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UNDP, UNFPA and FAO Joint Programme “Unleashing young people’s and vulnerable citizens’ creativity and innovation by strengthening their adaptive capacity to address the economic and food insecurities in the exposed communities of the Aral Sea region”

ANNUAL PROGRAMME NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT



Reporting period:
1 January – 31 December 2022

Funded by the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund
for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan

Contributors:



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UN Multi-Partner Human
Security Trust Fund
for the Aral Sea Region
in Uzbekistan

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Programme Title & Project Number

Programme Title: UNDP, UNFPA and FAO Joint Programme “Unleashing young people’s and vulnerable citizens’ creativity and innovation by strengthening their adaptive capacity to address the economic and food insecurities in the exposed communities of the Aral Sea region”

Programme Number: 00128324

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Participating Organization(s)

Organizations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme:

- UNDP
- UNFPA
- FAO



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MPTF /JP Contribution by Agency:

- UNDP - \$1,740,000
- UNFPA - \$180,000
- FAO- \$180,000

Agency Contribution

- by Agency (if applicable)

Government Contribution (if applicable)

Other Contributions (donors) (if applicable)

TOTAL: \$2,100,000



Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval

Assessment/Review - if applicable please attach

Yes No Date: dd.mm.yyyy

Mid-Term Evaluation Report – if applicable please attach

Yes No Date: dd.mm.yyyy



Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results

Country/Region:

Uzbekistan, the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Bozatau, Kungrad, Muynak districts

Priority area/strategic results:

- **UNDAF Outcome 1:** equitable and sustainable economic growth through productive employment, improvement of environment for business, entrepreneurship and innovations expanded for all;
- **UNDAF Outcome 2:** By 2020 vulnerable groups benefit more from an inclusive, financially sustainable and efficient social protection system;
- **UNDAF Outcome 6:** rural population benefits from sustainable management of natural resources and resilience to disasters and climate change.



Implementing Partners

The Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction of the Republic of Uzbekistan

- The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan
- Ministry for Support of Mahalla and Family of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- The International Innovation Centre for the Aral Sea Basin under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- The Ministry of Agriculture in Karakalpakstan
- The Ministry of Housing and Communal Services in Karakalpakstan
- The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan
- Business Women's Association
- Youth Agency



Programme Duration

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Report Submitted By

- **Name:** Ms. Matilda Dimovska
- **Title:** UNDP Resident Representative in Uzbekistan
- **Participating Organization (Lead):** UNDP
- **Email address:** matilda.dimovska@undp.org

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AFD	French Development Agency (Agence Francaise De Developpment)
BWA	Karakalpakstan Branch, Business Women’s Association of Uzbekistan ‘Tadbirkor Ayol’
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IICAS	The International Innovation Centre for the Aral Sea Basin under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan
CDP	Community Development Plan
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
EIB	European Investment Bank
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FS	Feasibility Study
GoU	Government of Uzbekistan
JP	Joint Programme
MIIT	Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade of Uzbekistan
MoEDPR	Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MPHSTF	UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan
PB	Project Board
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VCC	Village Council of Citizens
WP	Work Plan

The UNDP, UNFPA and FAO Joint Programme (JP) “Unleashing young people’s and vulnerable citizens’ creativity and innovation by strengthening their adaptive capacity to address the economic and food insecurities in the exposed communities of the Aral Sea region” addresses the needs of the youth and rural vulnerable groups considering the new reality, reflected in closure of normal life and businesses, through promoting digitalization, focusing on skill building and the jobs of the future, where possible as well as promoting innovative agriculture practices. During the reporting period, (1 January – 31 December/2022), the JP accomplished the following results:

- **3** vocational training centers were established, equipped and are currently operational where 489 unemployed youth, women and migrants of Bozatau, Kungrad and Muynak districts had the opportunity to increase professional skills and employability on “Cooking”, “Beauty Salon” “Sewing” and “Information technology”;
- **1** startup platform was established, fully designed, renovated and fully equipped. Youth now have access to the innovation platform/ environment for development of new business ideas and startups at the Youth Center for the youth of Karakalpakstan.
- **30** unemployed young people from the “youth notebook” of the three pilot districts improved their employability skills as an electrician with a permit to work on electrical installations up to 1000V.;
- **72** young people increased their capacities and skills on Start-up project development, 6 winner- teams of the start-up contest received financial support where the 14 engaged young people became able to earn income; 10 start-up beginners from Karakalpakstan refined ideas through exchange of experience and information with leading experts in Tashkent; 255 rural women from the three districts became empowered through obtained knowledge/skills on business plan development, entrepreneurial and social skills, aspects of gender equality, family planning, and budget management through series of trainings;
- **9** women improved family income through realization of business projects supported by the JP.
- Evidence-based research on environmental protection of the Aral Sea region on fostering innovative solutions to rehabilitate and upgrade the existing irrigation system and agricultural land restoration is in process. The Feasibility Study is being conducted by AFD with support of the JP and results are expected by April 2023;
- **38** young people improved their food security through engaging in innovative agricultural activities in the three targets districts;
- Young farmers, dehkans, academics, and students increased their capacity on the innovative water saving technology “Buried diffuser” which was tested jointly with IICAS in demonstration plots.;
- **35** (additional to the six in 2021) vulnerable households from the ‘iron book’ increased their income in crop production, horticulture;

- **572** women and youth and **78** extension specialists improved income generation opportunities through the conducted thematic trainings in horticulture, livestock development, conservation agriculture, fishery and resource-saving technologies;
- **4** rural households improved income and food security through the establishment of 3 fruit tree nursery and 1 fishery pond in the pilot districts.
- **200** rural residents (52% youth) from 6 communities of the pilot districts strengthened social cohesion through engagement in community planning, decision-making and community development plans (CDP) in 2022;
- **6** CDPs on addressing priority needs were developed using the UNDP methodology on Participatory Rural Appraisal;
- **4,465** rural people (50% women) in VCC "Kazakhdarya" of Muynak district now have access to an improved healthcare facility through the conducted renovation work;
- **8,430** rural youth (49% girls) benefitted from free access to internet through established 15 Free Wi-Fi zones in Bozatau, Kungrad and Muynak districts;
- **15,822** rural people potentially have access to digitalized public services through the established 3 Infokiosks;
- **21,839** rural residents of Bozatau potentially have access to digitalized medical services through the established Electronic polyclinic platform;
- **30** young rural specialists improved their skills/knowledge on ICT and technical digitalization of remote communities;
- **253** school children in target districts had their awareness raised on WASH;
- **342** school students and teachers in Muynak became empowered through use of advanced digital technology in public school #17.

