This action is funded by the European Union

**ANNEX III**

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action programme in favour of Uzbekistan for 2019

**Action Document for the EU Contribution to the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan**

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**ANNUAL PROGRAMME/MEASURE**

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation and action programme/measure in the sense of Articles 2 and 3 of Regulation N° 236/2014.

| 1. **Title/basic act/ CRIS number** | EU contribution to the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan  
| | CRIS number: ACA/2019/42168  
| | Financed under the Development Cooperation Instrument |
| 2. **Zone benefiting from the action/location** | Aral Sea region (Republic of Karakalpakstan), Uzbekistan |
| 3. **Programming document** | Addendum No 1 to the Multiannual Indicative Programme between the European Union and Uzbekistan for the period 2014-2020¹ |
| 4. **SDGs** | Main SDG(s) on the basis of section 4.4  
| | SDG 1. No Poverty  
| | SDG 13. Climate Action  
| | Other significant SDG(s) on the basis of section 4.4  
| | SDG 3. Good Health and Well-being  
| | SDG 5. Gender Equality  
| | SDG 6. Clean Water and Sanitation |
| 5. **Sector of concentration/ thematic area** | Rural Development |
| 6. **Amounts concerned** | Total estimated cost: EUR 11,990,565.00² |

¹ C(2018)4741 of 20 July 2018

² [1]
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<tr>
<th>7. Aid modality(ies) and implementation modality(ies)</th>
<th>Project Modality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect management with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)</td>
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| 8 a) DAC code(s) | Main DAC codes: 11240, 11231, 11330, 12191, 12230, 12261, 12281, 12330, 13020, 14021, 14031, 16020, 16050, 31120, 31130, 31140, 31150, 31161, 31320, 33210, 41020, 43040, 43072, 73010. |

| b) Main Delivery Channel | UNDP - 41114 |

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<td>Climate change mitigation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climate change adaptation</td>
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| 10. Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC) thematic flagships | N/A |

**SUMMARY**

The drying of the Aral Sea has resulted in severe socio-economic and ecological consequences, due to the unsustainable and malign management and use of water resources during the Soviet era. Only in Uzbekistan, the Aral Sea catastrophe covered the Aral Sea region, with the epicentre in the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, and its total population of 3.7 million people. However, its consequences are felt far beyond Uzbekistan.

The comprehensive needs assessment in the Aral Sea region conducted by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2017 revealed that the local population in rural areas of Karakalpakstan suffers from the lack of jobs and income generation opportunities, severe environmental (i.e. land, air, and water) degradation, poor road conditions, shortage of clean

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2 Exchange rate InforEuro for June 2019 – EUR/USD = 0.893 EUR
drinking water, limited access to quality healthcare, and deteriorating infrastructure, which are either caused directly or exacerbated by the Aral Sea catastrophe.

The ‘EU contribution to the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan’ (hereinafter the Action) aims to address the multiple environmental, economic, health, food and social insecurities in the most vulnerable areas of the Aral Sea region through bringing integrated and innovative solutions under a platform of the United Nations Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region (MPHSTF).

The MPHSTF was established under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), at the initiative of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2018. The MPHSTF is the pooled financing mechanism established to finance the unified MPHSTF Programmatic Framework, which is developed on the basis on the results of the Needs Assessment survey.\(^3\)

In accordance with the Multi Annual Indicative Programme for Uzbekistan 2014-2020, the overall objective of the Action is to provide support in the area of rural development, through the contribution to the MPHSTF.

1 CONTEXT ANALYSIS

1.1 Context Description

The Aral Sea was the fourth largest lake in the world until the 1960s. The drying of the Aral Sea, a man-made disaster long in the making, is not only an environmental problem, but especially a catastrophe for communities and people living on its former shores. The Aral Sea disaster resulted in land degradation and desertification, shortage of drinking water, malnutrition, deteriorating health and high poverty rates of the affected population. The socio-economic and environmental consequences are further complicated by the speed of negative changes taking effect.

Significant population growth, the scale of urbanization and intensive use of lands, construction of large hydro-technical and irrigation facilities on the water-streams of the Aral Sea basin, without regards to the environmental consequences, were the main factors of the Aral Sea’s drying out.

Environmental consequences

Intensification of the desertification process in the vast territory: the vast areas of salt fields formed on the dried-up part of the sea turning into a new desert ‘Aralkum’ with an area of more than 5.5 million hectares, covering the territories of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Annually more than 75 million tons of dust and poisonous salts ascend from the Aral Sea.

Pollution and salinization of water and land resources: the level of water salinity in the Aral Sea has increased by more than 13-25 times and exceeds the average level of mineralisation of oceans by 7-11 times. As a result of salt dispersion during dust storms, the mineralisation of irrigation water and groundwater increased, and the quality of land has sharply decreased.

Depletion of the gene pool of flora and fauna: as a result of the drying out of the Aral Sea, sixty species of wild animals and plants vanished and the number of endangered species increased.

\(^3\) [http://aral.mptf.uz/download/?file=Needs%20assessment%20report%20_brief_ENG.pdf]
Change of the Aral Sea region climate and landscape: a direct consequence of the Sea’s drying out was the dramatic climate change, felt not only in Central Asia, but also in other regions. The number of days with temperature over 40 degrees has doubled in the Aral Sea region since the early 1960s. Uzbekistan reports average temperature increases, which are double the speed of the global warming, which many believe is the consequence of the Aral Sea drying.

