A Woman from Charkesar Empowers Her Local Community Through Education

Education empowers. Safura Ruzimova, a resident of the village of Charkesar (Namangan region), was convinced of the power of education by her life example. According to her, “lack of work, education and income often forces women to endure adverse life circumstances. Education allows us to be confident in our abilities and build the life we dream of.” Once her education and job in the school gave her the strength to change her life for the better and start her own business.

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Access to electricity for every resident of Yangiabad and Charkesar
Seven power transformer stations (250kVa) have been procured and set up by the project. This helped to approximately 250 households in Charkesar and 200 households in Yangiabad with access to uninterrupted electricity.

Reducing threats of uranium legacy
The project has installed 120 new "Radioactivity" safety signs to warn the local population about areas of potential risk.

Supporting business initiatives to boost employment
Seven business initiatives in Charkesar and Yangiabad have been financially supported to create new job opportunities for local population and improve their economic wellbeing. The project has granted USD 70,000 in total. Three more co-funded by the project including by RFF Toward Green Recovery project (Charkesar) making 10 projects in total.

Improving business skills of local community members
More than 500 active community members and representatives of local authorities in Charkesar and Yangiabad have gained an extensive knowledge on entrepreneurship and learnt about opportunities for further development of green entrepreneurship in remote areas, business planning processes, woman entrepreneurship in remote areas and etc.

Involving community members in solving social issues of ULS
The project has purchased dosimetry equipment and transferred to the Ministry of Emergency Situations to provide the local population with measurements of the radiation level and ensure safe residence near the uranium heritage sites. Every person of the uranium legacy sites is able to request a dosimeter and carry out independent measurements to monitor radiation exposure.

Reinforce implementation of legal framework
Number of policy papers, analytical reports on socio-economic development of pilot uranium legacy sites, introduction of measures on community development, and legal aspects of management of uranium tailings and access to information developed and presented via roundtable events to stakeholders.
Increasing Understanding of Radiation Concerns and Risks

Accurate information can be a powerful tool to mitigate the harmful effects of radiation. A growing literature on environmental health literacy suggests that communication about environmental risks must move beyond individual behaviour education to empower communities to mobilise to reduce environmental threats.

In 2020, project experts carried out a series of meetings with representatives of khokimiyats, regional centres of sanitary and epidemiological welfare, the veterinary department, the department of ecology and environmental protection, and makhalla.

These meetings facilitated communication between local government officials and residents and helped deliver crucial information about radiation threats and risks from the former uranium tailings dump located near the township, about the need to limit the stay of people and livestock grazing restrictions. Furthermore, participants learnt about the project goals and were invited to contribute to the project activities.

Distributing Outreach and Advocacy Materials about Radiation Safety

To increase understanding of radiation concerns at the ULS territories in Uzbekistan, it is essential to raise public awareness and to disseminate information about radiation safety.

As part of the work on awareness-raising, the project has developed leaflets about radiation security rules for nutrition and residence in the areas contaminated with radionuclides. These regulations have been translated into Uzbek and distributed among the population of Charkesar and Yangiabad.

In addition, the project has produced two short films, "Humans of Yangiabad" and "Humans of Charkesar", that depict stories of the people who witnessed the beginning, development, and end of the uranium mining industry in Yangiabad. The films show how the lives and livelihoods of these people changed in the 90s, after the mining sites' closure, and how the radio-ecological situation in the town affects its residents.
Project Experts Researches the Environmental Effects of Radioactive Contaminants in Charkesar and Yangiabad

In 2020, project experts teamed up with specialists from the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Health, and the State Committee for Ecology to conduct a study of the radioecological situation in the territories of the former Charkesar-23 uranium mines and Yangiabad ore field.

Experts in the uranium legacy sites measured the levels of radioactive contamination in neighbouring residential and non-residential buildings using specialised "Polimaster" equipment.

The findings of this study helped to determine the current situation and the steps that need to be undertaken to reduce the risk of the negative impact of uranium waste on people, livelihoods, and the environment.

Working Groups are Engaging Communities in Radiation Safety Activities

In June 2021, the project initiated an establishment of special working groups in Yangiabad and Charkesar. These groups have been formed to increase local population’s knowledge on radiation safety and the impact of uranium legacy sites on human health and the environment.

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The working groups serve as an effective mechanism to increase public participation in radiation safety activities, ensure radiation protection of the public and the environment through implementation of Project’s initiatives at the local level.