Overall during the reporting period, the project successfully implemented the planned activities and managed to achieve all targets set for 2022. This Joint Programme is funded by the MPHSTF for the Aral Sea region, which is generously supported by the Governments of Uzbekistan, Norway, Finland, the Republic of Korea, the European Union and Alwaleed Philanthropies and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The ultimate goal of the UNDP, UNFPA and FAO Joint Programme is to address social, health, economic and food insecurities in the most vulnerable communities of the Aral Sea region by increasing efficiency and innovations in agriculture, promoting smart and digitalized communities with favourable infrastructures, and facilitating active labour market initiatives. The Programme enhances community development, empowerment of youth aged 14 to 30, women, and vulnerable groups of people such as disabled, women-headed families, labor migrants, unemployed youth, etc. Around 183,200 people have benefitted from the programme activities and results in target districts of the Programme.

The Programme's goal is in line with the government policy that highlights addressing the negative consequences of the Aral Sea environmental disaster as a priority issue. The project seeks to improve the wellbeing of communities affected by the Aral Sea crisis through the following objectives, which fully align with the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund (MPHSTF) Programmatic Framework and Results Matrix as they contribute to addressing the multiple insecurities of people living in one of the most vulnerable districts of Karakalpakstan. The JP has three outcomes:

Outcome 1. Reduce the vulnerabilities of the unemployed, unskilled youth and women and returning migrants through the empowerment and promotion of essential entrepreneurial skills, and youth-led innovations in the region;

Outcome 2. Create an enabling environment for income generation for rural communities (with focus on youth and women) through promoting innovative agriculture practices and piloting new agriculture initiatives,

Outcome 3. Enable the development of smart communities through digitalization, better access to social infrastructure and community engagement with a focus on youth, adolescent and women.

The JP results contribute to the attainment of UNDAF Outcome 1 (equitable and sustainable economic growth), Outcome 2 (vulnerable groups benefit more from inclusive, financially sustainable and efficient social protection system) and Outcome 6 (rural population from sustainable management of natural resources

and resilience to disasters and climate change), while they also mirror the MPHSTF Results Matrix Outcomes.

The first objective has a direct contribution to Outcome 2 of the MPHSTF Results Matrix Outcome (increasing employment and income generation opportunities for local communities), particularly reducing the vulnerabilities of the unemployed, unskilled youth and women, and returning migrants through the empowerment and promotion of essential entrepreneurial skills, and youth-led innovations in the region for over 370 direct beneficiaries in total. The second objective contributes to the MPHSTF results matrix Outcome 1 (Reducing the stress on local communities due to the deteriorating environmental situation), and Outcome 5 (Improving the living conditions of local populations, with particular focus on vulnerable groups such as women, children and youth) namely promoting innovative agriculture practices and piloting new agriculture initiatives engaging 727 direct beneficiaries.

The project's goal and objectives are fully aligned with the following policies and strategies of the Government of Uzbekistan for addressing the Aral Sea crisis:

- The State Programme on Development of the Aral Sea Region for 2017-2021¹, which focuses on improving the environmental and socio-economic situation, the living conditions of the population, and the effective implementation of investment projects to mitigate the environmental disaster in the Aral Sea region;
- The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan² on 'Measures for integrated socio-economic development of the Republic of Karakalpakstan in 2020-2023'. This resolution focuses on the holistic development of the region through strategies including the improvement of water supply, education, health infrastructure, sport facilities, attraction of investments into the region, creation of industrial production entities, and support of youth and entrepreneurship.

¹ The State Programme on the Development of the Aral Sea Region for 2017-2021, Presidential Decree # 2731, dated 18 January 2017

² Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, # 4889, dated 11 November 2020

I) NARRATIVE REPORTING ON RESULTS

The JP results achieved for the period 1 January to 31 December 2022 are presented in this report. The JP geographically focuses on the three pilot districts of Bozatau, Kungrad, Muynak in Karakalpakstan, the most affected areas of the ecological crisis districts in the Aral Sea region¹. The Joint Programme addresses the needs of the youth and rural vulnerable groups considering the new realities through promoting digitalization, focusing on skill building and the jobs of the future where possible, as well as promoting innovative agriculture practices.

During this period, the key activities undertaken contributed to the following outcomes of the project:

Outcome 1. Reduce the vulnerabilities of unemployed, unskilled youth and women and returning migrants through the empowerment and promotion of essential entrepreneurial skills, and youth-led innovations in the region (UNDP/UNFPA).

Outcome 2. Create an enabling environment for income generation for rural communities (with focus on youth and women) through promoting innovative agriculture practices and piloting new agriculture initiatives (UNDP/FAO).

Outcome 3. Enable the development of smart communities through digitalization, better access to social infrastructure, and community engagement with a focus on youth, adolescent and women (UNDP).

Under Outcome 1, the following results have been achieved by the Joint Programme:

- 3 vocational training centers were established where 489 youth were able to obtain professional skills and knowledge on sewing, cooking, beauty salon and IT; the premises were allocated by local Khokimiyats and all necessary equipment/items (sewing machine, PCs, beauty salon, plumber model room with tools, cooking items, air conditioners, furniture) delivered to Bozatau, Kungrad and Muynak districts;
- 30 young people from the “youth notebook” learned the theoretical and practical skills of an electrician with the qualification of an Electrician with a permit to work on electrical installations up to 1000V. Trainees obtained

necessary skills, received diplomas, certificates and 20 of them currently provide services in labor market having potential for being self-employed. In total, 170 migrants, women and youth who were trained on the basis of mono vocational training centers became employed in various sectors of economy;

- A startup platform has been created in cooperation with the Agency for Youth Affairs. The necessary equipment was purchased (youth center in Nukus), the premises were renovated and designed in accordance with the latest trends. Over 100 young people of the region benefitted from the platform during 2022.

