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Final Narrative Report

EU-UN Joint Programme on Improving Vocational Education in Abkhazia

February 1, 2019 – April 30, 2022





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Project information

Project Title	EU-UN Joint Programme on Improving Vocational Education in Abkhazia
Donor	EU
Co-funding	UNDP
Contract Number	ENI/2018/403-849
Project Duration	1 February 2019 - 30 April 2022
Total Estimated Budget	USD 3,247,343
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UNDP Co-funding	USD 115,918
Administrative Agent	UNDP Multi Partner Trust Fund Office
Convening Agency	UNDP Georgia
Implementing Partners	UNDP, UNICEF, FAO



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Acronyms

AAH	Action Against Hunger
ABL	Administrative Boundary Line
AR	Amilat Resurskua
ASU	Abkhazian State University
BMSB	Brown Marmorated Stink Bug
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSS	Centre for Strategic Studies under the df President of Republic of Abkhazia
df	de facto
DOL	Digital Online Learning
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FLMW	Front-line Medical Worker
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GMS	Gagra Medical School
GPP	Good Parenting Practices
iNGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MLSS	df Ministry of Labour and Social Security
MoC	df Ministry of Culture and Protection of Historical and Cultural Heritage
MoE	df Ministry of Economy
MoELP	df Ministry of Education and Language Policy
MoF	df Ministry of Finance
MOH	df Ministry of Healthcare
MRT	df Ministry of Resorts and Tourism
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OYH	Ochamchire/a Youth House
PHC	Primary Health Care
RDE	Regional Departments of Education
SCI	Student Centred Instruction
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMC	Sukhum/i Medical College
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises



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SSAA	State Statistics Administration of Abkhazia
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
STEMLAB	STEM laboratory for youth training NGO
SYH	Sukhum/i Youth House
TMT	Training of Master Trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocational education and training



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Table of Contents

Project Information	2
List of Acronyms	3
Table of Contents	5
Executive Summary	6
Project Operational Environment	8
Key Project Achievements	9
Progress on Activities	14
Challenges	38
Lessons Learned	42
Communication and Visibility	43
Indicator Based Performance Assessment	49
Annex I: Financial Statement	
Annex II: Management Declarations	



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Executive summary

The EU-UN Joint Programme on Improving Vocational Education in Abkhazia (hereafter - Joint Programme or Project) was implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) from February 01, 2019 until April 30, 2022 with the overall objective to improve access to quality education at the vocational education and training (VET) colleges across Abkhazia. This three-year Joint Programme envisioned development of equal opportunities for children, young women and men throughout the region and irrespective of their nationality and place of residence, with special focus on gender balance, young people from remote areas and disadvantaged groups. The activities of the Joint Programme were grouped under five major outputs as follows:

- Output 1. Assessing the ways to improve the management and delivery of VET;
- Output 2. Supporting the elaboration and implementation of best VET practices in selected areas;
- Output 3. Developing the education sector to support VET;
- Output 4. Establishing cooperation schemes and dialogue with public and private employers.
- Output 5. Creating a pool of farmer field school master trainers in plant protection sector

Throughout the life cycle of the Joint Programme, UNDP implemented comprehensive, integrated and sustainable sets of interventions that insured more inclusive and far-reaching impact in dealing with concrete challenges in the VET sector across Abkhazia. On the one hand, it focused on **hard component**, such as renovating the buildings of VET colleges, classrooms, and professional training laboratories and workshops. On the other hand, it focused on **soft component**, such as assistance in developing new curricular, capacity building of teaching personnel, promotion of career guidance for students and representatives of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), building sustainable bridges with the labour market as well as working on increasing the awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

UNICEF focused on improving the capacities of teachers to educate the students so that they are better equipped to enter VET programmes; improving the parental understanding of educational needs and support; and strengthening training of health workers by improving the learning environment of medical colleges and pre- and in-service training.

While livelihood prospects in Abkhazia rely heavily on agricultural activities, increasing agricultural production is critical to improve resilience. To address these issues under the Joint Programme, FAO provided technical support on strengthening the capacities of plant protection experts in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) through establishment of a pool of Master Trainers in the plant protection sector. FAO supported creation of four Farmer Field Schools (FFS) by the partner international non-governmental organization (iNGO) Action Against Hunger (AAH) in Gali. In the four FFS, farmers implemented recommended techniques and measures as identified through the practical learning process.



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The FFS members have reported improved and increased crop yields for 2021 following the application of learned IPM techniques.

Despite the delays due to COVID-19 restrictions and domestic political instabilities, the Joint Programme reached out and supported beneficiaries in line with the initial plan, both young women and men, taking into consideration gender balance and needs in disadvantaged regions, where the population has limited access to education, social services and economic opportunities. The interventions under the Joint Programme have been gender mainstreamed, containing gender markers and gender-specific targets to empower local women, especially in remote rural areas.

In order to achieve synergies and main objectives of the Joint Programme, UNDP, UNICEF and FAO closely coordinated their work with each other. The Joint Programme established mechanisms for regular consultations between the implementing agencies as well as other UN agencies and iNGOs in organizing events, such as online training programmes and webinars as well as concrete collaboration in achieving the synergies.

The visibility actions and efforts of the Joint Programme both in traditional and social media were designed, planned and executed with the idea to promote the prestige of VET education, but also to promote knowledge and awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Joint Programme was in line with the UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and contributed to increased awareness about the SDGs among VET students, managers, and educators. The results of the Joint Programme were also in line with the priorities of the country programme documents of implementing UN agencies - UNDP, UNICEF and FAO - as well as respective policies of the donor organization.



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Project Operational environment

During the period of three years, the Joint Programme was implemented in a very complex and intricate political and operational environment affected by many factors. Programmatic achievements could have been larger and the impact more tangible and sustainable if not for the ongoing post-conflict challenges. Implementing partners continued operating in volatile conditions, including but not limited to distrust towards the international community and increased pressure on local civil society organizations (CSOs) and civic activists.

Communities faced continuous restrictions and lengthy closure of “crossing points” across the dividing lines, resulting in severe humanitarian consequences for the local population: ongoing “borderization” and restrictions on freedom of movement; arbitrary detentions of local inhabitants along the administrative boundary lines; hampered access to pensions and other social benefits; increasing prices and shortage of food, etc.

The existing and emerging problems became more challenging in the situation of political tensions in second half of 2019, early 2020, and in late 2021 due to the contested elections of de facto president and regular public confrontations between different political groups in the streets of major cities. The change of leadership in various decision-making bodies significantly slowed down the inception phase of the project and local stakeholders delayed provision of non-objection for the Joint Programme, hence delaying the project implementation. The overall political situation in and around Abkhazia significantly reduced access to Abkhazia, which further impeded the implementation.

Throughout this period, implementing partners maintained the organizations’ apolitical positioning in Abkhazia: adhering to the “Do No Harm” principle, maintaining strategic partnership with donor community and stakeholders, focusing on the needs and vulnerabilities in line with the “Leave No One Behind” concept and working based on the conflict-sensitive theory of change.

COVID-19 emerged as a huge epidemiological challenge in the spring of 2020 due the lack of medical and human capacities to deal with the pandemic. Lockdowns, restrictions and the spread of infection have significantly affected the entire educational sector. Education facilities were locked down on several occasions. VET colleges had limited access to sanitary supplies, including even basic items for sanitary and hygienic needs (such as disinfectants, soap, etc.) and underdeveloped sanitary facilities (such as lack of running water for washing hands and/or very limited access to toilets).

Restrictive regulations on exit and entry from/into Abkhazia have affected the work of the Joint Programme. For example, UNDP had to cancel one study trip abroad for stakeholders from the VET sector due to COVID-19 related restrictions. Similarly, UNICEF also had to cancel planned study tours, and modalities of implementation had to be changed as international experts could not get access to Abkhazia.



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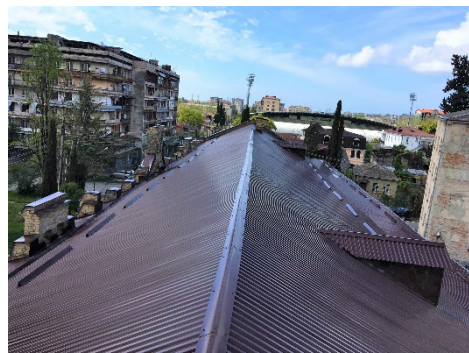


Key project achievements

Between February 2019 and April 2022, the Joint Programme operated as a flagship project on improving VET education in the conflict-affected region of Abkhazia. The activities were designed to achieve the main goals and objectives of the Joint Programme under the concept of **“3Rs” - Rehabilitation, recalibration and reengagement.**

Rehabilitation covered the work on renovating educational and training facilities and equipping three colleges across Abkhazia, including college facilities in remote disadvantaged eastern districts.

- During the period between February 01, 2019 and April 30, 2022, UNDP completed **rehabilitation of 3 colleges in VET sector and provided equipment for 10 laboratories**. In addition, two colleges received support in capacity building, training and equipment in order to develop and deliver digital online education programmes. The colleges were selected based on international and local assessments accomplished in 2019 and 2021; the assessments included a series of recommendations on selecting the VET colleges, educational programmes and necessary equipment, respecting the geographic balance between central, eastern and western districts of Abkhazia.



Replacement of roof at “Sukhum/i State College”; Photo credit: UNDP project office in Sukhumi

- The learning environment for about **800 current VET students** (including about 40% female students) was improved through rehabilitation of colleges and assistance with new teaching materials, guidebooks, training kits, teaching equipment, establishment of VET education and new Career Guidance Centre and online digital platforms (website-based educational platform and Instagram).



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Renovated & equipped classroom at VET collage; Photo credit: UNDP project office in Sukhumi

108 young men and women received professional orientation, career guidance and counselling services (at least 30% female youngsters and at least 20% from disadvantaged groups) through a series of public presentations, workshops and apprenticeship trainings. These activities, mainstreamed with the best practices of the European Training Foundation (ETF), were organized mainly by participants of the 2019 Study Trip to Turin (Italy).

- UNICEF focused on improving the learning environment for training in medical colleges. UNICEF supported an assessment of the Medical Colleges in Abkhazia. Based on the extremely poor and dilapidated conditions of the assessed premises and lack of safe environment for learning and teaching, UNICEF, in close coordination with the EU, developed plans to rehabilitate the colleges to improve the environment for learning and teaching. The premises of two medical colleges were rehabilitated (1 hall, 10 classrooms, water closet, 2 roofs); and 15 classrooms of medical colleges furnished. In addition, to improve the transition to applied teaching and learning as well as improve access to learning resources, 3 classrooms were equipped with IT equipment to facilitate Digital Online Learning (DOL); and 2 medical colleges were provided with visuals learning and teaching materials (mannequins, artificial body parts, posters, brochures (on breastfeeding and on nutrition until 12 months) etc.).

Recalibration work focused on modifying and adjusting the project activities to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of quarantines, delays and closures of the educational process.

- The international experts, identified by UNDP through competitive selection processes, have **completed three major assessments and mid-term assessment between 2019 and 2021**: (i) “Developing the Mid-term Vision on Supporting Life-Long Learning (LLL)/Continuing Education in Abkhazia”; (ii) Concept Note on “Development Strategy for Career Guidance Centre”; (iii) “Closing the Gap: Skills Mismatch in Vocational Education and Training in Abkhazia”.
- UNDP made significant progress on establishing cooperation schemes and dialogue with private and public employers. The project issued **three grants** to local CSO partners (Sukhum/i Youth



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House, Ochamchira/e Youth House and Amilat Resurskua) in order to improve interaction between VET providers and private sector.

- The partner organizations arranged a series of **10 roundtables/dialogue discussions with major stakeholders** from all districts of Abkhazia, including remote and rural areas, identifying gaps in the field of Life-Long Learning (LLL), bottlenecks and future priorities for effective evidence-based LLL intervention. The dialogue meetings brought together more than 140 representatives from different sectors of society to address cross-cutting themes such as career guidance and counselling, skills relevance and adaptability to a modern labour market.
- To address some of the challenges arising from COVID-19 related closures and disruptions, UNICEF provided IT literacy courses for the teaching staff as well as students of medical colleges, reaching 20 medical college teaching staff and 40 students.
- UNICEF supported the development of online teaching platforms for both students and teachers. These platforms were tested in 2020 and were operationalized in early 2021. These online platforms allow for continuation of learning when in-person trainings are not possible and allowed for expanded access to various educational materials.
- UNICEF changed the planned modality of teacher capacity building activities to online modalities, launching a 6-week online course on student centred instruction (SCI), which was followed up with a 2-day in-person workshop, reaching 49 teachers and local education experts. With the positive feedback from participants, this was followed by a 6-week online life skills course using a hybrid format, reaching 43 teachers and local education experts.

