



## **ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**

United Nations Development Programme, Kazakhstan

00123512 "Phase 2: Supporting the Economic Empowerment of Afghan Women through Education and Training in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan"

07.02.2023



Reporting Period	01.01.2022 – 31.12.2022	
Donor	European Union	
Country	Kazakhstan	
Project Title	Phase 2: Supporting Economic Empowerment of Afghan Women through Education and Training in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan	
Project ID (Atlas Award ID)	00130011	
Outputs (Atlas Project ID and Description)	00123512, Phase 2: 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	November 2021	
Project End Date	May 2027	
2022 Annual Work Plan Budget	1,031,960 USD	
Total resources required	1,031,960 USD	
Revenue received	Donor/EU funding	774,265 USD
	Total	774,265 USD
Unfunded budget	N/A	
UNDP Project Manager	Name: Askhat Zhumabayev Email: askhat.zhumabayev@undp.org Tel.: +77272582643, 711	

*Table of Content*

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..... 3**

**II. BACKGROUND..... 3**

**III. PROGRESS REVIEW ..... 4**

**IV. PROJECT RISKS AND ISSUES..... 12**

    A. UPDATED PROJECT RISKS AND ACTIONS ..... 12

    B. UPDATED PROJECT ISSUES AND ACTIONS..... 12

**V. GENDER RELATED ACTIVITIES ..... 13**

**VI. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES..... 14**

**VII. LESSONS LEARNED ..... 14**

**VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD ..... 14**

**IX. FINANCIAL STATUS ..... 15**

**X. ANNEX..... 16**

## **I. Executive summary**

2022 reporting year identifies the three activity pillars – finalization of the selection campaign, placement in language preparation courses, and enrolment in academic programs. As one of the most positive results – a successful advertising campaign enabled 105 Afghan women to become a part of the regional women empowerment initiative and start their educational journey.

Hence, as a result, 50 scholarship winners arrived in Kazakhstan for the six-month pre-academic course to acquire intensive language skills at Almaty Management University and be further enrolled in Bachelor's and Master's programs at three top universities in Kazakhstan.

In terms of financial expenditures over the reporting period, 99.7% of the 2022 target amount has been utilized. The cumulative amount spent in 2022 is \$1,029,184 against the planned \$1,031,960.

The report provides a comprehensive overview of key developments in the capacity building of women, shares the major achievements over a one-year period, and outlines certain challenges.

## **II. Background**

The project is aimed at building resilience and promoting the academic, economic, and social empowerment of women in Afghanistan especially vulnerable women living in challenging conditions by enhancing their capabilities, employability, and prospects through education and training in Central Asia.

The Specific Objectives are:

1. Improved higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility system for women in Afghanistan
2. Improved involvement of Afghan women, including a quota of women with disabilities and from remote rural areas, in higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility programmes
3. Enhanced employability of women participating in the higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility programmes

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. The project also contributes to 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 21 and older)	UIS, national/higher education and TVET institutions statistics	0,48%	2021	0,48%	0	0
	Indicator 2. Afghan female population with TVET certificate (% ages 21 and older)	UIS, national/higher education and TVET institutions statistics	0,06%	2021	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	2021	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	2021	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 environment by host universities	Intervention progress reports	Standards for Gender sensitive academic environment by host universities under discussion	2021	Standards for Gender sensitive academic environment by host universities under discussion	-	-
	Indicator 1.4. Status of independent unit mechanism for complaints	Intervention progress reports	Mechanism is fully functional	2021	Modality under discussion	Mechanism is fully functional	-
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	2021	0	105	86
	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%	2021	0	105	86