Demographic consequences

The negative consequences of the catastrophe resulted in worsening of the demographic situation in the region, by decreasing the birth rate and an increasing mortality rate, which in its turn has led to a slowdown in population growth. They also force young people and economically active population to leave the region for other regions of the country and abroad to find decent jobs. The high level of migration of the population due to the deterioration of living conditions might lead to catastrophic consequences associated with the irretrievable disappearance of culture, traditions, spiritual and historical heritage of the people in the region.

Negative effects on water, health and sanitation

The most acute issue is the access of the population to high-quality drinking water. More than half of the population of the Aral Sea region, especially inhabitants of rural settlements, use insufficiently purified and highly mineralised water. Rural areas have no centralised hot water supply (99.3%), while non-centralised systems do not function in all the households (27.5%).

Water pollution and a large volume of dust and salt coming from the bottom of the dried Aral Sea play a decisive role in high death rates (general and infant mortality), as well as in high rates of somatic diseases (anaemia, kidney disease, gastrointestinal disturbances), and in an increase of the level of respiratory, blood, cholelithiasis, cardiovascular and oncological diseases.

Over the last decade, the infant and maternal mortality rates in the Republic of Karakalpakstan have exceeded the same indicators for the Republic of Uzbekistan by 13% to 17%. The death rate from tuberculosis in the Republic of Karakalpakstan remains the highest in the country (19.4 cases per 100 000 population) and is almost three times higher than the average for Uzbekistan.

The incidence of acute intestinal infections in Karakalpakstan over the past decade was 188 per 100 000 population, which is 1.4 times higher than the average for the Republic of Uzbekistan. In the structure of respiratory apparatus, chronic bronchitis is 2.5-3 times higher than the average for the country.

Children are exposed to this strong and rapidly negative impact, which poses a particular danger to the gene pool of the population of the Aral Sea region, and, consequently, the consequences may be irreversible. For example, the content of dioxin in the blood of pregnant women and in the milk of nursing mothers in Karakalpakstan is, on average, five times higher than in Europe.
Socio-economic consequences

Agriculture dominates the structure of the regional economy, while the share of industry and services in the economy lags far behind the average national indicators. The employment in the agricultural sector of the region makes up 33% of the total employment.

In the past, the Aral Sea was one of the richest fishing grounds in the world: the annual catch of fish in the reservoirs of the Aral Sea was 30-35 thousand tons. More than 80% of the inhabitants of the Aral Sea coast were engaged in the extraction, processing and transportation of fish and fish products. The loss of the fishing and transport potential of the sea resulted in non-functioning of such industries as fish processing and ship repair, and consequently tens of thousands of people became unemployed.

The results of a survey conducted by UNDP in 2017 revealed that, despite the measures taken, the region ranks last among the regions of Uzbekistan in terms of its economic potential, agricultural production, and retail commodity turnover, and penultimate in terms of its production of consumer goods. Thus, the total per capita income in Karakalpakstan is 1.4 times lower than the average for Uzbekistan. Karakalpakstan is ranked 12th among the fourteen regions of the country by volume of products and services indicators, the number of small businesses, and exports per capita - which explains the low level of entrepreneurship development.

All the surveyed areas are classified as territories with a relatively tense situation in the labour market. The unemployment rate in some areas reaches more than 10% (4.9% in the country), and youth unemployment averages 12.5%. The level of entrepreneurial activity remains low due to unfavourable climatic conditions.

Ensuring food security in the Republic of Karakalpakstan has its own specific features related to the state of land and water resources, environmental challenges, the level of socio-economic development, access to transport, and the capacity of food markets. In general, for 60% of the households, the affordability of food products is low.

There are problems associated with the lack of sustainable provision of electricity and fuel in the surveyed districts. The specificities of these districts require the development of alternative energy sources, such as solar and wind energy facilities.

1.2 Policy Framework (Global, EU)

Under the EU’s Multiannual Indicative Programme for Uzbekistan (2014-2020), EU development assistance between 2014 and 2020 is concentrated on rural development. Goals include poverty reduction and wealth creation in rural communities, the improvement of quality of life, living standards and food security of people residing in isolated or sparsely populated areas, and the protection of natural resources.

This rural development aid intervention goes beyond the traditional focus on agriculture, as it supports income and employment-generating investments in village infrastructure, local cooperatives, family farms and micro and small-sized enterprises. Rural development interventions may also include sustainable energy, improvement of water, sanitation and irrigation systems in rural areas, and measures to increase resilience to climate change and natural or man-made disasters.

With reference to the above, the proposed cooperation with the MPHSTF is in line with the EU’s Multiannual Indicative Programme for Uzbekistan.
1.3 Public Policy Analysis of the partner country/region

To reduce the destructive impact of the Aral Sea crisis, the governments in the region, the UN system, bilateral and multilateral donors, and others have been raising awareness of the issue and responding to mitigate the human, ecological, and economic consequences of the crisis.

The initiatives of the Government of Uzbekistan to mitigate the consequences of the Aral Sea environmental crisis and the social and economic development of the Aral Sea region are part of its priority measures identified within the framework of the first ‘Strategy for Action in the Five Priority Areas of Uzbekistan's Development in 2017-2021’.

In this context, the State Programme ‘Complex of measures to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe, restoration and socio-economic development of the Aral Sea region for 2015-2018’ should be mentioned.