Reengagement work included activities in finding new innovative ways to engage with all major stakeholders and beneficiaries in the new environment of restrictions on communication and interaction in person.

- At least **72 academic staff of VET establishments** were trained locally in new teaching methodologies (at least 50% female). These trainings were conducted through combination of offline and online training programmes in 2021. Unfortunately, during the year of 2020, international trainers were not able to travel to Abkhazia due to pandemic-related restrictions and they had to deliver the trainings online.
- The UNDP facilitated **signature of three partnership documents** between VET establishments and private/public actors. In turn, signing of these documents led to establishment of three high-profile apprenticeships for VET students.



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- In order to build better visibility and prestige of VET colleges and to develop networking and leadership competencies among college students, UNDP organized Quest Games on working professions, reaching more than **80 college students from Sukhumi in 2019 and 2021**.
- **Four syllabi were developed** in selected professions with support of international and local expertise. These syllabi were adapted to the local educational environment and labour market needs.



Photo credit: UNDP project office in Sukhumi

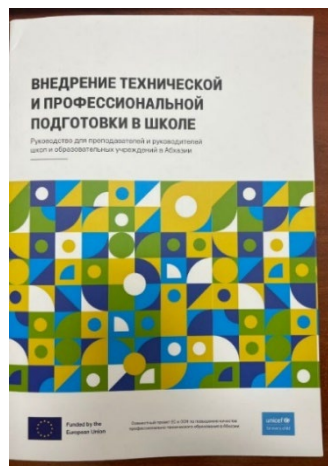
- UNICEF worked closely with local education experts to conduct a comprehensive assessment on the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subject needs of schools in Abkhazia. The assessment methodology included online surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with teachers of science and technical subjects. The sample included teachers from urban and rural schools across Abkhazia. The assessment was used as a foundation to plan capacity building activities. A STEM guidebook was developed with detailed instructions tailored to the needs of the local teachers and communities as well as a guidebook on the application of Student Centered Instruction (SCI) in science and technical subjects was developed. A total of 100 teachers were selected to take part in trainings, and the guidebooks were distributed to these teachers.



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Covers of guidebooks and publications. Photo credit UNICEF FO

- UNICEF piloted STEM programming in 13 pilot schools with 10 of the schools establishing STEM labs, which included the provision of technical equipment, teaching materials and resources; while 3 schools established model STEM lab hubs. The STEM lab hubs were established in the larger participating schools and will be used to bring neighbouring schools together to share and learn from each other. Within these pilot schools, UNICEF supported the establishment of a network of STEM trained teachers across Abkhazia with 43 teachers participating. These teachers connect online and have a chance to coordinate and share their expertise and experience to teachers across various communities. In order to maximize the capacity and usage of these labs, UNICEF carried out the training and capacity building of teachers. These labs have generated demand from students and the wider community. Although additional engagement was planned with school parent associations, COVID-19 related restrictions hampered the implementation of these activities.
- UNICEF engaged with the wider student and parental community in the form of a children's science show, where some of the episodes were covered through VET project, as well as a TV show on Good Parenting Practices (GPP), where parental concerns are addressed in an engaging format, with expertise and best practices shared by international and local experts. Such engagement allowed UNICEF to reach out and engage with wider audiences in Abkhazia.



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Progress on activities

Output 1. Assessing the ways to improve the management and delivery of VET

The COVID-19 crisis illustrated not only the unpreparedness of the local entities and VET colleges for such a large-scale social disruption, but also the lack of professional, technological and technical knowledge and ICT capacities. Specifically, there was a shortage of skilled mid-level professionals to effectively manage existing resources and facilities to deal with the negative impact of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the lack of appropriate managerial skills in the VET sector to effectively coordinate the work of the colleges, provide clear guidance and leadership, and effectively manage the existing resources and the sanitary supplies provided by international organizations. In addition, education facilities had no WHO-recommended trainings on safety, sanitary and hygienic issues. Absence of items for sanitary and hygienic needs (such as disinfectants, soap, etc.) and underdeveloped sanitary facilities were a problem as well.



Safety, sanitary and hygienic supplies provided by UNDP to VET Collage in Gudauta

VET colleges under the df Ministry of Education and Language Policy (MoELP) offer professional education to about 700 or 800 students out of 60,000 college-age young women and men in Abkhazia (2021, Labour Market Assessment; 2019, Mindaugas). The results of roundtables with stakeholders indicated that more young women and men would enter VET if college managers update the old-fashioned professional training programmes, introduce a flexible education process, develop new short courses and programmes relevant to the needs of SMEs and the labour market, and introduce new student-oriented teaching methodologies. SMEs expressed considerable interest in tailored short-term trainings in VET system. The VET colleges also have real potential to at least double the student enrolment between 2022 and 2025.



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A series of assessments and studies suggested that until 2019, SMEs rarely interacted with colleges and did not work on improving respective VET programmes. UNDP began working on identifying the most demanded professions within the changing labour market/SMEs in 2019-2020 to address the needs of local population and SMEs in general and the population in the disadvantaged regions (remote and/or rural areas). However, the pandemic interrupted the work and undermined further linkages and interactions between colleges and private sector/SMEs due to the lack of appropriate professional skills, modern technologies, personnel trained in ICT, and online education, as well as labour market fragmentation. Yet, after seeing the first results of the rehabilitation of VET facilities in 2021-2022, private businesses expressed their interests in professional training for their staff members and/or accepting VET students for work-based learning (WBL) and even hiring them.

The labour market in Abkhazia needs serious inflow of qualified VET graduates not only with professional working competencies but also with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge so they can contribute to sustainable economic growth, economic stability and improving the wellbeing of the population. To achieve this goal, the colleges need to engage students and foster relations with the private sector through apprenticeship programmes, which would be a powerful source of competitive advantage for young people entering the labour force. There is also an urgent need for creating the proper mobilization of private sector and for cultivating entrepreneurial mind-set, as the current training programmes for college graduates do not match with the needs of SMEs and labour market.

1 /Indicator: Institutional assessment of VET sector carried out; Baseline (No); Target: (Yes)

Achieved - Institutional assessment of VET sector was accomplished, which provided comprehensive review and mapping of all major VET institutions in Abkhazia, as well as assessment of physical conditions of VET colleges, rehabilitation needs and assessment of educational specializations.

1.2. /Indicator: # of follow-up assessments of VET sector; Baseline (0); Target: (1)

Achieved - Follow up Assessment of VET sector was carried out, which provided the analyses of the progress of project activities in improving the access to vocational education in Abkhazia. The evaluation analysed results achieved and challenges encountered, and provided recommendations to adjust implementation modalities, as needed. This was particularly important for recalibration and adjustment of the Joint Programme in the context of COVID19 related restrictions.

1.3 /Indicator: Mid-term vision with due consideration of LLL developed; Baseline (No); Target: (Yes)

Achieved – Mid-term vision assessed the Joint Programme’s results, lessons learned and contributions to improving access to quality vocational education and training. The international experts, identified by UNDP through competitive processes, completed the document on “Developing the Mid-term Vision on Supporting Life-Long Learning (LLL)/Continuing Education in Abkhazia.” The



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comprehensive “Mid-term Vision Report” provided a set of recommendations on improving quality, effectiveness and accessibility to the formal VET sector, LLL as well future steps for improving the training process for VET students and teachers in general.

1.4. /Indicator: # of consultation meetings with local stakeholders to address the gaps in the field of LLL; Baseline (0); Target: (10)

Achieved - More than 10 consultation meetings with VET local stakeholders took place between 2019 and 2022. The meetings involved representatives of private sectors, VET institutions and local CSOs/NGOs. UNDP jointly with partner organizations arranged a series of roundtables/dialogue discussions with major stakeholders from all districts of Abkhazia, including remote and rural areas, identifying gaps in the field of LLL, bottlenecks and future priorities for effective evidence-based LLL intervention. The dialogue meetings brought together more than 140 representatives from various sectors of society to address cross-cutting themes such as career guidance and counselling, emphasis on soft and digital skills, skills relevance and adaptability to modern labour market, etc.

1.5 /Indicator: Labour Market Demand Survey carried out; Baseline (No); Target: (Yes)

Achieved - Labour market Demand Survey was carried out to identify the demand and supply challenges between VET system and public/private sectors. The report, prepared by the international expert with assistance of local experts has become an important part of the evidence-based design for tailoring the VET educational and training activities to labour market needs.

1.6. /Indicator: # of consultation meetings with potential partner colleges; Baseline (0); Target: (at least 10, including in disadvantaged areas)

Achieved - 12 Consultation meetings were arranged with VET institutions, including two in disadvantaged regions (“Tkvarchel/i College of Humanities and Industry” and “Gal/i College of Humanities”). The pieces of evidence collected from the meetings suggested that professional education programmes in VET colleges should involve beneficiaries and private sector representatives (especially from the disadvantaged areas) into VET planning and delivery process. The VET sector – through the specialized VET Career Counselling Centre – should be more proactive in setting up consultations involving educators and SMEs practitioners. They should work together in setting up new programmes (short- and long-term) and ensure the quality and efficiency.

Output 2. Supporting the elaboration and implementation of best VET practices in selected areas

Lockdowns, restrictions and the lack of medical and human capacities to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the educational process in general and VET in particular. The entire VET sector was locked down twice (from March to June and again from October to December 2020) due to



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the absence of and appropriate equipment for delivering DOL and lack of the stable access to the internet and even to electricity at the colleges and at students' homes. Moreover, over the past three years, every winter Abkhazia experienced regular electricity cuts negatively affecting the entire educational process. In addition, VET teachers had very limited or no DOL experience and only 6% of VET educators and trainers had “excellent” computer skills and no VET teachers had experience in e-learning (2020, Assessment Report on Online Education; 2020, Evaluation of DOL Preparedness).

The health vocational training sector also faced considerable gaps in teaching and learning methods, and extremely poor physical conditions of educational facilities (dilapidated premises, lack of proper roof and toilet conditions). Theory-based learning has been continuously applied due to outdated professional knowledge and lack of capacities of teaching personnel, as well as outdated or poor quality of visuals, medical mannequins and other materials to enable application of practice-based approaches in teaching and learning. Prior to equipping the facilities to incorporate DOL techniques, UNICEF provided IT literacy courses for the teaching staff as well as students of medical colleges. Equipped facilities allow application of available learning materials and visualization of topics related to the subjects and topics taught (i.e. obstetrics, paediatrics, surgery, infection prevention and control, first aid etc.). However, colleges and teachers need follow-up supervision and guidance on application of the resources available online into daily teaching.

Up to 150 students graduate on annual basis from two medical colleges of Abkhazia. The pandemic highlighted the extreme shortage of competent cadres of health workers at the primary and secondary healthcare levels, and such professions as midwife, general nurse, paediatric nurse, feldsher etc. continue to remain in high demand in the local primary healthcare (PHC) system. However, low salaries of health workers and lack of supervision and monitoring etc, are not attracting students to pursue these careers. Moreover, the curricula for health professions are outdated and do not meet international standards. While UNICEF worked to improve the image of medical colleges – from improved physical safety and attractiveness of its premises to specialized equipment to facilitate local pre- and in-service training – further work is needed to update the curricula.

UNICEF conducted a comprehensive assessment of Sukhum/i Medical College (SMC) and Gagra Medical School (GMS) to analyze key constraints and bottlenecks which limit the functioning and performance of the schools and detailed key recommendations for actions to be undertaken under the scope of the project. Based on the extremely poor and dilapidated conditions of the assessed premises, and lack of safe environment for learning and teaching, UNICEF, in close coordination with the EU, developed plans to rehabilitate the colleges to improve the environment for learning and teaching.

UNICEF's profile and positioning among local medical professional networks enabled entry points for initial actions at the medical colleges. The renovations were split in two phases to allow for buy-in among the management and teaching staff and to provide space to attract interest in further improvements specifically on updating the teaching curriculum. All stakeholders strongly supported the improved



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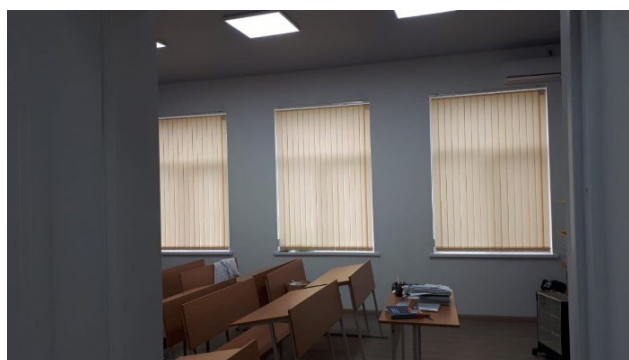


conditions from aesthetical (cleanliness) and safety points of view however updating of the curriculum remained a sensitive issue and was not able to be moved forward in the current operating environment.