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%	2021	0%	0%	0%
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%	2021	0	0%	0%
Indicator 2.5. Drop-out rate of Afghan women enrolled in higher education outgoing learning programmes (country, higher education	Higher education institutions statistics	0%	2021	0%	0	0

	institutions, field of studies)						
	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%	2021	0%	0	6%
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 outgoing learning mobility system programme.	Beneficiary survey	0%	2021	0%	0	0
	Indicator 3.2. Percentage of Afghan women graduates in a job position relevant to their field of studies/qualifications	Beneficiary survey; Qualitative /quantitative reports from Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and of the	0%	2021	0%	0	0

	after completing the outgoing learning mobility system programme. (disaggregated by sex)	Ministry of Higher Education					
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	2021	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	2021	7,400,000	0	0
	Indicator 1.2.2 Number of received applications for higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility programmes which include all	Outgoing learning programmes Database of applications received completed with the required documents	0	2021	1,198	0	0

	required documentation (disaggregated by sex)						
Output 2.1. Increased access of the Afghan women to higher education and TVET outgoing learning mobility mechanism in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan	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	2021	50	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	2021	0	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	2021	50	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	2021	0	50	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	2021	0	0	0
	Indicator 3.1.2. # of NGOs staff acquainted with the best international systems of employability with support of the	Interviews	0	2021	0	0	0

	intervention (disaggregated by sex and type of participant)						
Output 3.2. Increased availability of placement opportunities relevant to and compatible with field of studies of the Afghan women participating in outgoing learning mobility programmes	Indicator 3.2.1. Number of Afghan women participating in the outgoing learning mobility programmes benefitting from a placement in a private company during their studies. (disaggregated by sex)	Internship attendance sheet	0	2021	0	0	0

In February 2022, UNDP Kazakhstan and its partnering institution in Almaty, Almaty Management University (AlmaU) made joint efforts to accomplish the Responsible Party Agreement (RPA) and started preparations for the arrival of students. As a result of this cooperation, all 50 project participants arrived in Almaty. In August 2022, participating students successfully graduated from English Language courses, including Cultural Exchange programs and Basic Russian Language courses.

The year 2022 was marked by an important breakthrough – admission to the Bachelor’s and Master’s Academic Programs of Kazakh British Technical University (KBTU), Kazakh National Agrarian Research University (KazNARU), and LLP “International Educational Cooperation” (KazGASA). As a result:

- 25 students have been enrolled in Kazakh-British Technical University (KBTU): 15 students in MA Marketing and 10 students in BA Marketing
- 10 students have been enrolled in Kazakh National Agrarian Research University (KazNARU), BA Agriculture/Agribusiness
- 15 students have been enrolled in the Leading Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture (KazGASA), MA Engineering/Construction

In preparation for another valuable component of the programme, the Summer School training were also supposed to be held in 2022. The purpose of this training was to develop a new set of skills, such as job hunting, networking, leadership, and entrepreneurial skills. Initially, the training was planned to be held during the summer period. However, considering the physical non-presence of all project participants in the host countries, it was decided to postpone the trainings for later period, to January – February 2023:

- Almaty 11-15 January 2023
- Bishkek 17-21 January 2023
- Tashkent 30-3 February 2023

#### **IV. Project Risks and Issues**

It is essential to note that the critical situation in Afghanistan is an unremitting matter of concern and the source of ever-developing constraints for the project participants and the project team. It impacts the travel activities undertaken by students and, therefore, may affect their continuation in the educational process.

##### **a. Updated project issues and actions**

Project Risk 1: Travel from Afghanistan

The unstable political situation in Afghanistan led to the late arrival of participating students.

*Actions taken:* As a result of close cooperation between the UNDP Kazakhstan and the host University, project participants managed to arrive in Almaty in April 2022.

##### **b. Updated project risks and actions**

Project Issue 1: One of the host universities, KazGASA has expelled three project participants due to several reasons, such as nonattendance and travel overseas.

*Actions taken:* It was decided to impose certain rules regarding overseas travel. All students traveling due to family or medical-related reasons should provide university focal points with an explanation letter, possibly including a doctor’s note, proving that the student has severe health

issues, and needs urgent medical assistance. Once the UNDP project team receives confirmation from the host university, the travel prospect might be considered further. Attendance status is constantly being updated with the host universities via email, phone calls, and during project team visits.

