



acted

**ACTED UZBEKISTAN
COUNTRY STRATEGY
2023-2025**

ACTED GLOBALLY

We go the last mile. Founded in Afghanistan, against the backdrop of a forgotten crisis, Acted's mission is to save lives and support people in meeting their needs in hard-to-reach areas. Millions of vulnerable people around the world need humanitarian assistance today, and hundreds of millions will need it tomorrow, in the face of the growing threat of climate change. We believe that our assistance must be conceptualised and delivered within the framework of people's natural environments, and the territories on which they depend. Therefore, Acted pursues a triple mandate as a humanitarian, environmental and development aid actor, contributing to the relief, stabilisation, and recovery of crisis-affected people in fragile areas.

This vision is guided by the motto "Think Local – Act Global" - reflecting the need to rely on a deep understanding of local territories and contexts to develop and implement actions based on local knowledge, structures and capacities.

This local thinking contributes to a global response - running through all ACTED programming and operations - as we work together towards the building of a 3ZERO world: a world with Zero Exclusion, Zero Carbon, and Zero Poverty.

KEY FIGURES



Active in 43 countries worldwide



€540M budget in 2022
97% dedicated to operations



7,700 dedicated staff



Over 20 million beneficiaries reached



Over 550 projects a year

Programme Strategy 2020-2025

Zero Exclusion, Zero Carbon, Zero Poverty

- **Zero Exclusion:** because society is enriched when it can benefit from all the voices and ideas of its members, and no-one should be left behind;
- **Zero Carbon:** because we only have one planet, and we want to pass on to our children social, political and economic systems that respect and protect natural balances.
- **Zero Poverty:** because everyone should have the opportunity to develop their potential.





UZBEKISTAN COUNTRY OVERVIEW



Background Information

Uzbekistan is a resource-rich, double-landlocked country in the heart of Central Asia, which faces various humanitarian and development challenges, further exacerbated by the impact of **climate change**. The country is facing **increasing water scarcity**, due to declining water levels in rivers and lakes, as well as increased demand for water for agriculture, industry and households; **desertification** due to deforestation, overgrazing and soil degradation; and **declining crop yields**, due to rising temperatures and decreasing precipitation, which result in lower crop productivity. Overall, the **ineffective management of natural resources** in Uzbekistan aggravates the effects of climate change, negatively affecting both the human population and the country's precious biodiversity.

Economic development remains a major issue in Uzbekistan, particularly for young people. The country had a youth unemployment rate of almost 14% in 2022, compared with 6% for the overall population. The high **dependence on natural resources** makes Uzbekistan's economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity prices. To combat this vulnerability, the country is currently striving to diversify its economy by developing sectors such as manufacturing, textiles, automobiles and construction. **Tourism** has also been identified as a sector with strong growth potential.

Uzbekistan faces a range of **social issues**, particularly concerning **vulnerable groups**, such as women; people with disabilities; youth; and older people. Especially in rural areas, women's access to economic opportunities is severely limited by inequitable access to finance; information; technology; tools; and to high-quality input markets with linkages to output markets. Women also face significant social and cultural barriers to economic security, characterised by low literacy rates and restrictive gender norms. In rural areas, the additional workload of caregiving limits women's opportunities to learn about new agricultural practices or more diverse economic opportunities. Furthermore, land ownership is overwhelmingly male, limiting women farmers' control over their land.

Although the country is making significant progress in terms of legislation on social matters, the effective implementation of this legislation remains a challenge, and vulnerable groups continue to suffer from **social and cultural pressures**, as well as a **lack of transparent and effective governance programming** that affects respect for their human rights.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) continue to be among the most dynamically developing actors in Uzbekistan, despite the challenging operating environment that they face. Government engagement with CSOs remains limited, with little effective cooperation on good governance policies, economic and social issues such as gender-based violence, labour rights, or protection of the environment. This is partly due to the need for strengthened technical capacity and financial sustainability of civil society actors.