The adoption of another State Programme on Development of the Aral Sea Region for 2017-2021 (PP-2731 as of January 18, 2012), with a total budget of over 8.8 EUR⁴ is the logical continuation of measures on mitigation of the negative consequences of the catastrophe.

The analysis of the measures taken and socio-economic policy pursued in the Aral Sea region indicate that the Government considers the implementation of the following fundamentally important measures as priorities:

1. Improvement of the management system, economical and rational use of water resources in the region;
2. Creation of favourable conditions for reproduction and preservation of the gene pool and health of the population living in the environmental risk areas;
3. Expansion of employment and generation of income sources aimed at improving the level and quality of life of the population of the Aral Sea region;
4. Restoration of the ecosystem and biodiversity, as well as conservation and protection of the flora and fauna.

However, with the increased aggravation of the environmental, socio-economic and humanitarian consequences of the Aral Sea disaster and the degradation of the human habitat in the Aral Sea region, it is clear that it would be impossible to solve this immense (in global scale) problem without substantial assistance from the UN and the international community.

In this context, the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan to establish the MPHSTF, which met UN support, is designed to be an effective mechanism for consolidating and coordinating the efforts of all development partners on a single platform.

The MPHSTF and the Government’s priorities in this area are in line with the EU’s Multiannual Indicative Programme for Uzbekistan (2014-2020) with the focus on sustainable rural development.

1.4 Stakeholder analysis

The key stakeholders are Participating UN Organisations (PUNOs) including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), United

⁴ 8,422 billion UZ sums / Exchange rate InforEuro for June 2019: 1 UZS = 0.00011 EUR
Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), national and regional authorities, bilateral and multilateral donors, and civil society.

The following ministries and agencies mentioned below are also stakeholders assisting the PUNOs with the implementation of the Action and related activities:

- The State Committee on Forestry of Uzbekistan and its Branch in Karakalpakstan with the capacity and resources in the implementation of activities on afforestation and climate change adaptation actions;
- The Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Agriculture, Women’s Committee of Karakalpakstan, Karakalpakstan Board of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Business Women Association, Youth Union - will support income generation initiatives;
- The State Committee of the Government of Uzbekistan on Development of Tourism will play an important role in supporting in tourism development aspects;
- The Ministry of Housing and Communal Services will assist PUNOs with implementing drinking water supply projects.

The above-mentioned ministries and agencies possess resources and extensive experience in implementing development initiatives jointly with international donors and financial institutions - not only in the Aral Sea region, but in the other parts of Uzbekistan as well.

Direct beneficiaries are the populations of the eight Northern districts (Muynak, Karauzyak, Kegeili, Chimbay, Takhtakupir, Nukus, Kanlykul and Shumanay districts) of Karakalpakstan, which are the most affected by the Aral Sea disaster, with the total number of 471 300 inhabitants.

The MPHSTF brings together the expertise of a diverse network of stakeholders, including international financial institutions and donor organizations, the Government of Uzbekistan, regional and local authorities, UN agencies, and community-based organizations. The MPHSTF will go beyond short-term fixes and will advance comprehensive solutions that are innovative, foster technology exchange through South-South cooperation, actively include the affected communities, and are preventive rather than reactive in their nature. Thus, the MPHSTF and its projects complement and continue the efforts of the Government aimed at solving the problems of the Aral Sea region by applying a programmatic approach that supports development cooperation in a strategic, transparent and impartial fashion, in line with global best practices.

1.5 Problem analysis/priority areas for support

The most important primary insecurity for the people living around the Aral Sea is the drying of the sea: communities have little or no access to clean water; they have lost their jobs as a result of the loss of traditional sectors, such as fishing, coupled with the lack of investments in the region and the poor conditions of the soil for farming; pesticides and industrial wastes that were at the bedrock of the sea are now creating respiratory diseases and are a host of other health insecurities; lack of access to agriculture and lack of income has exacerbated food insecurity and malnutrition, with people unable to grow their food or to afford to buy quality products.

These multiple insecurities have been snowballing onto each other to create chronic situations of overall human insecurity. They require holistic interventions, long and short-term, built on the actual situation of the people in the region with their capacities in mind, which could help them mitigate the impact of these insecurities and prevent their further intensification.
The MPHSTF aims to address the environmental, health, food, social and economic insecurities in the most vulnerable areas of the Aral Sea region by bringing in innovative solutions to address the environmental issues and improve access to basic services and poverty reduction.

This will be achieved through the implementation of a package of measures that will increase the local coverage of access to basic services, enhancing the afforestation works of the dried seabed, and work on improving the environment, as well as increasing household income opportunities for the poor to improve living conditions for rural communities and vulnerable groups.

Given the fact that the EU development assistance for Uzbekistan between 2014 and 2020 is concentrated on rural development, the proposed project fully matches the EU priorities.

The EU support of the MPHSTF is expected to create strong added value by bringing in expertise, technology and know-how. Therefore, the MPHSTF will emphasize and work to get maximum benefit from this cooperation, especially through partnerships and collaboration.