SMC toilet facilities rehabilitated

At SMC, UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of a roof of the building to protect it from severe leakage during rainfalls, renovated ten classrooms and a hall on the first floor, and complete renovation of toilet facilities to allow equal, safe, gender sensitive access to WASH facilities. In addition, a drainage system was installed to protect the ground floor from floods.



Rehabilitation of classrooms in SMC



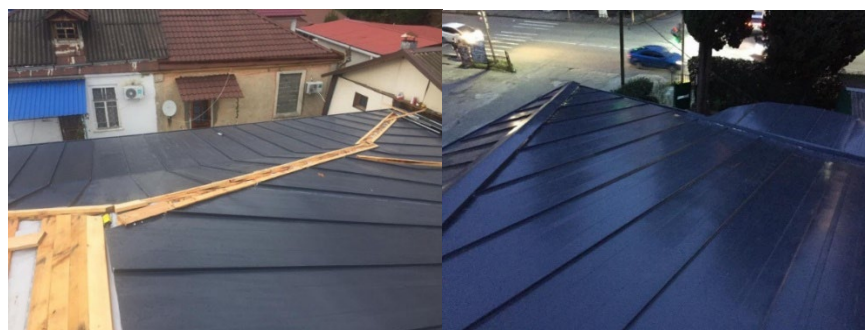
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At GMS, the roof was renovated to protect the building from leakage during rainfalls.



GMS roof rehabilitated

Renovated spaces were furnished, and three classrooms (two in SMC and one in GMS) were equipped with ICT equipment to allow application of digital materials and visualization of the subjects taught. Specialized mannequins (adult, newborn and children) were delivered along with visual aids (posters on obstetrics, neurology, cardio-vascular system etc.) and teaching materials to enable a shift from theory-based to practice-based teaching and learning (for example, learning injection techniques through application of special mannequins). The intervention will better prepare graduates to actual manipulations and inputs during their service in medical institutions.



Visual materials distributed to SMC and GMS



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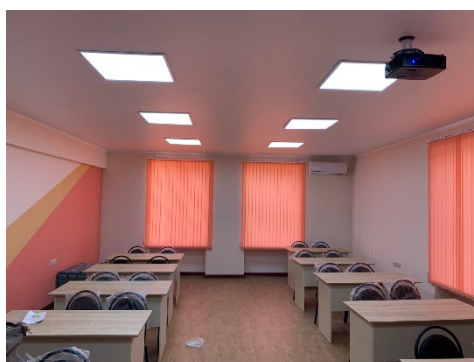
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The social environment became more VET friendly, absorbing and adopting VET initiatives due to the success of visibility and awareness campaigns by UNDP in promoting the prestige of working professions. The campaigns included numerous roundtable meetings, regular communication and social media, and a series of TV programmes on improving the image of working professions. The rehabilitation work at VET colleges received regular coverage in social media and private TV, contributing to substantially improving the image of colleges and the VET educational process. Many families expressed their interest in learning more about VET education. Young women and men participated in career guidance and orientation events and subscribed to social media platforms. In addition, private businesses expressed an interest in professional training for their staff members (if such training was tailored to their needs) and/or accepting VET students for work-based learning and even hiring them.



Career Guidance and Orientation Center: Photo credit: UNDP project office in Sukhumi



Renovated classroom at Abkhaz Multi-Industrial College; Photo credit: UNDP project office in Sukhumi

UNICEF has been also actively engaged with parents and teachers to deepen their understanding of VET approaches and expectations, however, additional work and support is needed in order to overcome the existing stigma and perceptions about VET and professional education within the local society. This is particularly important for parents, as they play a key role in guiding their children's future careers.



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2.1. /Indicator: Teachers Skills Development Concept elaborated; Baseline (No); Target: (Yes)

Achieved – The Teachers Skills Development Concept (TSDC) was elaborated to organize effective distance learning for VET administrative personnel and teachers thorough improved access to manuals and video materials on new teaching/learning methods. The TSDC focused on enhancement of the competencies of VET educators, administrative personnel/managers and stakeholders in applying digital and online learning in the education process.

2.2. /Indicator: # of syllabi developed in selected professions through international consultancy/expertise; Baseline (0); Target: (4)

Achieved - Four syllabi were developed in selected professions with support of international and local consultancy/expertise. 1. Syllabus of the professional development programme in horticulture, including teaching materials to enhance VET delivery was developed through international consultancy/expertise. 2. Syllabus of the professional development programme in the art and business of handicraft, including teaching materials to enhance VET delivery was developed for VET teaching personnel/managers, students and stakeholders. 3. Syllabus of professional development programme was prepared for VET administrative personnel/managers and stakeholders to enhance their competencies in improving innovative entrepreneurship education, training and coaching. 4. Syllabus of professional development programme for VET educators, administrative personnel/managers and stakeholders was developed to enhance the competencies in integrating information and communication technologies (ICTs) into educational process and applying the EU experience in the digital transformation of education. These syllabi were adapted to the local educational environment and labour market needs, and were delivered to VET institutions, taking into consideration the geographic balance in central and eastern districts of Abkhazia. These four syllabi were developed for building bridges between labour market and colleges by visualizing the experience and knowledge acquired by major stakeholders and by applying this knowledge into practical training programmes relevant to the needs of the local labour market at a local level. These educational programmes were especially important for the eastern districts of Abkhazia and beneficiaries from rural and remote areas and young women and men from disadvantaged groups.

2.3. /Indicator: # of academic personnel of VET establishments to visit third country on a study trip; Baseline (0); Target: (15 with at least 50% female participants)

Partially Achieved - 10 participants (at least 50% female participants), including four representatives from the private sector (entrepreneurs), six representatives from the VET sector and VET training establishments participated in the third country study visit. The main objective was to strengthen knowledge in modern teaching approaches in LLL as well as in vocational education standards and facilitation of continuous dialogue between VET sector and labor market. (Istanbul, Turkey 2021).



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2.4. /Indicator: # of academic staff of VET establishments trained locally in new teaching methodologies; Baseline (0); Target: (50 with at least 50% female staff)

Achieved - international trainers provided 4 trainings to local VET staff involving more than 60 academic and management staff in 2021. Due to COVID-19 related restrictions, most of the trainings were conducted online: Handicraft 15; Agriculture and horticulture – 15; VET education on entrepreneurship and modern technologies (Poland) – 15; VET education and building links with SME (Azerbaijan) – 15.

2.5. /Indicator: # of administrative staff of VET colleges trained locally in management of VET establishments; Baseline (0); Target: (15 with at least 40% female staff)

Achieved - international trainers provided a series of trainings for personnel of VET colleges in management of VET establishments involving more than 15 administrative staff (with at least 40% female staff). Due to COVID-19 related restrictions, most of the trainings were conducted online by a professional training team from Kazakhstan. This training was conducted online by an experienced international trainer using as examples the work of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in Central and Eastern Europe; the online mode of programme delivery was chosen because the trainer could not travel to Abkhazia due to pandemic-related restrictions.

2.6. /Indicator: # of local VET teachers provided with ToT courses; Baseline (0); Target: (15 with at least 50% female teachers)

Achieved - In total 32 local VET teachers were provided with ToT courses (with at least 60% female staff). 10 local VET teachers were trained by a local trainer in Hospitality. 12 local VET teachers were trained in effective organization of distance learning of VET administrative personnel and teachers through access to the manuals and video- materials on new technologies and learning methods. 10 local VET teachers, and teachers from the schools were trained on how to use the main concepts of the CDIO initiative (Conceive-Design-Implement-Operate) for innovations in the teaching-learning process.

2.7. /Indicator: # of students in selected professions supported with new teaching materials, including textbooks, training kits, teaching equipment, furniture, etc. Baseline (0); Target: (800 with at least 40% female students).

Partially achieved - 760 students (per year) in selected professions supported with new teaching materials, including textbooks, multimedia materials, training kits, teaching equipment, furniture, and new career guidance online platforms (website-based educational platform and Instagram, etc. (at least 60% female students). For example, the Guidebook covered recommendations on practical usage of soft skills (e.g., student-centred education, case studies, capacity building for higher employability of VET students, etc.). A billboard on new teaching methodologies to be used by five colleges across



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Abkhazia supplemented the Guidebook. These activities were implemented by the local CSOs: Amilat Resurskua, Ochamchira/e Youth House, STEMLAB and Sukhum/i Youth House.

2.8. /Indicator: # of academic and administrative staff of VET colleges provided with training in using the new teaching material and multimedia equipment; Baseline (0); Target: (30 with at least 50% female staff)

Achieved - 35 academic and administrative staff of VET colleges received trainings and multimedia equipment (at least 70% female staff). All these trainings were conducted online through newly established and localized online training programmes, as international trainers could not travel to Abkhazia due to pandemic-related quarantines. These trainings were also reinforced through the CSO-produced Guidebook (training kit) on capacity building for college educators and managers. UNDP distributed the Guidebook to VET academic staff at colleges across Abkhazia.

2.9. /Indicator: # of students have improved access to rehabilitated VET institutions; Baseline (0); Target: (1000 with at least 30% female students)

Partially Achieved - 760 students have improved access to rehabilitated VET institutions (at least 60% female students). UNDP largely completed the partial rehabilitation and provision of equipment to three colleges. The colleges were selected through a series of assessments, which included a set of recommendations on selecting VET colleges, educational programmes and vital equipment. These interventions could be considered as major contribution to improving the learning environment in the VET sector and provision of better quality education to a broader group of potential students.

Output 3. Developing the Education Sector to Support VET

Training of teachers on life skills and language instruction to support VET

With the emergence of COVID-19 in early 2020, UNICEF focused on the development of online teaching platforms for both students and teachers. These platforms were tested in 2020 and were operationalized in early 2021. These online platforms allow for continuation of learning when in-person trainings are not possible and allows for expanded access to various educational materials.

The trainings, supervision and consultations with teachers on Life Skills and specific language needs for teaching and explaining science and technical subjects was carried out. A guidebook was developed and teacher training activities were conducted with 43 teachers receiving intensive training on Life Skills and science and technical subjects.

Trainings and instructions materials and other support materials were distributed for pre-service and in-service teachers. The online teacher professional development portal (www.ashkol.org) has been developed for teachers and local education experts, all the training and capacity building materials have



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been digitalized and uploaded on the portal. This online portal allows students to get access to online resources and can communicate with their peers on subject matters.

A Life Skills course was also developed on the basis of the positive feedback received from SCI online course. A 6-week long course on Life Skills was piloted in January 2022, with a total of 43 participants have taken part in the online course on Life Skills. The course was carried out both online and with face-to-face interactions and supervisions from international and local education experts. This hybrid format proved to be very effective, as it ensures deeper understanding, as well as higher level of ownership and commitment from participants.

Training of science and technical subject teachers on how to use SCI through the ‘whole school’ approach in order to interest students in VET

UNICEF tailored the student-centred instruction (SCI) approach to the specific needs of science and technical subject teachers. A guidebook was developed to support the reference and instruction material for teachers in ensuring ‘the whole school approach’. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and related social distancing measures, UNICEF changed the planned modality of teacher capacity building activities to online modalities. The initial transition was slow, with shorter online sessions carried out on Zoom, however, with the teachers very soon managed to improve IT skills and in the second year of the project, UNICEF was able to launch a 6-week long online course on SCI. The course was built around 6 modules with preparatory sessions, individual and group work, and seminar sessions with international education experts. The course was completed with a 2-day in-person workshop, where the course participants presented their individual works and planed for the next steps.

The course participants significantly improved their knowledge and understand of SCI, but moreover, they themselves became advocates of SCI and introduction of student-centered approaches throughout schooling in Abkhazia. The course participants have been organized into an online professional network and some even formalized themselves into an experts group called “Teachers for Innovation in Abkhazia’s education”. This course attracted a lot of attention and received very positive feedback from participants. As a result, a second round of the course was launched. A total of 49 teachers and local education experts have successfully completed the online course on SCI.

