

PROJECT BRIEF

Programme Area:

Social and economic integration of visually and hearing impaired

Project Number:

00035685

Duration:

2005 –2009

Partners:

Deaf and Blind Society of Turkmenistan

Budget:

USD 576,368.76

Contributors:

UNDP

EC

Asian Blind Union

Project Contact Information

Executing Agency:

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Social and economic integration of visually and hearing impaired

Background:

The process of transition to a market economy of Turkmenistan has implied many changes to previous social protection system, including its special provisions for disabled. While the system of state support to disabled in the form of allowances and special provision for medical treatment was maintained, policies enabling active participation of the disabled in the society and disabled concerns integration/mainstreaming in the development agenda of the country yet remains to be developed. The Deaf and Blind Society of Turkmenistan (DBS) is the main actor in the field providing services to visually and hearing impaired people. The DBS aims at protecting the rights and interest of the target groups, facilitate social and vocational rehabilitation as well as integration and provision of employment services. Currently, it provides employment opportunity for its members in different production facilities such as sewing workshop, publishing house, locks production workshop, carton making facilities and others. The DBS also supports organization of various sports and cultural events, provides free medical services to its member and to the extent possible access to special library for visually and hearing impaired people. Its budget is mainly made up of revenues from existing production facilities, some funding support from the state budget allocations and grants from donor organizations.

Although the organization is attempting to support as much disabled as possible, their capacities are limited in terms of territorial coverage (presence at local levels), and limited financial means. The existing training-production enterprises are deteriorating, as the equipment is outdated and obsolete. Access to information for the disabled is limited as there is only one library for blind/visually-impaired people, with outdated specialized equipment and limited collection of information materials. Of 1600 visually impaired people all around the country only 237 have access to the library.

Objectives:

The purpose of this Project is to pilot sustainable approaches for integrating the blind/visually-impaired and deaf/hard-of-hearing people beneficiaries into economic and social activities through:

- 1) support the DBS in the development of its capacity and services for the disabled;
- 2) assistance to modernization of DBS production facilities;
- 3) development of DBS's management, leadership and advocacy capacities;
- 4) upgrade disabled social and employment-related skills;
- 5) integrate disabled into the mainstream workforce as well as provide selective support for maintaining employment in sheltered employment and
- 6) raise public awareness about the needs and concerns of disabled and about their potential to participate productively in the workforce.
- 7) upgrading the capacity and collection of materials of the specialized library for disabled
- 8) assistance to establishment of productive dialog between DBS and the government and international institutes and organizations

Description:

The overall development objective of this project is to complement Government efforts in creating better living conditions for people with disability, particularly those blind/visually-impaired and deaf/hard-of-hearing people. The project focuses mainly on integration of the blind/visually-impaired and deaf/hard-of-hearing people into economic and social activities by building social and employment-related skills, modernization of DBS production facilities, development of sustainable strategy of economical development of DBS Training Production Enterprises and raising public awareness about the potential of disabled to participate productively in the workforce. Thus the project will bring the target groups closer to the society so they enjoy not only constitutional rights but also as citizens have the possibilities to participate in social and economic activities. As part of institutional capacity building, the project will promote introduction of modern ICT. This project will also promote collaboration with Government institutions, particularly Ministries of social welfare, and of economy and finance, Municipalities, local CBOs, and international agencies, including, USAID, WB, TACIS and other financial organizations, to enhance the flow of resources for creating better living conditions for the target group.

Achievements:

Research and data

- A comprehensive review of the situation with social and vocational rehabilitation and legislature in the field of social protection and rehabilitation of blind/visually impaired and deaf/hard-of-hearing people in Turkmenistan was conducted.

Updated: July 2008

- Labour Market Demand Research and Marketing/Business Development Research have been conducted which provided recommendations for improvement of business operations of the production enterprises of the DBS and also productive participation in the workforce.