72 youth (18-30 years old) were trained in the development of start-up initiatives (environment, IT, social, tourism, agriculture and climate change). 17 start-up projects were reviewed, and six start-up projects became contest winners, the necessary equipment was provided to the winning projects: “Bilim Language School”, “Improvement of Water Technology”, “Programmers’ Combine”, “Bookies Audiobooks”, “PET-blocks”, and “Leather products”.

A study tour was organized for 10 startups from Karakalpakstan to Tashkent to empower novice startups to refine their ideas and create favorable conditions for market research. Meeting with the founders of such projects as Book-café, Dekos, Deli, and platforms for innovative ideas such as Astrum IT Academy and IT Park.

18 female leaders selected on a competitive basis from Muynak, Bozatau and Kungrad districts from among vulnerable groups of the population were trained to become the facilitators to promote gender equality in their communities, strengthening their skills in teamwork, social skills, family planning, family budgeting, entrepreneurial skills and business plan development. In 2022, the 18 community leaders further trained 255 women in their communities (92 in Kungrad district, 82 in Muynak and 81 in Bozatau districts) and transferred the skills and knowledge they have acquired to help them create new entrepreneurship and income-generating family or individual business opportunities.

¹ UNDP, UNFPA and FAO Project document

Rural women from vulnerable groups obtained knowledge/skills on business development to lead home-based, family and self-employment initiatives and have additional income opportunities in the three districts.

A contest among women-led business initiatives was organized and 9 women-led business projects became winners of the contest in the spheres of cooking, beauty salon, sewing, etc. and were financed by the programme, which created 18 jobs among women and youth.

Under **Outcome 2**, the following results have been achieved:

- 572 rural youth improved their knowledge and skills in adopting efficient agricultural practices including horticulture [105], livestock development [165], fishery [105] and conservation agriculture practices [110], as well as water saving technology [87]. In addition, the capacity of local extension specialists [78] were increased through organization of a total of 25 thematic trainings. The obtained innovative knowledge will expand an opportunity to improve food security of the rural population in the three districts. 3 fruit tree nurseries (Buzatau, Muynak and Kungrad) and 1 fishery pond (Buzatau) were established in the pilot districts.
- 38 rural youth in the three target districts have been engaged in agricultural activities, thanks to technical assistance provided to the three newly established cooperatives: 1 for growing drought-resistant crops (Muynak), 1 vineyard (Kungrad) and 1 vermicompost production (Bozatau). Specifically, the JP delivered equipment such as a Sprayer, Motor pump, Motoblock, Trimmer, Generator, Tarpulin, shovels, sesame seeds, fertilizers, and fences for Muynak; Special greenhouse size 33m² (height 2.6m, width 5.5m, length 6m) for Biohumus production included – 12 sets for Bozatau; Grape seedlings, drip irrigation system, and vine-prop for Kungrad. Through these measures, young members of cooperatives improved agro-practices through practical engagement in agro-work and theoretical knowledge shared by experienced farmers in bean production (470 kg harvest), biohumus production (36 tons), etc. which enabled them to earn

income 1,545,450/month in average and thus improving their income and food security.

- 35 vulnerable households (unemployed youth and women) became self-employed in crop production, horticulture after receiving assistance from JP in farming: 14 - vegetable growing in hotbed, 2 - creation of an orchard on 0.10 hectares; 10- poultry, 7- hydroponics and 2-bee farming. In average 20,000,000 Uzbek soum (1,770 USD) of income were generated annually by households.

Under **Outcome 3**, the following results been achieved:

- 200 rural residents (52% youth) from 6 communities of Bozatau, Kungrad and Muynak districts participated in needs assessment and community development plans (CDP) in 2022; Identified needs such as access to improved healthcare services, digital infrastructure, and capacity building in the field of ICT were included in the CDP and addressed accordingly;
- As a result, 6 CDPs on addressing priority needs (access to improved healthcare services, digital infrastructure, and capacity building in the field of ICT) were developed using the UNDP methodology on Participatory Rural Appraisal by mobilizing the community members including the youth and women, where the needs and priorities of the local population are reflected;
- 4,465 rural people (50% women) in VCC “Kazakhdarya” of Muynak district have access to improved healthcare facility through the conducted renovation work;
- 8,430 rural youth (49% girls) have improved access to internet through the established 15 Wi-Fi zones in Buzatau, Kungrad and Muynak districts;
- 15,822 rural people potentially have access to digitalized public services through the established 3 Infokiosks;
- 21,839 rural residents of Buzatau potentially have access to digitalized medical services through the established Electronic polyclinic platform;
- 30 young rural specialists improved their skills/knowledge on ICT and technical digitalization of remote communities.

Outputs:



Outputs 1.1 Mono-vocational training centers are capacitated and have the tools to provide professional trainings to unemployed youth, women and migrants on the jobs demanded in the local market (UNDP).

In 2022, meetings and consultations continued with the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations of Karakalpakstan and district Khokimiyats on the youth employment situation in the Aral Sea region and on priority jobs required in the local job market. Mono-vocational training center premises in three target districts were identified, renovated and fully equipped with

items/equipment in five professional spheres which can create an employment opportunity for youth in rural areas such as «Cooking», «Plumbing», «Beauty Salon», «Sewing» & «Information Technology». On the basis of the Mono-vocational centers, 489 young people were trained which was organized by the rural employment agency and they were provided with employment in three districts.

[30] young people from the “youth notebook” learned the theoretical and practical skills of an electrician and received the qualification of an Electrician with a permit to work on electrical installations up to 1000V.



Photos 1, 2, 3. Youth and women trainings in five professional spheres on the basis of established three mono-vocational training centers



Photos 4, 5: Practical training on Electrician.

Photo 6: Diploma received by graduates of the training on Electrician



Output 1.2. Enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship development created through establishing new businesses and start-up initiatives using innovative and impact-based technologies and solutions (UNDP).

