional	Selection Committee membership and regulations fully functional
	Indicator 1.2. Status of development of Selection Guide Note by the Selection Committee	Intervention progress reports	Selection Guide Note under discussion	2019	Selection Guide Note under discussion	Selection Guide Note by the Selection Committee approved	Selection Guide Note by the Selection Committee approved
	Indicator 1.3. Status of adoption of Standards for Gender sensitive academic	Intervention progress reports	Standards for Gender sensitive academic environment by host	2019	Standards for Gender sensitive academic environment by host universities under discussion	-	-

	environment by host universities		universities under discussion				
Specific Objective 2. Improved involvement of Afghan women in higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility programmes	Indicator 2.1. Number of Afghan women enrolled in outgoing learning mobility system programmes	List of the women candidates approved	0	2019	50	0	0
	Indicator 2.2. Percentage of Afghan women who completed the language module successfully (disaggregated by language if relevant)	List of students who passed the language test	0	2019	50	0	0
	Indicator 2.3. Graduation rate of women enrolled in higher education outgoing learning programmes (disaggregated by learning institutions and field of studies, if relevant)	Higher education institutions statistics	0%	2019	0%	20%	20%

	Indicator 2.4 Graduation rate of women enrolled in TVET outgoing learning programmes (disaggregated by learning institutions and field of studies, if relevant)	TVET institutions statistics	0%	2019	0	40%	40%
	Indicator 2.5. Drop-out rate of Afghan women enrolled in higher education outgoing learning programmes (country, higher education institutions, field of studies)	Higher education institutions statistics	0%	2019	0%	0	0
	Indicator 2.6. Drop-out rate of Afghan women enrolled in TVET outgoing learning programmes (country, TVET institutions, field of studies)	TVET institutions statistics	0%	2019	0%	0	0
Specific Objective 3. Enhanced employability of women participating in the higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility programme	Indicator 3.1. Percentage of Afghan women TVET and MA graduates employed <i>one year after</i> completing the	Beneficiary survey	0%	2019	0%	0	0

	outgoing learning mobility system programme.						
	Indicator 3.2. Percentage of Afghan women graduates in a job position relevant to their field of studies/qualifications after completing the outgoing learning mobility system programme. (disaggregated by sex)	Beneficiary survey; Qualitative /quantitative reports from Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and of the Ministry of Higher Education	0%	2019	0%	0	0
Output 1.1. Developed concept of the higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility mechanism.	Indicator 1.1.1. Number of exchange sessions (distance or in person) between Ministries of Education of host countries organised with support of the intervention	Meeting minutes	0	2019	0	0	0
Output 1.2. Increased awareness among the Afghan women of the existence of the higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility programme	Indicator 1.2.1. Number of potential students informed about the learning mobility programme (disaggregated by sex)	Social media analytic tools/social dashboards	0	2019	1,151,365	0	0

	Indicator 1.2.2 Number of received applications for higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility programmes which include all required documentation (disaggregated by sex)	Outgoing learning programmes Database of applications received completed with the required documents	0	2019	775	0	0
Output 2.1. Increased access of the Afghan women to higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility mechanism in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan	Indicator 2.1.1. Number of Afghan women, enrolled in higher education outgoing learning mobility programme	List of the women candidates awarded with a scholarship	0	2019	20 (2019-2020)	0	0
	Indicator 2.1.2. Number of Afghan women, enrolled in TVET outgoing learning mobility programme	List of the women candidates awarded with a scholarship	0	2019	31 (2019-2020)	0	3
Output 2.2. Improved knowledge of women applicants for higher education /TVET programmes on languages and cultures of the host countries	Indicator 2.2.1. Number of Afghan enrolled in the online foundation language trainings with support of the intervention	List of students enrolled per each language course	0	2019	50 (2019-2020)	0	0

Output 2.3. Strengthened awareness and capacity of women participating in the higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility programmes on gender equality, women's empowerment, leadership, and other soft skills	Indicator 2.3.1. Number of Afghan women attending Summer School Training events with support of the intervention	List of students enrolled per each Summer School Training events	0	2019	44 (January-February 2021) 41 (June-July 2021)	0	0
Output 3.1. Enhanced employability of women upon return from outgoing learning mobility programmes	Indicator 3.1.1. Number of study visits of relevant NGOs to Kazakhstan with support of the intervention	Study visits schedule	0	2019	0	0	0
	Indicator 3.1.2. # of NGOs staff acquainted with the best international systems of employability with support of the intervention (disaggregated by sex and type of participant)	Interviews	0	2019	0	0	0
Output 3.2. Increased availability of placement opportunities relevant to and compatible with field of studies of the Afghan women participating in	Indicator 3.2.1. Number of Afghan women participating in the outgoing learning mobility programmes	Internship attendance sheet	0	2019	0	5	5