2 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

<table>
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<th>Risk level (H/M/L)</th>
<th>Mitigation Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Lack of or limited access to or no trust in information about Aral Sea disaster and its impact on environment, climate change, socio-economic situation in the Region</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Raising awareness programs promoted among international donors/IFIs and other development partners based on evidence based approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Low interest from IFIs towards the Aral Sea catastrophe (most donors do not place any special emphasis on the Aral Sea issue in their country strategies in Uzbekistan)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Negotiations between the Government and the international partners with the purpose of explaining the high importance solving of the Aral Sea related problems and triggering donors to include Aral Sea catastrophe thematic in their programming documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Lack of cooperation between IFIs in Uzbekistan, including different strategies/financial cycles and procedures</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Meetings with participation of donors/IFIs, the Government of Uzbekistan representatives and the stakeholders with the purpose to explain the importance and efficiency of an integrated/holistic approach to solving problems related to the Aral Sea catastrophe</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Low level of sustainability of initiatives launched within the MPTF</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Awareness raising to include the MPTF initiatives in to the regional</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>development plans supported by government budget allocations</th>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Low level of commitment from National/Local level Government to accept/use proposed technologies and methods in the Aral Sea region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Insufficient capacities of national government and local beneficiaries in the use of new techniques and approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Beneficiaries are not adequately consulted, which results in ineffective programming</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Assumptions**

The following will contribute to successful implementation of the Action:

- Leadership commitment of the Government in the process of establishing and launching the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region, and the Uzbekistan President’s resolution dated on 8th January 2019 on supporting the activities of the newly established MPHSTF;

- As part of this resolution, the ‘Roadmap’ has also been endorsed that outlines the specific activities to be conducted for fostering the MPHSTF’s work including the resource mobilization activities. In January 2019 over 80 letters were signed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan and sent out via Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the call for cooperation and resource mobilization to International Financial Institutions, bilateral and multilateral donors, big corporations and charity organizations under the MPHSTF;

- PUNOs have a long standing partnership with the Government of Uzbekistan in jointly implementing development initiatives including in the Aral Sea region. The PUNOs have built solid working relationship with the Government at all levels (national, regional, local and community) and contributed valuable inputs to socio-economic and environmental development in the national context and in Aral Sea region as well. Thus, the Government and beneficiary institutions remain interested in, and available for the proposed action. Based on the long-lasting partnership, the above identified risks can be addressed with the joint efforts during the course of the Action’s implementation;

- The proposed Action will work on mitigation of the multidimensional consequences of the Aral Sea catastrophe as well as climate change aspects to reduce the level of climate change related risks;

- Alignment of the Action with the government policies and strategies will result in getting full support by the government authorities in the implementation phase;

- Decision making by relevant government institutions is timely and coherent;
3 LESSONS LEARNT AND COMPLEMENTARITY

3.1 Lessons learnt

In 2017, within the 2nd phase of the UN Joint Programme, the Needs Assessment survey of socio-economic conditions of the population residing in Aral Sea Region has been conducted by UNDP covering 8 districts (Takhtakupir, Moynak, Karauzyak, Kegeyli, Kanlikul, Shumanay, Chimbay and Nukus) in 116 Village Council of Citizens (VCC) and 1600 households. It envisaged the overall characteristics of the region, demographic condition, rural development, social infrastructure, education, health care, environmental situation and gender aspects in employment.

Overall, the needs assessment survey indicated that socio-economic indicators of the observed areas, are extremely lagging behind in terms of employment, environment, transportation, health, education and provision of drinking water comparing compared to other regions of Uzbekistan.

Moreover, the Government of Uzbekistan, having researched the local needs of the population of the Muynak district, formulated a State Programme on Recovering Socio-Economic Development of the District and adopted the decree dated 16th of January 2019, registered #37. Programme The programme outlines to implementation of 120 social and 75 entrepreneurship development projects which are designed to build local resilience to climate change and other environmental irregularities occurring in the Region.

The experience of the two UN Joint Programmes (2012-2019), funded by the UN Human Security Trust Fund, which brought together six UN agencies working under one umbrella and demonstrated the benefits of an integrated response to a multi-faceted problem instead of traditional stand-alone interventions. The Programmes demonstrated the value of coordination, integrated planning, but also consolidating the implementation at the field level with one coordinating entity. The following key best practices and lessons learned were documented:

- Through a careful evidence-based analysis (conducted in cooperation with the Council of Ministers and khokimiyats, through the implementation of surveys, monitoring and evaluation processes, grass root inputs/community development planning, and other tools) and drawing strongly on the participatory approach, the Programme has been highly successful in targeting those in need. This approach should be further fostered within regional initiatives.

- Added value through the application of an integrated approach to local development, and the identification of linkages and synergies between livelihood, health and infrastructure development components, have both helped to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of project results.

- Partnership building, through engaging national, regional and local institutions in programme implementation, partnership building has enhanced programme relevance
and increased long-term sustainability. Further cooperation with government institutions has resulted in the further identification of best practices and approaches for integrating them into the State Programme on mitigating the Aral Sea disaster’s consequences.

- More engagement in supporting the Government to develop **long-term regional strategic planning** has resulted in strong institutions and mechanisms for responding to long-running and complex issues (including Regional Strategy Development, database development, and the Muynak district development prospective until 2030). Consequently, a comprehensive needs assessment and development framework for the region has been elaborated on, to enhance government capacity and ownership for long-term regional development.

- The Programme has convincingly demonstrated the benefits of coordinated efforts by **regional level donors** to improve livelihoods, through partnering with Swiss Development Cooperation, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Coca-Cola Foundation, the Global Water Challenge, MASHAV - Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), GEF Small Grants Programme, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and the British Embassy in Tashkent. This coordination will be further fostered within the established Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region.

