

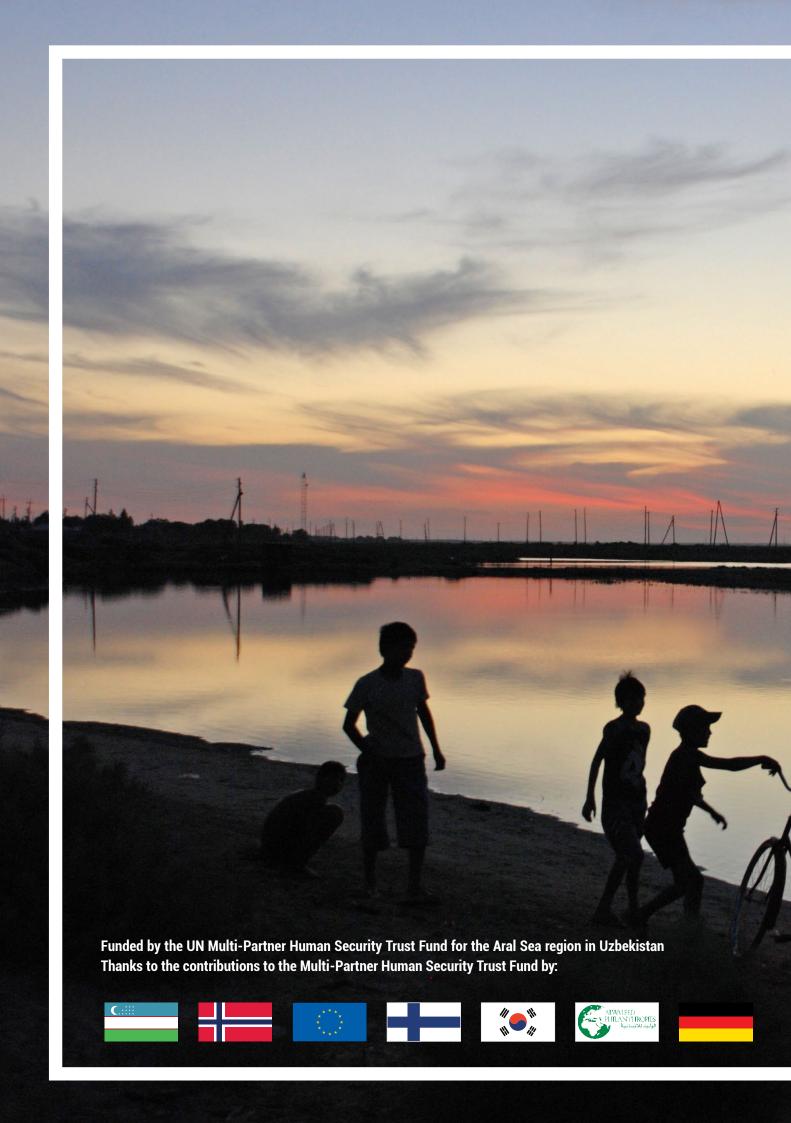






2023

# ANNUAL FUND-LEVEL REPORT







UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region

# ANNUAL FUND-LEVEL REPORT

2023

## **FUND INFORMATION**

Fund Name	UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan (MPHSTF).
Operational period	November 12, 2018 – December 31, 2024.
Goals	To address environmental, economic, health, food, and social insecurities in the most vulnerable areas of the Aral Sea region by providing innovative solutions to address environmental issues, improving the access of affected rural populations to basic services, and contributing to poverty reduction.
Expected Outcomes	Outcome 1: Stress on local communities due to the deteriorating environmental situation is reduced.
	Outcome 2: Employment and income generation opportunities for local communities are increased.
	Outcome 3: Local community access to affordable and healthy food and clean drinking water is secured.
	Outcome 4: The overall health of the local population is improved, and healthy lifestyle promoted.
	<b>Outcome 5:</b> The living conditions of local populations are improved, with particular focus on vulnerable groups such as women, children, and youth.
Reporting period	January - December 2023
Participating UN Organizations	UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNODC, FAO, WHO, UNOPS
Contact information	Ms. Consuelo Vidal, UN Resident Coordinator ad interim in the Republic of Uzbekistan, Co-chair of the MPHSTF Steering Committee. E-mail: consuelo.vidal@un.org.  Ms. Rusyan Jill Mamiit, UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Uzbekistan, Development Coordination Officer for Partnerships and Development Finance, RCO Focal Point for the MPHSTF. E-mail: mamiit@un.org.  Mr. Uktam Abdurakhmanov, Head of the MPHSTF Technical Secretariat. E-mail: uktam.abdurakhmanov@undp.org.

#### **Participating UN Organisations**



Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)



United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)



United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)



United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC)





United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)



World Health Organization (WHO)



United Nations Office For Project Services (UNOPS)

#### **Contributing Partners**



**European Union** 



Government of Finland



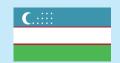
Government of Germany



Government of Norway



Government of the Republic of Korea



Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan



Alwaleed Philanthropies

#### **MPHSTF Parallel Contributors**



Government of Japan

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

AC	Advisory Committee on	RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
	Sustainable Development of the	RoK	Republic of Karakalpakstan
	Aral Sea Region	SAA	Standard Administrative
CFP	Call for proposals		Arrangement
CDPs	Community development plans	SC	Steering Committee of the
CS0	Civil Society Organization		MPHSTF
EU	European Union	SDGs	Sustainable Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture	OLUE	Goals
<b>ED</b> 4	Organization	SHIF	State Health Insurance Fund
FDA	French Development Agency	SMEs	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
GGGI	Global Green Growth Institute	STH	Soil-transmitted helminths
GIZ	German Agency for International		
Oall	Cooperation	SWASH	School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
GoU	Government of Uzbekistan	ToR	Terms of Reference
HCF	Health Care Facilities	TS	Technical Secretariat of the
ICT	Information and Communications Technology		MPHSTF
IICAS	International Innovation Centre	UNESCO	United Nations Educational,
ПОДО	for the Aral Sea Basin under		Scientific and Cultural
	the President of the Republic of		Organization
	Uzbekistan	UNFPA	United Nations Population
IOGT	Internet of Good Things		Fund
IMCI	Integrated Management of	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
	Childhood Illness	UNDP	United Nations Development
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control	IIIIODO	Programme
JP	Joint Programme	UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
MIIT	Ministry of Investment, Industry	UNOPS	United Nations Office for
	and Trade	ONOF 3	Project Services
МОН	Ministry of Health	UPSHIFT	Social innovation and social
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding		entrepreneurship programme
MPHSTF	UN Multi-Partner Human Security	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
	Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan	WASH FIT	Water and Sanitation for Health
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations		Facility Improvement Tool
PHC	Primary Health Care	WHO	World Health Organization
PUNOs	Participating UN Organizations		
1 01103	i articipating on organizations		

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

With due appreciation for partnerships with and contributions made by development partners since 2019, this 2023 Annual Fund-level report presents the operational performance of the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan (MPHSTF), specifically the key results achieved and activities implemented in cooperation with the Government of Uzbekistan, the UN Country Team, and civil society partners and other stakeholders, through 2023.

