

## *Skills Development for Employability in Rural Areas of Uzbekistan*

| <b>Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies)</b> | <b>N°</b>  | <b>Global / Region / Sub-region / Country</b> | <b>Amount (EUR €)</b><br><i>(Check in donor agreement)</i> |
|--|--|---|--|
|  | 1  | The Republic of Uzbekistan                    | 9 600 000  |
| <b>Donor and financial information</b>             | <i>Name of donor: European Union</i><br><i>Contribution Agreement reference: ACA/2020/415-597</i><br><i>Budget code of UNESCO: 549UZB1000</i><br><i>Total Budget approved: EUR 9 600 000</i> |   |  |
| <b>Project Objective</b>                           | <i>Enhancing living standards in rural areas through better employability for women and men</i>  |   |  |
| <b>Implementing period approved dates</b>          | Start date: September 1 <sup>st</sup> 2020 (as defined in the agreement)<br>Completion date: August 31 <sup>st</sup> 2024  |   |  |
| <b>Reporting period</b>                            | From: 01/01/2022<br>To: 31/12/2022   |   |  |
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### **1. Project Objective**

The objective of the EU funded TVET project for UNESCO in Uzbekistan is to support the development of relevant skills of women and men for sustainable, diversified and modernised agriculture in Uzbekistan. The project aims to improve the quality, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the skills development system in the agriculture and irrigation sectors, with a particular focus on the rural regions of Karakalpakstan, Khorazm, Bukhara and Surkhondaryo. The project also supports the Government of Uzbekistan with developing, testing and piloting new initiatives and approaches in the agriculture and irrigation sectors, with a view to scaling up transversal methods, high technology agriculture and food processing, and innovative approaches throughout the country. More specifically it supports the development of new curricula and standards, the provision of modern equipment and facilities, the training of teachers

and managers, and the establishment of partnerships with employers and social partners in the agriculture and irrigation sectors. The project also promotes the benefits and opportunities of TVET for youth and women in rural areas, as well as the importance of lifelong learning and skills development for employability and social inclusion.

## **2. Project progress 2023**

The project results were closely monitored by the project team and by the evaluation company PPMI that conducted a mid-term evaluation validation workshop in June, 2023. The consequent workshop informed the donor, all the stakeholders and beneficiaries about the evaluation conclusions and recommendations as per the next phases of the project.

### **Component 1: Governance of skills development in the agriculture and irrigation sectors is modernized and strengthened in line with the labour market demands**

#### **a. TVET Strategy and Roadmap**

The project supported the Government of Uzbekistan in developing **a new TVET strategy and Roadmap** that exhibit the country's vision on TVET in 2030 and action plan. The strategy pays a particular focus on the quality assurance in TVET, and it comes with a package of documents, such as an action plan, target indicators to be achieved within the time set, financial calculations of the funding needed, and legal aspects of the implementation of the strategy. **The project organized a workshop on 7 September, 2023** to (a) present the Strategy to all national and international partners and (b) conduct consultation and receive feedback to further integrate into the Strategy.

The main objective of the proposed TVET 2030 strategy is (a) to improve TVET system in Uzbekistan for increased employability, (b) equate supply (professional education) with demand (labour market) qualitatively and (c) enhance access to lifelong learning, in particular for vulnerable people.

#### **b. Quality Assurance Framework**

Alongside the Strategy, the project helped develop the **Quality Assurance** Framework for TVET based on the analyses of current global trends, the European Quality Assurance reference framework of Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), incorporating all agreed tools and methodologies of the EQAVET. **The developed framework was presented to all the relevant stakeholders on 4 May, 2023 in the conference titled "Quality Assurance Policy in TVET and Skills Development in Uzbekistan"** and, successively, a **position paper on "National Quality Assurance Framework for TVET in Uzbekistan-2023"** was released in mid-2023.

The Quality Assurance Framework for TVET (UQAF-TVET) underpins the National Uzbekistan Qualifications Framework. It is designed to be used as a common quality assurance approach for all ministries and private TVET institutions and provides the quality structure within which all bodies operate as a fundamental requirement for delivering TVET services in Uzbekistan.

The complete set of UQAF-TVET manuals consists of the followings:

1. National Quality Assurance Framework overview manual

2. Accreditation of Training Institutions manual
3. Accreditation of Assessment Centers manual
4. Quality assurance of Sector Councils manual
5. Quality assurance for Awarding Bodies manual (depending on agreement)

The project also assisted the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovations (MHESI) in developing a governmental decree “About the Measures to Introduce the National Quality Assurance System in the Field of Professional Education and Vocational Training in accordance with International Standards”. The document is expected to be adopted at the end of the 2023.

