

## Social and Economic Integration of Visually and Hearing Impaired People

Programme Area: Poverty Reduction and MDG Achievement		
<b>Budget:</b>	<b>Project Number:</b> 00035685	<b>Duration:</b> 2005 – 2009
2005 – USD 165,680	<b>Funded by:</b> UNDP – USD ; World Bank – USD ; Asian Blind Union – USD ; DBS – USD ; EC – EURO 100,000 (parallel funding)	
2006 – USD 95,018	<b>Partners:</b>	
2007 – USD 199,622	Deaf and Blind Society of Turkmenistan (DBS)	
2008 – USD 158,365	<b>Executing Agency:</b> UNDP Turkmenistan	
2009 – USD 37,187		

### **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 people with disabilities (PWDs) in the society and disabled concerns integration/mainstreaming in the development agenda of the country yet remains to be developed.

The Turkmenistan Society for the Deaf and Blind (DBS) is the main actor in the field, providing services to visually and hearing impaired people, protecting their rights and interests, facilitating social and vocational rehabilitation as well as provision of employment services. Jobs are offered through various production facilities of DBS - 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 members and access to specialized library. The budget of the organization is made up of revenues from existing production facilities, funding support from the state budget allocations and grants from donor organizations. Although DBS is attempting to support as much disabled people as possible, their capacities are limited in terms of territorial coverage (presence at local levels), and limited funding. The existing training and production facilities are deteriorating, as the equipment is outdated, and the library for blind/visually-impaired people has outdated specialized equipment and limited collection of information materials.

### **Project objectives:**

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

- i) improving social and employment-related skills of people with disabilities;
- ii) creating additional job places for people with disabilities;
- iii) improving access to information for deaf and blind people;
- iv) building capacity of the Deaf and Blind Society to provide better quality services to its members and to advocate for the rights and interests of people with disabilities;
- v) raising public awareness about the needs and concerns of PWDs and about their potential to participate productively in the workforce; and vi) promoting establishment of dialogue between the Deaf and Blind Society and the government institutions, and partnerships with international organizations.

### **Project achievements:**

The project succeeded in demonstrating an inclusive model for integration of people with disabilities into economic and social activities. The DBS's Rehabilitation Center, upgraded with the support of UNDP, has offered long-term social rehabilitation programme to 220 deaf and blind people - Braille reading and writing, indoor and outdoor orientation (for the blind), vocational trainings in carpentry, sewing and sewing equipment maintenance (for the deaf) and general massage (for the blind), with 80% of the graduates landing jobs both at the DBS production shops or in their home towns. The upgraded sewing shop allowed the DBS to expand the range of products, increase the number of jobs for deaf women by 40%, and improve quality and assortment of products for sale at the local and foreign markets.

The major advocacy efforts by UNDP helped establish a dialogue with the Government of Turkmenistan at the policy level, resulting in the development of proposals to create a national strategy on social and economic integration, which were submitted to the Government for consideration, and eventually facilitated Turkmenistan's accession to the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2008, thus becoming the first Central Asian country to do so. UNDP now plans to continue advocacy of the implementation of this convention as part of a UN Joint Programme.

The project has shown that people with disabilities have skills and competencies to be equal members of the society, and what can be done to assist disabled people to realize their rights. By guaranteeing the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, the project made an important contribution to the betterment of the Turkmen society as a whole.

*Research and data*

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

*Vocational training*

- Two-month sign language TOT course for 9 members of the DBS conducted.
- 32 people with lately acquired blindness trained in indoor and outdoor orientation, use of tiflo devices, reading and writing according to Braille and were also engaged in social activities.
- 4 four-month vocational training for total of 220 people in joinery, sewing and sewing equipment maintenance (for deaf) and general massage (for blind) have been conducted. More than 80% of training graduates have successfully taken advantage of the acquired vocational skills in the job market in their respective home places.
- Three-month training of basic IT skills for blind and visually impaired persons conducted.
- 53 deaf women and 6 blind women trained in the use of new equipment during the two-month vocational training course. The women are now employed by the DBS training and production facility at the new sewing workshop.

*Productive participation in the workforce*

- Modernization of sewing facilities and sewing classroom of Ashgabat Training Production Enterprise is in process to create jobs for 30 hearing impaired people.
- Research and Development Unit established to design new models to increase assortment of produced garments;
- Five NISSAN mini buses were procured for transportation of target groups from and to work places.
- Two vehicles were procured for transportation of the raw materials and finished products.

*Access to information*

- The specialized library modernized to produce “talking” books for visually impaired people.

*Capacity development*

- Training for management of Central Board of the DBS and Training-Production Enterprises in strategic leadership towards sustainability, business planning and management, financial management, accountability and sustainability.
- Functional review carried out and recommendations for organization’s improvement prepared

*Information and communication campaign*

- Round table meetings held in 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.
- 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.
- Visibility materials with information on DBS activities were produced.
- Publication of brochures (manual) for people staying in direct or temporal contact with blind people.
- 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.
- 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.

Project Contact Information	
<b>Location and coverage:</b>	Ashgabat
<b>UNDP Programme Officer:</b>	Ms. Nurjemal Jalilova Address: UN House 40, 1995 (Galkynysh) st., Ashgabat, 744013, Turkmenistan Tel: (+993 12) 42 52 50 Fax: (+993 12) 42 53 17, 42 53 88 E-mail: <a href="mailto:nurjemal.jalilova@undp.org">nurjemal.jalilova@undp.org</a>
<b>Useful Links:</b>	<a href="http://content.undp.org/go/newsroom/2009/december/integration-of-visually-and-hearing-impaired-in-turkmenistan.en?categoryID=1678279&amp;lang=en">http://content.undp.org/go/newsroom/2009/december/integration-of-visually-and-hearing-impaired-in-turkmenistan.en?categoryID=1678279&amp;lang=en</a> <a href="http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/6894C5ED-F203-1EE9-B62549933AD0B7C8">http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/6894C5ED-F203-1EE9-B62549933AD0B7C8</a>