The working groups brought together representatives of the ministries and governmental agencies in pilot regions, namely the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Education, the State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection, the State Committee for Veterinary, the Union of Youth, Makhalla Committees of Charkesar and Yangiabad.

Currently most of the families living near the uranium heritage sites are unaware of the radioactive risk hazards and the risks stemming from grazing livestock on contaminated pasture. Expanding awareness of local communities and decision makers about the uranium waste risks and negative impact on people, as well as on the environment, is extremely important to ensure people’s well-being at these territories.
Children and youth are one of the most vulnerable groups during emergencies. Such contests for children help raise their awareness of disaster risk reduction, inspire to be proactive and make them think about the ways they can protect our planet.

“I found out that there is a mine near our school where uranium was extracted many years ago. We were informed about the threats of radiation to human health and the environment. In other lessons, I learned how the waste from factories pollutes the environment. I wanted to reflect all these facts in my work,” says Malika Tagaeva, a ninth-grade student and a winner of the contest.

“Mom helped me with the idea of my drawing. Here I showed that our planet was in danger due to industrial waste and climate change. But I believe that we can help our planet if we start using solar and wind energy, save water, ride bicycles, and recycle waste,” says Sarvinoz Akramova, an eighth-grade student and the contest winner.

The competition, part of the project efforts to raise public awareness about the impact of uranium waste on communities, attracted 190 students from two schools in Charkesar and Yangiabad. The students demonstrated their creative talent in painting and good knowledge of the issue. The submitted pictures reflect the views of students on daunting problems such as radiation exposure, mudflows and floods, air pollution, climate change, and human activities that contributed to these processes.
Contest winners
Du tabiatingižni himoya giving!
Uranium Legacy Sites Population are able to Independently Measure the Radiation Level

Increasing the local community’s awareness of the radiological risks and providing access to measurements of the radiation level is one of the ways to enhance public participation in ULS management. This enables policy makers to make more informed decisions by engaging with, and carefully mapping out the needs, opinions and visions of local communities on issues that matter to them. The Project has purchased dosimetry equipment and transferred to the Ministry of Emergency Situations to provide the local population with measurements of the radiation level and ensure safe residence near the uranium heritage sites.

WHAT WE DID TO REINFORCE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE SAFE GOVERNANCE OF LEGACY SITES

Presentation of the Charkesar and Yangiabad Development Roadmap

Based on the analysis of the current status of socio-economic situation in Yangiabad and Charkesar project experts have elaborated a Development Roadmap of these territories. The Roadmap, presented by project experts during the July 2020 roundtable event, provides 20 recommendations on economic issues and 63 tool/measures, 22 recommendations on social issues and 49 tool/ measures to solve them. The finalized Roadmap has been delivered to local khokimiyats.
WHAT WE DID TO REDUCE URANIUM LEGACY RISK IN TARGET COMMUNITIES THROUGH GENDER SENSITIVE SOCIAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Helping People in Uranium Legacy Areas Develop Their Business Competences

In Charkesar and Yangiabad project experts have conducted a series of interactive workshops for entrepreneurs, active community members and farmers. More than 500 men and women living in the territories of the uranium heritage and in nearby cities have gained new knowledge on the development of entrepreneurship, have learnt about new opportunities to contribute to green economy, and their competencies in developing business proposals. We support local population’s participation in shaping laws and policies on all issues affecting their lives, including managing the impact of uranium waste on their health and the health of their families, as well as the environment. This training session aimed to improve women and men’s business skills and to engage women in solving social, economic, and environmental issues through their business projects.

Since 2020, the project has conducted the following training workshops:

"Business planning process: from the idea to implementation" (November 2020) for 70 community members

"Opportunities for the development of green entrepreneurship in remote areas. Improving competencies in the development of business proposals" (June 2021) attended by 37 community members

Online business development consultations (July 2021) for 20 community members

"Opportunities of Cooperatives in community development and green economic development potential in the regions" (June 2021). 35 local community members participated in the workshop

"Woman entrepreneurship in remote areas" (October-November 2021). This training sessions were organized as a "Training of Trainers" to create a community of competent trainers. As a follow on project, every participant of the workshops will further train 6 people, and a total of 280 representatives of Namangan and Tashkent regions will gain new knowledge about women entrepreneurship.

Participants of the training workshops shared their impressions:
Nigora Tursunova: “I have been engaged in entrepreneurship since 2002. I started with trading, but my interest in farming has led me to establish the “Oltin Muborak” enterprise. Now, I am planning to expand my business and develop eco and agro tourism on the farm to create new jobs for unemployed women. Therefore, I find such training sessions very useful. I gained knowledge about current trends in business development, got acquainted with social and green entrepreneurship. Previously, I did not know about social entrepreneurship, but now, I want to move in this direction, because I got inspired.”