Development and piloting of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programmes

UNICEF worked closely with local education experts to conduct a comprehensive assessment on the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subject needs of schools in Abkhazia. The assessment included online surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with teachers of science and technical subjects. The sample included teachers from urban and rural schools across Abkhazia.



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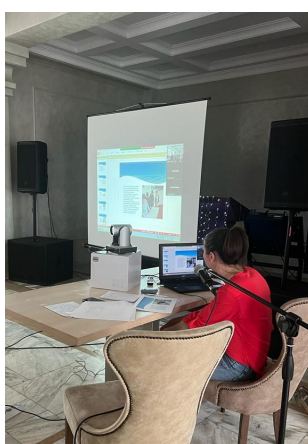
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The STEM needs assessment was the foundation for the development of the STEM programme in schools in Abkhazia. A programme and curriculum were elaborated by international and local education experts. Once fully drafted and translated, it was shared with the key education decision-makers in Abkhazia. The curriculum, as well as the guide for the programme was edited and 250 copies of it were printed and distributed among teachers from participating schools during accompanying trainings.

There was a competitive selection process to identify 13 schools to participate in the pilot STEM programme. Detailed application forms with requirements were distributed to all schools, and these were also accompanied by an online and TV information campaign. Each school that wanted to take part in the competition had to apply with a detailed STEM project, with participation of at least two teachers (one science/technical subject and one from humanities). Based on the applications and proposals, local education experts and decision-makers ranked all the proposal and eventually selected 13 schools with the strongest proposals.

The assessment also informed the development of a tailored training programme for teachers. Teachers from these 13 schools were invited to STEM subject trainings, a total of 56 teachers underwent various capacity building activities in the field of school-based STEM education. All of the teachers worked in groups and conducted master classes in their schools based on STEM techniques they developed during trainings and workshops. The master classes received very positive feedback from leadership, but also from regional boards of education and subject specialists. There is currently a discussion and understanding that additional support might be need for further mainstreaming STEM subjects into schools across Abkhazia.



Teachers presenting their STEM masterclasses presentations to other teachers. Photo credit: UNICEF FO

Establishment of model STEM Labs in schools in Abkhazia



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Based on an Abkhazia-wide STEM competition, 13 schools across the region were selected for STEM programme piloting; the selection of schools was first of all based on the quality of the STEM project ideas that the teachers came up with, however, it was also considerate of the geographic and linguistic community of the school. Out of these 13 schools, 10 schools received equipment that is needed to conduct STEM integrated programming; while the 3 biggest schools had model STEM lab hubs established. The STEM lab hubs included full-fledged rehabilitation of the facilities. The STEM lab hubs are used not only by the schools itself but also as regional hubs for students and teachers from other schools. These hubs may also be used in the future to support students from families that cannot afford covering private classes on science and technical subjects after school hours. This initiative is currently under discussion with Heads of the Regional Boards of Education and could be launched in September 2022 and may significantly contribute to project sustainability.



STEM Lab sign, Photo credit: UNICEF Sukhumi

Support awareness raising of parents, teachers and students to understand the importance and value of VET

The parent and teacher community play a major role in the decision making of students about their future career paths. UNICEF had originally planned a series of events and activities with parents, however, most of them had to be altered or scaled back due to the overall political climate, which was further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic related limitations, where establishment of face-to-face trustworthy relations with newer target audience (parents) were significantly limited. Although not at the originally planned scale, UNICEF continued engaging online with representatives of parental communities from previously engaged schools, reaching 10,000.



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Despite these constraints, UNICEF still managed to engage with wider parental community in the form of a children's science show, where some of the episodes were covered through VET project, as well as a TV show on Good Parenting Practices, where parental concerns were addressed in an engaging format, with profound expertise and international best practices being shared by international and local experts. Such an engagement allowed UNICEF to reach out and engage with wider audiences in Abkhazia. In preparation of each of the episodes, UNICEF collected information and questions from parental communities, and selected local and international experts, who could provide informed responses. Such a modality and format will be further applied by UNICEF.

3.1. /Indicator: # of teachers trained on Life Skills to support VET; Baseline: 120; Target: 1200

Achieved - A total of 1089 teachers were trained through various types of capacity building exercises, trainings and workshop on topics related to SCI, CLIL, Life Skills and education management. The trainings were conducted by international education experts, as well as by trained locally engaged education experts. The trainings were conducted both online and offline, as well as in a hybrid modality.

3.2 /Indicator: # of lifeskills guidebooks produced; Baseline (0); Target: 500

Achieved - Lifeskills guidebooks were developed, edited and 500 were produced for distribution to teachers and local experts.

3.3 /Indicator: # of science and technical subject teachers trained on SCI; Baseline (350); Target: 750

Achieved - A total of 800 teachers from all districts of Abkhazia were trained on SCI approaches in science and technical subject teaching.

3.4 /Indicator: # of SCI teacher guidebooks produced; Baseline (0); Target: 600

Achieved - SCI teacher guidebooks in science teaching were developed and 600 produced for distribution among teachers, who have completed the training.

3.5 /Indicator: number and quality of STEM programmes; Baseline (0) Target: STEM programmes in 10 schools

Achieved - STEM programmes were developed and introduced in 13 pilot schools across Abkhazia.

3.6 /Indicator: # of STEM manuals produced; Baseline (0); Target: 250

Achieved - STEM manuals were developed, designed and 250 produced for distribution among teachers from 13 STEM pilot schools.



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3.7 / Indicator: # of established STEM Labs in schools; Baseline (0); Target: STEM Labs in 3 schools in Abkhazia (centre, west and east);

Achieved - 13 STEM labs were established (10 STEM labs and 3 STEM model labs). The model labs were fully renovated and equipped to become STEM hubs for the entire regions.

3.8 / Indicator: # of parents, teachers and students who have taken part in awareness raising activities on VET; Baseline: (0); Target: 1600 parents, students and teachers exposed to VET activities;

Achieved - 8,000 parents and caregivers were reached and engaged throughout the project duration including through online engagement through parental shows.

3.9 /Indicator: # of activities carried out to support the multi-lingual language education; Baseline (3 roundtables, 1 study trip, 2 international conferences, series of trainings); Target: 6 activities

Not achieved - The study tour had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak and political constraints. This component was reprogrammed to support the establishment of the STEM labs in 13 schools.

Output 4. Establishing cooperation schemes and dialogue with public and private employers

The economy struggled at all levels in Abkhazia during the pandemic as most of SMEs would regularly close their doors and therefore stop hiring the VET graduates. According to a series of private interviews, VET teachers received their salaries with significant delays. Due to the economic difficulties, colleges had difficulties to attract new students as many families were unable to pay even small tuition fees for education at VET colleges.

International and local assessments have indicated that none of the colleges have reached a level where they can cover the need for professional skills and competencies in working professions. However, there is significant potential that the combination of a) right interventions and b) tailored support to the VET sector might help to translate the work of the colleges into concrete results. These results include (but are not limited to) improving the educational process in VET, better employability of college graduates and better preparedness of young women and men for the labour market needs. The public reaction to the regular roundtable consultation meetings and regular outreach campaigns and communication through social media became an effective tool in improving support for and prestige of VET education.

Skills and competencies matching labour market needs can be a potentially very effective driver for building bridges between labour markets and the network of VET colleges in Abkhazia. The level of effective bridging and matching in large degree depends upon mechanisms for involvement and



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participation of private and public enterprises in planning the educational process in the VET sector. During 2020, most of the SME partners have had limited opportunities for engaging in VET-relevant decision-making process, as most SMEs were struggling to adjust their work to the new environment of COVID-19-related restrictions and focusing on survival of their business models. In this situation, UNDP's activities under the Joint Programme have been directed to series of proactive actions to empower colleges in various ways.

UNDP made significant progress under Output 4. The Joint Programme issued grants to several local CSOs (Sukhum/i Youth House, Ochamchira/e Youth House and Amilat Resurskua). The grants were designed towards capacity building of the CSOs in organizing activities for establishing formal and non-formal educational programmes and apprenticeships with private and public employers and interested parties, with at least 30% female youth and at least 20% from disadvantaged groups.

4.1. /Indicator: # of youngsters have access to specific entrepreneurial study programmes; Baseline (0); Target: (200 with at least 30% female youngsters including at least 20% from disadvantaged groups)

Achieved - In total up to 210 youngsters have access to specific entrepreneurial study programmes (at least 30% female youngsters and 20% from disadvantaged groups). 96 VET students and administrative personnel (8 digital on-line learning (DOL) webinars) participated in the webinars on the EU experience and major trends in managing and promoting entrepreneurial culture, interest in SME self-employment among youth and SME business acceleration. 25 youngsters participated in specific entrepreneurial study programme on pottery. 15 VET students have access to the basics of business planning. 80 VET administrative personnel/managers and stakeholders participated in 16 digital on-line learning (DOL) webinars on the EU experience and major EU trends in managing and promoting STEM education.

4.2. /Indicator: # of youngsters receive professional orientation, career guidance and counselling services; Baseline (0); Target: (200 with at least 30% female youngsters including at least 20% from disadvantaged groups)

Achieved - at least 230 youngsters (40% female including at least 20% from disadvantaged regions) received professional orientation and career guidance services through the Career Guidance Centre (CGC) at the "Sukhum/i State College". UNDP contracted a local CSO to arrange a series of study trips from the Gali and other districts to visit the CGC. UNDP's grantee also organized Quest Games on working professions, reaching more than 80 college students from the Sukhumi town.

4.3. /Indicator: # of dialogue meeting facilitated between VET establishments and potential (private and public) employers; Baseline (0); Target: (30)

Achieved - Between 2019 and 2022, UNDP organized up to 30 dialogue meetings and workshops to facilitate dialogue between VET establishments and private/public employers. This work was accelerated with the opening of the Career Guidance Centre at the "Sukhum/i State College" in 2021.



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The participants discussed different topics during a series of visits to private and public enterprises and used multimedia materials on working professions and improving prestige of VET colleges and private sector (including 12 documentaries on working professions to stakeholders).

4.4. /Indicator: # of awareness raising events/measures arranged to activate the public/private sector in Abkhazia; Baseline (0); Target: (10)

Achieved - Between 2019 and 2022, UNDP organized more than 10 awareness raising events (meeting with public and private sector, roundtables and group discussions) including the remote and eastern districts of Abkhazia. In addition, students from the Gali district participated in sport competitions in Sukhumi town.

4.5. /Indicator: # of representatives from VET establishments as well as private/public sector participate in a study trip to third country; Baseline (0); Target: (30 with at least 50% female participants and 30% representatives from disadvantaged groups)

Partially achieved - 20 representatives from VET establishments and private/public sectors (at least 60% female participants including 30 % representatives from disadvantaged groups) participated in a study trip abroad (Turin in 2019 and Istanbul in 2021). The study trip to North Macedonia was cancelled due to COVID19 related restrictions.

4.6. /Indicator: # of partnership documents signed between VET establishments and public/private actors of labour market; Baseline (0); Target: (6).

Achieved - Between 2019 and 2022, UNDP initiated signature of six partnership agreements between VET establishment and private companies providing apprenticeship for handicraft, bakery, barista, and kitchen services. UNDP facilitated the signing of partnership documents between VET establishments and private/public actors in the labour market in order to build better visibility and prestige of colleges and to develop soft skills, networking and leadership competencies among college students. The signing of these documents led to establishment of three high-profile apprenticeships for VET students.

Output 5. Creating a pool of farmer field school master trainers in plant protection sector

In line with the objective of the joint programme to improve the effectiveness, quality and accessibility of vocational education system in Abkhazia, to fill the gap in plant protection knowledge and extension, FAO created and trained a pool of Plant protection experts in Abkhazia.

Abkhazia is subject to a range of various pest outbreaks: Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, Cabbage White Butterfly, Fall Armyworm. In addition, the high humidity of the region triggers fungal diseases development on primary physical damages provoked by pests. As public extension services provide



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recommendations to farmers mainly in case of major challenges such as large outbreaks, farmers are most of the time left without guidance. Farmers who can afford travel to Russia to seek for technical support, while the rest of the community relies on neighbouring farmers' advice.

FAO through the Training of Trainers and Farmer Field Schools disseminated concepts and information on IPM and GAP including early warning and pest monitoring system, economic thresholds for interventions, appropriate and safe use of chemicals and training on crop diversification.

FAO initially identified 16 Master Trainers' extensionists for capacity strengthening in function of their ability to commit to trainings and demonstration days. 13 out of these 16 finalized the two years training cycle provided. As a result, the 13 extensionists improved practical skills that will allow for further supporting farmers of Abkhazia on field.