National Strategies on Development and Green Economy

The **development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026** consists of seven priority directions and one hundred goals Uzbekistan is willing to achieve. Further economic liberalisation; privatisation in most spheres; elimination of monopolisation; the attraction of more foreign investment; and decentralisation that gives more authority to the regions are among many other priorities identified in the Strategy.

The **strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the transition to the green economy for the period 2019-2030** is to achieve sustainable economic progress, which contributes to social development, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, climate and environmental sustainability through the integration of the principles of the green economy into the ongoing structural reforms.

UZBEKISTAN IN FIGURES

448,978 sq km • 35.6 million inhabitants • 80.4 billion USD (GDP) • 7.4% GDP growth •
2,254.9 USD (GDP per capita) • 12.3% inflation • 11.5% of the population lives below the poverty line •
2.13% infant mortality rate • 0.727 HDI • 35.3 Gini Index

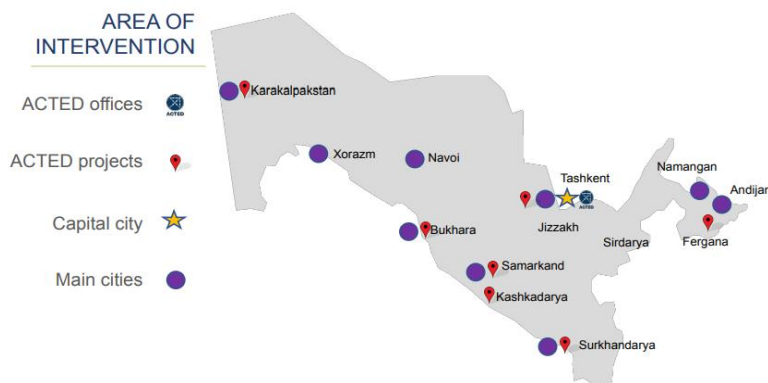
ACTED IN UZBEKISTAN

Acted's historic footprint in Uzbekistan showcases its long-standing commitment to the country development and well-being. Since 1999, our organisation has implemented various projects across different sectors, making a significant impact on disaster risk reduction, water and sanitation, agriculture and rural development, education and skills development, social cohesion and peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, and capacity building. Over the years, Acted has implemented programmes nationwide promoting sustainable development opportunities to address the country's main challenges. Acted's programmes focus on strengthening the institutional capacity of partners, stakeholders and/or communities. As a result, Acted has long standing partnerships with communities, government agencies, civil society and international development partners.

Main sectors of intervention:

- Civil Society Development
- Transparent and Effective Governance
- Advancing women's rights and preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV)
- Labour Rights
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)
- Inclusive Rural Development
- Natural Resources Management (NRM) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)
- Green economy and climate change
- Sustainable and Fair Green Transition
- Biodiversity protection


ACTED'S OPERATIONS





With over 25 staff, Acted implements projects in all 12 regions of Uzbekistan, including Karakalpakstan, with its main office located in Tashkent.




OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

 **27,253** beneficiaries reached through development projects in 2022.

 **1,950** households reported increased income following participation in projects related to advancing women's rights since 2019

 **80** women started their business through a small grants programme since 2018

 **202** Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) assessed and trained through Acted's signature Grassroots Organisation Capacity Assessment (GOCA) tool since 2018

PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGY 2021-2023

In line with development challenges identified in the country, Acted Uzbekistan will focus its programming strategy for 2021-2023 on **three strategic pillars** of intervention that respond to the needs of Uzbekistan's population in the 21st Century. This strategy has been developed in close alignment with the development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for the period of 2022-2026 and the SDGs.

The programmatic approach will focus on three key areas of intervention linked to Acted's global 3Zero strategy:

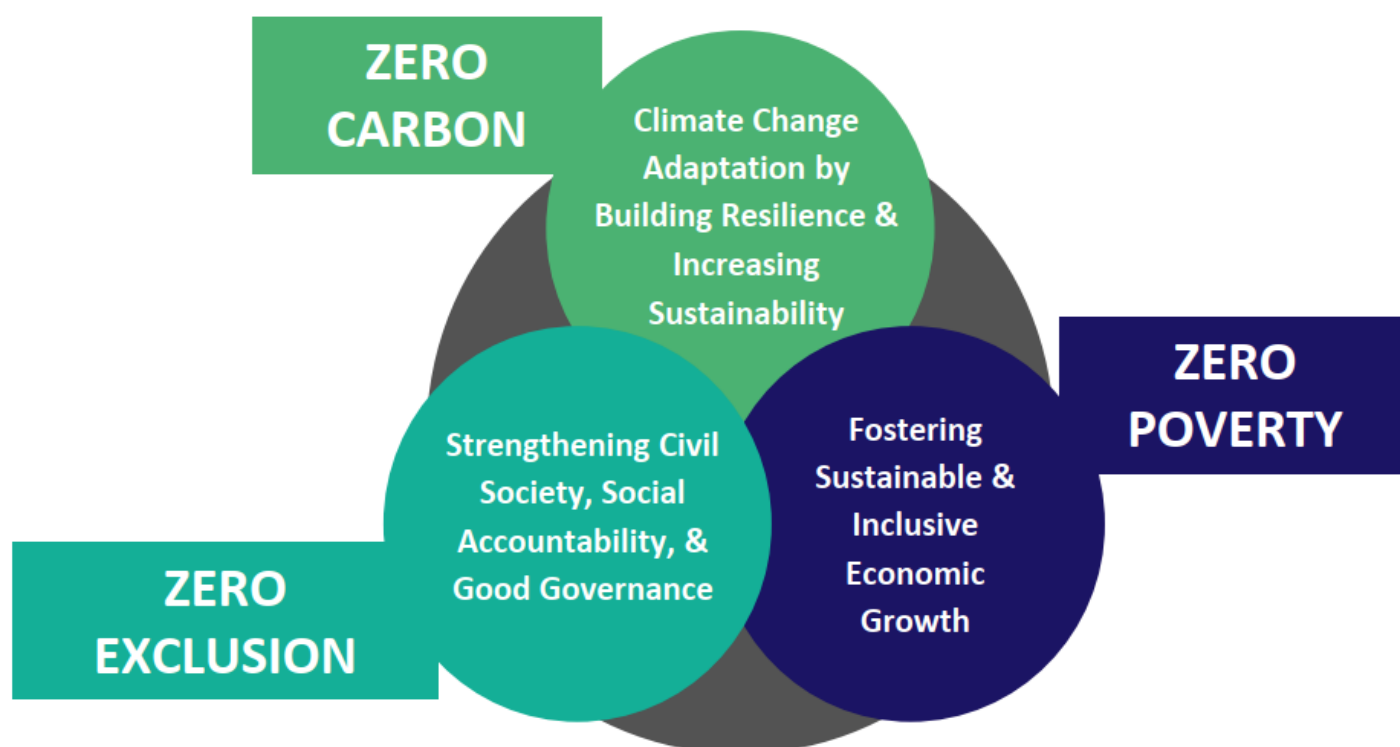
- **Zero Carbon:** supporting climate change adaptation by building resilience and increased sustainability;
- **Zero Poverty:** fostering sustainable, inclusive economic growth; and
- **Zero Exclusion:** strengthening civil society, social accountability and good governance.

This programmatic strategy will allow Acted to increase **synergies** between existing and new projects, increase the **sustainability** of actions in Uzbekistan, and fully capitalise on existing **lessons learned** – taken from Acted's 25+ years of experience in the country.

Regional approach. While acknowledging the unique trajectory of each country, Acted in Central Asia is operationalizing a regional approach among its missions in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. As many of the current development challenges in these countries share similar root causes, given their shared history, we strive for greater harmonisation to capitalise on our 24-year long presence in the region.

Gender. As a norm, Acted mainstreams gender into its overall operations and is committed to promoting the transition from gender sensitive to gender responsive programming; with the overall objective of reaching gender transformative operations. Such a commitment will be made feasible through integrating gender gap analysis into project design and implementation, as well as working on gender issues directly.

Environment. Recognising the profound consequences of climate change already manifesting in Uzbekistan, Acted is committed to address this crisis through a focused approach on environmental protection. Our aim is to enhance the resilience of local actors and communities in the face of climate change impacts. Acted achieves this by actively engaging civil society and empowering local stakeholders to become advocates for the protection of biodiversity.





