

## INFORMATION

### **on the activity of GEF Agency regarding a practical assistance to the population living in the epicenter of ecological crisis in Priaralje (Aral Sea shore)**

1. The project on “Program of social assistance to the population living in a zone of ecological crisis” has been approved in 1998.
2. SAF Agencies (Social Assistance Funds) under Nukus branch of IFAS (Republic of Karakalpakstan) have been established:
  - SAF Agency in Buston city (for Turtkul, Beruniy, Ellikkaliy rayons);
  - SAF Agency in Kungrad city (for Muinak, Kungrad, kanglykul, Shumanay rayons);
  - SAF Agency in Chimbay city (for Kegeyliy, Chimbay, Takhtakupyr, Karauzyak, Bozataus rayons);
  - Nukus branch of IFAS (for Khojelin, Nukus, Amudarya rayons, Nukus city, Takhiatash city).
3. Since the beginning of the project implementation, 2115 projects at amount of 1318,0 mln. sum have been financed, over 3540 jobs have been created. The production (paid services provided) at amount of 2552,0 mln. sum was produced. As a whole, the sources of life support of the profit are above 20 thousand of people. The entrepreneurs have received a net profit at amount of 407,0 mln. sum. At the same time, the project participants have obtained the experience of the arrangement of the private business, studied legal and economic norms and the performance of individual business activity.
4. During 9 months of the current year, the participants of mini projects have produced the following production: a meat in a live weight – 534,3 tons, milk – 1769,8 tons, grain – 369,0 tons, eggs – 178 thousand units, ready-made garments – 33,8 thousand units, bakery and confectionery – 98,7 tons.

For the purposes of a further strengthening of a social assistance to the population and to provide a practical help in a zone of ecological crisis **it is required the following:**

to create additional 4 SAF Agencies, with the participation of foreign donors, including a simultaneous monitoring performance and the submission of the recommendations. International donor assistance is proposed for each Agency **at amount of USD 50,000 per year**. Total amount for 4 Agencies (project) is USD 200-250 thousand per year.

As a whole, the project budget for every agency is up to USD 250 thousand per year on average, including joint financing of international donors, which is USD 50,000.

**Special conditions – commitments, which will be indicated in the project adopted are the agreements providing that donor’s funds for bureaucratic and administrative management both will not and should not be used.**

**Separate fragments of public awareness, coming from monitoring and assessment of the**

**Component implementation: A2 – “Water saving competition” and B – “Public awareness”**

- The existing public awareness in zones of crisis is the following: the projects of the assistance to the Aral Sea Basin problems, offices, which are being implemented in Almaty, Astana, Bishkek, Tashkent, “Issyk-Kul” and etc., irrespective of their financial sources, including international organizations, donors as UNDP, USAID, Swiss Mission, INTAS, NATO and etc., according to the practical results look like rather imitation to the Aral Sea or advertisement actions of the demonstration of the assistance provided.
- The population, especially in zones of crisis, think that through the majority of the projects aimed to provide the assistance to the Aral Sea, there is **“feeding”** of international consultants and separate persons in the region, who consider that it is important to receive material reward rather than **to provide a practical assistance to the population, crisis zone and Aral Sea problems.**

