Dear colleagues and partners!

It is our pleasure to introduce the first issue of our Programme’s quarterly E-newsletter, covering our activities conducted over summer 2012.

The Joint Programme is a collective action of UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and UNV in Uzbekistan supported by UN Trust Fund for Human Security. The Joint Programme seeks to address the consequences of the Aral Sea environmental crisis through improvement of income generation opportunities, healthcare system and capacities of local authorities for the long-term benefit of the most vulnerable local communities.

This issue of E-newsletter will convey the concept of human security that will be promoted throughout our activities, as well as focus on presenting an in-depth info on our agenda and specific targets that we would like to achieve within the next three years. Besides, it will provide an insight on our target districts and our partners.

We would appreciate to receive your valuable feedback and wish you a good reading on behalf of our extended team!

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And follow us on Twitter via @UNAralSea.

Dildora Tadjibaeva
Programme Coordinator
PROGRAMME OVERVIEW:

The drying up of Aral Sea to 30% of its initial size due to an unsustainable use of natural resources e.g. heavy extraction of water for irrigation purposes has had a negative impact on the region’s economy, social sphere and livelihoods of the population. Traditionally, the Aral Sea provided both irrigation and fishing opportunities, while nowadays due to the reduced water flow, the fishing industry and related sectors are devastated, resulting in a high as ever unemployment. Basic social infrastructure is scarce in many communities, including clean water, gas and electricity. The combined impact of the above factors puts serious implications upon the health and wellbeing of the population.

In April 2010 UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon visited Karakalpakstan and called the drying up of the Aral Sea as “one of the worst manmade environmental disasters of the world”. Considering the complexity of existing problems, it was clear that collective actions of UN agencies are crucial in improving welfare of people of this region.

To better address the needs of the vulnerable communities of Aral Sea region the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) provided support to a Programme titled “Sustaining Livelihoods Affected by the Aral Sea Disaster”. Implemented by five UN agencies in Uzbekistan - UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, WHO and UNV, the Joint Programme aims to support local communities of Muynak, Shumanay and Kanlikul in improvement of their access to basic infrastructure, including access to clean water and gas through design and implementation of community development plans, by reaching out about 130,000 people.

Within the Programme’s effort to improve income generation opportunities, UNDP and UNESCO will work with dekhkan farms and introduce improved agricultural practices and pasture management techniques, plant new crops and tree varieties. They will also support entrepreneurial activities of women and youth by developing local handicrafts and tourism sites.

Strengthening of healthcare sector is also one of the targets of the Programme, and is carried out by UNDP, UNFPA, WHO and UNV. This effort will involve education of about 1,500 primary healthcare workers in reproductive health issues, and awareness campaign of youth on family planning, HIV-prevention, introduction of Practical Approach to Lung Health (PAL), and material and technical support to regional medical centers.

Meanwhile, in order to ensure successful design and implementation of socio-economic and environmental policies, within the framework of the Programme UNDP will conduct capacity-building of regional and district authorities.

By acting on community level and reaching each and every individual, the Joint Programme and partners aim to enhance economic opportunity, education, health care and environmental security, to ensure that people in the Aral Sea region live fulfilled lives and enjoy various opportunities that life has to offer.
KEY TARGETS:

- 30% of dehkhan farmers in 50 target communities apply improved agriculture practices
- 100 dehkhan farmers applied tool to bring degraded land back into productive use
- At least 2 eco-tourism sites are developed and visitor information centers established
- 100 women and people with disabilities improved entrepreneurial skills
- 1500 community and volunteer healthcare workers trained
- 300 young people trained as peer-educators on HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health
- 250 healthcare providers trained on adolescent sexual and reproductive health
- 170 general practitioners and 120 nurses trained on Practical Approach to Lung Health strategy
- 50 communities have implemented community development plans
- At least 50 social infrastructure rehabilitation projects completed
- Improved access to natural gas distribution system within Aral Shore communities

Human Security goal

The Aral Sea environmental disaster has greatly affected the human security of the population, which refers not only to the basic physical security and absence of violence, but to the sound governance, healthcare, education systems and economic opportunity. According to the UNTFHS, human security means protection of “the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfillment,” and encompasses creation of political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems, that when combined give people the building blocks for survival, livelihood and dignity.

In order to restore human security in the region, the Programme will improve economic, food, health and environmental security for the population of Karakalpakstan affected by the Aral Sea environmental disaster.

Latest activities:

Joint Programme Presentation – held on June 28, 2012 in Nukus, Karakalpakstan engaged the representatives of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, national implementing partners, the representatives of regional and district authorities, community leaders, and media. The participants of the presentation actively discussed the main activity components of the Programme, and made recommendations for their successful implementation.

During the Q&A section, the representatives of regional and district authority specifically discussed the upcoming community development plans and projects on social infrastructure that will grant access to clean water and gas for population of Muynak, Shumanay and Kanlikul totaling to about 130,000 people.
Support of the tourism sector:

In order to better address poverty and create additional sources of income, it is crucial to fulfill the region's potential for eco-tourism and promote its culture and archeological heritage. Therefore, within the framework of the Joint Programme it is planned to establish at least 2 eco-tourism sites and visitor information centers at the existing historical sites.