As of December 2023, the Fund has supported seven development projects implemented in eight districts of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and Nukus city. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of PUNOs, local governments and development partners, over 293.000 residents of Karakalpakstan have benefited across the areas of health, food, social, economic, and environmental security.

From 2021 to 2023, a joint programme by UNDP, UNFPA, and FAO addressed social, health, economic, and food insecurities in vulnerable communities in the Republic of The programme Karakalpakstan. has improved community development, infrastructure, and digital access, benefiting residents with thousands of electricity, clean drinking water, renovated healthcare facilities, and enhanced ICT skills. Another joint programme by UNDP, UNICEF, and FAO has focused on improving agricultural efficiency and innovation in the Aral Sea region. Key results included scientific research, capacity building for rural women and youth, sustainable agriculture training, and improved water infrastructure. These initiatives have empowered communities, promoted green development, and enhanced resilience.

The Joint Programme supported by the Fund and implemented by UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA, aims to strengthen the existing health system by introducing a new primary healthcare model developed with a new financing mechanism of output-based integrating universal health payment, coverage, promoting the screening, early identification and treatment of cervical cancer, and ensuring use of WASH and IPC practices in health settings. All these directions of work are critical for providing essential health services for most affected population groups in selected districts, including women, infants, early age children and adolescents. As a result, over 12,300 direct beneficiaries were reached through the cervical cancer screening programme, professional training programmes healthcare providers, parents and teachers, and also young people.

The implemented Fund's project by WHO and UNOPS guided investments in Karakalpakstan's health system through a conducted study that proposes targeted investments into hospital infrastructure, equipment and workforce, with strategic WHO involvement to guide public health needs, with the aim of fostering a technologically-advanced, sustainable, and efficient healthcare environment in the Muynak and Kungrad regions. The development of this medical network has the potential to assure better utilization of resources, and increase the number of beneficiaries, as well as the scope and quality of benefits they receive.

In November 2023 the Fund announced a Fourth Call for Proposals to the total amount of \$1.8 million within a thematic area aimed at reducing stress on Karakalpakstan's local communities due to the deteriorating environmental situation. Hopefully, the expected results to be selected within the call will further strengthen the socio-economic and environmental situation in the Aral Sea region.

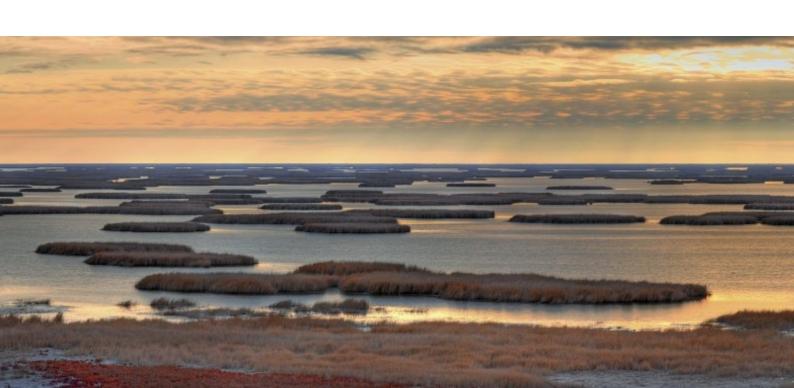
The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP-28 represented a crucial moment in the global journey towards a sustainable future, as it arrived at the midway point between the Paris Agreement's inception and its target. The Fund is pleased to announce that in partnership with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and the Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection, and Climate Change, it organized a COP-28 side event to shed light on the vital climate efforts of the Aral Sea Trust Fund, its remarkable achievements, and the Aral Sea's significance as a cautionary tale for climate-resilient development.

As per a decision of the Fund's Steering Committee made in November 2023,

the first operational cycle of the MPHSTF was extended until the end of 31 December 2024. In this regard, by learning from challenges faced and good practices developed through the existing fund's operations, and applying them throughout the entire Aral Sea region and Karakalpakstan as a whole, the Fund is moving towards a new cycle of the MPHSTF for the period of 2024-2030.

The Aral Sea Trust Fund will further contribute achieving to global commitments in the fields of climate change adaptation, the fight against desertification. and biodiversity conservation. These efforts will result in better food and health security, and reduced poverty in the most affected regions of Karakalpakstan. Guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 for Uzbekistan, the Fund will seek to contribute to Agenda 2030 implementation in Karakalpakstan.

The MPHSTF is dedicated to pursuing joint efforts for people, the planet, and prosperity, as embodied in our motto "The Sea Is Gone, People Are Not".



# 1. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE FUND

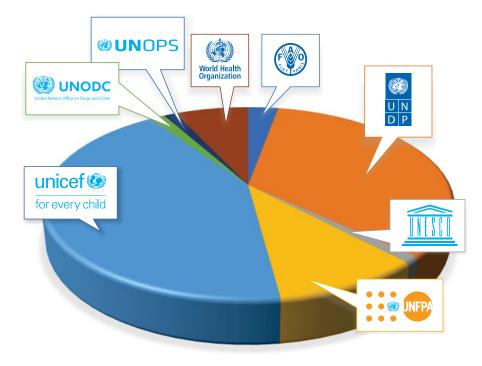
## **FUND IN NUMBERS**



#### **Contributing Partners**

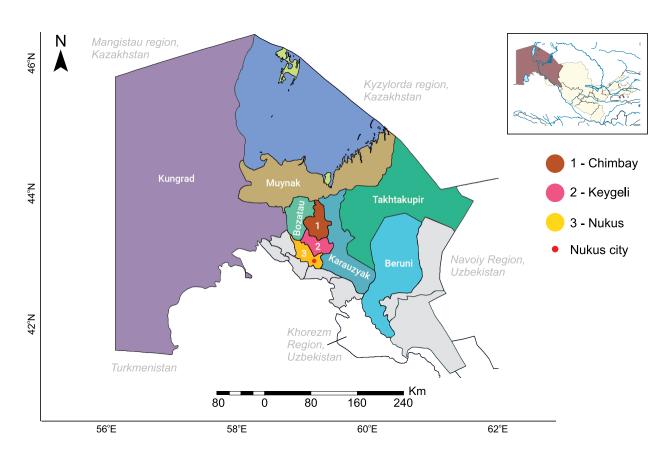


#### **Allocations, PUNOs**



For more information, see the Annual Financial Report, 2023

#### Impact on People - over 293,000 direct beneficiaries reached in 8 disctricts



## **HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023**

#### ···· JANUARY······

#### THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR PROJECT SERVICES JOINED THE FUND

**UNOPS**, as a central source for infrastructure, procurement and project management for UN member states, international financial institutions, governments, and other partners around the world, signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** (MoU) between PUNOs and the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office on 27 January 2023.