In cooperation with partners such as the Youth Agency, Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, and Ministry of Innovation

of Karakalpakstan, the Programme established the Innovation Start-up Center/platform in Nukus to nurture the next generation of start-uppers through mentorship and guidance, ICT application development, project development, etc. The Youth Agency of Karakalpakstan allocated two rooms for the Start-up platform within the Youth Agency premises in Nukus. The Programme delivered the necessary equipment and items for



Photos 7, 8, 9: Start-up platform in Nukus

theStart-up platform (laboratory and training room). The start-up platform became fully operational in summer 2022. Photos of Start-up platform are presented below.

An assessment of the start-up projects among youth was held. Based on results of assessment, [72] young beneficiaries (aged 18-30) from the pilot districts & Nukus city were trained and mentored on start-up project development, managing innovative businesses on environment, ICT, social sphere, tourism, agriculture, and climate change. A contest for the best Start-up projects was organized and the 6 winning teams of of the start-up contest received financial support for the realization of their projects: language school “Bilim”, “Improvement of water technology”, “Combine of programmers”, “Bookies audiobooks”, “PET paving stones”, “Leather products”. Relevant equipment/items were also procured. In order to empower start-up beginners, a study tour was organized for 10 start-upers from Karakalpakstan to Tashkent to refine their ideas and create favorable conditions for market research. Meeting and discussions with the founders of such projects as Book-café, Dekos, Deli, and platforms for innovative ideas such as Astrum IT Academy and IT Park were organized.



Output 1.3. Home based, family and individual entrepreneurship initiatives supported to provide additional income opportunities to the most vulnerable. (UNDP and UNFPA)

UNFPA in cooperation with the Ministry of Makhalla and Family Support of Karakalpakstan developed training tool such as a special motivational planner for beginner-entrepreneurs in the local language and jointly with local khokimiyats organized series of trainings for selected [18] local facilitators/leaders to promote and expand economic rights of women in pilot districts. Those leaders further trained [255] women from Bozatau (81), Kungrad (92) and Muynak (82) on improved social skills, increased capacities on family planning, reproductive health, gender equality, business development, family budgeting, business idea evaluation and implementation scheme, marketing and time management methods. Special telegram groups were created between three team members to discuss ideas, progress, problems and prepare for the Business Ideas Fair.

The second fair-competition was organized in Nukus, where 30 innovative business plans were developed by the trained women and presented for the Review Committee’s attention. Based



Photos 10, 11: Rural women of Bozatau, Kungrad and Muynak in training.

Photo 12: Business plan is being presented in fair-competition.

on the evaluation of the selection committee, 9 projects (Bozatau – 4; Kungrad – 2; Muynak – 3) were proposed for further financing. The necessary equipment and items were delivered to beneficiaries and the business initiatives are fully operational.

All these measures are instrumental in empowering women in rural communities and generating additional monthly income of 1,200,000 – 2,500,000 soum.



Output 2.1 Produce evidence-based research on environmental protection of Aral Sea region fostering innovative solutions to rehabilitate and upgrade the existing irrigation system and agricultural land restoration.

UNDP has conducted a joint meeting with EIB and AFD in December 2021 and August 2022 and is also in regular contact with MIIT. The Programme recruited two national experts-researchers on innovative use of land for afforestation who provided their assistance/ inputs to Feasibility Study being conducted by AFD. According to AFD, the results of the feasibility study will be available by April 2023. Current activity was supposed to be completed in first half of 2022, however due to the impacts of

COVID-19 on the overall work flow, EIB and AFD launched the feasibility study in autumn 2022.



Output 2.2 Ensure food security for youth and rural population by transforming innovative knowledge and skills in adopting efficient agriculture practices (FAO).

Study and monitoring for mapping the target audience institutional and individual capacity gaps in horticulture, crop diversification, fishery and livestock development were conducted in the target districts.

In cooperation with local Khokmiyats of the pilot districts, ICBA, the Research Institute of Fisheries, and the Association of Women in Agricultural Sector, innovative knowledge and skills were transferred to rural youth and local farmers in adopting efficient agriculture practices namely [105] rural people improved knowledge and skills in innovative methods of horticulture, [165] on livestock development, [110] people on conservation of agriculture practices, [105] rural inhabitants improved skills and knowledge on fishery, [87] on water saving technology and [78] on increasing the capacity of local extension specialists through organization of total 25 thematic trainings. These measures contribute



Photos 13, 14, 15: Beneficiaries of pilot districts are obtaining knowledge and skills in efficient agriculture practices



Photos 16, 17, 18: Beneficiaries of fruit tree nurseries and fishery ponds

to increasing the efficiency and productivity of agro-practices as well as improving income and food securities of beneficiaries. For instance, beneficiary Sadiq Dyusenbaev has established fishery pond in Bozatau and earned 18.8 million soums from fish sales in 2022.

Additionally, technical support to the households in establishing nurseries and fishery ponds through procurement of the necessary equipment/machinery has been provided. So, in total three fruit tree nurseries were established in Ali-Aul VCC of Muynak district, Adebit VCC of Kungrad district and Buzatau TCC of Buzatau district. Moreover, 1 fishpond was established in Aspantay oul of Buzatau region.

 **Output 2.3** Better job opportunities for rural youth by engaging them in the agriculture sector (UNDP).

The Programme identified needs of rural youth who wished to be engaged in agricultural work and considered possibilities to involve youth into youth cooperatives, small farm enterprises as an employment scheme for rural youth. As result, the Joint Programme provided technical support to the three newly established youth cooperatives: 1 for growing drought-

resistant crops (Muynak), 1 vineyard (Kungrad) and 1 vermicompost production (Bozatau). Specifically, the JP delivered equipment such as Sprayer, Motor pump, Motoblock, Trimmer, Generator, Tarpulin, shovels, sesame seeds, fertilizers, fences for Muynak; Special greenhouse size 33m² (height 2.6m, width 5.5m, length 6m) for Biohumus production included – 12 sets for Bozatau; Grape seedlings, drip irrigation system, vine-prop for Kungrad. Through these initiatives, [38] rural young people in the three targets districts have been engaging in agricultural work, increasing their skills and improving their income.