The mid-term evaluation of the Programme demonstrated that:

- Farmers are gaining new knowledge about crop protection and they are putting into practice. This is saving them money, helping to protect the environment, and is likely contributing to a reduction in one of the most serious crop pests in Abkhazia
- Through the pool of 13 Master Trainers and the Lead Farmers they work with, the benefits of the JP are reaching large numbers of farmers

Develop a farmer field schools' curriculum based on the main crops, as well as defining the indicators for extension advice on Integrated Pest Management and Crop Diversification;

Under the project, FAO provided technical support to Action Against Hunger (AAH) in establishing and implementation of four Farmer Field Schools (FFS) in Gali district of Abkhazia, including identification and registration of farmers for FFSs, identification of priority crops, establishing demonstration plots, development of FFS curriculum.

For this purpose, FAO and AAH identified four Farmer Field School respectively dedicated to hazelnut, tangerine, peach and pepper cultivation, as shown in the below table:

District	Lead Farmers	Focus crops	Farmers Members of FFS
Gali	Gurtskaya Roman	Hazelnut	15
Gali	Dzigua Zurab	Tangerine	15
Gali	Tungia Fridon	Pepper	17
Gali	Khubulava Mamuka	Peach	10

In line with the Project Document and Work Plan, FAO developed Farmer Field Schools Curricula with the engagement of the NGO "ACSA – Moldavian National Agency for Rural Development". The



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of the United Nations



curriculum included four practical hands-on learning through demonstration field days in each of the four focus crops of Gali district from July 2020 to May 2021.

FFS implementation included external field days and cross visits, where farmers from other villages, who are not members of FFS attended practical demonstrations. The cross visits were organized in synergy with FAO's 18 FFS created in the rest of Abkhazia through the USAID funded project "Integrated Pest Management (IPM)". Farmer Field School members from Gali attended field demonstrations and experiments conducted in other districts of Abkhazia and vice versa, which supports connections between communities.

Besides the FFS Curricula, the project also supported Farmer Field Schools of Gali through creation jointly with FFS Lead Farmers and FFS members of Seasonal Calendars and Annual Training Plans for each of the above focus crops. The seasonal calendar described seasonal activities pertinent to each focus crop, related problems and tasks as well as potential solutions. While the annual training plan presented training themes synchronized with the seasonal calendar. FAO developed these documents to guide the four Farmer Field Schools created by AAH through their learning path.

Develop training modules for Training of Master Trainers (TMT)

The project conducted a training needs assessment through in-depth discussions with the Heads and Deputy Heads of District Agricultural Departments, teachers of Agrarian University (AGU) and amongst farmers in order to tailor training modules for extensionists. Following this training needs assessment, the Project developed an adapted Curriculum, presentations, video materials, handouts, and atlases of pests and diseases for capacity strengthening of Master Trainers extensionists throughout 2020 and 2021. The training themes composing the Curriculum were selected to fit issues that farmers' concerns, including phytosanitary analysis of wintering pests and diseases, planning of phytosanitary measures, winter - spring pruning for fruiting, forecast of the development of diseases and pests based on the weather forecast, effects of fertilization on tolerance to diseases and pests in fruit and vine plantations and others.

Organize two (2) indoor Trainings of Master Trainers (TMT) on FFS methodology and plan the season-long FFS programme;

Initially FAO partner NGO "ACSA – Moldavian National Agency for Rural Development" was to implement training in Abkhazia and meet with the identified Lead Farmers and Master Trainers to plan the season-long FFS programme as well as organizing Training of Trainers (ToT) on needs-based extension support. However, due to the pandemic part of the training programme has been conducted online while facilitated by the Project agronomists in situ.



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TMT sessions in 2020 at Prospect Centre in Sukhumi

Organize at least five Trainings of Master Trainers (TMT) for local professional staff and extension service providers, farmer associations and NGOs on the concepts and practices of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Crop Diversification;

The Project team organized two cycles of 13 Training of Master Trainers. The 1st cycle of six training sessions took place during July to November 2020 and the 2nd cycle during February to July 2021.

During the training sessions, Master Trainers extensionists gained advanced knowledge in plant protection and good agricultural practices based on the international experience. Especially for the extensionists from the District Agricultural Departments, who were working with outdated knowledge, it was a unique opportunity to access innovative practices and learn about needs-based extension support which is well developed in Moldova. During facilitating field days following each theoretical training sessions, with the support of FAO agronomists the trainees practiced through provision of extension services to individual farmers through monitoring their orchards, identifying problems, and advising farmers.

Following up with the training:



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Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



- Master Trainers from the District Agricultural Departments graduated from the training programme along with the rest of the 13 trainees. They continue providing consultation and upgraded agriculture support to individual farmers upon request, visiting their farms, which is exactly what the project aimed for.
- Master Trainers from the University strengthened their practical knowledge and skills through practicing provision of extension support to farmers and implementing of various field experiments together with farmers. These included an experiment to determine the level of starch in the apple fruit to identify the ripeness and the timing for harvesting, experiment with fruit tree leaves to identify the lack of nutrients based on leaf symptoms, experiment to determine the soil pH in order to identify the suitability of the soil to cultivated crops and adapt recommendations for fertilization, production and use of organic soil amendments - compost for plant fertilization.



Master Trainer Kama Chukbar facilitating a Field Day in Gulripshi district



Ceremony of handing over certificates of completion to Master Trainers

Organize and at least two (2) national IPM conferences/workshops on good agricultural practices and review experience of other countries and raise awareness on modern technologies;

FAO has conducted three workshops in 2020 and three in 2021 with the participation of plant protection specialists from de facto Committee on Ecology, Institute of Ecology, Plant Protection Department of the de facto Ministry of Agriculture, Institute of Botanic, Environmental NGO “Apsabara” and Abkhaz Research Forest Experimental Station on IPM.

During these workshops, FAO discussed with these stakeholders existing plant protection issues, including on control of BMSB, Red Palm Weevil, Boxwood Moth and Chestnut Blight and presented the analysis of plant protection measures being taken by local actors as well as recommendations based on the international good practices.



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of the United Nations



Particular emphasis at these workshops were given to BMSB, its monitoring, implementation of control measures and awareness raising against the pest. BMSB has been a major issue in Abkhazia since 2017. The de facto government organizations and farmers invested much effort to control the pest and take preventive measures with the support of international organizations, including FAO and AAH. Monitoring of the level of infestation of BMSB in 2020 and 2021 showed a significant decrease in the pest infestation level, compared to previous years. This improvement is related to a range of factors including application of BMSB integrated management measures disseminated through trainings in Abkhazia by AAH and FAO since 2019, such as mechanical pest control activities during wintertime, use of pheromones during spring and summer, as well as chemical control.



Meetings of the Working Group on Invasive Pests and Diseases at Riviera (30 July 2020) and Prospect Centre (25 September 2020) in Sukhumi

Strengthen existing agricultural training centers to implement Farmer Field Schools with a focus on IPM, non-chemical based pest control measures and crop diversification.

FAO strengthened the capacity of two specialists of the AAH Agricultural Training Centre in Gali, engaging them into the pool of Farmer Field Schools Master Trainers and training sessions under IPM training programme implemented with the support of Moldavian experts. Following the training programme, these two specialists/Master trainers facilitated implementation of four rounds of field demonstration in Gali. As these specialists had not received training since the end of their studies, they obtained new knowledge in IPM, GAP and learned about needs-based individual extension support. Following the graduation from IPM FFS training for Master Trainers, these specialists continued providing training in the AAH Agricultural Training Centre. One of them engaged as trainer for the agricultural training courses in Vocational Education Centre in Gali under the Joint Programme.

Nevertheless, since there is a lack of plant protection and agricultural extension specialists in Abkhazia it is necessary to further collaborate with the Agricultural Training Centres, Vocational Educational Schools and the Agrarian Department of the Abkhaz University to support them both with formal theoretical courses as well as practical learning through field demonstration. Especially there is a lack in agronomists among youth. While there is a growing demand from private farms and companies for young



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skilled agronomists, which are very few, young graduates of the Agronomy Faculty provided for now with low level of competencies are left without offers. After graduation from the Agrarian Faculty of the University, most of the young graduates turn to other fields of employment. Therefore, capacity-strengthening programmes for young agronomy specialists developed jointly with the de facto Ministry of Agriculture and District Agricultural Departments for improvement of the technical education provided at the University and creation of paid internship opportunities to motivate them would enhance employment opportunities for the youth of Abkhazia and allow for a more resilient agriculture in the region.

Provide technical advice in the implementation of 4 Farmer Field Schools (FFS)

FAO provided technical support and advice in establishing and implementation of the above four FFSs in Gali district in Abkhazia to introduce a farmer-to-farmer hands on practical learning on Integrated Pest Management, Crop Diversification and Good Agricultural Practices. Jointly with Action Against Hunger (AAH) four farmers were identified amongst 16 applicants from different villages of Gali each to lead a Farmer Field School. Out of various crops farmers cultivate, each farmer has identified a priority crop to focus the FFS learning on. Once the Lead Farmers were identified, FAO conducted the technical assessment of the plots and validated them and started working with them. The Lead Farmers registered neighbouring farmers growing similar crops to join their Farmer Field School.

In line with the Project Training Plan, during July 2020 to June 2021, four rounds of FFS field demonstrations have been conducted, facilitated by two trained Master Trainers extensionists and FAO agronomists. After the completion of the AAH component of the project, FAO has integrated these four schools into its network of Farmer Field Schools established under the USAID funded project on “Integrated Pest Management through Farmer Field Schools in Abkhazia”.

These Farmer Field Schools attended practical experiments in other Schools and hosted crop diversification demonstration plots - potato seedlings, vegetable production (broccoli, rockets, lettuce and other salad crops), establishment of an orchard hosting 450 seedlings of two Italian hazelnut varieties (Tonda di Giffoni and Tonda Gentile delle Langhe), installation of drip irrigation systems.

The members of the four FFS have shown great motivation and participated in each training activity conducted. In overall, the farmers’ knowledge on IPM has improved and they have adopted practices demonstrated at the demonstration plots. Although some farmers had difficulties to apply all the recommended practices and measures due to lack of plant protection materials and equipment available in Abkhazia over the pandemic. Some of the farmers also faced challenges related to unfavourable weather conditions, as strong winds in summer 2021 brought damage to crops and led to harvest losses.



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Field Day in Shashikvara, Gali, June, 2020



Field Day in Repi, Gali, September 2020



Field Day in Nabakevi, Gali, February 2021



Field Day in Saberio, Gali, March 2021

Challenges encountered during the project implementation



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During the implementation period, the Joint Programme faced five major sets of broader challenges in working on improving the access to vocational education in Abkhazia. This included as follows: lack of ownership, lack of broad participation, lack of clear regulatory environment, lack of strategy in dealing with the challenges of COVID-19, and lack of ICT equipment and skills in DOL among the college educators.

Lack of ownership¹ among college educators, managerial personnel and stakeholders disengaged them from participation in improving the vocational education sector in general and the quality of education in particular. VET colleges were chronically underfunded and underequipped for several decades, reducing motivation among existing personnel and undermining the recruitment of new personnel into the VET sector. In addition, centralized control over the educational programmes, the use of curricula that remained unchanged over decades and a very rigid educational delivery structure (which is still built around requirements to study strictly for three or four years) significantly reduced interest in new teaching methods, moving away from traditional teacher-centred to student-centred education and educational innovations.

Initially, there was a lack of interest in STEM approach among teachers, stating that in principle, STEM elements were already present in education in Abkhazia, hence, there was a lack of genuine interest among teachers and lack of ownership at the initial stage. Based on this initial experience, UNICEF with the support of international experts, adjusted the planned format and took a much slower, but deeper approach of training and engaging with local teachers. A smaller group went through a series of workshops and consultations, where under the guidance of the international experts, local teachers themselves developed the STEM approach for Abkhazia. A slower, but more participatory approach, allowed for the development of a much higher sense of ownership among teachers, which proved to be much more effective for advocating for a wider STEM introduction into schooling.