Within the framework of the Joint Programme UNDP and UNESCO representatives carried out visits to various historical sites, including Mizdakhkan, Tupräk-kala, Janbas-kala, Dzhanpiq-kala, and Badaytugay nature reserve, in order to select sites for establishment of visitor information centers.

Reproductive health for rural healthcare workers and activists:

Within the framework of the Joint Programme and its objective to improve healthcare system in the Aral Sea area, UNFPA jointly with Uzbekistan's Ministry of Health conducted series of training activities for healthcare professionals in three districts of Karakalpakstan.

The training course titled “Medical eligibility criteria for various contraceptive methods, counseling and reproductive rights”, was designed for obstetrician-gynecologists, midwives and general practitioners of the region. More than 125 medical personnel benefited from five 3-day workshops that provided in-depth coverage of various aspects of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Introduction of Practical Approach to Lung Health:

As a result of drying up of Aral Sea, a virgin desert Aral Kum has now been formed. Frequently blowing dust storms carry toxic pesticides lying on the seabed, thus having a devastating effect on the lung health of the population and causing serious lung conditions.

One of the targets of the Joint Programme is to train 170 general practitioners and 120 nurses in Karakalpakstan on Practical Approach to Lung Health (PAL). This initiative is carried out by WHO. PAL experts have started developing a manual for nurses and have been incorporating new concept and interactive teaching methods.
Power supply for rural healthcare facilities:

Rural healthcare facilities in Kazakhdarya, Muynak district are usually faced with the issue of irregular electricity supply. In order to address this problem and help the healthcare points to provide their services despite the inefficiencies of public electricity supply system, the Joint Program recruited experts in renewable energy sources. They conducted field visits of 9 rural healthcare points in Kazakhdarya to carry out feasibility study for further installation of solar panels.

Discussions were held with Heads of healthcare points regarding the needs for electricity consumption, health facilities assessed on possibility of installing renewable solar energy. Based on the recommendations of consultants from site visits, necessary decision will be made on installation of solar panels in rural health facilities. We anticipate that almost 30,000 people in Muynak will benefit from this initiative.

For latest updates on Joint Programme activities check out our newly launched Project page on AKVO platform. Here you can find information on the Joint Programme’s mission and goals, partners, as well as latest developments and photo gallery.
I want to talk about some of the pressing issues faced on a daily basis by people that live on the disappearing Aral Sea. So when thinking of, let’s say, the issue of water scarcity and supply…
The Joint Programme is funded by:

The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security was established in 1999 with the express aim of promoting human security through the protection and empowerment of people and communities threatened in their survival, livelihood and dignity. The objective of UNTFHS is to finance activities carried out by UN organization(s) and/or designated non-UN organization(s), which translate human security concept into practical actions, in particular those at the field level, to demonstrate its added-value in view of promoting and disseminating the concept. Since 1999, the UNTFHS has committed over USD 350 million to projects in over 70 countries. www.ochaonline.un.org

The Joint Programme is implemented by:

UNDP is the UN’s global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. UNDP is on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. www.undp.uz

UNESCO - the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - was established on November 16, 1945 and its Headquarters is in Paris. As a specialized agency of the United Nations, UNESCO contributes to the building of peace, the alleviation of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. It is doing so promoting international co-operation among its 193 Member States and six Associate Members UNESCO is working to create the conditions for genuine dialogue based upon respect for shared values and the dignity of each civilization and culture. www.tashkent.unesco.org

UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund, is the lead UN agency that expands the possibilities for women and young people to lead healthy sexual and reproductive lives. We are on the ground improving lives in more than 150 countries. We’re making real progress – yet more work needs to be done. UNFPA - delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every child birth is safe, and every young person’s potential is fulfilled. www.unfpa.uz

The World Health Organization-founded in 1948-is the specialized agency of the United Nations for health. WHO Country Office in Uzbekistan has been an active player in the country, towards the achievement of a common development goal - Health for all. http://www.who.int/countries/uzb/en/

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide by advocating for recognition of volunteers, working with partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing an increasing number and diversity of volunteers, including experienced UN Volunteers. http://www.unv.org/what-we-do/countries/uzbekistan.html
For more information, please, contact:

Tashkent Office:

Dildora Tadjibaeva  
Programme Coordinator  
E-mail: dildora.tadjibaeva@undp.org

Zakiya Abdurazakova  
PR Specialist  
E-mail: zakiya.abdurazakova@undp.org  
1 Y. Gulamov street, 100000 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Nukus office:

Mustafa Abdrakhmanov  
Area Manager  
E-mail: mustafa.abdrakhmanov@undp.org  
56 Ernazar Alakoz Street, Nukus, Karakalpakstan  
Tel: (+998 61) 224-13-81, fax: (+998 61) 224-16-35

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