Technical support to the International Innovation Center for Aral Sea Basin under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan in establishing a training facility on conservation agriculture practices was completed. Demonstration plots have been created on innovative resource-saving methods of agriculture, particularly the irrigation technology “Buried diffuser”. Tests in demonstration plots were successfully conducted between March to September 2022. Two irrigation technologies, Buried Diffuser and Drip Irrigation, were tested. Preliminary results have shown that the Buried Diffuser



Photos 19, 20: Young people engaged in agriculture in youth cooperatives in Kungrad and Bozatau



Photos 21, 22: Demo plot on testing “Buried Diffuser” water saving technology in IICAS

technology can save up to 20% of water resources and up to 41% of more harvest than Drip Irrigation. Findings and results were shared among youth, farmers, dehkans, and academics in the seminar organized in September 2022 and published booklet with findings were disseminated to beneficiaries.



Output 2.4 Support vulnerable groups (with focus on youth and women) in self-employment through promoting innovative technologies in crop production, horticulture and aquaculture (UNDP).

In cooperation with local Khokimiyats of the pilot districts, [35] vulnerable households identified from the “Iron book” who wanted to engage in agricultural activities and household plots. All 35 vulnerable households received assistance in farming: 14-vegetable cultivation in hotbed, 2-creation of an orchard in 0.10 hectares; 10- poultry farming; 7- hydroponics and 2-bee farming. The Programme support contributes to promoting food security among family members of selected households. Beneficiaries obtained valuable skills and knowledge on efficient horticulture and agro-practices through trainings organized by FAO.



Photos 23, 24, 25: Beneficiaries from vulnerable groups engaged in agro-practices at household plots in target districts



Output 3.1 Empowered vulnerable remote communities through use of advanced digital technology.

A needs assessment on digitalization was conducted among schools in rural areas in 2020, 2021. The results of the needs assessment have shown the need for modern ICT equipment, therefore the Joint Programme provided technical support to 3 schools in pilot districts in 2021. In order to empower

vulnerable communities through the provision of access to advanced digital technology in 2022, school # 17 in Muynak was provided with modern ICT (25 PCs, interactive board interactive projector, projector, screen for projector, 2 multifunction printers) which enabled [342] school children and teachers to have better access to the internet and digital education (1021 school children and teachers improved access to internet in 2021).



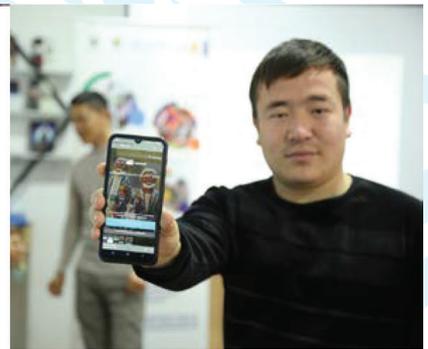
Photos 26, 27: Schoolchildren of # 17 school in Ali aul, Muynak have access to internet and digital education



Output 3.2 Strengthened social cohesion through youth engagement in community planning, decision-making and rehabilitation processes.

The assessment of priority needs of 6 communities of Muynak, Kungrad & Bozatau districts with the participation of [200] residents was carried out. The results of the assessments have shown the need for access to improved health services, digital infrastructure and capacity building in the field of ICT and, accordingly, in these areas [6] Community development plans were developed, initiative groups with youth participation were created.

As a result [4,465] rural people (50% women) in VCC “Kazakhdarya” of Muynak district have access to improved healthcare facility through the conducted renovation work; [8,430] rural youth (49% girls) have access to internet through the established 15 Wi-Fi zones in Bozatau, Kungrad and Muynak districts; [15,822] rural people have access to digitalized public services through the established 3 Infokiosks; [21,839] rural residents of Bozatau have access to digitalized medical services through the established Electronic polyclinic platform. [30] young rural specialists improved their skills/knowledge on ICT and technical digitalization of remote communities.



Photos 28, 29, 30: Free Wi-Fi zones (15 communities) in Bozatau, Kungrad and Muynak districts



Photos 31, 32: Infokiosks in pilot districts, rural people have access to digitalized public services



Photos 33, 34, 35: Electronic polyclinic platform, rural residents have access to digitalized medical services in Bozatau district



Output 3.3 Strengthened community capacities and facilities to respond to the pandemic and ensure longer-term recovery in cooperation with UNICEF led Joint Programme.

A rural healthcare facility was renovated in the remote village “Kazakhadarya” of Muynak, a

heating system was installed, access to hot water assured and WASH standards such as access and water quantity, water quality, water facilities, appropriate and adequate toilet facilities, collection and disposal, drainage work were achieved. [4,465] village residents (50% women) have access to improved an healthcare facility and services.



Photos 36, 37, 38: Rural healthcare facility in Kazakhadarya VCC of Muynak. People have access to improved healthcare services

Delays in implementation

The Programme has not experienced any delay of activities in 2022, except some delay in Output 2.1.(Produce evidence-based research on environmental protection of Aral Sea region fostering innovative solutions to rehabilitate and upgrade the existing irrigation system

and agricultural land restoration). The delay is caused mainly by situation related to COVID-19 and relevant organizations who was supposed to be engaged in feasibility study started the work in Autumn 2022.

Challenges:

- By the decree of the President, the Presidential school was moved to the building of the Kungrad district mono-centre. In this regard, the issue of replacing of the vocational monocenter to another building is considered. The preparation process is on, all equipment and items will be set in another

premise within a month. Therefore Output 1.1 will be fully achieved by end of March 2023;

- Prices of some of the equipment and items increased.

Mitigation and adaptation measures taken by the Programme

The Programme team conducted negotiations with Kungrad khokimiyat to allocate another premise for vocational mono-center in the district. As result relevant premise at the

industrial college of Kungrad allocated was.

- All equipment and items will be shipped to the newly allocated premise by the end of March 2023 (Output 1.1).