Prior to the Action’s initiation, considerable assistance was rendered to mitigate the negative consequences of the Aral Sea catastrophe in Uzbekistan by various development actors. However the results have been less than anticipated because of the following key challenges:

- Problems associated with the identification of relevant and effective projects based on proper assessment of needs of the local populations;
- Lack of an inter-sectoral, integrated approach that can target multiple human insecurities at the same time;
- Problems of coordination between development partners and executing agencies that provide development assistance to the Aral Sea Region;
- Weak administration of development projects by the development actors;
- Low level of monitoring and performance evaluation system;
- The presence of these and other problems has created obstacles for the effective use of limited assistance resources and joint initiatives among donors.

Based on above facts and findings of the Needs Assessment, the Programmatic Framework (Strategy) of the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for Aral Sea region was developed. The Fund brings together the expertise of a diverse network of stakeholders, including international financial institutions and donor organisations (note: currently, the EU Delegation and the Japan Embassy are representing the donor community in the MPHSTF’s Steering Committee), the Government of Uzbekistan, regional and local authorities, UN agencies, and community-based organizations. The MPHSTF will go beyond short-term fixes and will advance comprehensive solutions that are innovative, foster technology exchange, actively include the affected communities, and are preventive rather than reactive in their nature. Thus, the MPHSTF and its projects complement and continue the efforts of the
Government aimed at solving the problems of the Aral Sea region by applying a programmatic approach that supports development cooperation in a strategic, transparent and impartial fashion in line with global best practices.

3.2 Complementarity, synergy and donor coordination

MPHSTF is aimed to closely coordinate with the European Commission’s disaster preparedness programmes (former DIPECHO, future CADIRR programme) in terms of increasing resilience and reducing the vulnerability of local communities and institutions by supporting strategies and realization of social infrastructure projects to improve preparedness, mitigation and response capacities to be able to better cope with recurrent natural disasters in the region.

It is envisioned that the MPHSTF will build synergies with the EU, other donors and various institutions of the Government of Uzbekistan to garner support for tackling human insecurities of the population affected by the crises. Through the MPHSTF, the efforts will be complemented by all the participants, donor community, the UN agencies and civil society organizations on integrating manner and addressing community-level needs of the Aral Sea region. As a coordination platform, the newly created MPHSTF will provide an innovative and effective mechanism for mobilizing all stakeholders around the human security approach both as a conceptual and operational tool for interventions in the region affected by multiple insecurities around the Aral Sea caused by climate change.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is considering projects in line with the objectives of the Fund, that could be initiated in parallel, in coordination with the European Commission, the UN and the Government of Uzbekistan.

The MPHSTF Programmatic Framework fully aligns with the Government Strategy on Five Priority Directions of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021 and with the set of measures on social-economic development of Muynak district of Karakalpakstan. It is also aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Uzbekistan for 2016-2020, contributing to the thematic area “Inclusive economic development, with a focus on employment and social protection” and “Quality health and education, to fully realize human potential”.

The MPHSTF will advance the coordination mechanism to ensure that the joint interventions are coordinated, comprehensive, and executed in a timely manner. In addressing areas previously not attended to, partners will address gaps and will avoid duplication with, or detraction from, existing initiatives.

The effectiveness and synergy of the MPHSTF will also be strengthened through: (i) more focus on evidence-based analysis and participatory approach to target the most vulnerable; (ii) an integrated approach to the regional development, including through a mapping of current and planned donor initiatives in the region, and (iii) joint work on long-term regional strategic planning based on comprehensive analysis of the situation in the region.

The MPHSTF Steering Committee is established as a mechanism for ensuring synergy of the partners consisting of the EU, UN agencies, National Government representatives, donors and civil society organizations. The Steering Committee will meet at least twice a year to coordinate and discuss the progress of activities within the MPHSTF, effective utilisation of available resources, and further mobilisation of resources.

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4 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

4.1 Overall objective, specific objective(s), expected outputs and indicative activities

The overall objective of the Action is to strengthen the health of populations, to reduce environmental degradation, to boost resilience of vulnerable populations affected by the Aral Sea disaster through increase of income, effective governance and coordination.

The Action aims to address environmental, economic, health, food and social insecurities in the most vulnerable areas of the Aral Sea region through bringing innovative solutions in addressing the environmental issues, improving the access of affected rural populations to basic services and poverty reduction.

The action will have 5 specific objectives as follows:

1. Reduction of the stress on local communities due to the deteriorating environmental situation
2. Increase in employment and income generation opportunities for local communities
3. Securing of local community access to affordable and healthy food and clean drinking water
4. Promotion of health improvement of the local populations, and healthy lifestyles
5. Improvement of the living conditions of local populations, with particular focus on vulnerable groups such as children and youth.

Objective 1. Reduction of the stress on local communities due to the deteriorating environmental situation
Indicative expected outputs:
1.1. Local management practices and knowledge of ecosystem services are improved;
1.2. New technologies in the area of water purification, agroforestry, afforestation, and soil stabilization are piloted;
1.3. The quality of water, air and soil pollution is monitored and addressed through local regulatory practices.

Objective 2. Increase in employment and income generation opportunities for local communities
Indicative expected outputs:
2.1. New income opportunities in sectors adjusted to local conditions are created;
2.2. Skills and knowledge of local communities to participate in new industries, to become entrepreneurs, as well as adaptability to new work conditions for employability are improved;
2.3. Investments in local infrastructure serving local communities (e.g. energy, access roads, service industry, banking) are increased.