Accession to the Fund provides an opportunity for PUNOs and partners to apply for the Call for Proposals, and receive funding from the MPHSTF in implementing development programmes and projects designed to achieve prosperity for people of the Aral Sea, the Central Asian region, and the planet as a whole. In particular, UNOPS together with WHO has supported universal health coverage and security in Karakalpakstan through a **joint programme**.

#### ----- MARCH -----

# TWO NEW PROJECTS LAUNCHED TO IMPROVE HEALTHCARE, WATER, SANITATION AND EMPOWER YOUTH

Over 2-3 March, the UN Resident Coordinator *a.i.* in Uzbekistan, Ms. Consuelo Vidal, together with UN agencies and the Government of Karakalpakstan, launched **two new projects** amounting to \$4.4 million in Nukus in the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

# CEREMONIAL SIGNING EVENT TO ACKNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

In the framework of its International Climate Initiative, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, being a key contributor to the climate-related United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund, has made a €700,000 contribution to the Fund by signing an SAA.

As an earmarked allocation, the German contribution will serve to specifically support reducing stress on local communities caused by the deteriorating environmental situation, being the Fund's first outcome.

#### MAY

# SECOND NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY FOR KARAKALPAKSTAN CONDUCTED

Over April-May, a second needs assessment survey of Karakalpakstan's population was conducted. The study's objectives were to: 1) assess trends of the population's needs for 2017-2022; 2) identify new factors including climate change's impacts on the population's human security, and; 3) identify priority measures to better ensure environmental, social, food, economic and health securities of the Aral Sea region's population. The needs assessment's findings and recommendations will be used in developing the Fund's Strategy for 2025-2030

#### **SEPTEMBER**

#### A LOCALIZED LEAP TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The UN in Uzbekistan, in collaboration with the Government of Uzbekistan and the Government of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, jointly convened the 'Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Aral Sea Region' conference in Nukus on 15 September 2023.

The **occasion** brought together key stakeholders, including government representatives, local development organizations, academia, civil society, and international partners, to shed light on the intersection of sustainable development and SDG localization, emphasizing vulnerabilities faced by regions like the Aral Sea.

#### **NOVEMBER**

#### THE FOURTH CALL FOR PROPOSALS ANNOUNCED

As per a decision of the MPHSTF Steering Committee, the **fourth Call for Proposals** was opened from 24 November to 24 December 2023 for eligible PUNOs to develop project proposals with national and international partners, NGOs, CSOs, and other stakeholders.

The thematic focus of the call was Outcome 1 of the Fund targeted towards reducing stress on local communities caused by the deteriorating environmental situation.

#### ····· DECEMBER ·······

#### **ARAL SEA TRUST FUND HIGHLIGHTED KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AT COP-28**

Illuminating the region's pivotal climate efforts, the Fund has orchestrated a significant presence through the **COP-28 side event** 'Showcasing the Aral Sea Restoration Activities for a Climate-Resilient Future', held in Dubai.

The event aimed to underscore the urgency of collective action in confronting environmental catastrophes, emphasizing the role of such initiatives in fostering resilient development.

# 2. PROGRAMMATIC RESULTS

## **FOOD AND WATER SECURITY**

# OUTCOME 3. LOCAL COMMUNITY ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE AND HEALTHY FOOD AND CLEAN DRINKING WATER IS SECURED

'Unleashing young people's and vulnerable citizens' creativity and innovation by strengthening their adaptive capacity to address economic and food insecurities in the exposed communities of the Aral Sea region' Joint Programme implemented by UNDP, UNFPA and FAO.

From 2021 to 2023 the joint programme teams of UNDP, UNFPA and FAO, have collaborated with a range of national partners and civil society to address social, health, economic and food insecurities in the most vulnerable communities of the Bozatau, Kungrad and Muynak districts of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, by increasing efficiency and innovations in agriculture, promoting smart and digitalized communities with favourable infrastructures, and facilitating active labour market initiatives.

In the framework of this JP, the following key results were achieved.

## Community Development and Needs Assessment:

 485 rural residents from 15 communities, 51 percent of whom are youth, participated in needs

- assessments and created Community Development Plans (CDPs).
- These CDPs addressed key needs, including improved healthcare services, digital infrastructure, and ICT capacity building.

#### **Infrastructure Improvements**

- 8,922 rural inhabitants now have a stable electricity supply, due to the installation of 17 transformers each with a capacity of 250 kVA.
- Four projects have successfully enhanced access to clean drinking water at two healthcare facilities (benefiting 6,698 patients and staff), and two schools (benefiting 510 students and school personnel).
- 2,900 rural residents in three communities now have better access to clean drinking water, through three new water purification systems.

 Renovation of healthcare facilities at the 'Kazakhdarya' VCC of the Muynak district has enhanced healthcare access for 4,465 residents.

# Digital and Technological Advancements:

- 8,430 rural youth, 49 percent of whom are girls, now have improved internet access via 15 new Wi-Fi zones.
- Digital public services have been expanded with three Infokiosks benefiting 860 rural users, and potentially 15,822 residents.

 The Electronic Polyclinic platform has digitalized medical services for 5,717 residents of Bozatau, and potentially an additional 21,839 residents.

#### **Capacity Building and Education:**

- 30 young rural specialists have enhanced their ICT and technical skills for digitalizing remote communities.
- 1,500 students and teachers in targeted districts have now been empowered through the introduction of advanced digital technology in schools.

For more information, see the: Final Programme Report.







Photo 1. Access to clean drinking water in rural areas (2 communities) in Bozatau and Muynak districts.





Photo 2. Schools have access to internet and digital education.

# Joint Programme on 'Empowering Youth Towards a Brighter Future through Green and Innovative Development of the Aral Sea Region'

This joint programme (JP) of UNDP. UNICEF and FAO focused on enhancing agricultural efficiency and innovation. It aimed to develop smart, digital communities with supportive infrastructure and active labour market measures. Additionally, the programme sought to boost community development, empower young people and women, support infrastructure improvements, and create job opportunities in rural areas, particularly targeting the most vulnerable communities.

