

Annual Project Progress Report

Project title:	Towards decent work for people with disabilities in Turkmenistan: transforming social enterprises into meaningful training and employment opportunities
Award ID:	00097775
Project ID:	00101359
Implementing partner(s):	Blind and Deaf Society of Turkmenistan
Period covered in this report:	January-December 2021
Date of last Annual Report:	N/A
Date of the last Project Board meeting:	24.02.2021
Date of last Quality Assurance and rating:	21.12.2020 Implementation (undp.org)

1. Project Performance

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

Project Output 1:

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

Output indicators:

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

Output targets (2021):

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

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

b) If no or partially, please explain why?

UNDP has developed the BDST institutional capacity building strategy and business plans of its three training-production enterprises with the support of the national consultant and the Chinese experts. The strategy lays out a way forward for the BDST in terms of improving current management and business operations to increase sheltered and open market employment opportunities for its members. As this strategy is yet to be built upon by the BDST based on the results yet-to-be achieved under Output 2 in 2022, there is so far no increase in number of employed BDST members and growth of income among the BDST members.

1.2 Training on employment of people with disabilities

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

b) If no or partially, please explain why?

UNDP strengthened capacity of 66 members of the BDST from the cities of Ashgabat, Mary and Turkmenabat, of which 43 are female members, who enhanced their knowledge and learned international experience of barrier free employment, social security and protection of the rights and interests of people with disabilities. The training was delivered by 6 certified trainers-members of the BDST (of which 4 are female members) trained online by the Chinese experts.

Project Output 2:

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

Output indicators:

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

2.2 Number of new jobs created for people with disabilities

Output targets (2021):

2.1 Assessment of the existing capacity and development of recommendations for procurement of cardboard and printing equipment for Training and Production Enterprise (TPE) No. 1 in Ashgabat. Conduct accessibility checks and develop an implementation plan and recommendations for TPE № 1 of BDST in Ashgabat.

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

b) If no or partially, please explain why?

UNDP completed assessment of production capacities and provision of recommendations for reconstruction of the cardboard-printing workshop of the Ashgabat TPE of the BDST and procurement of new equipment for this workshop by the national consultant with the support of Chinese experts. Recommendations for accessibility checks for the Ashgabat TPE of the BDST were provided by Chinese experts in writing based on the Chinese experience and international practice.

2.2 Carrying out major repairs of the cardboard-printing workshop of the BDST in Ashgabat

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

b) If no or partially, please explain why?

Following the assessment of production capacities of the cardboard-printing workshop of the cardboard-printing workshop of the Ashgabat TPE of the BDST by the national and Chinese experts, UNDP prepared an RFQ for reconstruction of this workshop which is to be posted by the end of 2021. The actual reconstruction works are expected to start in Q1 of 2022. The achievement of this result in 2021 has been delayed owing to the longer-than-expected period of hiring a local expert and provision of feedback by Chinese experts.

2.3 Procurement, installation of cardboard printing equipment at the TPE No. 1 in Ashgabat and training of BDST employees on maintenance issues

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

b) If no or partially, please explain why?

Following the assessment of production capacities of the cardboard-printing workshop of the BDST in Ashgabat by the national and international experts, UNDP prepared and launched e-tender (ITB) for procurement of new equipment for this workshop. The tender deadline was extended twice because of insufficient number of applications. The new deadline is 7 January 2022. The achievement of this result in 2021 has been delayed for the same reason as above.

Project Output 3:

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

Output indicators:

3.1 An appropriate training curriculum developed

3.2 Number of people with disabilities who have received professional training based on gender

3.3 Availability of a Transformation Plan

Output targets (2021):

3.1 Developing an appropriate training programme for vocational training and conducting training for trainers and training for employees on the development of professional skills and equipment maintenance

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

b) If no or partially, please explain why?

It was agreed during the online consultations with the Chinese Foundation for Poverty Alleviation and UNDP China colleagues that an appropriate training programme for employees of the cardboard-printing workshop of the Ashgabat TPE in Ashgabat on operation and maintenance of new equipment is to be conducted by the supplier of new equipment. In this respect, the relevant indicators under this output could not be achieved in 2021 because of the delayed start of re-equipment and reconstruction of the cardboard-printing workshop for the reasons explained above. As for the indicator relating to development of the Transformation Plan, the full achievement of this indicator should be expected in 2022, pending 1) the development of relevant policies, procedures and protocols at the enterprise level relating to training and hiring of employees, production contracts, accessibility and placement of people with disabilities, tailored mentor training for employees to become mentors for people with visual/hearing disabilities and 2) the development of partnerships with secondary vocational schools and employers to promote education and employment for people with disabilities, all scheduled for 2022.