Objective 3. Securing of local community access to affordable and healthy food and clean drinking water
Indicative expected outputs:
3.1. Local infrastructure investments for access to and distribution of clean water are increased;
3.2. Opportunities for local production, processing, storage and sale of diverse, affordable and high-quality food are increased;
3.3. The quality of nutrition is increased through standardisation, regulation, monitoring, information, and education.
Objective 4. Promotion of health improvement of the local populations, and healthy lifestyles
Indicative expected outputs:
4.1. Investments in local health services and pharmacies (e.g. facilities and equipment) are increased;
4.2. Access to rural health clinics and to medication primarily in remote areas is improved;
4.3. The quality of health care is enhanced through improved professional education.

Objective 5. Improvement of the living conditions of local populations, with particular focus on vulnerable groups such as women, children and youth
Indicative expected outputs:
5.1. Adequate housing appropriate for the local living conditions is provided;
5.2. Social and community services, including pre-school education and leisure opportunities, and life skills education for children and youth are improved.

4.2 Intervention logic

The MPHSTF intends to improve the social wellbeing of communities affected by the negative consequences of the Aral Sea crisis in line with the government’s policy that highlights addressing the negative consequences of the Aral Sea environmental disaster as a priority issue.

Based on the experience and the lessons learned from previous interventions, the programme integrates geographic and thematic focus.

To achieve this, in Karakalpakstan it will: (a) build the capacity of local authorities to take on increased responsibilities as decentralization progresses and advocate for poverty reduction policies in the regions (training in regional planning); (b) translate these policies into concrete community-based actions that can be applied by local authorities and communities to mitigate the consequences of the Aral Sea disaster (through improved access to services and income generation opportunities as well as improving of land/pasture quality).

The action will support increased access to rural development services and demonstrate innovative approaches and appropriate technologies for: (i) support in scaling up of afforestation of the dried sea bed by strengthening the institutional capacity of state forestry departments, introducing know-how in afforestation efforts and new water saving technologies, (ii) improved job opportunities, (iii) improved access to basic food products, (iv) improved access to rural health care facilities and to medication (v) improved access to housing and municipal services.

The MPHSTF will focus more on the programmatic approach than on stand-alone projects in order to strengthen the interconnection and reduce transaction costs, allowing the government and partners at different levels to work in a coordinated and committed manner.

It will also serve as the means for broader advocacy on sustainable development of the region through socio-economic development interventions, targeted and practical innovative pilot projects and raising awareness and best practice sharing to promote the achievement of the sustainable development goals in the Aral Sea region.
In line with the Busan development effectiveness principles on local ownership, a focus on results, partnership of development partners, and transparency of aid, the mission of the MPHSTF is to make positive contribution in the area of development coordination.

4.3 Mainstreaming

There are situations when the problem is readily identifiable and can be addressed through one or a few specific actions. However, the situation in Karakalpakstan is more complex. The environmental disaster has led to worsened livelihood opportunities due to land degradation and water shortages as well as the disappearance of the fishing industry. It has also led to poor health and food insecurity by limiting access to quality drinking water and sanitation, both insecurities having been exacerbated by low income levels. Livelihood opportunities became more limited, giving rise to other negative externalities in people’s everyday lives.

In this regard, adopting traditional sector-specific or vulnerable group-tailored approaches in the circumstances of Karakalpakstan is not sufficient given the complexity of human security challenges faced by individuals and communities affected by the Aral Sea disaster. A more comprehensive and holistic approach is required that will address the root causes of the risks and challenges affecting the individuals and communities. The approach should be able to create positive linkages between multiple sectors (i.e. economic, social, political, health, environmental, etc.) and address these complex and interlinked challenges. The approach should also reflect the strengths and aspirations of local communities. At the same time, partners at all levels need to be involved: interventions from the bottom up that build resilience of communities by empowering them should be synchronized with macro-level policies, improvements of governance institutions, and adoption of practices and regulations that protect vulnerable populations against the human security threats they face. The MPHSTF seeks to pursue two complimentary strategies: focus on empowerment and resilience building of local communities, and promote long-term policies focusing on protection.

Environment and climate change will be addressed under the different objectives. The activities under Objective 1 will be directly contributing to address desertification processes, enhance biodiversity and contribute to climate change adaptation. Activities promoting employment opportunities and the improvement of living conditions under Objectives 2 and 5 respectively, will also promote the use of low carbon options, including the use of renewable energy, energy efficiency, passive housing and low carbon construction materials and housing design. The promotion of entrepreneurial activities and business skills development will pay attention to environmentally sustainable and climate resilient productive activities.

From the human rights-based approach perspective, the proposed interventions will address the following civil, social and economic rights: right to adequate living standard, right to water, right to sanitation, right to food, right to health, right to adequate housing, right to information and right to public participation.

MPHSTF promotes equal opportunities for men and women and ensures mainstreaming of gender equality in its activities.

The MPHSTF pays special attention to women’s economic empowerment by offering business skills trainings for rural women, supporting them with development of non-traditional business ideas and applying modern technologies related to food processing, production, tourism development and service delivery.

In order to integrate the human security concept into the programmes and policies, four key principles will be applied both to the process and to the outcome of programmes and policies.
Within the protection and empowerment framework, human security promotes people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific, and prevention-oriented measures that seek to reduce the likelihood of crisis, help overcome the obstacles to development, and promote human rights for all.