Sayyora Tashpulatova: “I have been managing LLC “Tashpulat Stroy Invest” for more than 10 years. Throughout this period, we have built more than 100 houses and other buildings. Many people wonder how it is possible for a woman to work in the construction industry. But for me, construction is my area of expertise. Before that, I worked at the plant as a specialist in estimating and as a design engineer for more than 30 years. Today’s training workshop was useful for me, I learned new business trends and how I, through my activities, can contribute to the development of a green economy.”

Gulmira Beisinova: “I manage a family business. We have a sewing workshop, a hairdresser’s, and a grocery store. I was inspired to learn about social entrepreneurship and a green economy. My business includes elements of social entrepreneurship - I provide temporary work for women who stay at home and care for children with disabilities. After the training workshop, I want to introduce the concept of a green economy in my business, and I already have ideas on how to do this.”

Elena Alekseeva: “Before the training, I have been working as a freelance tour guide, organizing solo and group travels. I had never thought of starting a business. However, participation in the training has made me change my mind. I have realized that launching a business is not that scary, I just need to create a detailed business plan including threats and opportunities to overcome them. Now I am ready to register as an individual entrepreneur and build up a team to organize tours and show fascinating views of Yangiabad. I was delighted to learn that the project provides grant opportunities for business development in the region. I have submitted my proposal and I hope my business project will receive grant funding.”
Promoting Green Economic Development for People at Uranium Heritage Territories

In Charkesar (Namangan region), a number of green business projects including greenhouse facilities in mountainous areas in a household environment, a sewing workshop in the countryside and a garden in mountain conditions have been identified to be co-financed as best practices of promoting green approach to business. This initiative came to life as a result of established cooperation with the “RFF Towards Green Recovery in Uzbekistan” project.

These three projects in Charkesar were selected during a joint field mission in June 2021. The delegation – comprised of representatives of Environment and climate actions cluster, UNDP’s “Towards Green Recovery” project and the project team – identified potential for green interventions, explored the local needs and visited the community sites, where green solutions/technologies could be promoted and piloted with additional funding from UNDP Green projects.

Along with the promotion of green solutions among population, the project also cooperates with local authorities who can significantly contribute to green economic development. In this regard, 21 representatives of Pap district khokimiyat, including 11 women, have been trained on how to establish cooperative (co-op) and integrate green community development concept. Participants learnt how communities can benefit from introducing of green solutions based on experience of EU on smart villages.

A similar meeting has been organized in Angren (Yangiabad) for 14 employees of the khokimiyat and representatives of local communities responsible for various development issues.

Participants noted, that the training programs have been very useful and helped them to learn new approaches to community development which could be implemented in their regions.
Supporting Business Projects to Create Jobs and Build Prosperity at the Uranium Legacy Territories

Entrepreneurship development is one of the ways to ensure economic growth and prosperity in the uranium legacy sites. To improve business environment, create jobs and generate income for the local people, the project “Stakeholder Engagement for Uranium Legacy Remediation in Central Asia. Phase II” seeks to build business competencies of the entrepreneurs and finance/co-finance successful business initiatives at these territories. The project supported the following business initiatives implemented at the pilot areas of Yangiabad (Tashkent region) and Charkesar (Namangan region):

**Beekeeping business project.** Our project purchased processing equipment including hives, frames, a honey extractor and honeybees to help “Yangiabad Eco Start” family enterprise start their business. The business plans to create 4 jobs and provide local population with an excellent nutraceutical product.

**Tent camp.** Our project provided necessary equipment to support her in starting a campground business in Yangiabad mountain area (Tashkent region). According to her, this will be a unique place where people of all walks of life will be able to have wildlife experiences. The campground business will help 7 people living in the ULS find jobs.
Youth education centre. Our project purchased technical assets for the centre in order to help increase education level of the local youth and create at least 12 employment opportunities.

Private kindergarten. Our project supplied this business with toys and playground equipment, that will help to enhance the number of children from 50 to 100. The private kindergarten will create 12 jobs for men and women in the region.

“Yangiabad Jemchujina Chatkala” enterprise – provider of touristic and hotel services – optimized working process thanks to a washing and ironing equipment purchased by our project.
For NGO “Center of Agro Information”, our project procured greenhouses, a food drying machine and other equipment. This contribution helped start a new business and employ people living in the ULS.