Key interim results include the following.

# Scientific Research and Development

 Two scientific expeditions to the Aral Sea's dried bed have gathered crucial soil data, aiding afforestation project planning.

#### Capacity Building and Skills Enhancement

- 100 rural women in three districts developed skills in handicrafts production and alternative income generation.
- **150 young individuals** trained in e-commerce and entrepreneurship.
- 400 smallholder farmers improved their knowledge in sustainable agriculture and green financing through Farmer Field Schools.
- 30 young rural specialists enhanced their ICT and technical digitalization skills.

# Agricultural and Environmental Innovations

- 350 smallholder farmers received salt-tolerant and water-resilient seeds.
- 17 low-income households received innovative agricultural systems, including the African Grower System, hotbeds, and hydroponics.
- A green initiative promoting fruit drying using solar energy was begun in the Kegeyli district.

# Community Development and Infrastructure

- 45 women were assisted in developing their handicraft skills and generating alternative income.
- An integrated green local development model was developed and proposed to the government.
- 57 rural residents participated in developing community development plans in 2023, focusing on addressing essential needs like clean drinking water and stable electricity.
- Two community development plans were crafted to prioritize local needs, using UNDP's Participatory Rural Appraisal methodology.
- 3,685 rural residents in the Chimbay, Kegeyli, and Karauzyak districts gained improved access to clean drinking water through enhanced water infrastructure.

### **HEALTH SECURITY**

# OUTCOME 4. THE OVERALL HEALTH OF THE LOCAL POPULATION IS IMPROVED, AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLE IS PROMOTED

As of December 2023, the Fund's Joint Programmes implemented by WHO and UNOPS, as well as UNICEF, WHO

and **UNFPA** contributed to the Fund's Outcome 4.

Joint Programme 'Towards universal health coverage and security in Karakalpakstan (UHC+S)', implemented by WHO and UNOPS

With the aim to progress towards universal health coverage and security (UHC+S), and to guide investments in the health system of the Republic of Karakalpakstan by the year 2023, the Fund supports the WHO and UNOPS-implemented project.

Following up on the strategic direction set by the Business Plan for the medical network developed and submitted to the MoH Karakalpakstan in 2022 and leveraging previous assessments, UNOPS with WHO's assistance conducted a healthcare network feasibility study in 2023. The study evaluated three concept design options aligned with national and international standards: two options for Muynak hospital with either a fully new 60 bed facility or extension (estimated total cost of over 27 mln USD) and rehabilitation of existing buildings (for

over 20 mln USD) and a recommendation for the Extension of High-Tech Facilities and Reconstruction of Existing Buildings in Kungrad (over 25 mln USD), with estimation of total costs, considering operational and management expenses, and a phased financing approach for each option.

In summary, the study proposed targeted investments in hospital infrastructure, equipment, and workforce, with strategic WHO involvement to guide the public health needs, with the aim to foster a sustainable, technologically advanced, and efficient healthcare environment in the Muynak and Kungrad regions. The study's findings will be presented to the MoH of Karakalpakstan in early 2024, followed by discussions on how to implement the recommendations.

For more information, see the: Final Programme Report.

Furthermore, the Fund supported the UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA Joint Programme "Laying the foundations for people-centred, climateresilient primary health care and water, sanitation and hygiene practices at healthcare facilities and schools in Karakalpakstan".

Throughout 2023, the joint programme team worked to provide safe and clean schools and health facilities, improve the accessibility and quality of health care systems in rural areas through introduction of telecommunication and IT tools, and a new financial model in health insurance. The team also worked to improve the quality of cervical cancer diagnostics amongst rural women, promote climate-resilient, gender sensitive and inclusive WASH, nutrition, climate change adaptation and reproductive health practices and skills to attain better human security of the population in three districts of Karakalpakstan, focusing on children and adolescents.

The key interim results highlight the following:

- Through the Programme, 320,000 people (100% of target) in Kegeyli, Chimbay and Kungrad districts have improved access to state guaranteed health services. Specifically, the programme introduced the health insurance system, a priority within the health sector reforms, in 3 districts of the RoK.
- 241,000 people (48% women), including 48,625 women of childbearing age have improved access to Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) and breastfeeding knowledge and skills through the programme support. The Programme established a network

- of 25 master trainers on IMCI and Breastfeeding as well as 50 master trainers on universal health coverage. These master trainers reached 210 healthcare workers (100% of target) on IMCI and breastfeeding. Additionally, 550 visiting nurses and 638 members of medical brigades benefited from the universal progressive model of home visiting trainings.
- WASH Assessment was conducted in 31 healthcare facilities (HCF) and 16 identified **HCFs** were improvement of WASH facilities. Over 241,000 people and 5,000 school children are being benefited from access to climate resilient WASH services and healthy practices by the end of the project. Specifically, construction works are ongoing in 16 health care facilities and 10 schools to create a healthy and enabling environment for climate-resilient services WASH and practices. Over 30% of construction of WASH facilities was completed by December 2023
- Efforts made to support the development of tools for digitalization and telecommunication. In particular, a set of instructions were developed for training of medical service providers in IT skills to work in the electronic platform "MedHub" (https://id.medhub.uz/auth) and "MIS2" (https://mis2.ssv.uz/login). Moreover, 3,336 health care workers

undertook distance learning courses. Eventually, access of 194,793 people (81% of total population in 3 districts) to improved health services was ensured by providing telecommunication equipment in 19 health care facilities (HCFs) in 3 target districts.

 More than 641 healthcare professionals (80% of target) have enhanced their skills in implementing PEN/HEARTS protocols. Capacity building interventions helped broaden the responsibilities of nurses through on-the-job training in various tasks, including patronage visits, assessing cardiovascular disease (CVD) risks, follow-up conducting visits chronic diseases, and offering nurse consultations (referred to as "predoctoral" examinations). In turn, approximately 250,000 people (80% of target) benefitted from improved service quality. The SHIF permanent office in Nukus was established and enhanced its capacity management and control of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

For more information, the Annual Programme Report, 2023







Photo 3. WHO: "Juzim Bag" PHC in Kegeyli (one of three piloted districts of RoK)



Photo 4. UNICEF: Training of Trainers on Universal Progressive Model of Home Visiting



Photo 5. UNICEF: Practical session of TOT on UPMHV



Photo 6. UNFPA: Quality check of hystology for HPV positive women with lesion

# 3. FUND OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

# OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE AND THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

As per a decision of the Fund's Steering Committee, the Fourth Call for Proposals was issued for \$1.8 million on 24 November 2023, within the thematic area aimed towards reducing stress on local Karakalpakstan communities caused deteriorating environmental by the situation, with a proposed submission date of 24 December, 2023. Eight PUNOs were encouraged to use the One UN programming strategy, and to collaborate with national and international partners in developing proposals.