4.4 Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This intervention is relevant for the 2030 Agenda. It contributes primarily to the progressive achievement of SDG 1. No Poverty and SDG 13. Climate Action. In addition, the intervention will contribute to the achievement of the following other SDGs: SDG 3. Good Health and Well-being; SDG 5. Gender Equality and SDG 6. Clean Water and Sanitation.

The MPHSTF aims at building the resilience of communities affected by the Aral Sea disaster through the achievement of five SDGs in the most vulnerable geographic region of the country.

5 IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Financing agreement

In order to implement the actions proposed, it is foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with the Republic of Uzbekistan.

5.2 Indicative implementation period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 4 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 48 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission’s authorising officer responsible by amending this decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

5.3 Implementation of the budget support component

N/A

5.4 Implementation modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures.

5.4.1 Indirect management with an international organisation

This action may be implemented in indirect management with the UNDP, Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office in New York.

The implementation by this entity entails the management of implementation of all activities under expected outputs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria:

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6 www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.
• Effective presence in Uzbekistan and in Central Asia;
• Recognized competence and experience in environmental, health, food, social and economic sectors;
• The specific role of the agency in the area of Aral Sea disaster mitigation.

The international organisation identified above is currently undergoing an ex-ante assessment of its systems and procedures. Based on its compliance with the conditions in force at the time previously other indirect management actions were awarded to the organisation and based on a long-lasting problem-free cooperation, the international organisation can also now implement this action under indirect management, pending the finalisation of the ex-ante assessment, and, where necessary, subject to appropriate supervisory measures in accordance with Article 154(5) of the Financial Regulation.

In case the envisaged entity would need to be replaced, the Commission’s services may select another replacement entity using the same criteria. If the entity is replaced the decision to replace it needs to be justified.

5.5 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply, subject to the following provisions.

The Commission’s authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of products and services in the markets of the countries concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult.

5.6 Indicative budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>EU contribution (amount in EUR)</th>
<th>Indicative third party contribution (amount in USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Management with UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office in New York - cf. section 5.4.1</td>
<td>5,000,000.00</td>
<td>7,600,000.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation, (cf. section 5.9) – Audit (cf. section 5.10)</td>
<td>100,000.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and visibility (cf. section 5.11)</td>
<td>100,000.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,200,000.00</td>
<td>7,600,000.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Government of Uzbekistan - USD 6.5 million and Norway - USD 1.1 million

5.7 Organisational set-up and responsibilities

The UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan (MPHSTF), under the aegis of the UN, has been established by PUNOs, that take full programmatic and financial accountability over the funds transferred to them, to serve as a unique unified platform for international development cooperation and the mobilization of donor resources to implement integrated measures.
The Fund brings together the expertise of a diverse network of stakeholders, including international financial institutions and donor organizations, the Government of Uzbekistan, regional and local authorities, UN agencies, and community-based organizations. The MPHSTF will go beyond short-term fixes and will advance comprehensive solutions that are innovative, foster technology exchange through South-South cooperation, actively include the affected communities, and are preventive rather than reactive in their nature. Thus, the MPHSTF and its projects complement and continue the efforts of the Government aimed at solving the problems of the Aral Sea region by applying a programmatic approach that supports development cooperation in a strategic, transparent and impartial fashion in line with global best practices.

The MPHSTF is governed by a Steering Committee and supported by a Technical Secretariat. The Steering Committee has overall responsibility for the Aral Sea MPHSTF. It is responsible for leadership, strategic direction, and decisions on eligibility, allocation and other managerial and oversight aspects. It is co-chaired by the High-Level Government representative and the UN Resident Coordinator in Uzbekistan and consists of 3 representatives of donors (on rotational bases) contributing to the MPHSTF, 2 civil society members (on rotational bases), 3 Participating UN Organizations, and 3 national government representatives.

The Technical Secretariat provides technical, operational and administrative support to the MPHSTF Steering Committee and works under its overall guidance.

The MPHSTF will be administered by the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office acting as the Administrative Agent. The UNDP MPTF Office is responsible for Fund design and set-up, maintenance of the Fund account, receipt of donor contributions, and disbursement of funds upon instructions from the Steering Committee.

The MPHSTF is funded through contributions of the Government, bi-lateral or multi-lateral donors, International Financial Institutions, private business and big corporations.

So far, the Government of Uzbekistan has made an official commitment of USD 6.5 million, of which USD 2.0 million has already been transferred into the MPHSTF. The government of Norway has become the first external donor by contributing USD 1.1 million.

5.8 Performance monitoring and reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partner’s responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and direct outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) or the partner’s strategy, policy or reform action plan list (for budget support).

SDG indicators and, if applicable, any jointly agreed indicators, as for instance per Joint Programming document, should be taken into account.

The report shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the action implementation.
The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

5.9 Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a final evaluation will be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the fact that this programme is testing the approach to improve human security in an affected region in multiple dimensions, and lessons from the evaluation may support future programmes using this approach.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 30 days in advance of the dates foreseen for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country and other key stakeholders. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a framework contract.

5.10 Audit

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

It is foreseen that audit services may be contracted under a framework contract.

5.11 Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU.

This action shall contain communication and visibility measures which shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action, to be elaborated at the start of implementation.

In terms of legal obligations on communication and visibility, the measures shall be implemented by the Commission, the partner country, contractors, grant beneficiaries and/or
entrusted entities. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, the financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and delegation agreements.

The Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Action shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations.

It is foreseen that a contract for communication and visibility may be signed under a framework contract.
APPENDIX - INDICATIVE LOGFRAME MATRIX (FOR PROJECT MODALITY)

The activities, the expected outputs and all the indicators, targets and baselines included in the logframe matrix are indicative and may be updated during the implementation of the action, no amendment being required to the financing decision. When it is not possible to determine the outputs of an action at formulation stage, intermediary outcomes should be presented and the outputs defined during inception of the overall programme and its components. The indicative logframe matrix will evolve during the lifetime of the action: new lines will be added for including the activities as well as new columns for intermediary targets (milestones) for the output and outcome indicators whenever it is relevant for monitoring and reporting purposes. Note also that indicators should be disaggregated by sex whenever relevant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results chain</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Sources and means of verification</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall objective: Impact</td>
<td>To build the resilience of communities affected by the Aral Sea disaster through effective governance and coordination</td>
<td>1. Public satisfaction of environmental policy, %</td>
<td>1-2. Needs assessment (2017) and Impact Assessment Survey (2023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. % of people surveyed that are satisfied with local public service delivery and ensuring social stability</td>
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<td>3-4. State statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. % of population that is economically active disaggregated into sex and location</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. % change in infant mortality (up to 1 year, per 1000 live-born)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific objective(s)</td>
<td>Outcome(s)</td>
<td>Key Performance Indicators</td>
<td>Data Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome 1: Reduction of the stress on local communities due to the deteriorating environmental situation</td>
<td>1. Number of policy frameworks on environment and climate change adaptation updated and recommendations fulfilled</td>
<td>1. Revised policy documents on environment and climate change mitigation</td>
<td>Macroeconomic policy will support SME to create job and income opportunities to promote pro-poor growth. Government will encourage farmers and food producers to introduce and disseminate climate change adaptation tools and mechanisms. Good communication and support from all stakeholders, beneficiaries and end-users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 2: Increase of employment and income generation opportunities for local communities</td>
<td>2.1. Number of permanent jobs and self-employed people sustained over a year (** EU RF 2.11)</td>
<td>2. Projects progress reports, local authorities data</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome 3: Securing of local community access to affordable and healthy food and clean drinking water</td>
<td>3.1. Growth rate of gross agricultural output in targeted districts</td>
<td>3.1.-3.3. Projects progress reports, local authorities data</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2. Number of target communities with pure water infrastructure (** EU RF 2.08)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.3. Number of Households with access to water facilities (**EU RF 2.08)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. % of population satisfied with health services (disaggregated by sex, age and location)</td>
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<td>Outcome 4: Promotion of health improvement of the local populations, and healthy lifestyles</td>
<td>5. Number of social infrastructure facilities constructed in accordance to the new standard projects that meet local conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome 5: Improvement of the living conditions of local populations, with particular focus on vulnerable groups such as women, children and youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>1.1. Number of people trained in ecosystem services and management</td>
<td>1.2. Number of households with improved quality of irrigation water</td>
<td>1.3. Number of improved water/air quality monitoring laboratories</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Output 1.1. Local management practices and knowledge of ecosystem services are improved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Output 1.2. New technologies in the area of water purification, agroforestry, afforestation, and soil stabilization are piloted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Output 1.3. The quality of water, air and soil pollution is monitored and addressed through local regulatory practices</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Output 2.1. New income opportunities in sectors adjusted to local conditions are created</td>
<td>2.1. # of jobs created in target communities (covering rural women/girls) (** EU RF 2.11)</td>
<td>2.2. # of people trained and retrained in the specialized centers to improve and develop their entrepreneurial skills/knowledge (** EU RF 2.15)</td>
<td>2.3. Number of total infrastructure projects implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output 2.2. Skills and knowledge of local communities to participate in new industries are to become entrepreneurs, as well as, adaptability to new work conditions for employability are improved</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Output 2.3. Investments in local infrastructure serving local communities (e.g. energy, access roads, service industry) are increased</td>
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<tr>
<td>Output 3.1. Local infrastructure investments for access of clean water are increased</td>
<td>3.1. # of population with improved access to clean drinking water (** EU RF 2.08)</td>
<td>3.2. Number of projects on strengthening local production capacities in storage and processing of agricultural products</td>
<td>3.3. Number of improved food quality checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output 3.2. Local production, processing, storage and sale of diverse, affordable and high-quality food is increased</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Output 3.3. The quality of nutrition is increased through standardization, regulation, monitoring, information, and education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Output 4.1. Investments in local health services and pharmacies are increased; Output 4.2. Access rural health clinics in remote areas is improved</td>
<td>4.1. Number of health care facilities have improved infrastructure and equipped with modern equipment</td>
<td>4.2. Number of functional rural health clinics equipped with modern equipment</td>
<td>4.3.# and % of health care professionals educated and retrained (within the project) disaggregated by sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output 4.3. The quality of health care is improved through increased professional education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Output 5.1. Adequate housing appropriate for the local living conditions is provided</td>
<td>5.1. Number of adapted standards for the design and construction of residential buildings and social facilities</td>
<td>5.2. Number of community members and school children covered through youth led peer to peer education program per type of service and location</td>
<td>5.1. Ministry of Construction data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output 5.2. Social and community services, including pre-school education and leisure opportunities, and life skills education for children and youth are improved</td>
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</tbody>
</table>