**Component 2: Qualifications and methodologies of skills development are modernized to serve the needs of the labour market, learners and workers in the agriculture and irrigation sector.**

**a. National Occupational Standards**

The project has completed the **development of National Occupational Standards (NOS) on six professions**, namely Crop production operative technician, General farm manager, Livestock technician, Irrigation operative technician, Greenhouse manager and Automated Irrigation Technician. Whilst the creation of NOS, the UNESCO experts followed the methodology and experience of the New Zealand, Australia and the UK. The created NOSs have been submitted to the Ministries of Agriculture and Irrigation for internal validation through their Sector Skills Councils, after which each Ministry will send the documents to the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction for adoption.

**b. Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) in 6 occupations**

Consecutively, the **Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC)** was developed based on the created NOSs by the international experts in consultation with national consultants, the sectoral representatives and teachers from the pilot technicums.

The final versions of the CBC, along with additional learning materials, were submitted to the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovations in September, 2023 after further polishing and formatting to their requirements.

**c. Capacity building interventions to stakeholders and teachers on CBC**

Due to its novelty in the TVET context of Uzbekistan and ensure better implementation, the project also delivered **two capacity-building workshops, namely Assessment in CBC (15-18 August, 2023) and Training of Trainers (22-25 August, 2023)**, for the teachers from pilot colleges. The trainings were also attended by the administrative personnel of the technicums, which boosted their understanding of the CBC and its implementation at their respective pilot institutions. The final versions of the CBC, along with additional learning materials, were submitted to the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovations in September, 2023 after further polishing and formatting to their requirements.

**Component 3: Agriculture and irrigation colleges in rural areas are modernized with competent management and teaching staff.**

**a. Modernization and renovation of 4 pilot colleges**

**The project focuses on modernizing the agriculture and irrigation colleges in the four priority rural regions.** To this end, the project hired an engineering company to evaluate and develop the scope of renovation works at the below pilot colleges and extend constant technical support to the four construction companies in the regions:

- a) Karaozak Technical School of Agro-Economics in the Republic of Karakalpakstan
- b) Kushkopir college of water resources and land in Khorazm region
- c) Kizirik technical school of agro technologies in Surkhandarya region
- d) Gijduvan technical school of agro technologies in Bukhara region

**The 4 renovation companies were selected through a tender process and began the renovation works of the colleges in September, 2023. The renovation works were finalized in December 2023.**

**PHOTOS OF THE COLLEGES BEFORE THE RENOVATION WORKS**



#### PHOTOS OF THE COLLEGES AFTER THE RENOVATION WORKS



#### **b. Provision of equipment to 4 pilot colleges**

The project took measures to bolster the technical capacities of the pilot technicums to run Competency-Based Curriculum with the needed **equipment and tools**. In this respect, the list of agriculture and irrigation equipment has been identified based on the competency-based curriculum and in consultation with the colleges and local consultants. **The first batch of equipment were delivered in all 4 pilot colleges in November and December 2023. See Annex 1 with list of equipment delivered in 2023.**

The remaining equipment, such as greenhouses and laboratory equipment will be delivered to the pilot colleges in January- February 2024.

The project conducted several missions to the colleges between August and October (2023) to monitor the process, identify potential risks and record the volume of the performed work accordingly.

#### **c. Outreach interventions to increase demand of students to the pilot colleges**

Awareness raising and outreach are key aspects within the project to increase the visibility and awareness of the project objectives, outcomes and impact among the target groups and the general public. They also aim to attract and motivate potential students, especially youth and women in rural areas, to enroll in the 6 new occupations developed by UNESCO. Awareness raising and outreach activities include organizing college fairs, producing and disseminating media materials, conducting social media campaigns, and engaging with high-level representatives from the EU, UNESCO, the Ministries, and other stakeholders.

To this end the project also launched **an advocacy campaign called #BuildYourFutureSkills** to

raise awareness and interest among rural youth, especially women, about the benefits and opportunities of TVET and the six priority occupations. In addition, all four colleges have selected **two youth ambassadors** who will be UNESCO Youth Ambassador of that particular region and who will further support in promoting the campaign, develop activities to mobilize youth in their region and support in the organization of the fair.

**The project organized a college fairs in each college in August and September** which served as a platform to showcase the benefits and opportunities of TVET education and to attract and motivate rural youth to enroll in the colleges, especially for the new occupations.