Lessons learned:

- Frequent staff rotation in the Khokimiyats in target districts takes place. Newly appointed Khokimiyat staff are usually unaware of the Joint Programme and they periodically

need to be informed and updated on the Joint Programme objectives and results. The Project team periodically organizes meeting with representatives of the

Khokimiyats, including new appointees, to deliver information on the project and its achievements;

- There are many development plans/projects which are included in state programme and

Best practices:

- The Joint Programme applies an integrated and holistic approach in supporting the youth, migrants, vulnerable women in socio-economic and environmental needs in the three pilot districts. The coordinated joint efforts by UNDP, UNFPA and FAO allow for addressing multiple insecurities of the population and have bigger impact on their lives;
- The Joint Programme implements new approaches in supporting the youth of the region through the creation of vocational mono-centers, where youth can be trained on professional skills and receive certificates on specialties which are not covered by other mono-centers. This measure greatly helps youth to find a job and improve income security.
- The Joint Programme engages community youth in establishing/creating community development plans and management, planning and implementation of projects that are most appropriate from the views of the young generation. The current approach helps to identify specific needs of youth and address them accordingly.

Qualitative assessment:

Overall, the Joint Programme completed all planned activities for 2022. Some results were achieved on time, some activities implemented in advance. The project established sound partnerships with key stakeholders at regional, district and grassroots levels, and local communities have been fully engaged in implementing the activities. Through its interventions at every stage, the project has promoted gender mainstreaming principles. When organizing initiatives, committees or panels, the project has ensured that the voices of the most vulnerable groups of the

announced to be done by the Government in remote areas. However, in reality there are many pending projects. This situation creates some uncertainty for Joint Programme and makes it reconsider site selection.

- The Joint Programme piloted Free Wi-Fi zones in 15 remote rural communities where all rural residents including youth and women have access to the free internet service;
- The JP established an electronic polyclinic in Bozatau district, which is the first e-polyclinic in rural areas, which creates convenience for the rural population in accessing electronic medical services;
- The Joint Programme initiated and tested the innovative irrigation technology "Buried Diffuser" in the Aral Sea region. Test results have shown higher efficiency of the technology compared to Drip Irrigation. Results were disseminated among farmers, dehkans, students and academics.
- The JP supports the community youth and vulnerable women in attaining knowledge and skills in integrating the best innovative technologies in the agriculture sector, including the introduction of water saving technologies, crop diversification, horticulture and hotbeds development that are proven to be successful in the agro sector in worldwide.

population, including those of women, youth and the elderly, were all represented and heard. Through community mobilization and target audience identification for entrepreneurship support and skill-building initiatives, the project engaged women and youth in communities. Despite the fact that the One UN model is a mandatory approach, it is important to note that it was fully promoted through smooth coordination between UNDP and UNFPA and FAO, in terms of joint planning and implementation of activities.

II) INDICATOR-BASED PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

	Achieved Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
Outcome 1. Reduce the vulnerabilities of unemployed, unskilled youth and women and returning migrants through the empowerment and promotion of essential entrepreneurial skills, and youth-led innovations in the region (UNDP, UNFPA)			
Indicator: # of youth (disaggregated by sex) strengthened their skills through access to professional education centers/ points and engaged in entrepreneurship activities Baseline: N/A Planned Target for 2022: 700	1120		Programme training reports/ analytical report
Output 1.1 Mono-vocational training centers are capacitated and have tools to provide professional trainings to unemployed youth, women and migrants on the jobs demanded in the local market.			
Indicator 1.1.1 # of youth equipped with necessary technical skills have prepared Baseline: 37 Planned Target for 2022: 54	90		Programme/ training/ analytical reports
Indicator 1.1.2 # of youth employed (informal/formal) Baseline: 54 Planned Target for 2022: 30	50		National statistics/ analytical reports
Indicator 1.1.3 # of skill building platforms enhanced their professional portfolio Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 2	3		Programme/ MoELP/ analytical reporting
Output 1.2 Enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship development created through establishing new businesses and start-up initiatives using innovative and impact-based technologies and solutions.			
Indicator 1.2.1 # of youth enhanced their skills through mentorship and start-up initiatives Baseline: 50 Planned Target for 2022: 30	72		Programme MoELP/ Youth Agency/ training reporting/ Quarterly/ semiannual progress reports
Indicator 1.2.2 # of youth led innovation club established Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 1	1		
Indicator 1.2.3 # of start-up projects developed Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 1	6		
Indicator 1.2.4 # of knowledge-based jobs created Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 3	14		
Output 1.3 Home based, family and individual entrepreneurship initiatives supported to provide additional income opportunities to the most vulnerable.			
Indicator 1.3.1 # of women enhanced their knowledge on home-based entrepreneurship Baseline: 235 Planned Target for 2022: 240	365	Some of expected participants were affected by COVID-19 and could not participate in planned trainings.	Project reports, pre-post assessment reports of trainings, registration records of established business entities
Indicator 1.3.2 # of family-based and individual entrepreneurship established Baseline: 27 Planned Target for 2022: 5	19		
Indicator 1.3.3 #of community leaders trained in business facilitation skills Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 12	36		