Zero Carbon: Supporting Climate Change Adaptation by Building Resilience and Sustainability



Zero Poverty: Fostering Sustainable, Inclusive Economic Growth



Zero Exclusion: Strengthening Civil Society and Good Governance

STRATEGY PILLAR 1: Supporting Climate Change Adaptation by Building Resilience and Sustainability

Our objective

Supporting climate change adaptation, building resilience and environmental sustainability, and promoting renewables energies.

Areas of Intervention

- 1) *Strengthening the capacity of CSOs to better promote environmental protection actions;*
- 2) *Promoting the use of Renewable Energy (RE) and Energy Efficiency (EE);*
- 3) *Promoting Integrated Natural Resources Management (INRM).*

Zero Carbon

Under the first pillar of the 2023-2025 strategy, we will continue to develop our green programming – responding to the challenges posed by **climate change** in Uzbekistan. Building on the programmatic achievements of the past years, Acted will promote energy efficiency and renewable energy, focusing both on business development for green energy, and on the community-based tourism sector. At the government level, Acted will advocate for improved policy space on the green economy and promoting eco-tourism, including through establishing eco-certification schemes. At the level of civil society, Acted will work to strengthen the capacities of CSOs to protect biodiversity, by supporting civil society structures to effectively involve themselves and their communities in this field and to improve their cooperation with government agencies responsible for implementing national biodiversity strategies. Finally, at the internal organisational level, Acted will strive to reduce the carbon footprint of its activities in Uzbekistan and attract green financing.

Acted Uzbekistan recognises the critical role women play in climate change actions at the household, livelihood, and community level. Conscious of women's potential to be agents for change, and their role in the water sector in Uzbekistan, Acted will continue to develop its activities linking gender and sustainability. This will build on, for example, the first Nationwide Gender Assessment of the Water Sector in Uzbekistan done by Acted for the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) in 2021.



We acknowledge that the misuse of natural resources, disasters, and climate change are increasingly interconnected, and often catalyse one another. To address these interlinked challenges, as part of the 2023-2025 programme strategy, Acted will strengthen its work on climate change adaptation and resilience-building, through **participatory and integrated management of natural resources**. Acted Uzbekistan strongly believes that policy recommendations on decarbonisation, as well as actions to protect the green economy, heavily depend on the capacity of civil society to actively engage with these recommendations. As such, we will continue to assess and improve the capacity of CSOs, to successfully close the gaps between existing legislation and effective implementation.

OUR ACTIONS

Promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy in the community-based tourism sector

Supporting women to fight climate change

Protecting biodiversity through civil society-led natural resource management

Supporting civil society to promote decarbonisation

STRATEGY PILLAR 2: Fostering Sustainable, Inclusive Economic Growth

Our objective

Poverty reduction and value chain development.

Areas of Intervention

- 1) Promoting access to knowledge, skills, and inclusive financial resources;
- 2) Contributing to rural development by improving basic infrastructure;
- 3) Ensuring access to WASH.



Zero Poverty

Under Pillar Two of the 2023-2025 programme strategy, Acted will continue developing its programming on sustainable, inclusive economic growth across Uzbekistan. This includes comprehensive programmes to strengthen existing value chains and foster sustainable economic growth, especially in rural communities. Acted will seek to ensure that these programmes create inclusive opportunities, especially for small entrepreneurs and with a focus on women.

Existing initiatives on mentoring MSMEs to develop their business plans and the provision of technical consultations on green technologies will be strengthened. To this end, Acted will be able to draw on the organisation's global Enterprise Capacity Assessment Tool (ECAT), used to identify capacity building needs and to plan technical support interventions for MSMEs.

We will continue to support MSMEs in the community-based tourism sector, empowering small entrepreneurs through fostering market linkages, and providing knowledge and skills trainings. Acted will also continue its work to ensure the protection and economic empowerment of women as well as vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities by promoting access to formal employment and ensuring their labour rights.