outgoing learning mobility programmes	benefitting from a placement in a private company during their studies. (disaggregated by sex)						
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In 2022, UNDP Kazakhstan continued contributing to the gender equality cause in Afghanistan by the means of providing study opportunities for Afghan women and maintaining cross-country cooperation. With UNDP support, the EU-funded Afghan Women Empowerment programme hosted a group of 50 students in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In 2022, 31 Afghan women successfully completed academic programs and, as a result, became agents of change committed to contributing to socio-economic recovery and development of Afghanistan. In addition, 3 students studying at KazNARU (BA Plant Science and Technologies), 1 student at KBTU (BA Finance), and 2 students at Satbayev University (BA Mining Engineering) successfully completed the second year of the academic programme and were transferred to the third grade. 3 TVET Finance students were selected from the reserve list of candidates and will start pursuing education at KBTU in January 2023.

To learn the academic performance of the students regular monitoring visits were organized by UNDP project team to the host universities. The meeting outcomes demonstrated statistical evidence that the project participants are effectively fulfilling the academic requirements.

Upon request of UNDP Kazakhstan one of the partnering universities, KBTU, introduced a year-long post-education professional orientation course for 18 project graduates (from Master's and TVET programmes graduates 2021) starting from 25 October 2021. The programme "Vocational Education Training on Business and Language" allowed Afghan women to obtain additional qualification on career-related disciplines. These trainings were consisted of Russian language course, Occupational Health and Safety Promotion course, Business Ethics classes as well as the module on successful job interview preparation. In June 2022, the students successfully completed the course.

Starting in July 2022, twelve selected project graduates joined the two-months course organized by the Vocational Educational Department of KBTU. This initiative was aimed to equip the students with knowledge and practice provided by international companies. During the period, two training courses were introduced by KBTU partners – Joint Center Janser HR & Academy, and Alibaba group.

IV. Project Risks and Issues

Ongoing implications caused by geo-political changes and the role of de-facto authorities of Afghanistan affect various areas, including the project beneficiaries' participation in the project. The donor of the project is being diligently informed about the changes on a constant basis.

a. Updated project risks and actions

Project Risk 1: Travel to Afghanistan during the vacation period

During the summer period few students have visited Afghanistan. One student, Muhadesa Rasekh (Satbayev University), is still not able to return to Almaty.

Actions taken:

As a result of the communication with the partnering university, the student was able to continue her participation in the project and connect to classes online despite the full return to offline mode of studies starting from September 2022.

b. Updated project issues and actions

Project Issue 1: Drop-out of Bachelor students of KBTU

Three Bachelor students of KBTU could not succeed in full completion of the 2021-2022 academic year. Geo-political situation in Afghanistan critically affected both the personal plans and capability

of students to continue the learning programme in Kazakhstan. Currently, former project participants reside overseas.

Actions taken:

It has been decided to select and provide scholarship opportunities for 3 candidates from the reserve list to study TVET programme at KBTU to follow project quantitative indicators.

Project Issue 2: Pregnancy of the student

In autumn 2022, Satbayev University and UNDP project team were informed about pregnancy of a Bachelor student.

Actions taken:

The issue was raised at the project Advisory Board meeting which resulted in supporting the student by the means of increasing the student's monthly stipend.

V. Gender Related Activities

The 2022 project year started with the Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) aimed at outlining major milestones of an academic initiative for Afghan women. The multi-stakeholder board was attended by representatives from UNDP Country Offices, the European Union delegations, national partners, and other members of the committee. Participants expressed their commitment to support the programme that addresses the most pressing issues of gender equality and provides access to quality education for women and girls in Afghanistan.

One of the key decisions made at the SCM was an introduction of the low-profile communication strategy. All the materials previously published at the media platforms were deleted to preserve students' confidentiality. In the future, no identities will be revealed in all media materials released for external use. New approach ensures consideration of increasing restrictions toward women education and violation of women's rights in Afghanistan and allow participating students to continue pursuing education in the host countries. Thus, given the complexity and fluidity of the political situation, the approach intends to consider and secure safety of students and their family members.

In order to develop leadership skills, UNDP organized two meetings to highlight the importance of promoting gender equality and providing access to higher education for women and girls in Afghanistan. The first meeting was held on 31 May 2022 at Almaty Management University with Mr. Thomas Nicholson, EU Special Representative for Afghanistan. Students expressed their perspective on the prospects of education and future career opportunities. The second meeting with Ms. Usha Rao-Monari, UN Under-Secretary-General, UNDP Associate Administrator strongly inspired students to continue studies and encouraged them to achieve their career goals, despite of existing gender inequalities in Afghanistan.