At the level of decision-making, the health VET sector faced profound gaps in planning of medical staff needs, preparing required professionals through pre- and in-services training and proportionate personnel distribution all over Abkhazia. Lack of prioritization of healthcare human resources needs, particularly, general medical staff, that is highly required at the level of primary healthcare and polyclinic services, left narrow opportunities to leverage the potential of medical college and its ability to supply the local healthcare system with educated and skilled nurses, feldshers, midwives and other FLMWs. Therefore, an attempt to collectively review the outdated curricula faced heavy resistance as this was perceived as admitting of own weakness and inability to train quality personnel. At the same time, successful implementation of the infrastructure and supplies component of VET health activities

¹**Ownership** is a concept promoted by the ETF as follows: **Ownership** is underlined as a primary principle for ensuring more engaged participation and appropriation of the results of the analysis by reflecting upstream on the added value of the process and the use of the analysis, in the national policy context or bilateral dialogue with the EU and donors. For more details see: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2018-10/Torino%20Process%202018-20%20guidelines.pdf>



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to improve teaching and learning facilities served as a trust-building element and facilitated grounds conducive for further thematic soft interventions in the area in the future.

Lack of broad participation² hindered the improvement of vocational education in general and the VET educational process in particular. There are no mechanisms or arrangements for various stakeholders to engage with VET colleges to deliver important inputs about the current situation in the labour market and the needs of SMEs. According to anecdotal evidence and interviews with interlocutors, the VET colleges do not have a tradition of inviting businesses to their premises, organizing regular meetings of SME representatives with students or inviting representatives of private and public enterprises to participate in the curriculum development process or in assessing skills and competencies. The lack of participation by external stakeholders in organizing and planning the educational process could be also seen in the rudimentary development of apprenticeship programmes or even their complete absence. This has a big negative impact on the quality of VET education as up to 90% of educational materials are often delivered through traditional lectures and only about 10% of knowledge is acquired through apprenticeship (work-based learning). This lack of participation leads to a situation where the skills and competencies of VET graduates do not match the needs of private/public organizations.

UNICEF engaged parents, teachers, school administration and local authorities in the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes, where possible. Although some of this was hindered due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were some positive developments in the participation of stakeholders. In addition, the project was designed to create additional linkages between secondary education and VET. This will continue to be a focus area in the future.

Strengthening the technical capacities of plant protection experts through creation of a pool of FFS Master Trainers in Integrated Pest Management and Good Agricultural Practices has proved to be critical for providing effective agricultural extension support services in Abkhazia. Most of the national experts, academics, who participated in the project trainings acknowledged the increased knowledge and practical skills they have gained on the advanced techniques in integrated pest management and good agricultural practices in project training programs and field experience. However, there is a need to further strengthen capacities of plant protection experts and agronomists, as there is a dire lack of skilled specialists in the region. It is necessary to cooperate with the Abkhaz University and de facto Ministry of Agriculture to intensify expert support to technical education through theoretical, in situ trainings and field demonstration activities.

² **Participation** is a concept promoted by the ETF as follows: **Participation** is reinforced to encompass the main actors involved in skills development, with the emphasis on social partners and civil society. There will be key milestones during the process (elaboration, discussion and dissemination of the report) adapted to the national situation (e.g. national monitoring cycle, links with EU sector policy dialogue). Participation is in line with effective multi-level governance principles.
<https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2018-10/Torino%20Process%202018-20%20guidelines.pdf>



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Lack of a clear regulatory environment became an especially painful issue due to COVID-19-related lockdowns and regulatory changes towards significantly tightening numerous restrictions. These policy and regulation changes heavily affected the ability of the Joint Programme to work on comprehensive assessments, leading to cancellations in bringing in international expertise for evaluating the local VET sector and labour market, and reducing absorption capacities of local stakeholders for learning about best practices from EU member states. This included a multi-month embargo on issuing an entry permit for the international expert. There were difficulties, cancellations and delays in organizing workshops and interviews with stakeholders. UNDP postponed the third-country study trip for stakeholders from the VET sector for a year.

There was general confusion about the regulation of short-term courses for students and short-term online training programmes for managers and educators due to the absence of a Law on Education (the draft Law has been under discussion for the past four years). Many stakeholders doubt that the current administrative regulation recognizes short-term training programmes for colleges, businesses and young women and men. In turn, this led to confusion and problems in developing dialogues with various stakeholders around the region in organizing training courses, both traditional people-to-people and in DOL formats. The Joint Programme also faced difficulties in accessing information in the field of education and labour market development, as various institutions provided contradictory numbers and figures.

Lack of strategy in dealing with the challenges of COVID-19. Interviews with interlocutors suggest that there was no entity nor group of institutions working on strategy in dealing with the challenges of COVID-19 throughout 2020. The lack of local capacity to effectively deal with this emergency and come up with a viable strategy for saving the educational process from total collapse led to the situation where the management of VET became quite unpredictable and chaotic. Colleges did not develop any clear approach for implementing WHO recommendations on measures to control the spread of COVID-19 among students. This development affected the ongoing projects in two ways. One was the unpredictable changes in entry to and around the region. The second concerned business activity regulations if the business was regularly shutdown or requested to reduce its workload and number of staff.

UNICEF organized additional online sessions for teachers and education experts in Abkhazia on how to manage and deliver education during quarantine and education disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. These online sessions and consultations with international experts proved to be very effective as these online sessions required very basic IT knowledge and were a first entry point for more complex online settings.

Lack of ICT equipment and skills in DOL among college educators not only undermined the quality of the entire range of educational programmes, but also hindered the competitiveness of VET graduates in the local labour market. Anecdotal evidence and interviews with interlocutors suggest that the local



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labour market is experiencing a severe shortage in cadres capable of handling even basic ICT services and working with ICT equipment.

Unfortunately, even existing ICT equipment was not used effectively due the lack of college educators skilled in DOL. The entire academic process in the VET sector was simply closed for more than six months (with intervals) due to the absence of DOL experience and appropriate equipment. In fact, only 6% of VET teachers had “excellent” computer skills and no VET teachers had experience in e-learning (2020, Assessment Report on Online Education).

UNICEF supported the provision of ICT equipment (with other resources) to schools and building the digital skills of teachers. Shorter sessions were used initially to allow for teachers to improve their IT skills. The skills have significantly improved enabling for the launch of a 6-week online training course.



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Lessons learned during the project implementation

The active implementation of the project activities and proactive work on engagement with stakeholders provided a series of lessons learned and helped to develop good practices.

- Establishing and maintaining trusted working relations on the ground with a wide range of local stakeholders (including colleges, CSOs, SMEs, and the df local administration) was of great importance for the success of implementation of the Joint Programme;
- Experience of 2020 illustrated the need for systematic and well-tailored work in developing ICT literacy rate and an introduction of DOL at all levels of the VET sector. This includes training administrative and teaching personnel in basic ICT skills and computer literacy, and online training and webinars for all stakeholders;
- Active involvement of local stakeholders and partner organizations – especially CSOs – can help to build better support for the Joint Programme and avoid or at least reduce barriers and challenges in dealing with sensitive issues, including work on assessing local institutions and getting information and statistical data on various topics through formal and informal channels;
- A carefully designed and implemented visibility component of the Joint Programme (using both traditional and new social media) should take into consideration sensitive local issues, to enable the programme to proceed smoothly. Local stakeholders are more open to collaboration when they know about past success stories through various channels of communication;
- Small buy-ins integrated into the Joint Programme improving vocational education would also help to facilitate establishment of better working relations;
- It is essential to develop and promote online communication tools with young women and men through the platforms they use and understand, such as Instagram, Telegram and web platforms;
- New programmes require additional time to build trust, understanding and most importantly sense of ownership among local stakeholders, as education remains to be a highly politicized topic, additional time and effort should be considered when planning long term interventions that are expected to bring systematic and habitual change.



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Communication and Visibility

UNDP actively worked with local partners and stakeholders on implementation of the “Communication and Visibility Plan” and developing a series of visibility activities, including approximately 50 TV appearances (up to 15 multimedia products, 20 news reports and 20 interviews) for use by VET colleges in Abkhazia. The team faced numerous challenges in implementing the visibility actions. It had to present programme activities very carefully taking into consideration the sensitivity of the working environment in Abkhazia. It also had to deal with several attempts by some institutions to politicize the information about activities of the joint programme.

The communications and visibility activities, undertaken under the EU-UN Joint Programme were designed for specific target audiences of VET stakeholders. All activities were agreed with the European Union Delegation in Georgia, in line with the Joint Visibility Guidelines for EC-UN Actions in the Field and the specific visibility standards. The EU visibility was ensured at all times, including at the beneficiary level. With due respect to sensitivities around programming in Abkhazia, the main communication tools to be used for the communication and visibility activities included:

- Visibility items/materials (leaflets, brochures, press-releases, training materials, conference materials, photos, videos), including ensuring visibility of the European Union, and the local partner/s, on the publication prepared by the Joint Programme. The Programme also envisaged preparation of the audio-visual material about the intervention, as well as design of several banners for the Programme to be used for meetings and events;
- Events organized by the Programme (e.g., awareness meetings, consultation meetings, dialogue meetings, monitoring visits, expert visits, study tours, trainings, etc.), including: the Joint Programme launch event and the Programme closing conference
- Social media - due to sensitivities, the corporate websites of UNDP and FAO were used as the primary vehicle of general information about the programme, including the updates about the ongoing activities, results, and impact as possible. Press releases, articles, publications, photo galleries, and success stories generated under the joint programme were posted on Youtube and to the relevant Instagram. Key stories and updates were re-posted to regional and global web resources of UNDP, UNICEF and FAO as possible.
- Media - to keep the Programme on the mainstream media radar and ensure accurate coverage of the Programme implementation; opportunities were explored based on case-by-case principle for covering the Programme activities and results in the local Abkhaz media (public and private television, radio and print press);

The Joint Programme generated series of visibility materials, arranged visibility events with young people from different districts of Abkhazia and collaborated with TV stations (mainly private) and video producers in producing video materials and short trailers as follows:



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- Roundtable with high school students addressing gaps in the field of LLL and better understanding labour market needs. School Facebook article “Who to become and how to choose a profession?” (February 2020):

<http://sukhum-school3.com/school-life/news/kem-stat-i-kak-vybrat-professiyu/>

- News coverage by Private ABAZA TV on UNDP’s rehabilitation work at the Abkhaz Multi Industrial College entitled “Modern, high quality and mobile! The Abkhaz Multi Industrial College has a new auditorium 22.04.2020”:

<https://abaza.tv/news/?ID=7755>

- News coverage by Private ABAZA TV on UNDP’s rehabilitation work at the “Sukhum/i State College” entitled: “The replacement of the roof is being completed at the Sukhumi State College.”

<https://abaza.tv/news/?ID=7741>

- News coverage by Private ABAZA TV on UNDP’s work on promoting working professions entitled: “People in the [working] profession: Studio Artel Daura Gumba”:

<http://abaza.tv/news/index.php?ID=7851>

- News coverage by Private ABAZA TV on UNDP’s work on promoting working professions in remote rural districts such as Ochamchire entitled: “People in the [working] profession: Designer Tamuna Shamugia”:

<http://abaza.tv/news/?ID=7885>

- News coverage by Private ABAZA TV on UNDP’s work on promoting working professions in VET colleges and the prestige of VET education entitled: “People in the [working] profession: Teacher-engineer Alisa Bartsyts, 06/17/2020”:

<https://abaza.tv/news/?ID=7939>

- News coverage by Private ABAZA TV of a training on new teaching methods delivered by international trainers and organized by UNDP entitled: “New teaching methods [in VET]”:

<https://abaza.tv/news/index.php?ID=7981>

- News coverage by Sputnik Abkhazia on UNDP’s work on renovation of the “Sukhum/i State College entitled”: “For the first time in 115 years, the overhaul of the Sukhum State College began in the capital of Abkhazia”: (2020)

<https://m.sputnik-abkhazia.ru/video/20200702/1030454156/Pereorientatsiya-s-remontom-kak-menyayut-Sukhumskiy-goskollledzh.html>

<https://t.me/SputnikAbkhazia/3010>



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Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



- News coverage by Private Gal/i TV on UNDP's work on renovation of Gali college and promoting working professions in VET colleges and the prestige of VET education entitled: "REPAIR WORKS IN GAL HUMANITARIAN COLLEGE": (2020)
<https://www.facebook.com/GalTv.rgt/videos/344834016605963/>
- News coverage by Private ABAZA TV on training in new teaching methods delivered by international trainers and organized by UNDP entitled: "Teachers of Abkhaz colleges completed online training [on innovations in education]" (2020):
<https://abaza.tv/news/?ID=8622>
- News coverage by Private ABAZA TV on UNDP's work in promoting working professions in VET colleges and the prestige of VET education in 2020 entitled: "On the Joint Programme of the European Union and the United Nations to improve secondary vocational education":
<https://youtu.be/qj3UUO7cAkA>
<https://abaza.tv/news/?ID=8841>
- About the Joint Programme of the European Union and the United Nations to improve secondary vocational education (3 Feb 2021)
<https://youtu.be/qj3UUO7cAkA> //
<https://abaza.tv/news/?ID=8841>
- About the Joint Programme of the European Union and the United Nations to improve secondary vocational education (Feb 2021)
https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=447861196630561&id=289938471532089
- About the VET international training on handicraft news coverage 1 (May 2021):
<https://t.me/apsuatv/1364>
- About the VET international training on handicraft news coverage 2 (May 2021):
<https://fb.watch/67u3QThRI7/>
- About the VET international training on handicraft news coverage 3 (May 2021)
<https://fb.watch/67u9fsAXfl/>
- The online training program for VET colleges continues in Abkhazia, (03-06-2021)
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1129088497559392&ref=sharing>
- In the capital, in the Sukhumi Youth House, a round table was held (14-06-2021)
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=912354286278333&ref=sharing>