Also under this pillar of the 2023-2025 strategy, Acted will continue its essential work in the field of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). WASH programming seeks to improve the lives of communities by reducing the spread of waterborne diseases and improving overall health and well-being for marginalised communities.

OUR ACTIONS

Supporting rural economic development through MSMEs

Improving economic opportunities for rural women

Promoting the development of Community-Based Tourism

Improving access to WASH facilities

STRATEGY PILLAR 3: Strengthening Civil Society and Good Governance

Our objective

Develop and enhance local civil society and social accountability mechanisms.

Areas of Intervention

- 1) *Contributing to civil society empowerment and localisation. Building capacities of communities and local authorities;*
- 2) *Building social cohesion, promoting social accountability;*
- 3) *Strengthening CSOs to promote gender equality, women entrepreneurship, GBV prevention, and economic development.*

Zero Exclusion

Acted's conceptual approach to effective governance is based upon an empowered, pluralistic civil society, social cohesion, and effective and responsive public institutions.

We strongly believe that positive change comes from people. Acted will therefore continue focusing on empowering and building the capacity of **civil society organisations** to work for the benefit of their communities, promote inclusive and sustainable local development, and gender equality. We will utilise our signature Grassroots Organisations Capacity Assessment (GOCA) tool to strengthen CSOs' technical, financial and operational capacity.

We will work closely with **local authorities** and CSOs to promote good governance through data-driven decision making with the aim of strengthening social cohesion, while also building social accountability mechanisms. Supporting effective cooperation between authorities and CSOs, Acted will work with CSOs to support them to produce, analyse and use credible data for advocacy with authorities; to engage public-private dialogue on economic policy issues; and to develop the capacity of media to deliver data-driven, analytical reporting on economic policy.



Acted will focus its programming on promoting **gender equality** in Uzbek society. We will aim towards preventing gender-based violence through raising awareness for women's rights across all layers of society, advocating for policy changes, supporting the establishment of local response mechanisms, and breaking gender stereotypes persistent in local culture. In addition, building upon previous action enhancing labour rights for vulnerable populations, we will empower civil society to engage constructively in the labour reform process and address the employment challenges faced by women and vulnerable groups.

OUR ACTIONS

Strengthening civil society

Promoting data-driven
decision-making

Empowering women and youth

Enhancing labour and
employment rights for
vulnerable citizens

FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME – GOCA

Acted has been using its signature GOCA (Grassroots Organisational Capacity Assessment) tool since 2012, to **analyse the organisational and institutional capacity** of CSOs and develop tailored capacity building plans based on the results. The provision of small grants allows CSOs to apply their learnings in projects, while enabling Acted to evaluate the impact of the capacity building provided. The GOCA toolkit includes a detailed assessment and scoring, based on **five pillars** of organisational development (listed to the right).

In Uzbekistan, Acted has a long and positive history of implementing the GOCA – having used the tool in support of over **195 grassroots organisations** since 2017. By using the GOCA to increase the capacity of CSOs to play their role as independent development actors, Acted promotes transparent and inclusive governance through innovation and collaboration between civil society and local authorities. Using the GOCA tool, Acted has empowered civil society actors to advocate and engage in a constructive dialogue with the government of Uzbekistan on various policy issues.

Each organisation supported through the GOCA receives an individualised score from 1-5, following the initial assessment of the five pillars (Governance and Administration; Organisational management; Financial management; Project cycle management; and External relations and mobilisation), ranging from zero (incipient/embryonic). This scoring system helps Acted to identify their exact stage of organisational development, and the support they require to grow. Based on this, a detailed training plan is developed. Subsequent GOCA assessments are conducted throughout the CSO capacity building programme to measure the growth of the organisation and revise the trainings and joint action plan as needed.

THE GOCA FIVE PILLARS OF ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Governance and administration

Organizational management

Financial management

Project Cycle Management

External Relations and Resource Mobilization



KEY PROGRAMME - Gender equality and women's rights

In Uzbekistan, Acted plays a leading role in strengthening local actors' capacities to prevent **gender-based and domestic violence** and foster inclusive development by focusing on advancing women's rights.