On top of that, to increase ownership of students and amplify gendered experiences through individual lenses, the project team developed two human stories. In February, the global community celebrated the International Day of Women in Science. In this regard, the UNDP project team has released a human story about one of the project participants from Satbayev University. The main heroine has shared her experience of being a student in the aftermath of the August events in Afghanistan in 2021. The same year, another student was invited as a guest speaker at the Second SDG Regional Summit, where she shared memories from childhood, struggling with gender stereotypes such as child marriages and expressed views on the importance of education for women. Both stories were a great success among audience as well as helped heroines to step up and be vocal about their own insights.

In conclusion, despite the continuously growing restrictions imposed by the *de-facto authorities*, the project moves forward and focuses on an achievement of the target indicators. Yet, it remains to be vital to monitor the unstable political conjuncture of Afghanistan aggravating gender equality agenda and its possible implications on the project.

VI. Cross-Cutting Themes

UNDP country offices in Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan continued efforts on supporting Afghan women through education and training in tertiary institutions in Almaty and Tashkent. The drastic change in the geopolitical context in Afghanistan had adverse and rigorous implications for all the aspects of project implementation. The movement restrictions imposed by the de-facto regime since 15 August 2021 critically impacted the fulfilment of certain objectives and activities of the programme. However, regardless of emerging challenges and obstacles, joint efforts of the EU and UNDP offices in participating countries, as well as national partners, enhanced the responsiveness to the crisis.

Human rights are also another valid aspect of the project. As restrictions being imposed by de-facto authorities, including ban women from pursuing education and work, are directly affecting the main objectives of the project. Therefore, human rights activities will be considered and reflected in the next reporting period.

In addition, there is another area of supporting Afghan women that in turn unfolds a new room for cross-cutting cooperation. The EU is implementing the SME support programme in Afghanistan. The initiative aims to support women by providing job opportunities in SMEs. In this regard, graduated project beneficiaries go through an eight-month paid internship followed by a provision of financial grants for setting up a small enterprise. The SME project team is ready to hold a meeting with each graduate to understand the academic qualifications, skills, and areas of interest.

In conclusion, the importance of the portfolio approach is underlined, and the project adheres to such an approach and will search for various opportunities to cooperate with other initiatives, including those implemented in Afghanistan.

VII. Lessons Learned

The critical situation in Afghanistan remains to be a continuous matter of concern. Over the reporting period, several students have reached both the university and UNDP project team with regards to having consultations with the qualified personnel. As an example, KBTU was capable to fulfil the need of a VET programme student who has been visiting licensed stress counsellor. For the certain period, the project participant has been receiving medical treatment and therapy sessions. Mental health support is the common occasional concern for a few students. It is recommended to consider provision of such professional psychological support of necessity. In addition, the continued geo-political turbulences in Afghanistan resulted in a slight deviation from the initial course of action. While one group of Afghan graduates returned to Afghanistan, another group of students decided to continue their educational and career path in Kazakhstan and overseas to strengthen their professional capacities prior returning to their home country.

VIII. Conclusions and Way Forward

The lessons learned and experience distilled from the past three years of project implementation illustrate the critical importance of timely set mitigation measures. The rapidly changing geopolitical situation in Afghanistan requires UNDP to respond quickly to changing conditions and adjust its implementation strategy.

New severe restrictions were introduced by the *de-facto authorities* of Afghanistan in December 2022. The restrictions relate to the rights of Afghan women and girls, specifically their access to higher education and the ban on work in humanitarian NGOs. An assessment of the possible implications of such developments on project activities/implementation will be carried out in 2023.

Given the presence of project beneficiaries in the host countries, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, there are no potential threats to achieving the 2023 target indicators. Due attention will be paid to students' academic performance and well-being. A new group of graduates is expected to complete the program in Tashkent, while Kazakhstan-based Bachelor students are expected to continue their academic journey. The three newly arrived TVET students will accomplish the course in December 2023.