## **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 benefits people in need. Since the initiative directly addresses the most pressing issues of gender equality, access to quality education for women and girls in Afghanistan facilitates partnership and cooperation in a wider region, promotes peace, and contributes to poverty eradication.

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 gender equality 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 female students and their family members.

Despite the initial challenges of the newly introduced traveling policy, which allows women to cross the border only when accompanied by Mahrams (men relatives), in 2022, UNDP Kazakhstan and its partnering institution in Almaty, Almaty Management University (AlmaU), made joined efforts to arrange the arrival of all 50 project participants, including traveling through the third countries.

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 education and encouraged them to achieve their career goals, despite of existing gender inequalities in Afghanistan.

Another gender-related activity, the Summer School trainings were also supposed to be held in 2022. The purpose of the trainings was to develop a new set of skills, such as job hunting, networking, leadership, and entrepreneurial skills. 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**

Over the reporting period, one of the host universities, KazGASA has reached the UNDP project team regarding the issue related to the knowledge gap of the students. The university has reported that students lack a basic understanding of essential subjects of the academic programme. In this regard, it was decided to support project participants and provide them with additional courses, such as "Architectural Composition", "Architectural Graphics", "Drawing", and "Painting".

Several students from KazNARU have reached both the UNDP project team and the university, with the option to change one of their teachers due to language problems. As a result, the university attracted a new teacher with a higher language proficiency.

## **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 most project beneficiaries in the host countries there are no potential threats to achieving the 2023 target indicators. The safe arrival of the remaining group of students to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan will be prioritized in the next reporting period.

Due attention will be paid to students' academic performance and well-being. A group of MA and TVET graduates is expected to complete the program in Almaty and Bishkek, while BA students and Uzbekistan-based TVET students are expected to continue their academic journey.

## IX. Financial Status

Activity	Approved budget, total	Expenses accrued	1st year expenses (2021)	2nd year expenses (2022)	Total expenses (2021-2022)
Activity 1	471,968	72145 - Svc Co-Training and Educ Serv	-	575,101	<b>575,101</b>
Activity 2	1,650,384	72160 - Svc Co-Education & Health Serv	-	225,823	<b>225,823</b>
Activity 4	746,253	64397 - Services to projects -CO staff	-	14,284	14,284
		71415 - Contribution to Security SC	-	874	874
		71470 - Natl Personnel Srvcs Agreement	-	33,463	33,463
		71605 - Travel Tickets-International	-	4,645	4,645
		71615 - Daily Subsistence Allow-Intl	-	3,971	3,971
		71635 - Travel - Other	-	2,258	2,258
		72135 - Svc Co-Communications Service	-	17,805	17,805
		72165 - Svc Co-Social Svcs, Social Sci	-	4,275	4,275
		72405 - Acquisition of Communic Equip	-	15,829	15,829
		72410 - Acquisition of Audio Visual Eq	-	2,209	2,209
		72435 - E-mail-Subscription	-	987	987
		73125 - Common Services-Premises	4,207	5,000	9,207
		74220 - Translation Costs	-	390	390
		74325 - Contrib.To CO Common Security	2,793	2,000	4,793
		74510 - Bank Charges	-	120	120
		74596 - Services to projects -GOE	-	18	18
		75105 - Facilities & Admin - Implement	490	65,417	65,907
		75705 - Learning costs	-	25,474	25,474
		76120 - Unrealized Loss	-	36,541	36,541
		76125 - Realized Loss	-	2,522	2,522
		76130 - Unrealized Gain	-	-4,565	-4,565
		76135 - Realized Gain	-	-5,261	-5,261
		Total activity 4			<b>235,750</b>
Grand total	2,868,605		7,490	1,029,184	<b>1,036,674</b>

**Askhat Zhumabayev**  
Project Manager, UNDP Kazakhstan

DocuSigned by:  
*Askhat Zhumabayev*  
18EA871DB4E74AE...

07-Feb-2023

**X. Annex**

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