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World Bank Supports Fishing Communities in the Northern Aral Sea Region of Kazakhstan

ASTANA, March 27, 2008 — Today the World Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan signed Grant Agreement for Kazakhstan Community-Based Aral Sea Fisheries Management and Sustainable Livelihoods Project. This project will help to improve living conditions for vulnerable, marginalized fishing communities in the Northern Aral Sea region by developing local capacity, enhancing income generating opportunities, and supporting access to basic social infrastructure and services.

This new Project supports the Syrdarya Control and Northern Aral Sea (SYNAS Phase-I) Project financed by the World Bank and the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Presently the first phase of SYNAS Project is close to completion while the second phase is being prepared. Construction of the Kok-Aral dam finished in August 2005 which allowed to increase the Aral Sea water level by 3 meters resulted in decrease of water salinity, significant increase in diversity and quantity of fresh-water fish, and revival of fishing industry in the Aral region.

“This Project aimed at supporting fishing communities of the Northern Aral Sea region is one in a series of measures taken for the Aral region revival. There are a number of instruments to be used by the Project meant to bring direct benefits to fishermen and their families. For instance, Competitive Grant Program for local population to develop small business.” said **Sergei Shatalov, World Bank Country Manager for Kazakhstan.**

The World Bank is administrator of grant funds provided by Japan under the Japan Social Development Fund. The Project, with an overall value of US\$1,902,285 has the following four components:

- The Component for Capacity Development for Sustainable Livelihoods through Improved Management of the Resources Base will increase community control over and access to one lake fishery resources, enhance the capacity of local government, provide training to fishing brigades and fishing enterprises and local government officials.
- The Component on Local Investments for Improved Living Conditions and Reduced Environmental Degradation will provide equipment and technology to improve the health and living conditions of fishers.

- The Component of Small-Scale Enterprises for Income Diversification and Improved Livelihoods will be aimed at improving the fish distribution system and upgrading of existing cold-storage infrastructure, as well as establishing of a low-cost fish-marketing information service. It also implies provision of competitive grants for small business development.
- The Component for Support in Project Implementation, Management and Monitoring and Evaluation Services will be focused on capacity building for the NGO “Aral Tenizi”, hiring of village promoters, development and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system.

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