IX. Financial Status

Activity	Approved budget, total	Expenses accrued	1st year expenses (2019)	2nd year expenses (2020)	3rd year expenses (2021)	4th year expenses (2022)	Total expenses (2019-2022)
Activity 1	1,016,870	72105 - Svc Co-Construction & Engineer	112,588	-	-971	8,508	120,126
		72160 - Svc Co-Education & Health Serv	161,218	349,833	192,892	74,688	778,631
		total Activity 1					898,757
Activity 2	444,576	75705 - Learning costs	1,663	356	-	102,892	104,911
		72145 - Svc Co-Training and Educ Serv	-	8 947	87,128	85,129	181,204
		total Activity 2					286,116
Activity 4	342,523	72125 - Svc Co-Studies & Research Serv	-	-	-	3,669	3,669
		61105 - Salaries - NP Staff	122	-	-	-	122
		61205 - Salaries - GS Staff	2,621	-	-	-	2,621
		62105 - Dependency Allowance-NP Staff	1	-	-	-	1
		62110 - Contrib Joint Staff Pension-NP	25	-	-	-	25
		62115 - Contrib to Med,SocIns-NP Staff	9	-	-	-	9
		62140 - Annual Leave Expense - NO	11	-	-	-	11
		62205 - Dependency Allow - GS Staff	1	-	-	-	1
		62210 - Contrib to Jt Staff Pens Fd-GS	12	-	-	-	12
		62215 - Contrib. to Medical, social In	4	-	-	-	4
		62220 - Language Allowance - GS Staff	2	-	-	-	2
		62240 - Annual Leave Expense - GS	7	-	-	-	7
		63360 - Medical Exams(incl Pre-empl)	-	-	-	-	-
		63530 - Contribution to EOS Benefits	7	-	-	-	7
		63535 - Contribution to Security	8	-	-	-	8
		63540 - Contribution to Training	1	-	-	-	1
		63545 - Contribution to ICT	3	-	-	-	3
		63550 - Contributions to MAIP	0	-	-	-	0
		63555 - Contribution to UN JFA	5	-	-	-	5
		63560 - Contributions to Appendix D	0	-	-	-	0
		64110 - Separations - NP Staff	2	-	-	-	2
		64210 - Separatations - GS Staff	1	-	-	-	1
		65115 - Contributions to ASHI Reserve	18	-	-	-	18
65135 - Payroll Mgt Cost Recovery ATLA	1	-	-	-	1		
66105 - Overtime & Night Differential	5	-	-	-	5		

71405 - Service Contracts-Individuals	10,258	48,394	56,173	-	114,825
71410 - MAIP Premium SC	5	21	24	-	50
71415 - Contribution to Security SC	380	1,695	1,593	891	4,559
71605 - Travel Tickets-International	1,582	432	179	1,290	3,483
71615 - Daily Subsistence Allow-Intl	3,740	812	524	2,084	7,159
71635 - Travel - Other	6,846	1,606	104	716	9,271
72505 - Stationery & other Office Supp	39	3,893	-	4	3,935
72805 - Acquis of Computer Hardware	16	-	-	-	16
72810 - Acquis of Computer Software	171	-	-	-	171
72815 - Inform Technology Supplies	7	-	-	-	7
73125 - Common Services-Premises	2,304	3,378	4,207	782	10,671
73505 - Reimb to UNDP for Supp Svcs	69	415	-	-	484
74205 - Audio Visual Productions	3,837	1,281	2,124	-	7,242
74210 - Printing and Publications	328	26	487	-	841
74510 - Bank Charges	14	131	376	1,964	2,484
75105 - Facilities & Admin - Implement	21,592	30,739	26,463	23,545	102,338
76120 - Unrealized Loss	9,686	21,220	6,288	37,804	74,998
76125 - Realized Loss	0	2,331	29	839	3,199
76130 - Unrealized Gain	-2,973	-24,852	-6,158	-35,341	-69,324
76135 - Realized Gain	-21	-	-945	-1,419	-2,385
77250 - Reimb for Med Costs (GS)-TA	100	-	-	-	100
77630 - Dep Exp Owned - ITC	63	-	-	-	63
64397 - Services to projects -CO staff	-	11,647	8,266	10,329	30,242
72135 - Svc Co-Communications Service	-	192	8,824	6,417	15,433
72165 - Svc Co-Social Svcs, Social Sci	-	4,275	3,250	-	7,525
72330 - Medical Products	-	695	-	-	695
72405 - Acquisition of Communic Equip	-	1,456	9,032	-	10,489
72430 - Postage and Pouch	-	7	15	26	48
72445 - Common Services-Com-s	-	677	-	-	677
74125 - Investment Management Fees	-	-4,255	-	-	-4,255
74215 - Promotional Materials and Dist	-	2,198	-	-	2,198
74325 - Contrib.To CO Common Security	-	1,012	2,793	1,933	5,738
72435 - E-mail-Subscription	-	-	994	324	1,318
72130 - Svc Co-Transportation Services	-	-	24	-	24
71205 - Intl Consultants-Sht Term-Tech	-	-	-	233	233
71211 - Intl Consult Security Charge	-	-	-	7	7
71470 - Natl Personnel Svcs Agreement	-	-	-	34,448	34,448

		72415 - Courier Charges	-	-	-	10	10
		74596 - Services to projects -GOE	-	-	-	13	13
		total Activity 4					385,565
Grand total	1,803,969		336,379	468,561	403,715	361,782	1,570,437

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X. Annexes

1. Annual Work Plan 2022
2. Communication and Visibility report