- There are such opinions that due to the above-stated projects, which “enrich” the problem as it has been claimed by no one and has not been reached as a “production”, which profit look likes as imitation of the assistance, there is misinformation of public and population that they receive the above-stated help and word public is being misled regarding a “**great**” assistance which is being provided to solve the Aral Sea problems.
- Many people annoy and even embitter that due to non-useful expenditures spent for the implementation of the above-mentioned projects, and the absence of the practical assistance to the population and to crisis zone, as a whole, a philosophy on the opportunity to alleviate the impact of ecological problem is being discredited and the opinions regarding non-advisability to provide the assistance are being occurred, and in addition, these conjunct projects provoke disagreements between the regions.
- The most negative fact is the following: certain groups of persons from “**international consultants**” (some of them have been stayed in the region during 5-7 years and more) and from “**local specialists**” determined themselves as “**professionals**” on the Aral Sea crisis and formed a constant “pool” of foliicolous on the using of this subject in various interpretations and in a certain measure, they remain a prior right of the access to “**eat away**” of the funds aimed to provide the assistance for their private and conjunct needs.
- The project “executors” thinking that the countries and donor organizations “trust” them, in order to justify otioseness of their actions, are being misled donors and leaders of their organizations regarding the unreceptiveness of the regional countries to their “priceless” recommendations, or the worst executors provoke opinions that beneficiaries are not loyal to the country-donor, their organization or the leader representing the donor, in this regard, we face unfavorable outcomes.
- The specialists of these “pools” are being “acted” as information monopolists and they have a right to represent a country or region on the Aral Sea problems, and in this regard, to speak on behalf of their organization and to “assume” authorities to approve the projects of the above-stated issues.
- **The most negative impact.** According to the population opinion that it has become as a rule to provide “the implementation” of the projects aimed to assist the Aral Sea in comfort offices and at workshops in the capitals or in favorable cities and zones of the region countries. As a result of such a situation, many people propose that the attitude to the Aral Sea problem is being looking like a hypocrisy, and it is seen that **donors**” do not pay attention to the population who really suffers from crisis is living in zones (epicentre) of crisis instead of favorable zones of Tashkent oasis, Fergana Valley, in capitals where there is a nice climate of Almaty, Bishkek, Issyk-Kul and etc., where almost all the projects are being implemented during recent years. They think that the projects should be approved, taking into account the providing of real help to the population who are suffering from the Aral Sea tragedy.
- Public, population, governmental and non-governmental organizations consider that this problem has been studied and analyzed enough during 10 years and efficient actions should have bee initiated. The project on “assistance” as it takes place today should be stopped. many projects look like the illustration of soviet epoch and cabinet recommendations is being provided to them, in this regard, no

one is not able to reach even a level of approval in the lowest links of administrative and bureaucratic systems.

- “International consultants and local participants” got used so much, that the Aral projects they are being implemented in their offices or at the workshops in the capitals of the regional countries, and they do not emphasize that their “arrangements” are being carried out so far from the population living in the zones of ecological tragedy. Almaty, Astana, Bishkek, Fergana, Chirchik, Issyk-Kul and etc. where the Aral projects are being implemented are very far from the population and crisis’s epicentre and a part of them is not connected even geographically with the river basins feeding the Aral Sea.
- It is stated from the above-mentioned that the majority of skeptical and ironical proposals regarding the activity which is being performed in the offices of Astana, Almaty, Bishkek and etc. as well as the assistance of the projects and international consultant, are considered as non-occasional. People, living in the zones of ecological crisis (where about 3,5-4 mln. of people are suffered from direct crisis impact and 7 mln. of people are suffered from indirect crisis impact) have the above-stated opinion.
- Population and specifically water users (water saving competition participants) consider that, in principle, there are enough reserves for rational water using in the region, as well as for reducing of water discharge, and it is possible to achieve it, even with imperfect irrigation system, which is available in the region now.
- Participants of “**Water Saving Competition**” have actually demonstrated on the basis of their results the possibilities for reducing of water discharge without reducing of production volumes, only by in-farm arrangement and agrotechnical measures for 5-20% from the average over-year discharges.
- Water users and informed part of population, who can imagine a level of negative impact of the Aral Sea crisis to the region as a whole, uniquely consider that for the starting of real water discharge reducing it is not enough only recommendations, declarations statements and assurances. First, stimulus is necessary. Just, it is impossible to achieve something concrete making only declarations and recommendations or to implement so called “global” and “strategic” projects, conferences, meetings and workshops. Therefore the ask, in their opinion, very reasonable questions, for example, why the for assistance are spending in the offices of the capitals but not for stimulus for the reducing of water discharge, which would be a real input both for population and the Aral sea.
- Many people consider that gratuity is not necessary for stimulus, it is not necessary that it should be huge, but they should be. For the region with lack of water and defected ecological situation the water saving and stimulus to it should become a constant factor in vital activity of population. At the same time it should be public, with support of participants in public opinion, that **water saving made by the certain person** (it is necessary to indicate a full name) **is this concrete input for the problem solution**, that is very necessary and real patriotic action for the society, region, oblast and, finally for the country etc., and this person makes a real input, which is accessible for everybody, and will have to be implemented by each other.
- A very high trust to all donors has a population in the region, but especially to the USA, both to the country and population. Their rate is much more than rate of EC and, even UN. Therefore any measure made by USA raises a great interest and at the same time certain hope and expectation.