2. Progress Reporting

Please summarize the main achievements during the project cycle:

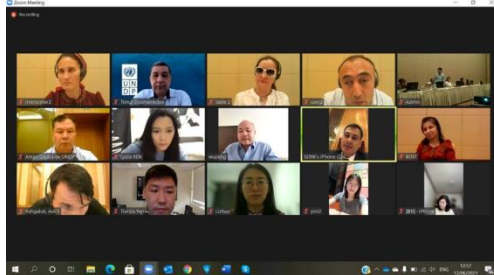
Following the delayed approval by the MFAT of the project document, the project started only in December 2020 and gathered pace in February 2021 after the first Project Board meeting. The project activities for 2021 were further elaborated at a joint online meeting with representatives of the Blind and Deaf Society of Turkmenistan (BDST), UNDP in Turkmenistan and UNDP in China and the Chinese Foundation for Poverty Alleviation. A Project Specialist was hired to support the timely implementation of the project ambitious agenda, especially for the work relating to reconstruction and re-equipment of the BDST production facilities.

The delayed implementation of project activities took place against the background of COVID-19 restrictions that impacted not only the work of national but also Chinese experts, who for the time being

can only provide distance support both for capacity building activities and reconstruction and re-equipment of the BDST training and production enterprises.

Despite the above challenges, some indicators and outputs of the project plan for 2021 were fully achieved, while the remaining ones have been set on track and should be achieved in 2022.

Project Output 1:



UNDP has presented the BDST with the institutional capacity building strategy and business strategies for marketing activities of its three training-production enterprises that were developed with the support of the national consultant and the Chinese experts. The strategy lays out a way forward for the BDST in terms of improving current management and business operations to increase sheltered and open market employment opportunities for its members. The strategy was presented to the Central Board of the BDST as well as managers of the BDST training-production enterprises in the

cities of Ashgabat, Mary and Turkmenabat, who are expected to be guided by this strategy and adjust their business operations accordingly to ensure better access to quality vocational training and decent work of BDST members.



UNDP strengthened capacity of 66 members of the BDST from the cities of Ashgabat, Mary and Turkmenabat, of which 43 are female members, who enhanced their knowledge and learned international experience of barrier free employment, social security and protection of the rights and interests of people with disabilities. The training was delivered by 6 certified trainers-members of the BDST, of which 4 are female

members, trained earlier by the Chinese experts from the Chinese Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (CFPA) and Chinese Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) in the course of the intensive six-day online Disability Equality Training (DET). A number of recommendations were made on the outcomes of the capacity building activity that should be taken by the BDST with UNDP support for further discussions with relevant national stakeholders as part of the current project and beyond:



of BDST with the wider community

- 1) Provide specific trainings for target groups on development of skills to open a small business, teach folk art and make souvenirs for tourists
- 2) Establish social clubs for exchange of knowledge and experience, learning languages
- 3) Promote sport activities/competitions in chess and draughts with members of wider community
- 4) Provide facilities for physical culture and social clubs
- 5) Support socialization and joint activities of members

6) Develop the BDST website that would feature interesting information on the capacities of the BDST members, their products, database with useful information, exchange of ideas and experiences, mutual support, business ideas and projects, changes in legislature regulating the rights and privileges of people with disabilities, vacancies, contests, trainings, access to psychologist or lawyer services, etc.

Project Output 2:

Chinese experts in writing based on the Chinese experience and international practice. Following the assessment of production capacities of the cardboard-printing workshop of the BDST TPE in Ashgabat by the national and Chinese experts, UNDP prepared an RFQ for reconstruction of this workshop and launched e-tender (ITB) for procurement of new equipment for this workshop.

UNDP completed assessment of production capacities and provision of recommendations for reconstruction and procurement of cardboard equipment for the Ashgabat TPE of the BDST by the national consultant with the support of Chinese experts. Recommendations for accessibility checks for the Ashgabat TPE of the BDST were provided by

**Project Output 3:**

The project is on track to developing a Transformation plan for selected enterprise to become sustainable models of vocational skills training, supported employment and transition to an open market employment for people with disabilities. In this regard, UNDP succeeded in initiating a dialogue with all relevant national stakeholders on the topic of promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the open labor market with the support of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of Turkmenistan through [an online seminar](#) marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, bringing together all relevant national stakeholders such as the Mejlis, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Ministry of Adalat, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Medical Industry, Women's Union, Youth Union, Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, National Center of Trade Unions of Turkmenistan. The seminar laid the foundation for cooperation among all stakeholders to promote a model of employment of persons with disabilities in the open labor market of Turkmenistan, within which these people could receive decent education, including secondary vocational and higher education, and necessary professional skills that would be in demand and applicable in the labor market of Turkmenistan, both in the public and private sectors.