The PUNOs submitted two proposals with a total amount of \$3.05 million, within the Fourth Call

The UNDP and FAO Joint Programme 'Building knowledge and skills of local partners and communities to address environmental insecurities through innovative air, land, and water management solutions in the Aral Sea Region' will promote more responsive capacities within local communities in Karakalpakstan to address environmental stress through improved technologies

and management practices for water capture and utilization, afforestation, reduced air pollution, and soil restoration.

The UNICEF project 'Enhancing Climate-Resilient and Safe Water, Sanitation, Hygiene, and Health Services for the Most Affected Communities in Four Districts of Karakalpakstan' will focus on providing access to quality and safe drinking water for remote communities; capacity building and awareness raising on climate change and adaptation in schools, healthcare facilities, and communities: strengthening and linkages between WASH, climate change and nutrition through service delivery and social behaviour change in the Kungrad, Muynak, Bozatau and Takhtakopir districts of the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

It is expected that the above-mentioned results will be achieved by the end of 2024, thanks to collaboration between the UN, government, civil society and development partners, to address the actual needs of Karakalpakstan's people.

To support and facilitate the Fourth Call for proposals, the MPHSTF Technical Secretariat developed Guidelines for the Fourth Call, and established an independent Technical Review Panel (TRP).

As per a decision of the Steering Committee on 15 December 2023, the Fund's current operational cycle was technically extended from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024, including all operational activities of the Fund's Technical Secretariat, subject to guidance of the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office.

The decision of the Steering Committee will strongly facilitate the preparatory process for the next cycle of the MPHSTF from 2024 to 2030. In line with this the Technical Secretariat has developed a ToR for an Independent External Evaluator to conduct end-of-cycle evaluation (2019-2023). The findings of the evaluation, as well as results of the Needs Assessment Survey conducted over April to May 2023 and facilitated by the Technical Secretariat in Karakalpakstan will underlie development of MPHSTF's full-fledged Strategy for the next operational cycle to the year 2030.

Findings of the Aral Sea Trust Fund's 2023 Needs Assessment for the Aral Sea and its linkages to SDGs were presented during the conference 'Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan' in September 2023, organised jointly with the UN in Uzbekistan, the Aral Sea Trust Fund, the Government of Uzbekistan, and Karakalpakstan's local authorities.

The **Technical Secretariat** (TS) supported the Fund's entire programming cycle. It provided extensive support to both the Steering Committee (SC) and the Advisory Committee (AC) in delivering the TOR, and it specifically supported implementation of the Fund's strategic decisions. In this regard, the Secretariat closely liaised with the Ministry of Investments, Industry and Trade, and other members of the SC.

To support the management process by providing decision-makers with reliable and sound data/information, the TS conducted regular monitoring visits to project sites in March, July and October, 2023. During these missions the TS held meetings with local authorities and project partners to discuss challenges, and both the outcomes and impacts of on-going programmes. As a result of the monitoring visits, key findings and recommendations were developed and submitted to project teams for their further consideration.



Photo 7. Monitoring visit of the Technical Secretariat, meeting with local authorities

# PARTNERSHIP, RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Government of Uzbekistan jointly with the UN in Uzbekistan continued to support the MPHSTF in building partnerships with new donors, and strengthening partnerships with current donors. The Technical Secretariat facilitated the process significantly.

In the framework of its International Climate Initiative, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, a key contributor to climate-related MPHSTF, has made a €700,000 contribution to the Aral Sea Trust Fund in 2022.

Aware of the importance of addressing climate issues associated with the Aral Sea crisis, MPHSTF, the Government of Uzbekistan and the UN Office in Uzbekistan jointly acknowledged the significance of the contribution by the Government of the Federal Republic of

Germany through a ceremonial signing event at the Ministry of Investments, Industry, and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan on 9 January 2023, reaffirming the three parties' support to the Aral Sea Trust Fund.

In March 2023, EU officials conducted a study mission to Nukus, to be familiarized with results achieved by the MPHSTF funded programmes. The MPHSTF team briefly presented EU Delegation representatives about the root causes, scale and consequences of the Aral Sea catastrophe, and described the rationale for establishing the Aral Sea Trust Fund in the above-mentioned context.

In addition, the team gave a brief overview of the institutional and operational aspects and future prospects of the MPHSTF.



Photo 8. Signing ceremony with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.



Photo 9. EU officials visit to Karakalpakstan.

In April the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan organised a visit of heads of diplomatic missions organisations and international Uzbekistan Karakalpakstan. to The visit's purpose was to raise awareness among representatives of foreign diplomatic corps about socio-economic reforms implemented in the Republic of Karakalpakstan in recent years, and efforts undertaken to mitigate the negative consequences of the Aral Sea catastrophe.

During the event the MPHSTF team highlighted UN joint efforts taken within the Trust Fund in the Aral Sea region, focusing on how UN agencies addressed urgent human insecurities in the Aral Sea region through promoting sustainable rural development, contributing improving the local healthcare system, improving WASH components, and strengthening young people's and vulnerable citizens' capacity to address economic and food insecurities exposed communities.

In September the UN in Uzbekistan, in collaboration with the Government of Uzbekistan, and the Government of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, jointly convened the conference 'Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Aral Sea Region'.

This occasion brought together key stakeholders including government representatives, local development organizations, academia, civil society, and international partners, to shed light on the intersection of sustainable development localization, emphasizing and SDG vulnerabilities faced by regions like the Aral Sea.



Photo 10. Presentation of the MPHSTF during the diplomatic corps' visit to Karakalpakstan.



Photo 11. The 'Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Aral Sea Region' conference in Nukus.



Photo 12. MPHSTF Side Event held on the margins of COP-28 in Dubai.

The event also featured a presentation of findings of the Aral Sea Trust Fund's 2023 Needs Assessment for the Aral Sea, outlining its vital linkages to the SDGs as identified through a comprehensive study conducted earlier this year.

In December the MPHSTF team in partnership with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and the Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection, and Climate Change, organised a COP-28 side event in Dubai to shed light on the vital climate efforts of the Aral Sea Trust Fund, its remarkable achievements, and the Aral Sea region's significance as a cautionary tale for climate-resilient development.

In addition, measures taken and results achieved within the MPHSTF in the Aral Sea region were presented during the EU Day festival held in Tashkent in May, the EU Delegation's visit to the Republic of Karakalpakstan in June, at the donors' coordination round table in June organised by the Agency for Development Innovative under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of Uzbekistan, and lastly at the 'Green Development Conference: New Uzbekistan Experience and Global Trends' organised by the Ministry of

Europe Day 17

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Photo 13. Showcasing the MPHSTF during the EU Day festival in Tashkent.

Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change of Uzbekistan in July.

In 2023 the MPHSTF Technical Secretariat reached out to more than 30 embassies and international development agencies in Uzbekistan, as well to five international foundations, including the embassies of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar, Romania, Great Britain, and Oman in Uzbekistan, the French Development Agency, GIZ, USAID, FCDO and JICA representative offices in Uzbekistan, and the Bill and Melinda Gates, Rockefeller and Bloomberg Foundations.



Photo 14. Meeting with the Ambassador of State of Kuwait in Uzbekistan.

Meetings were held with Ambassadors and deputy Heads of Missions of the embassies of the State of Kuwait, Romania, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Japan, Finland and Spain, to explore the possibility of building new and extending current partnerships within the MPHSTF.

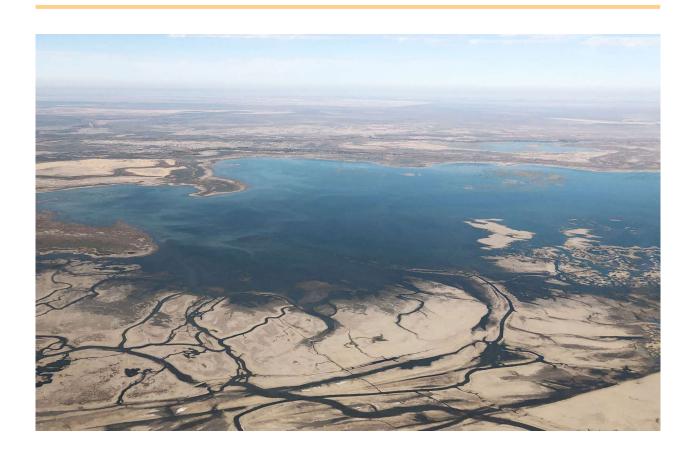
In addition, technical level meetings were held with representatives of the MPHSTF Technical Secretariat and FDA, and USAID and GIZ representatives.

During the meetings the MPHSTF team provided prospective donors with information regarding the origins, extent, and aftermath of the Aral Sea disaster. Additionally, they detailed the reasoning behind the creation of the MPHSTF within the mentioned framework. The team also provided an outline of the Aral Sea Trust Fund's institutional and operational aspects, as well as future prospects.



Photo 15. Business lunch with representatives of current MPHSTF donors

The technical level meetings identified common areas of cooperation between parties within the MPHSTF. The Fund's management was informed of meeting results.



### **A WAY FORWARD**

To date the Fund has offered a novel approach to building dialogue and collaboration between relevant partners, intention with the of identifying insecurities faced in the region, particularly those impacting the most vulnerable people including women, children and youth. The unified platform has enabled developing assistance in the Aral Sea region, improving resource mobilization and the effectiveness of its use, strengthening activity coordination, transparent ensuring financial interactions, and building capacity of national partners.

Through the platform it has been possible for the Fund to successfully support initiatives in Karakalpakstan, being an epicentre of ecological catastrophe, by addressing food, economic, social, health and environmental challenges through applying a holistic approach. It has drawn on the strengths and aspirations of local communities, building resilience from the bottom-up, while synchronizing these efforts with macro-level policies and strengthened government institutions.

Alongside these key achievements the platform has also successfully established itself as а key actor dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the Aral Sea region. Through its efforts the platform has become synonymous with development achievements made in the Aral Sea region over recent years, and has been applauded for bringing together all relevant partners.

As per a decision of the Steering Committee on 15 December 2023, the current operational cycle of the MPHSTF which was due to end on 31 December 2023, was technically extended until 31 December 2024. This will give the MPHSTF ample time to facilitate implementing the Steering Committee's decision as of 16 November 2022, to endorse the concept and strategic preparations for the next operational cycle of the Fund for 2024-2030, with further development of the strategic plan, and elaboration of the direction for the next cycle.

The MPHSTF team in 2024 will concentrate on end-of-cycle evaluation and development of a fully-fledged MPHSTF strategy for the next cycle.

During its next phase the MPHSTF will seek to further contribute to achieving global commitments in climate change, the fight against desertification, and biodiversity conservation. These efforts will result in better food and health security, and reduced poverty in Karakalpakstan's most affected regions.

To complement the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and national SDG commitments, the Fund will further seek to contribute to the 2030 Agenda through its development projects and programmes for the people, planet and prosperity of the Aral Sea region.

The Fund's next cycle will require an entirely new level of visioning, partnership, coordination and action.

# ANNEX 1. HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

# BLOSSOMING HOPE: ARAL SEA'S DRIED BED UNLEASHES HEALING POWER THROUGH BEEKEEPING

Have you ever imagined cultivating your own apiary amidst an environmental disaster like the Aral Sea region?

At first glance this scenario seems impractical due to the harsh conditions, especially the lack of flowering plants crucial for beekeeping. However, a unique feature distinguishes the Aral Sea's surreal landscapes — its diverse vegetation cover which fosters the growth of medicinal, forage, fruit, tannin, essential oil, and bee plants.

Venturing into the Muynak district, near the dried-up Aral seabed and its haunting ship cemetery, tourists are drawn to the area. It's here that our beekeeper heroines like Zamira Zhaulybayeva reside.

Zamira's day begins with the fragrant, rich taste of honey collected by bees from wild medicinal plants in the Aral Sea desert landscape. This honey, a lifechanging discovery, becomes the main food on her family's table. Her family, aware of the honey's healing properties, sees it as a panacea for many illnesses.



Photo 16. Desert plants in the Aral Sea region.

The story traces back to 1997 when Zamira's husband, Zhenis Boldykov, beekeepers Bukhara, assisting in developed a fascination for beekeeping. The family's dream of a bee apiary took root, and by 2022, within the UN Joint programme implemented by UNFPA and FAO, and funded by the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan for Human Security, Zamira's family received equipment they needed to start beekeeping.

Zamira's family perseveres despite challenges posed by a harsh climate, leaving most honey in the hives to help bees adapt. Zamira's dedication extends beyond beekeeping to plant-growing, contributing to the unique fodder base for bees. The honey obtained from desert plants, including Sandy Acacia and Cistanche, possesses a special flavour and aroma, and serves as a natural medicinal collection.



Photo 17. Project beneficiary, a beekeeper from Muynak district.

Zamira envisions promoting the Aral Sea's unique honey globally, capitalizing on Muynak's popularity among tourists. She believes that the natural bee product, collected in this extraordinary region, represents a step into the future for environmental sustainability.