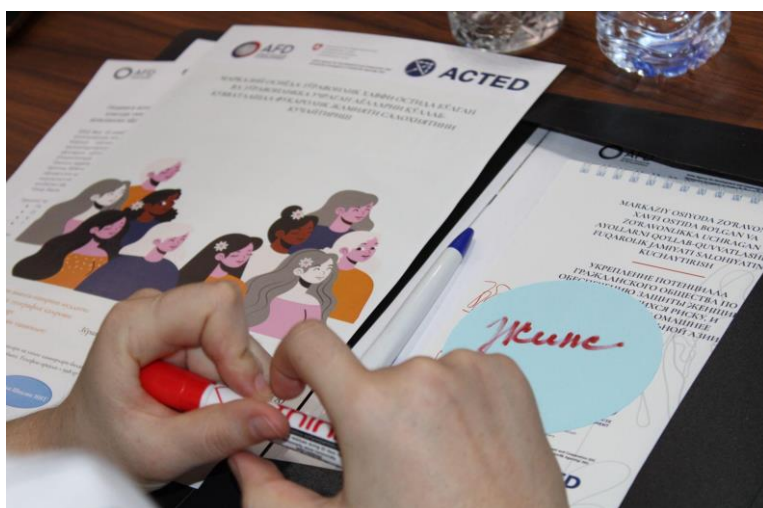
In **2018-2019**, Acted supported women who are at risk or survivors of violence to access safe shelters and specialist consultations before participating in a **reintegration programme** where they received small grants and mentoring to develop their own business activity. In **2020-2021**, Acted focused on **women's rights** and promoted gender equality, influencing government policies on women's empowerment and engaging police officers, journalists, civil society organizations and local authorities. Since 2021, Acted has been implementing a project aiming at **strengthening the role of civil society** in Central Asia in the **fight against gender-based violence** in society and **promoting the protection and empowerment of women** at risk or victims of violence.

Moving forwards, as part of the new strategy for 2023-2025, Acted is committed to furthering its support for women, with a particular focus on **women with disabilities, thereby confronting double barriers**. By providing support to this marginalised group, Acted seeks to address the **intersecting issues of gender inequality and disability rights**, promoting inclusivity and empowerment. For example, Acted aims to approach this issue from a labour rights perspective and, in particular, by encouraging women with disabilities to access formal employment and vocational training.

To achieve this objective, **Acted will encourage the involvement of its local partners and civil society organisations** by raising their awareness of the need to protect gender equality and social inclusion.



Gender Week, presentation of handicrafts made by beneficiaries of a former Acted project, Tashkent, March 2022.



Training for journalists in the frame of the 16 days Campaign, Tashkent, November 2022.



Visit to the beneficiaries of Acted's gender project in the Sukhandarya region, April 2023.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Acted ensures Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) by placing affected communities at the centre of our work, decisions and actions. Acted's independent Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) and operational project teams prioritise AAP to build better, more trusting relationships with the communities we serve. Central to Acted's approach to AAP is transparent two-way communication with affected individuals, and active involvement of local communities in Acted's programme design, to ensure that our projects are relevant, meaningful, and Fit For Purpose. This includes the centrality of needs assessments, to ensure that affected populations are able to share their own priorities and preferences for receiving assistance, and open communication with communities, on topics such as Acted's background and mandate; beneficiary selection criteria; affected communities' entitlements and rights; and complaints procedures.

Acted has an established Feedback Mechanism in Uzbekistan, managed by the MEAL, for the participation of the communities we work with, and to help us use community feedback to improve the quality and relevance of our programming. The Acted Feedback Mechanism enables community members to register comments and complaints, or ask questions in local languages, through a range of modalities, including via the hotline, in person or by email. All complaints are treated confidentially and with objectivity, and are recorded, categorised, and addressed, according to the category of the complaint.

248

number of complaints received from beneficiaries from 2019 to 2022

229

complaints/feedback received by the complaints and feedback box from 2019 to 2022

55%

of the received complaints/feedback concerned women's rights in society from 2019 to 2022





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For questions or additional information, please contact:

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