



Minutes

of the project board meeting of the joint UNDP-BDST project “Towards decent work for people with disabilities in Turkmenistan: transforming social enterprises into meaningful training and employment opportunities”

Date: 14.02.2022, 11:00-12:00

Venue: online conference

List of participants:

Mr. Chary Berkeliyevich Ovezov	Chairman of the Blind and Deaf Society of Turkmenistan (BDST)
Mr. Merdan Komekovich Reyyimov	Deputy Chairman of BDST
Mr. Huang Zhenjia	Representative of the project donor from the Chinese Embassy in Turkmenistan
Ms. Narine Sahakyan	UNDP Resident Representative in Turkmenistan;
Mr. Rovshen Nurmuhamedov	Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP
Mr. Akmyrat Danatarov	Programme Analyst on Governance, Economic Diversification and Inclusive Growth, UNDP
Mr. Timur Dosmamedov	Project Manager, UNDP
Ms. Ogulshirin Yazlyyeva	Programme Assistant, UNDP
Ms. Kristina Kalinka	Project Implementation Unit Assiatnt

Повестка дня:

11:00 – 11:10	Opening of the meeting: Opening remarks by the Chairman of the BDST, Mr. Chary Ovezov Opening remarks by UNDP Resident Representative Ms. Narine Sahakyan
11:10 – 11:30	Presentation of the goals and objectives of the project and an overview of the results achieved in 2021. Questions and answers. Discussion.
11:30 – 11:50	Discussion of planned activities and approval of the project work plan for 2022
11:50 – 12:00	Conclusion of the meeting.

1. Opening words, greetings

Mr. Timur Dosmamedov:

- Greeted, introduced all the participants, announced the program of the project board meeting and gave the floor to Mr. Chary Ovezov, Chairman of the BDST.

Mr. Chary Ovezov:

- Mr. Chary Ovezov, on behalf of the Blind and Deaf Society of Turkmenistan, welcomed all those present and congratulated Ms. Narine Sahakyan on her appointment as UNDP Resident Representative in Turkmenistan, and wished her great success and successful work for UNDP in Turkmenistan.
- Noted that the project continues its work for the second year. Much has been done and many results have been achieved, but not all planned activities for 2021 have been completed, which is why the project is behind schedule and asked the Project Manager to submit an action plan for 2022 and pay special attention to those activities that could not be carried out in 2021.
- Expressed special gratitude for the active and successful cooperation to the members of the project council and hope for further fruitful cooperation.

The floor was given to Ms. Narine Sahakyan, UNDP Resident Representative in Turkmenistan.

Ms. Narine Sahakyan:

- Greeted all participants of the meeting and expressed her satisfaction with UNDP's partnership with BDST in the implementation of such an important project.
- Noted that this project is the first project implemented in Turkmenistan within the framework of South-South cooperation and thanked the project donors represented by the Chinese Embassy in Turkmenistan, as well as colleagues from UNDP in China for the financial, expert and programmatic support provided to implement the project, despite on the objective difficulties associated with the global COVID-19 pandemic, preventing the arrival of Chinese experts in Turkmenistan.
- Reiterated the importance of UNDP cooperation with the Blind and Deaf the Society of Turkmenistan, which is the country's largest provider of employment and training services for people with visual and hearing impairments, in achieving the main goal of the project, namely, increasing employment opportunities and income generation among people persons with disabilities in Turkmenistan through vocational training and the creation of new employment opportunities, which will ultimately also contribute to increasing the capacity of the BDST and achieving concrete results in the social and labor rehabilitation of people with disabilities and improving the social protection system for vulnerable groups in Turkmenistan.
- Expressed her hope for the successful implementation of the project, as well as special thanks to the donor of the project - the Chinese Embassy in Turkmenistan for their support and cooperation in the implementation of this project.
- Thanked the project council members for the meeting and gave the floor to Mr. Timur Dosmamedov, Project Manager to present the results achieved, as well as the plan for the implementation of activities planned for 2022.

2. Overview of results achieved in 2021.

Mr. Timur Dosmamedov gave a brief overview of the implementation of the project in 2021. Objective difficulties were noted that affected the achievement of the results planned for 2021, including restrictions on movement amid the pandemic both within the country and abroad, which affected not only the work of national, but also Chinese specialists who could not come to Turkmenistan and so far can only provide remote support, including capacity building, reconstruction and re-equipment of workshops of training and production enterprises of BDST. Despite the above problems, the activities and indicators for the first component of the project work plan for 2021 were fully implemented, while the rest were postponed to 2022.

In particular, in 2021, a Strategy for the Development of the Capacity of the BDST was developed and, based on this strategy, a phased Action Plan for the Development of the Capacity of the BDST, which laid the foundation for achieving results in the second and third directions of the project. In addition, 66 members of the society from the cities of Ashgabat, Mary and Turkmenabat got acquainted with international experience in ensuring barrier-free employment, social protection and protection of the rights and interests of people with disabilities during online trainings with the support of Chinese experts. An online workshop was also held at the end of 2021, during which a dialogue was established with key national partners to promote a transition model to other employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the open market, both in the public and private sectors.