Retrieved from the final programme report of UNDP, UNFPA and FAO 'Unleashing young people's and vulnerable citizens' creativity and innovation by strengthening their adaptive capacity to address economic and food insecurities in the exposed communities of the Aral Sea region' JP.

# SAVING WOMEN'S LIVES BY TACKLING CERVICAL CANCER IN UZBEKISTAN

Zamira, a mother of four children, was undertaking a medical check-up at her local polyclinic in October 2021. Zamira lives in Shimbay, a remote district of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. She was advised by her doctor to take a laboratory test for HPV, which came out to be positive, and subsequently she underwent an observational colposcopy performed by a gynaecologist in her polyclinic. The results were unexpected and unsettling. The tests revealed that Zamira had Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia Grade 2 (CIN-2), a precancerous condition that required immediate attention and treatment. To face this, she, her family and children had to stay resilient and courageous.



Photo 18. Colposcopy is a widely available method of cervical cancer screening in Uzbekistan.

"I was so scared. I cried for several days, especially when I read not very patient-friendly information about cervical cancer on the internet. My thoughts were only about my kids. My eldest daughter was married at that time, and I had grandchildren, but my youngest was schoolboy. Thanks to the support I received from my children, I was able to stand on my feet. I flew to Tashkent for a check-up at the Republican Oncological Centre. I was totally devastated when doctors gathered for a concilium, and the outcome of it was that I required a hysterectomy. After a consultation at the Tashkent Oncology Center, I came back home where the surgery was performed by local doctors. I was thrilled that our doctors have the expertise required to conduct such operations.".

Cervical cancer poses a serious public health concern in Uzbekistan, where it is the 2nd most common cause of cancer death among women aged 15 to 45. About 68 percent of these cancers are diagnosed in their 3rd or 4th stages, due to the absence of an efficient cervical cancer screening programme, low awareness among women and healthcare providers, and inadequate access to and availability of medical equipment.



Photo 19. Visual confirmation of a lesion after an HPV test helps identify risks of cervical cancer for women



"I am a medical worker myself, and considered myself to be a very responsible person in terms of my own health, but I would never had imagined that this disease could somehow affect me. I never experienced any symptoms cervical cancer. Doctors indicated that I had anaemia, and accordingly I only took anti-anaemia pills."

In 2021, UNFPA Uzbekistan initiated a cervical cancer screening programme with HPV tests conducted the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the Chirchik district. Among the 49,140 women screened, 6.7 percent (3,290) were HPV positive. Of these, 23 percent (759) were referred to oncology, with 1.2 percent (9) subsequently undergoing surgical treatment. Additionally, percent (237) who had minimal lesions received thermal ablation or radio wave coagulation treatments. UNFPA supported the provision of two radiowave devices to treat minor lesions at the primary level, without the need for oncological centre visits, which made treatment more accessible for women. More than 500 gynaecologists, midwives, general practitioners, patronage nurses, and oncologists from pilot districts have been trained, and reached out to for building cervical cancer awareness.

"The recovery process was not easy, but I drew strength from the love of my family and the support of my community."

Zamira's courage and struggle for life made women in the village begin to take notice, realizing the importance of regular screenings and early detection. Zamira became an advocate for women's health, encouraging others to prioritize screenings and preventive measures.

"As a joyful mother of four and grandmother to four wonderful kids, I've come to realize that nothing surpasses the importance of health. I now advise my daughters to ensure timely vaccinations for their children, and timely cervical cancer screening for themselves."

https://uzbekistan.unfpa.org/en/news/saving-lives-women-tackling-cervical-cancer-uzbekistan



Photo 21. On-going capacity building for medical practitioners, to equip them with new techniques and knowledge.

Retrieved from the Annual Progress Report, 2023, of the UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA JP 'Laying the foundations for people-centred, climate-resilient primary healthcare and water, sanitation and hygiene practices at healthcare facilities and schools in Karakalpakstan'.

# **ANNEX 2. MPHSTF RESULTS FRAMEWORK**



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (targets 3.4, 3.8, 3.C)



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (targets 8.2, 8.4, 8.5)



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (targets 11.2, 11.5, 11.A)

	Outputs	Output Indicators	Baseline *	Means of Verification (MOV)	Frequency	Results Achieved
OL	TCOME 1: The stress on local o	communities due to the deteriorating	environmental situation	is reduced		in 2023 (cumulative)
# 0	of hectares of arable land increa	sed, thousand ha	509.6 (2018)	State committee on land resources, geodesy, cartography and cadastre data	Once a year	519.9
% (	of public satisfaction of environ	mental policy	16.4 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	16.8
1	Local management practices and knowledge of ecosystem services are improved	% of communities with access to ecosystem services	0	Operational research	Operational research should be conducted	0

NB. It is important to note that for 2022, the MPHSTF programmes focused on Outcomes 3 and 4. However, through direct or indirect cooperation with other organisations, there is some progress towards other targets. The latter is an example of coherence that MPHSTF seeks to promote.

<sup>\*</sup> for Karakalpakstan, value and reference year

	Outputs	Output Indicators	Baseline	Means of Verification (MOV)	Frequency	Results Achieved
		# of pilot projects that test out new technologies adjusted to local conditions	0	Project reports	Once a year	2
2	New technologies in the area of water purification,	Area of desert lands covered by forest stands, thousand ha	1,082 (2018)	State committee on forestry data	Once a year	2,257
2	agroforestry, afforestation, and soil stabilisation are piloted	# of households with improved quality of irrigation water	3,366 (2018)	Projects reports	Once a year	4866
		Area of restored tugai forests, thousand ha	20.3 (2018)	State committee on forestry data	Once a year	20.34
		# of newly established or improved environmental quality checks	0 (2018)	Uzhydromet data	Once a year	0
3	The quality of water, air and soil pollution is monitored and addressed through local	# of base stations monitoring the climate in the Aral Sea region	16 (2018)	Uzhydromet data	Once a year	16
	regulatory practices	% of water/air quality monitoring laboratories regularly reporting through the automated surveillance system	0 (2018)	Uzhydromet data	Once a year	0