As the result of the new equipment provided by the project, “Shakhliya” enterprise in Yangiabad is getting economic benefits from socks production.

In Charkesar (Namangan region), a number of green business projects have been selected to be co-financed as best practices of promoting green approach to business. This initiative came to life as a result of established cooperation with the “RFF Towards Green Recovery in Uzbekistan” project.
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Safura teaches "Technology" subject at school and at the same time studies at the Profi Education University located in the capital. For a long time, Safura dreamed of starting her own business, which would not only bring her additional income, but also be useful for the residents of her mahalla.

“The turning point was the day when a specialist from the EU-funded UNDP and Ministry of Emergency Situations project came to our school and shared grants opportunity to start a business. I still remember how I felt that this opportunity
would change my life, and set a goal for myself - to win this grant,” recalls Safura. A business idea instantly struck her. Seeing how schoolchildren and young people go to the regional center to study languages and some science subjects, she decided that a training center in Charkesar would be in demand.

“At this stage of my life, the knowledge gained at the training programmes helped me a lot. I already knew how to start a business, how to write a business plan,” says Safura.

For people like Safura, the UNDP, MES project funded by the European Union, conducted a series of trainings on entrepreneurship development, business planning and further implementation of “green” technologies in business in Charkesar and Yangiabad, cities with uranium heritage. “When I found out about my grant award, I was immensely happy. I wanted to start recruiting teachers for my center right away.” Under the terms of the grant, Safura was able to obtain all the necessary office equipment for the center at a cost of approximately $10,000.

Today, Safura’s training center has four instructors who teach Chinese and Russian, mathematics, and the basics of computer literacy. The center also has an Internet library. To date, about 30 people study at the center.

“We have been working for a little over a month, and we are already inspired by our results. We continue to engage young people by telling them about the importance of education. I am very happy when I see girls and young woman who come to study with us. I believe that knowledge is an investment in one’s worthy future, it is an opportunity to contribute to society. Education is the light that brightens your path even in the darkest moments.”
Dilyora’s Kindergarten Contributes to the Development of Uranium Legacy Areas

Dilyora Umurboeva has always dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur and contribute to the development of her village and future generation.

“I was born and grown in Charkesar (Namangan region), - shares Dilyora Umurboeva. – Years ago, this place was one of the centers of the uranium mining in the country. As my parents recall, people from all over the Soviet Union worked here, and the village was provided with the best food, clothes, and new residents brought innovations to our village. Today this is not the case, but we are striving to improve our village, to create opportunities for children and adults.”

There were lack of places in kindergartens in the village, and my brother and I came up with the idea to open up a kindergarten to offer not only high quality care, but also provide classes of foreign languages, mental arithmetic, gymnastics, dance, karate, checkers and chess. So, in 2019, we opened up the “Little Talents” kindergarten, and I became the head.

“In my opinion, opening a kindergarten is also an opportunity for the women of our village to devote time to work, hobbies and create additional jobs for them,” Dilyora notes. “Today, we have 50 children attending our kindergarten and have four employees.”

Participation in business development training series, organized by a UNDP project funded by the European Union, helped the entrepreneur to discover new opportunities for development. As a follow up, Dilyora prepared a business plan for kindergarten expansion based on public-private partnership. This strategy envisaged that 100 children could attend the preschool and eight local people would be employed. This business plan helped Dilyora win a $10,000 project grant to procure toys and playground equipment.

As Dilyora admits, there are no similar playgrounds in the
睹乌兹别克斯坦。
“我想让孩子们和青少年体验大自然。我相信这是知识和价值观与环境关系发展的核心基础。”伊琳娜·阿列克谢耶娃一边品着用火煮的茶，一边说。
“我们的特殊项目将帮助孩子们提高心理和身体能力，并将成为成年人从日常生活中抽身的好地方。”为期十二天的夏令营提供桌游、射箭、飞盘投掷、徒步穿越浅水小溪（狭长的小河）

“看到孩子们脸上开心的笑容，我们感到快乐，受到激励，进一步发展我们的幼儿园，使尽可能多的孩子得到良好的照顾，受益于早期学习项目，”Dilyora说。
I believe that my business will partially help solve the problem of unemployment in our town and provide options for leisure for young people. In the future, the promotion of ecotourism in our area will hopefully reduce livestock grazing and increase environmental awareness among young people, who in turn will educate their children."

Elena submitted a business plan to participate in a competition organized by our project. Becoming one of the winners, she received the necessary equipment for the tent camp. Carefully setting up the tents, Elena enthusiastically talks about the details of her tent camp.

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