	Achieved Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
Outcome 2. Create an enabling environment for income generation for rural communities (with focus to youth and women) through promoting innovative agriculture practices and piloting new agriculture initiatives (FAO, UNDP)			Programme training reports/ analytical report
Indicator: # of households have increased their income generation opportunities through adaptation of innovative technologies agricultural practices Baseline: N/A Planned Target for 2022: 50	183		
Output 2.1 Produce evidence-based research on environmental protection of Aral Sea region fostering innovative solutions to rehabilitate and upgrade the existing irrigation system and agricultural land restoration.			TOR and Research Plan Round Table Report Published Research Reports
Indicator 2.1.1 # of research work conducted Baseline: 1 Planned Target for 2022: 1	0	As per prodoc and WP, 3 studies were planned by the programme, in agreement with GoU including MIFT to support preparation of FS for potential Loan programme of EIB. As such, the GoU could not yet confirm the engagement of the programme to FS, and UNDP has prepared formal request to the MIFT confirming whether those studies are still relevant, otherwise the allocated funding will be reallocated to other activities subject for PB approval.	
Indicator 2.1.2 # of round tables organized Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 2	0		
Indicator 2.1.3 # of research reports (summary and full reports) printed Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 150	0		
Output 2.2 Ensure food security for youth and rural population by transforming innovative knowledge and skills in adopting efficient agriculture practices (FAO)			
Indicator 2.2.1 # of capacity building activities delivered Baseline: 55 Planned Target for 2022: 10	25	To achieve better understanding and receive more information of participants, we focused on inviting maximum 25 participants to each training. Therefore, the number of indicators has become more than was planned.	Monitoring visits
Indicator 2.2.2 # of people improved knowledge and skills in horticulture Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 100	105		
Indicator 2.2.3 # of people improved knowledge and skills in aquaculture Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 100	105		Extension Service Center registration documents Progress Annual and Quarterly Progress Reports
Indicator 2.2.4 # of people improved knowledge and skills in conservation agriculture practices Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 100	110		
Indicator 2.2.5 # of people adopted new practices on water saving technologies, hotbed production Baseline: 5904 Planned Target for 2022: 50	87		

	Achieved Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
Indicator 2.2.6 # of extension service centers representatives enhanced their capacity in providing extension services Baseline: 10 Planned Target for 2022: 60	78	During organization of trainings, JP observed that more people than it was planned wish to increase capacities. JP provided access to additional participants to attend trainings. Therefore, total number of trainees increased than planned.	
Indicator 2.2.7 # of fruit tree nursery established Baseline: 3 Planned Target for 2022: 1	3		
Indicator 2.2.8 # of fishery ponds established Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 1	1		
Output 2.3 Better job opportunities for rural youth by engaging them in agriculture sector			
Indicator 2.3.1 # of youth cooperatives established Baseline: 10 (pasture cooperatives) Planned Target for 2022: 1	3		Cooperative registration documents
Indicator 2.3.2 # of youth engaged in agriculture through the employment scheme Baseline: 47,830 Planned Target for 2022: 50	139		Monitoring visits, Progress
Indicator 2.3.3 # of households improved income generation opportunities Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 50	139		Annual and Quarterly Progress Reports
Indicator 2.3.4 # of farm enterprises improved technical capacities Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 2	3		MOUs and transfer acts with beneficiaries
Output 2.4 Support vulnerable groups (with focus to youth and women) in self-employment through promoting innovative technologies in crop production, horticulture and aquaculture			
Indicator 2.4.1 # of women improved capacities in agriculture Baseline: 3182 Planned Target for 2022: 40	89		Training Reports
Indicator 2.4.2 # of women engaged in homestead land production Baseline: 3 Planned Target for 2022: 40	89		Monitoring visits MOUs and transfer acts with beneficiaries
Indicator 2.4.3 # households improved income generation opportunities Baseline: 3 Planned Target for 2022: 10	41		
Outcome 3. Enable the development of smart communities through digitalization, better access to social infrastructure and community engagement with focus on youth (UNDP)			
Indicator 3.1 # of rural internet users have access to digitalization tools Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 400	1,363		Monitoring visits
Indicator 3.2 # of population has increased access social services (drinking water, renovation of health care facilities and electrification) in target communities Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 400	22,321		

	Achieved Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
Output 3.1 Empowered vulnerable remote communities through use of advanced digital technology			Progress Annual and Quarterly Progress Reports Training Reports Visit reports
Indicator 3.1.1 # of public organizations Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 3	19		
Indicator 3.1.2 # of trained specialists Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 18	30		
Indicator 3.1.3 # of schools connected to Internet Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 3	4		
Output 3.2 Strengthened social cohesion through youth engagement in community planning, decision-making and rehabilitation process			Training Reports Training consultant report Number of CDP Transfer acts with beneficiaries
Indicator 3.2.1 # of trained young people Baseline: 860 Planned Target for 2022: 60	90		
Indicator 3.2.2 # of conducted workshops Baseline: 36 Planned Target for 2022: 6	15		
Indicator 3.2.3 # of CDPs Baseline: 36 Planned Target for 2022: 6	15		
Indicator 3.2.4 # of social projects Baseline: 36 Planned Target for 2022: 3	22		
Output 3.3 Strengthened community capacities and facilities to respond to the pandemic and ensure longer-term recovery in cooperation with UNICEF led Joint Programme			Training report Visit reports
Indicator 3.3.1 # of trained school children on WASH Baseline: 0 Planned Target for 2022: 200	253		
Indicator 3.3.2 # of schools provided with drinking water Baseline: 8 Planned Target for 2022: 2	2		

III) SPECIFIC STORIES



“Home based, family and individual entrepreneurship initiative supported to provide additional income generation opportunity”

Urazmetova Sharofat is a woman from Muynak district, who was unemployed and registered in the “Woman`s” book. Before the fire that happened in her house, she used to provide services to the local population by embroidering clothes on her old sewing equipment. Her sewing machine and all items burned in a fire and she lost her source of income for herself and her family members.

Supporting women in rural areas to improve food and income security is one of the priority directions of the UNDP, UNFPA and FAO Joint Programme. Urazmetova Sharofat from Muynak, after increasing knowledge on business development through series of trainings organized by Joint Programme in 2022, submitted her business plan to the Joint Programme. UNDP and UNFPA in line with other 8 women-led business initiatives supported business projects (cosmetology, cooking and sewing) from Bozatau, Kungrad and Muynak, including the business initiative

of Sharofat to create a sewing workshop to provide services to the local population. Today, the initiator of the business project successfully carries out her activities and provide services to the local population. The following equipment and items were procured for Sharofat for realization of her initiative:

- Industrial straight stitch machine;
- Universal industrial overlock;
- Industrial iron with barrel capacity;
- Disc cutting knife.

After enhancing her skills at the household level with the help of equipment provided by the Joint Programme, Sharofat was also offered a job as a trainer of the sewing courses by the “Muynak Testile” LLC company and currently she successfully teaches 10 young women in sewing. Currently, her average monthly income varies between 1,5-2,5 million UZS. The Joint Programme interventions inspired her confidence in the future, thus she finally decided to buy an apartment on loan for her family in the center of Muynak city.