Awareness raising

- “Round table” meetings were held in all five provinces of Turkmenistan to discuss issues of concern, resolve current problems that Territorial Primary Production Organization of the DBS face today and secure support from local administrations for initiation of a comprehensive national strategy of social rehabilitation of the deaf and blind people in Turkmenistan.
- Meetings with local authorities in all five velayats have been held to secure support of the local governing bodies in job placement for disabled.
- Manual “Accessibility for disabled” has been translated into Russian language and distributed among the key social ministries to raise awareness on the national standards in providing barrier-free and accessible physical environment for disabled people.

Information-communication campaign

- Wall calendars with DBS symbolic and information about DBS activities were published.
- Publication of brochures (manual) for people staying in direct or temporal contact with blind people was arranged.
- The large scale public awareness campaign on the issues of disabled needs and concerns has been held which included meeting with local authorities and potential employers.
- International Day of Disabled Persons was marked to promote the image of the DBS members as full-fledged citizens of Turkmenistan enjoying their constitutional rights. Series of events were organized jointly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Turkmenistan and the Government of Turkmenistan on the occasion of the International Day of Disabled Persons, including the International Conference on the Social and Economic Integration of Disabled, Charity Fair and Charity Concert to show case capacities of disabled people.
- 6 newspaper articles, 1 magazine article and 4 press-releases have been published in the local mass media, international web sites and UNDP Turkmenistan web site on joint project activities and achievements.
- TV press coverage devoted to the International Day of Disabled Persons has been arranged and broadcast on national TV.
- UNDP Turkmenistan and DBS developed advocacy materials such as calendars, booklets, t-shirts, folder called “Invitation for cooperation and investment” which contains proposals for donors and a book with images of craft works of hearing impaired and poems written by visually impaired persons. These promotional materials have been distributed during the events and help raise awareness among all people on capacities and abilities of disabled people.

Vocational training

- Two-month sign language course for 9 members of the DBS who are expected to train other members of the DBS in sign language and act as sign language interpreters in the respective provinces was conducted.
- Two two-month basic rehabilitation courses for 32 people with lately acquired blindness coming from all provinces of Turkmenistan was conducted. They were trained in indoor and outdoor orientation, use of tiflo devices, reading and writing according to Braille and engaged in social activities.
- 4 four-month vocational training for total of 105 people in joinery, sewing and sewing equipment maintenance (for deaf) and general massage (for blind) have been conducted in period February 2006 – December 2007. More than 80% of training graduates have successfully taken advantage of the acquired vocational skills in the job market in their respective home places.
- A Computer User Training for the personnel of the DBS Central office and its subsidiaries was arranged in InfoTuk project premises.

- Three-month training of basic IT skills for blind and visually impaired has started in October 2007 where trained blind master trainers train first batch of four young girls.

Productive participation in the workforce

- Clothing manufacture facilities of the Ashgabat and Mary Training Production Enterprises were evaluated and a tender for the supply and installation of sewing equipment was conducted.
- Five NISSAN mini buses were presented to the DBS for transportation of target groups from and to work places.
- Two vehicles were provided to the DBST for transportation of the raw materials and finished products.

Access to information

- Internet and e-mail services were provided to the Central office of the DBST and to the Project Office.
- Needs assessment on modernization of the specialized library for disabled people have been conducting aiming to provide access to library resources for visually impaired people.

Capacity development

- The seminar for the staff and volunteers of the State Library for Blind and Deaf was conducted.
- Training for management of Central Board of the DBST and TPE in strategic leadership towards sustainability.
- Training for management of the TPPE in business planning and management.
- Training for financial staff of the DBST and Affiliates in financial management, accountability and sustainability.
- Development of the draft national strategy on social and economic integration of disabled.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Monitoring of spreading and applying knowledge and skills in the velayat TPE and TPPE during field trips.
- Regular Project Board Meetings have been held to discuss project progress and hold quarterly planning exercises.