### 3. Implementation methodology

The project employed a participatory and collaborative methodology, involving various stakeholders from the Government (at central and regional levels), the private sector, international and national development partners, teachers and College staff and national and international experts in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the project activities. The activities of the project are implemented by UNESCO Tashkent Office with backstopping from UNESCO HQ in Paris. Following tools have been used in the process of the project:

- **Evidence based programming and best practices** A situational analysis of the TVET sector in Uzbekistan, based on desk research, field visits, interviews, and surveys, to identify the needs, gaps, and opportunities for skills development in the agriculture and irrigation sectors. The use of best practices and lessons learnt from other countries and regions such as New Zealand, Australia, the UK, and the EU, in developing and implementing TVET policies, frameworks, curricula, and standards, as well as quality assurance mechanisms and systems.
- **Collaborative and consultative process:** A consultation and validation process with the relevant ministries, agencies, institutions, and experts, to ensure the alignment and coherence of the project outputs and outcomes with the national and international priorities and standards, as well as the feedback and input of the beneficiaries and partners.
- **Capacity building of key stakeholders:** A capacity-building and training program for the teachers, managers, and staff of the pilot colleges to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies in delivering and managing competency-based education and training.



- **A monitoring and evaluation system:** based on the logical framework approach and the results-based management principles, to track and measure the progress and impact of the project, using quantitative and qualitative indicators and data, as well as regular reports and reviews.
- **A communication and dissemination strategy:** using various channels and platforms, such as websites, social media, newsletters, publications, events, and media, to raise awareness and visibility of the project, and to share the results and achievements with the wider audience and stakeholders.
- The list of equipment related to the 6 selected qualifications has been compiled through fact-finding missions in four pilot regions to meet with potential employers: private institutions, relevant local departments of line ministries, agriculture and water resources. This information was valuable for procuring needed equipment, as well as for the education and training of future professionals, who will work in these sectors and thus expected to be familiar with the equipment in demand.

#### **4. Challenges**

**Low admission rate:** Despite the project team's projection of a high demand for the new qualification courses at the pilot technicums, based on the labour market needs and opportunities in the agriculture and irrigation sectors, the enrollment rate in October 2023 was lower than expected. The project team had organized educational fairs in each pilot technicum to promote the benefits and prospects of TVET for youth and women in rural areas, but the outreach efforts were not enough to fill the capacity of the colleges. This was due to several factors: Firstly, the online portal for registering new applicants was only open for 10 days, which limited the time for the pilot technicums to attract and register enough applicants. Secondly, four out of six occupations require tuition fee payment, which deterred many interested applicants.

To address this challenge:

- the project sent official letters to the MHESI and the Ministries of Agriculture and Irrigation, requesting their close cooperation and support for waiving the admission fees.
- The project also continued to raise awareness and advocacy for the qualification courses, and to provide guidance and assistance to the pilot technicums and the applicants.
- UNESCO discussed with the MHESI that the occupations can be transformed and integrated into a dual system, which allows students to be enrolled throughout the year.

**ANNEX 1: Equipment delivered to pilot colleges in November-December 2023**
**1. Supply of Agricultural tractors and related machinery/aggregates**

| <b>Description</b>                                  | <b>Qty</b> |
|---|------------|
| Agricultural tractor with 4 Wheels                  | 2          |
| Agricultural tractor with 3 wheel                   | 2          |
| Attached harrow (Middle size disc harrow):          | 2          |
| Attached plow chisel:                               | 2          |
| Attached laser planner (comes with laser):          | 2          |
| Attached multifunctional Planting machine (seeder): | 2          |
| Attached Planting machine (seeder) for cereals:     | 2          |
| Attached Fertilizer spreader:                       | 2          |
| Attached Fertilizer spreader for cotton:            | 2          |
| sAttached sprayer:                                  | 2          |
| Attached transporter (trailer):                     | 2          |
| Attached baler:                                     | 2          |
| Attached rotary mower:                              | 2          |
| Walking cultivator with power (Motorblock)          | 4          |
| Attached soil tiller for Motorblock:                | 4          |
| Attached Furrower for Motorblock:                   | 4          |
| Attached plow for Motorblock:                       | 4          |
| Attached transporter for Motorblock                 | 4          |
| <b>Overall quantity</b>                             | <b>46</b>  |

**2. ICT Equipment**

| <b>Item</b> | <b>Description</b>                     | <b>Qty</b> |
|-------------|--|------------|
| 1.          | <b>PC Monoblock</b>                    | <b>32</b>  |
| 2.          | <b>Intouch Interactive Touch Panel</b> | <b>2</b>   |



|    |   |           |
|----|---|-----------|
| 3. | Multifunctional device (MFP) A4 printer | 2         |
| 4. | PTZ camera with speakerphone            | 2         |
| 5. | WiFi Router                             | 2         |
| 6. | UPS-PS 2000-0 2000VA                    | 32        |
|    | <b>Overall quantity:</b>                | <b>72</b> |

### 3. Refrigerators

| Item | Description                                  | Qty | Gijduvan Technical School of Agro technologies, Bukhara region | Kizirik Technical School of Agro technologies, in Surkhandarya region |
|------|--|-----|--|---|
| 1.   | Mobile cold storage system (container type): | 2   | 1  | 1   |

### 4. Greenhouse (to be installed January-February 2024)