Photos 39, 40: Urazmetova Sharofat works as sewer and sewing trainer in Muynak



“Young initiator from Bozatau increases soil fertility in agriculture, marketize organic fertilizer – vermicompost and improves income level.”

Aybek Zhalgashov, a young initiator from a vulnerable household in Bozatau district, is leading a production cooperative consisting of twelve young people from the neighborhood who produce organic fertilizer – vermicompost – in their backyards.

“The idea of creating such a business came to me in those days when the quality of agricultural products desired to be better. This kind of problem was observed in all the inhabitants of my region, who were also engaged in the cultivation of crops. In the second year of study, an idea came up to solve these problems, given the fact that our family business had ideas for creating this kind of activity,” recalls Aybek.

Every business requires the right technology and equipment. Aybek understood this and

wanted to invest more, however, he did not have enough funds for further development. Having learned about the Joint Programme support for young entrepreneurs, he decided to present his business plan.

“This was a new opportunity for me that I simply could not miss! Previously, we used primitive methods of biohumus production on our plots, but this method has its limitations, the harvest can only be obtained seasonally. In connection with this, 12 youths from the district, including me, opened a new production cooperative LLC “Bio Organic Export”. Our business proposal was approved and furthermore we gained a lot of experience and knowledge with the support of Joint Programme, which organized trainings on water saving technologies, aquaculture, livestock and technology and design for further biohumus production,” says Aybek.

Specialists find many advantages in biohumus production. The presence of humus determines the fertility of the soil (recall



Photos 41-44: Aybek Zhalgashov with other 12 fellows produces organic fertilizer–vermicompost at yards and increases income

that humus is the main organic matter of the soil that contains nutrients). The main role in the process of creating biohumus are worms, which, in turn, process organic matter much faster and more completely than soil microorganisms in the process of composting. Biohumus increases productivity and also has a positive effect on the quality of products, including taste.

According to Aybek, demand for biohumus is high in local markets nowadays. "We started cooperating with wholesale retailers from the capital city Nukus, and with local farmers in Bozatau. Current production capacity of our cooperative is 144 tons per year which is about 216 million soums income/year. However, we plan to double production capacity in the second year so increase profitability of our cooperative".

Aybek is concerned that not all farmers care about the quality of the grown product. "In

most cases, the grown products do not quite meet the standards, in most cases they are not grown on pure ecological fertilizers, which may affect health. It is not the quantity of agricultural production that plays an important role here, but health issues!" - as Aybek says.

"Due to the lack of conditions and resources, there were times when we could not get a good harvest for several years in a row, we had to use a lot of fertilizers and chemicals, which made us think more than once about the correctness of growing agricultural products. The fact that I was a student at an agronomic university helped to apply my knowledge in this direction to my enterprise, and solving this issue has become my main goal" recalls Aybek.

According to our hero, the path he traveled was difficult, but despite this, he continues to do what he loves and believes in his success.



A young specialist with knowledge of ICT in the remote community "Kazakhdarya" of Muynak district helps to increase the level of knowledge of using the products of modern digitalization of local youth and residents of the community.

Today we live in a rapidly developing digital world, therefore we cannot imagine our daily life without digitalization products. The country's economy largely depends on the digital approach, as evidenced by world experience. In order to keep up with the times, it is very important to improve the skills of using digital platforms and computer literacy,

especially for residents of remote areas of vulnerable communities.

This category includes residents of the Kazakhdarya community (Makhalla) who do not have access to public services in their community. Accordingly, they have to cover a rather large distance to the district center in order to gain access to public services, thus they often face problems visiting government institutions due to the remoteness of the area. Today we will take a closer look at the problems of the rural residents of this community, through the eyes of a local resident and ICT specialist Manas Nazarbaev, who is a youth leader



Photos 45-47: Manas Nazarbaev helps rural resident to use Infokiosk and access Free Wi-Fi in Kazakhdarya community premise

in the Kazakhdarya community in Muynak district.

It's no secret that the role of the Internet and digital platforms is an integral part of our lives, without which we cannot perform the necessary manipulations, namely, (even simple actions) paying utility bills, cashing out money, paying and other types of public services. The digital age is spreading to all corners of the world and dictates its trends, offering quick and easy actions that do not require the presence of individuals in government institutions, which greatly simplifies time, effort and means. According to Manas, "Even a simple manipulation with the withdrawal of funds seems difficult for residents. Agree, this is a real problem caused by the lack of proper terminals and digital platforms that could make life easier for the rural residents of the vulnerable regions of the Aral Sea," he added.

Manas was interested in computer technologies from an early age, having learned the huge opportunities in the field of ICT, he set himself the goal of sharing knowledge with the youth of his community, teaching them software platforms that will give them the opportunity to work remotely and make a decent profit.

"From an early age, I have been driven by a passion for knowledge and now, I am aimed at improving the quality of life of my fellow villagers, with the help of my knowledge, teaching all young people how to use computer programs, this will undoubtedly improve their quality of life." - Manas shared his goals.

As Manas recalls, his first impression of the Mahalla building shocked him to say the least, "The state of the building left much to be desired," he admits, in terms of the lack of repairs and proper digital equipment.

"At that moment, I realized that the lack of the Internet and computer equipment could become the main problem on the way to my goal, it seemed that there was no way out of this situation." Manas recalls.

"By coincidence, a miracle happened! The Joint Programme of UNDP, UNFPA and FAO, funded by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund, provided an opportunity to ensure the technical digitalization of remote communities, which included our community. Hearing this news I was incredibly happy and more determined than ever to achieve my goals." - Manas said enthusiastically. What made him even more pleased was the trainings that were held within the framework of the Joint Programme to increase the level of knowledge in the field of digitalization, as Manas told us earlier about his passion for knowledge.

According to Manas, "The missing puzzles were the knowledge gained, which I was able to fill with new knowledge gained."

As part of the Joint Programme, Infokiosk equipment was installed on the basis of the post office with access to more than 370 types of public services, a free Wi-Fi zone with constant access to the Internet was created in the premise of Kazakhdarya community.