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3. Project Risks and Issues

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

A number of potential risks are listed below.

Description of risk	Type and category	Risk management actions	Current situation
Delays in inception of Project (setting a structure, recruitment of staff and experts/consultants)	Risk of project management and implementation	Identify the direction of the approval process (steps, deadlines, agencies, required documents); Organise informational meetings/ round tables with key government officials (MFA, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, Education, etc.); Review/evaluate the detailed work plan and set priorities; Develop criteria for hiring staff and experts (based on the project work plan) and conduct pre-selection (use human resources from previous projects and initiatives).	A Project Manager was recruited and project structure set and approved at the Project Board Meeting. A short-term Project Specialist was recruited. National experts for relevant activities were identified and contracted, including through head-hunting after unsuccessful public announcement selection process.
Unwillingness and lack of commitment to adopt and apply new knowledge and approaches (the BDST, enterprise management, government agencies, other partners)	Risk of project management and implementation	Prepare and sign project implementation agreements with partner organisations; conduct a series of training workshops and awareness-raising events; exchange factual information and involve the media; Ensure equal participation of people with disabilities in all activities, decision-making, project structure, etc.	The risk is being successfully addressed. There is enough commitment on the part of BDST and partners to adopting new strategies, knowledge and approaches. People with disabilities are involved in relevant activities and decision-making process.
Resistance to work together from organisations of people with disabilities, vocational training institutions, business and the public sector	Political and diplomatic risk	Organise a series of communication meetings, workshops, and round tables on general issues: access to quality vocational education and employment, to demonstrate positive lessons and benefits	Relevant stakeholders demonstrated readiness to engage with the BDST to promote employment of people with disabilities.
Delays in procurement and installing equipment	Economic and technical risk	Conduct a timely assessment of organisational needs and develop recommendations; Use existing technical knowledge in the country; Ensure the active participation of the National Advisory Committee in promoting the approval process	This risk remains valid owing to the lack of competent national experts with technical expertise for provision of recommendations on re-equipment of BDST social enterprises and the overall situation with COVID-19 pandemic. This risk is being addressed by

			proactive headhunting of relevant national experts.
Insufficient time to implement the Project to achieve the expected results	Risk of project management and implementation	Conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation of project implementation; Identify priorities and make changes (as necessary) to the action plan/ implementation plan of the Project;	This risk is being addressed. The project donor is well aware of the possibility of project extension and ready to do so when and if requested by UNDP Turkmenistan.
Low adaptability of target people with disabilities to new conditions	Social risks	Actively involve target people with disabilities in the project implementation; tailored training activities for smoother adaptation of target groups.	This risk is rated as low at the moment.

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

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

The current project with the Blind and Deaf Society of Turkmenistan (project beneficiary) is being funded through the Chinese South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund, and it was expected that the Chinese expertise and capacity building support would be provided to the project beneficiary by visiting Chinese experts in person at all stages of the project. However, COVID-19 travel restrictions prevented the in person engagement and support of Chinese experts. At the same time, the online support is of little help too because of poor internet in Turkmenistan and limitations of such kind of support given the complexity of the activities. So, the only working tool for Chinese support appeared to be paper work by national consultants for review and feedback of Chinese experts. Such method takes time for translation into English and Chinese and back to English. So, one of the lessons learned is that the project activities involving Chinese experts should be given more time than originally planned. Assignments for national experts should be also planned accordingly.

Another lesson learned is that proactive headhunting of national experts should be always planned when procuring services at the local market, given the limited number of competent experts in specific areas requiring special expertise.

Lastly, key national stakeholders demonstrated readiness to engage with the BDST on the issue of promoting employment of people with disabilities in the open labor market. This readiness for joint work will be further built upon by UNDP as part of the current project to achieve output 3.

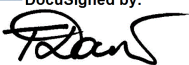
5. Transfer of Assets or other related matter

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

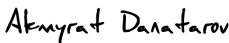
N/A

6. Financial management

Budget item	Total approved in 2021 (in USD)	Expenses + commitments	Budget utilization in % to planned
Component 1	5 156	19 347	375
Component 2	28 201	4 080	14
Component 3	31 537	4 203	13
Project management	30 000	37 252	124
Total delivery in 2021	94 894	64 882	68
In % to total project budget			

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 Prepared by: _____ **Project Manager**
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Date: 20.12.2021

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 Approved by: _____ **Programme Specialist**
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Date: 20.12.2021