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## Creating a network of qualified rural consultants

24 agriculture extension agents completed an intensive 5 day training course on provision of consultancy services for rural population during august 27-31, 2012. The training course was organized by the UN Joint Programme "Sustaining livelihoods affected by the Aral Sea disaster" implemented jointly by five UN agencies in Uzbekistan, including UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, WHO and UNV in cooperation with the Government of Uzbekistan and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The Joint Programme is financed by the UN Human Security Trust Fund. Within the initiative of Joint Programme targeted at creation of new income generation opportunities and promotion of improved agricultural practices, 24 rural farmers and dehkans (small farmers) in target areas were selected to form a network of agriculture extension agents (rural consultants) responsible for provision of consultancy services to rural population and solutions to the problems they might face in application of new agricultural practices. The training was conducted by the specialists of KRASS (Khorezm Rural Advisory Support Service). Over the course of 5 days the participants learned best practices of running rural advisory services, particularly, received in-depth information on the methodology and key concepts of agro-consulting, as well as methods of problem solving, including identification and analysis. The rural consultants were also familiarized with the foundation of monitoring and evaluation and the cycle of problem solving. Additionally, in order to ensure successful communication of consultants with the target audience, the trainers provided information on communication methods and principals of client relationship management, and group work. Due to the consequences of the environmental crisis in Aral Sea region such as poor soil conditions, intensive desertification and land degradation, the farmers and dehkans often face a plenty of problems. Therefore, the Joint Programme created a network of rural consultants to provide the farmers and dehkans a continuous support and promote application of improved and sustainable agricultural practices. The particular training is one of the foundations of their preparation. **For more information, please, contact:** Zakiya Abdurazakova - PR Specialist 1 Y. Gulamov str, Tashkent, 100000, Uzbekistan Tel: (+998 71) 232-20-91, (+998 71) 232-20-92 56 Ernazar Alakoz Street, Nukus, Karakalpakstan Tel: (+998 61) 224-13-81, fax: (+998 61) 224-16-35 E-mail: [zakiya.abdurazakova@undp.org](mailto:zakiya.abdurazakova@undp.org)

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