- There is some deformed and wrong imagine about the projects implemented on the Aral Sea problems. Any project (independently who won it by the tender results) identifies with the country-donor. Thus, all negative results are not due to the Project's failure but they concern to the country-donor.
- Population in the zones of ecological crisis react too painful to information of MM about the completion somewhat project in the assistance for the Aral sea basin. The mentioned is connected that they consider themselves suffering from the negative crisis and, at the same time they do not feel any help from the projects implemented to support them. In this connection they ask as if primitive but actually not simple questions: Where is this help? Why did not it achieve them? Who used it?
- Many people consider that the International Consultants (projects) are **“bad”**. That they use the funds for themselves and mislead **“good”** donors, and it means that help, as a whole and, particularly, from the great USA do not reach them.
- When the population in the Aral sea region hears or reads that the project for assistance to the Aral sea has been implemented in amount of some tens millions USD, they recalculate these funds to themselves. They make simple calculation that, for example loan in 500 USD means 0.6 mln. sum. They consider that if that help would achieved them, they could produce a production and earn money, and it would be indeed a real help to population suffering from the crisis, but not a TV- show ( timely purchase of 1 tone of fertilizes will allow to the farmer to double a harvest in 2 ha, and for that is needed only 150 USD, but he has not them in time. This amount would allow to provide him a job and feed 5-10 people).

Taking into account the above mentioned and that the Republic of Uzbekistan is a country:

- **Bordering** with all countries of the Aral sea basin including Afghanistan
- **Population of which** consists of more than half of the basin
- **The only** country in the basin situated in two main water courses (Amudarya and Syrdarya)
- The most part of population of the epicenter of the Aral sea crisis is in its **territory** (the Republic of Karakalpakstan)
- **The most part** of irrigated lands in the basin, accordingly the most part of non-productive water losses
- From the above-mentioned it is stated that the continuation of the implementation of the projects **“Water saving competition”** and **“Public awareness”** on its territory is a considerable part of the solving a whole Aral Sea Basin problem.
- The reduction of water using in agriculture is only 10% in this country, the providing of organizing water collection and the direction of all drainage flows to the Aral Sea Basin, can give 10 км<sup>3</sup> of water a year, which will be sufficient to stop further degradation and stabilization of the Aral Sea and create favorable conditions for the living of almost 2 mln. of people.

**In this regard, it is required to provide the following:**

- 1) The continuation of the implementation of Component A2 **“Water saving competition”** as a constant factor will meet the interests of the whole region, including small funds costs. For this project it is required a financial support of USD 0,5 mln. a year, total amount for a period of the

implementation (5 years) is USD **2,5 mln.**, taking into account that (up to 90%) of the funds are required to provide the presents to the winners of the competition on water discharge reduction.

**2) B Component implementation “Public awareness”** with active involving all MM (TV, radio, state and independent press) is also necessary to make as constantly acting tool for initiating the population to protect environment. The stated meets the interests not only the population, but all donors, and it will sufficiently impact in improvement of public awareness and initiate positive processes in the country’s life and in the region. The most attractive and positive in that project is that a deep interest of the governments in arrangement of this work will provide a submission of free time in TV and radio.

**In this connection** the cost of the project will not be so expensive.

**As the regard the costs**, the Project can be implemented within 200,000 USD a year ( 1mln USD for 5 years) Based on that, actually population can be involved into the problem solution.