Among the activities that have been transferred to 2022 are the purchase of printing equipment and the reconstruction of the cardboard printing and printing workshop of TPE No. 1 BDST in Ashgabat, in connection to the unsuccessful tender purchase of equipment due to the technical and financial inconsistency of the submitted proposals, as well as the relevant measures to train the staff of this workshop to work on new equipment.

The project donor was provided with quarterly and annual reports on the activities carried out and the disbursement of funds in the form of a donor through UNDP in China. The project was officially extended until the end of 2022 following an official request from UNDP in Turkmenistan to the China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchange (CICETE), which is the executing agency of the Chinese government.

- The project budget for 2021 was: \$652,779
- Utilized: USD 64,575.25 (because tenders for the supply of equipment and the reconstruction of the workshop were postponed to 2022)

The lessons learned during the implementation of the project in 2021 were also noted, concerning, first of all, interaction with Chinese experts, their involvement in project activities without coming to Turkmenistan, as well as a limited number of experts in the domestic market with special knowledge for the needs of the project.

3. Discussion of planned activities and approval of the project work plan for 2022.

Further, Mr. Timur Dosmamedov made a presentation of the planned activities for the second and third components for 2022, which include the selection of suppliers and the supply of cardboard printing and sewing equipment for the respective workshops of the BDST TPEs in the cities Ashgabat, Mary and Turkmenabat and related activities to train personnel to work on new equipment; selection of construction companies and work on the reconstruction of the above

workshops of the BDST TPEs; development of policies, procedures and protocols at the enterprise level for training and hiring workers, concluding contracts for the production of products, ensuring accessibility and accommodation of persons with disabilities; holding a Roundtable/Workshop on Employment of Persons with Disabilities and a South-South Forum to raise awareness of the social model of disability and inclusive approaches among policy makers, employers and the general public.

It was further suggested that the third component should be refocused on achieving a long-term result in terms of transforming the three social enterprises of the BDST into a sustainable model of vocational training for people with disabilities. In this regard, after consultations with the leadership of UNDP and BDST, it was proposed to look at the problem of reforming the employment system and employment of people with disabilities in the open market in a more comprehensive way, at the level of adopting an appropriate state program, strategy, standards that would not only reflect the problems of reforming selected BDST enterprises but also reflected deeper issues affecting the employment of people with disabilities in the open market, including issues of primary, secondary, secondary technical and higher education of people with disabilities, social and labor rehabilitation, active state regulation of the employment of this category of people, intersectoral cooperation with taking into account international best practices, in particular the Chinese experience, and involving all key national partners in this process, taking into account the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as taking into account the National Human Rights Action Plan in Turkmenistan for 2021-2025 years. It was proposed to combine the individual activities under the third component into one integrated activity in order to achieve a long-term and sustainable effect in accordance with the project document, which envisages that the project will benefit on a long-term basis: a) a large group of persons with disabilities and their families; b) the wider society throughout the country; c) service providers, community development and program developers, politicians, government officials, industry and society in general in Turkmenistan. The final product of this work fully meets the interests of the Society itself and can be offered to national partners as a program document for adaptation and implementation.

- The project budget for 2022 is: 1,317,845 USD

4. Conclusions. Recommendations. Outcome of the meeting.

Mr. Chary Ovezov:

He emphasized that all action plans for 2022 were previously discussed with the Project Manager and expressed full agreement with the UNDP proposal to combine a number of activities under the third component into one integrated event to achieve a longer-term result.

Mr. Chary Ovezov also wished everyone success in carrying out the planned activities of the project, given the short time frame, and made a recommendation for closer cooperation with Chinese partners in the supply of equipment from Chinese manufacturers, as previously planned. He once again noted that BDST specialists, who have many years of experience, will make every effort on their part to make this project successful and achieve all the goals.

Ms. Narine Sahakyan:

Also noted the importance of the urgency of the implementation of the planned activities due to time constraints and the duration of the project until the end of 2022.

Expressed a request to the Chinese colleagues, if possible, to respond quickly to agree on technical tasks and specifications. A request was also made to colleagues from the Chinese Embassy to attract Chinese companies to participate in tenders for the supply of equipment.

Concerning the activities under the third component, it will be necessary to discuss in detail the issues and problems that the project will help to voice specifically for the entire sector in a wider range.

The floor was given to Mr. Huang Zhenjia:

Mr. Huang Zhenjia:

Thanked all the participants of the meeting, colleagues from UNDP and BDST for the efforts made in the implementation of the project, and also noted that the deadlines for the implementation of all planned activities for the second component for 2022 are quite limited. For the third component, it was recommended to initially develop and discuss a plan, and then explore the possibility of combining relevant activities. If necessary, this proposal must be submitted to CICETE for approval.

At the end of the meeting, it was decided that:

- refocusing activities in the third component should be first developed and then discussed in more detail to provide the final product for public consideration.
- colleagues from UNDP China will also be sent a request to actively attract Chinese companies to participate in tenders.
- in connection with the shortest possible time for the implementation of activities for the 2nd component, to break into active work and avoid all kinds of delays.