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- Gal /iTV: Graduation Report from the Gali College in Gali district (June 30, 2021)
<https://www.facebook.com/GalTv.rgt/videos/513984636514584/>
- The EU-UN Joint Program on VET in Abkhazia has repeatedly provided assistance to the Gal/i Humanitarian College (Sep 09, 2021)
<https://www.facebook.com/GalTv.rgt/videos/388566569445279/?sfnsn=mo>
- Educational trip to the Bosphorus for VET educators and stakeholders// 17 Sept. 2021
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=jGvDJ53Cyvk>
- International trained Professor Quadrado provided training on the topic “CDIO International Initiative” at the Gali Humanitarian College (Oct 15, 2021)
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=379851913867067>
- Chefs with and without dreams: how Gali College prepares specialists like hot cakes (14.10.2021)
<https://sputnik-abkhazia.ru/20211014/povara-s-mechtami-i-bez-kak-v-gale-gotovyat-spetsialistov-naraskhvat-1035882628.html>
- The ASU hosted a lecture by a doctor of sciences, a member of the European Engineering Academy (15-10-2021)
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=484632219192188>
- News report and interview Ceramics exhibition (Nov 08, 2021)
<https://youtu.be/AixEwnK6s2w>
- FINAL VIDEO OVERVIEW OF 2021 (Nov 29, 2021)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D52Gx1QBQOA>
- TV coverage Closing event for UNDP’s VET Project (Nov 29, 2021) by Abkhaz TV
<https://youtu.be/fekMQykNVYs>
<https://fb.watch/9CRla1hJOB/>
<https://fb.watch/9CRj1kEkb8/>
- TV coverage Closing event for UNDP’s VET Project by ABAZA TV (Nov 29, 2021)
<https://abaza.tv/news/index.php?ID=9860>
- TV Round Table on digital transformation of education by Abkhaz TV (Dec 3, 2021)
<https://www.facebook.com/234131566664052/posts/4697704033640094/>



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Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



- Soccer among VET college girls' teams by ABAZA TV (Dec 10, 2021)
<https://abaza.tv/news/?ID=9902>
- Interview about the future of the VET education in Abkhazia
<https://youtu.be/E9C7e-sT2Ug>
- Coverage of Cold Chain Equipment and Medical College activities in Sukhumi (two topics covered simultaneously):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OY0I4xzIRpQ&t=85s> - Abkhaz TV (Russian)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHE8lZnCe50> - Abkhaz TV (Abkhaz)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ghh0ifGnyB8> - 9:36 Abaza TV (Russian)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5NfEVFOPtU> - Abaza TV (Abkhaz, extended)
<https://apsnypress.info/ru/item/7466-yunisef-pomog-s-remontom-v-gagrskom-i-sukhumskom-medkolledzhakh> - Apsny Press (Medical colleges)
<https://apsnypress.info/ru/item/7465-sukhumskij-ofis-yunisef-priobrel-spetsializirovannoe-kholodovoe-oborudovanie-dlya-bezopasnogo-khraneniya-i-transportirovki-vaktsin-v-abkhazii> - Apsny Press
<https://telegra.ph/YUNISEF-prodolzhaet-podderzhivat-uchrezhdeniya-zdravoohraneniya-v-Abkhazii-04-11> - D News (telegram)
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CcnK6IIDj9s/>
- Support provided to the Medical Colleges in Sukhumi and Gagra:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKkZ5huvTrc> – AT (Abkhaz)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-osHWmWijs> – AT (Russian) (17:59 -)
<https://www.apsnypress.info/ru/item/5116-yunisef-peredal-sukhumskomu-medkolledzhu-i-gagrskomu-meduchilishchu-naglyadnye-posobiya> - Apsnypress
<https://www.facebook.com/2095153200731108/posts/3059518074294611/?extid=0&d=n> – df MoH FB page
- Interview of the Head of Gagra Medical School on Sputnik Abkhazia:
<https://sputnik-abkhazia.info/20211113/syzhlar-srytskhraandaz-a-dyoup-liudmila-kharazaaa-lourykh-1036270271.html>
- Links to the brochures on the breastfeeding and complementary feeding developed within EU-VET Programme to support the training of health workers:
<https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17938780213540619/>
<https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/18170338510179524/>
- Post on the brochures on the breastfeeding and supplementary feeding developed by UNICEF to support the training of health workers:
https://www.instagram.com/p/CQ_SfgWIAK6/ -



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Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



- TV coverage on UNICEF activities on promotion of breastfeeding (including within EU VET Programme as part of training of health workers):

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CPp3Cjelqmg/> -

During the reporting period, two press releases on project activities and plant protection inputs were distributed through media including TV.

EU and FAO continue supporting farmers in Abkhazia through a network of Farmer Field Schools experimenting Integrated Pest Management

05.03.21

In February 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), under the EU-UN Joint Programme on promoting Integrated Pest Management through Farmer Field Schools (FFS), supported the farming community through provision of fertilizers and plant protection material. 220 Farmer Field Schools members received inputs for the treatment of one hectare as part of integrated measures to control pests and diseases. Through the network of FFS, FAO promotes technically and economically rational use of chemicals to reduce risks to both health and environment.

<https://pressa.apsny.land/ru/item/2573-es-i-fao-pomogayut-abkhazskim-fermeram-s-vnedreniem-metodov-integrirovannoj-zashchity-rastenij>

<https://abh-n.ru/es-i-fao-prodolzhayut-podderzhivat-abkhazskix-fermerov/>

AGTRK Channel: <https://apsua.tv/newsdetail/?ID=19201> (13:00 min)

TV Channel Abaza: <https://abaza.tv/news/index.php?ID=8950> (27:50 min)

29.07.2020 – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), under the EU-UN Joint Programme supporting Farmer Field Schools and agriculture extension, delivered around one ton of plant protection inputs to partner institutions and farmers. The delivery includes 200 liters of fungicides intended to limit secondary fungal damages caused by the BMSB.

TV Channel Abaza: <https://abaza.tv/news/index.php?ID=8083> (12:13)

AGTRK Channel: <http://www.apsua.tv/newsdetail/?ID=18240> (8:40)

Online resources:

<http://www.apsnypress.info/news/es-i-fao-dostavili-sredstva-zashchity-rasteniy-abkhazskim-fermeram/>

<https://abh-n.ru/fao-i-es-peredali-fermeram-okolo-1-tonny-sredstv-zashchity-rastenij/>

<http://abkhazinform.com/item/11176-mezhdunarodnye-organizatsii-dostavili-sredstva-dlya-zashchity-rastenij-ot-vrediteljev>



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Indicator Based Performance Assessment:

	<u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
<p>Outcome 1. To improve quality, effectiveness and accessibility of the vocational education system in Abkhazia</p> <p>1. Indicator: # of youngsters have improved access to quality VET services; Baseline (0); Target: (1000 with at least 30% female youth)</p> <p>2. Indicator: Overall framework for education for # of VET professions improved; Baseline (0); Target: (5, including 2 women-centred professions)</p> <p>3. Indicator: # of trained professionals in different areas ready to provide VET training to final users (students, farmers, etc.) Baseline (0); Target: (65)</p>	<p>1. Indicator: Target Partially Achieved; 760 VET students (with at least 40% female youth) benefitted from newly rehabilitated classrooms in 5 colleges of Abkhazia;</p> <p>2. Indicator: Target Achieved; Overall framework for education for 5 VET professional programmes (2 women-centred professional programmes) were improved.</p> <p>3. Indicator: Target Partially Achieved; 42, trained professionals are ready to provide VET trainings. 25 professionals were trained in IT area ready to provide VET training to final users (teachers in the colleges and schools, VET students,) 12 professionals in different areas are ready to provide VET training to final users during a third-country trip to Istanbul. 5 professionals were trained in agriculture to provide VET trainings to the VET students specialized in farming.</p>	<p>1. Indicator: This target is partially achieved due to COVID crisis, which significantly affected on the education process in Abkhazia as well as speed of construction works.</p> <p>2. Indicator: This target is fully achieved.</p> <p>3. Indicator: This target is partially achieved due to the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic, which affected on education process as well as travel of international experts</p>	<p>Internal reports; Contract for Work, on-site monitoring reports</p>