	Outputs	Output Indicators	Baseline	Means of Verification (MOV)	Frequency	Results Achieved
OL	TCOME 2: Employment and inc	ome generation opportunities for lo	cal communities are incre	ased		
% (	of the population that is econom	nically active	69.5 (2018)	State statistics	Once a year	74.0
# (	of new business initiatives starte	ed	18 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	103
4	New income opportunities in sectors adjusted to local conditions (e.g., agriculture, ethno-tourism, infrastructure and housing construction, service industry) are created	# of small and medium-sized companies created with the support of the MPHSTF	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	22
		# of jobs created in target communities per year	78 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	725
	Skills and knowledge of local communities to participate in new	% of people surveyed that are satisfied with their skills levels	61.8 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	N/A
5	industries and to become entrepreneurs, as well as, adaptability to new work conditions for employability are improved	# of people trained and retrained in the specialised centres to improve and develop their entrepreneurial skills/knowledge	0 (2018)	Training records	Once a year	1,825
6	Investments in local infrastructure serving local communities (e.g., energy,	amount of investments in local infrastructure with the support of the MPHSTF, mln. USD	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	0.138
	access roads, service industry, banking) are increased	% of people surveyed that are satisfied with trade services	51.2 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	N/A

	Outputs	Output Indicators	Baseline	Means of Verification (MOV)	Frequency	Results Achieved
6		% of people surveyed that are satisfied with the services of banking and financial institutions	54.5 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	N/A
ou	TCOME 3: Local community ac	cess to affordable and healthy food a	and clean drinking water s	secured		
% c	of the drinking water supply of h	nouses (apartments)	48.2 (2017)	State statistic	Once a year	70.5
		the local population: percentage are wasted due to malnutrition	0.23 (2018)	State statistic	Once a year	0.27
% c	of household budget spent on fo	ood	60 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	50
7	Local infrastructure investments for access and	amount of investments in water access and distribution infrastructure with the support of the MPHSTF, mln. USD	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	1.291
	distribution of clean water are increased	% of people surveyed that are satisfied with access to drinking water	33.8 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	76.1
8	Local production, processing, storage and sale of diverse, affordable and high-quality food is increased	% increase in the local production of food with the support of the MPHSTF	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	0

	Outputs	Output Indicators	Baseline	Means of Verification (MOV)	Frequency	Results Achieved
8	Local production, processing, storage and sale of diverse, affordable and high-quality food is increased	# of created of networks of fruits and vegetables fridge-storage	10 (2018)	Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan data, Project reports	Once a year	12
		# of newly established or improved food quality checks with support of the MPHSTF	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	0
9	The quality of nutrition is increased through standardisation, regulation, monitoring, information, and education	# of new crop varieties, adapted and resistant to harsh climatic conditions with the support of the MPHSTF	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	0
		# of newly established or improved biological laboratories with support of the MPHSTF for protection of plants and the prevention of diseases arising from environmental influences	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	0
ou	TCOME 4: The overall health of	the local population is improved, an	d healthy lifestyle promo	ted		
% reduction in infant and maternal mortality: - infant mortality rate (up to 1 year, per 1000 live-born) - maternal mortality (per 100,000 live births  16.6 28.7 (2018)  State statistic Once a year 11.7						
% (	of the population satisfied with	health services	53 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	85.2

	Outputs	Output Indicators	Baseline	Means of Verification (MOV)	Frequency	Results Achieved
	Investments in local health	amount of investments in local health infrastructure with the support of the MPHSTF, mln. USD	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	3,840
10	services and pharmacies (e.g., facilities and equipment) are increased	% of people surveyed that are satisfied with the availability of affordable medicines	32.8 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	85.2
		% of medical institutions equipped with equipment	78 (2017)	State statistic	Once a year	86
11	Access to rural health clinics and to medication primarily in remote areas is improved	# of new health clinics and pharmacies with the support of the MPHSTF	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	0
		# of functional rural health clinics strengthened with the support of the MPHSTF	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	4
11	Access to rural health clinics and to medication primarily in remote areas is improved	doctors/nurses/health care professionals/hospital beds per 10 000 people: - provision with doctors - provision with the nursing staff - provision with in-patient beds	23.1 94.8 39.4 (2017)	State statistic	Once a year	24.8 97 34.1
12	The quality of health care is improved through increased professional education	# of health care professionals educated and retrained through distance learning	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	1,889

	Outputs	Output Indicators	Baseline	Means of Verification (MOV)	Frequency	Results Achieved
	Healthy lifestyles and practices, drug and alcohol use prevention, as well as, mental health are promoted, including sanitation, vaccination, waste disposal, and local medicinal plants	% of populations responding positively to new healthy lifestyles in survey	0 (2018)	Assessments by independent evaluators	Once a two year	N/A
13		availability of teacher's manual on healthy lifestyle in Karakalpak language	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once per project	1
		# of teachers trained on healthy lifestyles	188 (2018)	Training records	Once a year	1,585
		# activities conducted on the promotion of healthy lifestyles	0 (2018)	Project reports	Once a year	2,196
OU	TCOME 5: The living conditions	of local populations improved, with	particular focus on vulne	erable groups such as w	omen, children and	youth
ser - c	% of the population with increased access to social and community services - drinking water - natural (liquefied) gas		33.8 48.6 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	71 69
% c	of populations responding posit	ively to living (housing) conditions	65.2 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	N/A
14	Adequate housing appropriate for the local living conditions is provided	adopted standards for the design and construction of residential buildings and social facilities, taking into account the actual ecological and geographic conditions of the Aral Sea region	0	Project reports	Once per project	1

	Outputs	Output Indicators	Baseline	Means of Verification (MOV)	Frequency	Results Achieved
14		# of social infrastructure facilities constructed in accordance with the new standard projects that meet local conditions	0	Project reports	Once a year	0
		# of new and improved pre- schools with the support of the MPHSTF	0	Project reports	Once a year	0
	Social and community services, including preschool education and leisure opportunities, and life skill education for children and youth are improved	% of enrolment of children by pre-school educational institutions	32.7 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	81
15		% of people surveyed that are satisfied with the quality of school education	64.5 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	77,4
		# of community members and school children covered through youth-led peer to peer education programme with the support of the MPHSTF	0	Training records	Once a year	16,254
16	The local governance system for addressing the human security needs of the population is improved	% of populations (disaggregated by sex) responding positively to their involvement in the local governance system	0	Independent assessment	Once per project	N/A

	Outputs	Output Indicators	Baseline	Means of Verification (MOV)	Frequency	Results Achieved
1	The local governance system for addressing the	# of representatives of local authorities participating in special training courses on human security, local development planning, etc.	48 (2018)	Training records	Once a year	249
16	human security needs of the population is improved	% of people surveyed that are satisfied with local public service delivery and ensuring social stability	68 (2017)	Socio-economic survey report	At the end of the project (2023)	83.7











# UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan

Resident Coordinator Office 4, Taras Shevchenko Street Tashkent 100029 Uzbekistan

Tel: +998 78 120 34 50 Fax: +998 78 120 34 85

- @un\_uzbekistan
- f UN.Uzbekistan
- (i) un.uzbekistan
- www.uzbekistan.un.org
- www.aral.mptf.uz