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<p>Output 1. Assessing ways to improve the management and delivery of VET</p> <p>1.1 /Indicator: Institutional assessment of VET sector carried out; Baseline (No); Target: (Yes)</p> <p>1.2. /Indicator: # of follow-up assessments of VET sector; Baseline (0); Target: (1)</p> <p>1.3 /Indicator: Mid-term vision with due consideration of LLL developed; Baseline (No); Target: (Yes)</p> <p>1.4. /Indicator: # of consultation meetings with local stakeholders to address the gaps in the field of LLL; Baseline (0); Target: (10)</p> <p>1.5 /Indicator: Labour Market Demand Survey carried out; Baseline (No); Target: (Yes)</p> <p>1.6. /Indicator: # of consultation meetings with potential partner colleges; Baseline (0); Target: (at least 10, including in disadvantaged areas)</p>	<p>1.1 /Indicator: Target Achieved; Institutional assessment of VET sector was accomplished, which provided comprehensive review and mapping of all major VET institutions in Abkhazia, as well as assessment of physical conditions of VET colleges, rehabilitation needs and assessment of educational specializations.</p> <p>1.2. /Indicator: Target Achieved; Follow-up Assessment of VET sector was carried out, which provided the analyses of the progress of project activities in improving the access to vocational education in Abkhazia.</p> <p>1.3 /Indicator: Target Achieved; Mid-term vision assessed the Joint Programme's results, lessons learned and contributions to improving access to quality vocational education and training.</p> <p>1.4. /Indicator: Target Achieved; More than 10 consultation meetings with VET local stakeholders took place between 2019 and 2022. The meetings involved representatives of private sectors, VET institutions and local CSOs/NGOs. UNDP jointly with partner organizations arranged a series of roundtables/dialogue discussions with major stakeholders from all districts of Abkhazia, including remote and rural areas, identifying gaps in the field of LLL, bottlenecks and future priorities for effective evidence-based LLL intervention.</p> <p>1.5 /Indicator: Target Achieved; Labour market Demand Survey was carried out to identify the demand and supply challenges between VET system and public/private sectors. The report, prepared by the international expert with assistance of local experts has become an important part of the evidence-based design for tailoring the VET educational and training activities to labour market needs.</p> <p>1.6 /Indicator: Target Achieved; 12 Consultation meetings were arranged with VET institutions, including two in disadvantaged regions ("Tkvarchel/i College of Humanities and Industry" and "Gal/i College of Humanities").</p>	<p>1.1 /Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>1.2. /Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>1.3. /Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>1.4. /Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>1.5. /Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>1.6. /Indicator: Achieved;</p>	<p>International Assessments/International Reports</p>
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<p>Output 2. Supporting the elaboration and implementation of best VET practices in selected areas</p> <p>2.1. /Indicator: Teachers Skills Development Concept elaborated; Baseline (No); Target: (Yes)</p> <p>2.2. /Indicator: # of syllabi developed in selected professions through international consultancy/expertise; Baseline (0); Target: (4)</p> <p>2.3. /Indicator: # of academic personnel of VET establishments to visit third country on a study trip; Baseline (0); Target: (15 with at least 50% female participants)</p> <p>2.4. /Indicator: # of academic staff of VET establishments trained locally in new teaching methodologies; Baseline (0); Target: (50 with at least 50% female staff)</p>	<p>2.1. /Indicator: Target Achieved; The Teachers Skills Development Concept (TSDC) was elaborated to organize effective distance learning for VET administrative personnel and teachers through improved access to manuals and video materials on new teaching/learning methods. The TSDC focused on enhancement of the competencies of VET educators, administrative personnel/managers and stakeholders in applying digital and online learning in the education process.</p> <p>2.2. /Indicator: Target Achieved; Four syllabi were developed in selected professions with support of international and local consultancy/expertise. 1. Syllabus in horticulture, including teaching materials to enhance VET delivery was developed through international consultancy/expertise. 2. Syllabus in the art and business of handicraft, including teaching materials to enhance VET delivery was developed for VET teaching personnel/managers, students and stakeholders. 3. Syllabus was prepared for VET administrative personnel/managers and stakeholders to enhance their competencies in improving innovative entrepreneurship education, training and coaching. 4. Syllabus for VET educators, administrative personnel/managers and stakeholders was developed to enhance the competencies in integrating information and communication technologies (ICTs) into educational process and applying the EU experience in the digital transformation of education.</p> <p>2.3. /Indicator: Target Partially Achieved; 10 participants (at least 50% female participants), including four representatives from the private sector (entrepreneurs), six representatives from the VET sector and VET training establishments participated in the third country study visit.</p> <p>2.4. /Indicator: Target Achieved; international trainers provided 4 trainings to local VET staff involving more than 60 academic and management staff in 2021. Due to COVID19 related restrictions, most of the trainings were conducted online: Handicraft 15; Agriculture and horticulture – 15; VET education on entrepreneurship and Modern technologies (Poland) – 15; VET education and building links with SME (Azerbaijan) – 15.</p>	<p>2.1. /Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>2.2. /Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>2.3. /Indicator: Partially Achieved; This indicator is partially achieved due to the COVID 19 restrictions to travel abroad.</p> <p>2.4. /Indicator: Achieved;</p>	<p>International Assessments/International Reports</p>
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<p>2.5. /Indicator: # of administrative staff of VET colleges trained locally in management of VET establishments; Baseline (0); Target: (15 with at least 40% female staff)</p> <p>2.6. /Indicator: # of local VET teachers provided with ToT courses; Baseline (0); Target: (15 with at least 50% female teachers)</p> <p>2.7. /Indicator: # of students in selected professions supported with new teaching materials, including textbooks, training kits, teaching equipment, furniture, etc Baseline (0); Target: (800 with at least 40% female students)</p> <p>2.8. /Indicator: # of students have improved access to rehabilitated VET institutions; Baseline (0); Target: (1000 with at least 30% female students)</p>	<p>2.5. /Indicator: Target Achieved; International trainers provided a series of trainings for personnel of VET colleges in management of VET establishments involving more than 15 administrative staff (with at least 40% female staff). Due to COVID-19 related restrictions, most of the trainings were conducted online by a professional training team from Kazakhstan.</p> <p>2.6. /Indicator: Target Achieved; In total 32 local VET teachers were provided with ToT courses (with at least 60% female staff). 10 local VET teachers were trained by a local trainer in Hospitality. 12 local VET teachers were trained in effective organization of distance learning of VET administrative personnel and teachers through access to the manuals and video- materials on new technologies and learning methods. 10 local VET teachers, and teachers from the schools were trained on how to use the main concepts of the CDIO initiative (Conceive-Design-Implement-Operate) for innovations in the teaching-learning process.</p> <p>2.7. /Indicator: Target Partially Achieved; 760 students (per year) in selected professions supported with new teaching materials, including textbooks, multimedia materials, training kits, teaching equipment, furniture, and new career guidance online platforms (website-based educational platform and Instagram, etc. (at least 60% female students).</p> <p>2.8. /Indicator: Target Partially Achieved; 760 students have improved access to rehabilitated VET institutions (at least 60% female students). UNDP largely completed the partial rehabilitation and provision of equipment to three colleges. The colleges were selected through a series of assessments, which included a set of recommendations on selecting VET colleges, educational programmes and vital equipment. These interventions could be considered as major contribution to improving the learning environment in the VET sector and provision of better quality education to a broader group of potential students.</p>	<p>2.5. /Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>2.6. /Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>2.7. /Indicator: Partially Achieved; COVID crisis affected negatively on education process in Abkhazia</p> <p>2.8. /Indicator: Partially Achieved; COVID crisis affected negatively on education process in Abkhazia; .</p>
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<p>Output 3. Developing the education system to support VET</p> <p>3.1 /Indicator: # of teachers trained on Life Skills to support VET; Baseline (120); Target: 1200 teachers trained</p> <p>3.2 /Indicator: # of lifeskills guidebooks produced; Baseline (0); Target: 500</p> <p>3.3 /Indicator: # of science and technical subject teachers trained on SCI; Baseline (350); Target: 750 teachers from all districts of Abkhazia were trained</p> <p>3.4 /Indicator: # of SCI teacher guidebooks produced; Baseline (0); Target: 600</p> <p>3.5 /Indicator: number and quality of STEM programmes; Baseline (0) Target: STEM programmes in 10 schools</p> <p>3.6 /Indicator: # of STEM manuals produced; Baseline (0); Target: 250</p> <p>3.7 / Indicator: # of established STEM Labs in schools; Baseline (0); Target: STEM Labs in 3 schools in Abkhazia (centre, west and east);</p> <p>3.8 / Indicator: # of parents, teachers and students who have taken part in awareness raising activities on VET; Baseline: (0); Target: 1600 parents, students and teachers exposed to VET activities;</p> <p>3.9 /Indicator: # of activities carried out to support the multi-lingual language education; Baseline (3 roundtables, 1 study trip, 2 international conference, series of trainings); Target: 6 activities</p>	<p>3.1 /Indicator: Achieved: 1089 teachers trained</p> <p>3.2 /Indicator: Achieved 500</p> <p>3.3 /Indicator: Achieved: 800 teacher and local experts</p> <p>3.4 /Indicator: Achieved: 600</p> <p>3.5 /Indicator: Achieved: 13</p> <p>3.6 /Indicator: Achieved: 250</p> <p>3.7 / Indicator: Achieved: 13 STEM labs were established (10 STEM labs and 3 STEM model labs)</p> <p>3.8 / Indicator: Achieved: 8,000 parents and caregivers</p> <p>3.9 /Indicator: Achieved: 0</p>	<p>3.1 /Indicator: list of participants</p> <p>3.2 /Indicator: Printed and distributed materials</p> <p>3.3 /Indicator: List of participants</p> <p>3.4 /Indicator: 600 teacher guides were distributed</p> <p>3.5 /Indicator: school STEM curriculum and programmes</p> <p>3.6 /Indicator: materials and guidebooks printed and distributed</p> <p>3.7 / Indicator: STEM labs with equipment and teaching materials</p> <p>3.8 / Indicator: online engagement</p> <p>3.9 /Indicator: The activities had to be reprogrammed due to political climate and COVID-19 outbreak in Abkhazia</p>	
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<p>Output 4. Establishing cooperation schemes and dialogue with private and public employers</p> <p>4.1. /Indicator: # of youngsters have access to specific entrepreneurial study programmes; Baseline (0); Target: (200 with at least 30% female youngsters including at least 20% from disadvantaged groups)</p> <p>4.2. /Indicator: # of youngsters receive professional orientation, career guidance and counselling services; Baseline (0); Target: (200 with at least 30% female youngsters including at least 20% from disadvantaged groups)</p> <p>4.3. /Indicator: # of dialogue meeting facilitated between VET establishments and potential (private and public) employers; Baseline (0); Target: (30)</p> <p>4.4. /Indicator: # of awareness raising events/measures arranged to activate the public/private sector in Abkhazia; Baseline (0); Target: (10)</p>	<p>4.1. /Indicator: Target Achieved; In total up to 210 youngsters have access to specific entrepreneurial study programmes (at least 30% female youngsters and 20% from disadvantaged groups). 96 VET students and administrative personnel (8 digital on-line learning (DOL) webinars) participated in the webinars on the EU experience and major trends in managing and promoting entrepreneurial culture, interest in SME self-employment among youth and SME business acceleration. 25 youngsters participated in specific entrepreneurial study programme on pottery. 15 VET students have access to the basics of business planning. 80 VET administrative personnel/managers and stakeholders participated in 16 digital on-line learning (DOL) webinars on the EU experience and major EU trends in managing and promoting STEM education.</p> <p>4.2. /Indicator: Target Achieved; At least 230 youngsters (40% female including at least 20% from disadvantaged regions) received professional orientation and career guidance services through the Career Guidance Centre (CGC). UNDP contracted a local CSO to arrange a series of study trips from the Gali and other districts to visit the CGC. UNDP's grantee also organized Quest Games on working professions, reaching more than 80 college students from the Sukhumi town.</p> <p>4.3. /Indicator: Target Achieved; UNDP organized up to 30 dialogue meetings and workshops to facilitate dialogue between VET establishments and private/public employers. This work was accelerated with the opening of the Career Guidance Centre in 2021. The participants discussed different topics during a series of visits to private and public enterprises and used multimedia materials on working professions and improving prestige of VET colleges and private sector (including 12 documentaries on working professions to stakeholders).</p> <p>4.4. /Indicator: Target Achieved; UNDP organized more than 10 awareness raising events (meeting with public and private sector, roundtables and group discussions) including the remote and eastern districts of Abkhazia. In addition, students from the Gali district participated in sport competitions in Sukhumi town.</p>	<p>4.1. Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>4.2. Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>4.3. Indicator: Achieved;</p> <p>4.4. Indicator: Achieved;</p>	<p>Internal reports; on-site monitoring reports;</p>
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<p>4.5. /Indicator: # of representatives from VET establishments as well as private/public sector participate in a study trip to third country; Baseline (0); Target: (30 with at least 50% female participants and 30% representatives from disadvantaged groups)</p> <p>4.6. /Indicator: # of partnership documents signed between VET establishments and public/private actors of labour market; Baseline (0); Target: (6)</p>	<p>4.5. /Indicator: Target Partially Achieved; 20 representatives from VET establishments and private/public sectors (at least 60% female participants including 30 % representatives from disadvantaged groups) participated in a study trip abroad (Turin in 2019 and Istanbul in 2021). The study trip to North Macedonia was cancelled due to COVID19 related restrictions.</p> <p>4.6. /Indicator: Target Achieved; UNDP initiated signature of six partnership agreements between VET establishment and private companies providing apprenticeship for handicraft, bakery, barista, and kitchen services. UNDP facilitated the signing of partnership documents between VET establishments and private/public actors in the labour market in order to build better visibility and prestige of colleges and to develop soft skills, networking and leadership competencies among college students.</p>	<p>4.5. Indicator: This target is partially achieved due to the COVID 19 restrictions abroad.</p> <p>4.6. Indicator: Achieved</p>	
<p>Output 5. Creating a pool of master trainers in plant protection sector</p> <p>5.1. /Indicator: # of Farmer field schools curriculum developed and training modules for Master Trainers (TMTs) developed Baseline (0); Target: (1)</p> <p>5.2. /Indicator: # Framework of indicators for extension advice on Integrated Pest Management and Crop Diversification identified; Baseline (0); Target: (1)</p> <p>5.3. /Indicator: # of Master Trainers trained and ready to lead FFS implementation; Baseline (0); Target: (15)</p> <p>5.4. /Indicator: # of Trainings of Master Trainers (TMTs) for local professional staff and extension service providers, farmer associations and NGOs and # of Trainers for Facilitators (in coordination with ACF) for lead farmers. Baseline (0); Target: (15)</p> <p>5.5. /Indicator: # of Farmer Field Schools operational (in coordination with Action Against Hunger) Baseline (0); Target: (4)</p>	<p>5.1. /Indicator: 1 Farmer field schools curriculum developed and 2 Training modules for Master Trainers (TMT 1 and TMT 2) developed</p> <p>5.2. /Indicator: 0 Framework of indicators for extension advice on Integrated Pest Management and Crop Diversification identified</p> <p>5.3/Indicator: 0 Master Trainers trained and ready to lead FFS implementation</p> <p>5.4. /Indicator: 2 Trainings of Master Trainers (TMTs) for local professional staff and extension service providers, farmer associations and NGOs and 1 Training for Facilitators (in coordination with ACF) for lead farmers.</p> <p>5.5. /Indicator: 4 Farmer Field Schools operational (in coordination with Action Against Hunger)</p>	<p>5.1. /Indicator: Achieved</p> <p>5.2. /Indicator: Achieved</p> <p>5.3. /Indicator: 13 finalised the full training module, out of the 16 that started it</p> <p>5.4. /Indicator: Achieved</p> <p>5.5. /Indicator: Achieved</p>	<p>Internal reports, assessments</p>



ANNEX I: FINANCIAL STATEMENT
