

## **POLICY BRIEF:**

# **Piloting an early warning system (EWS) in schools in Kazakhstan**



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## OVERVIEW

Research evidence and social theory strongly suggest that dropping out of school is the cumulative result of many factors that reach back a considerable distance into a student's life – some of which are specific to individual contexts of each child - predictive factors can emerge very early on in primary school and even before (Lamb and Rice 2008). The current project started in February 2018 with an inception phase. The main goal of the inception phase was to collect evidence and identify gaps in the existing system of dropout prevention and suggest recommendations for addressing such gaps. Insights from the inception report helped the team from the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education to develop a Theory of Change on the Early Warning System (EWS). The Early Warning System is a mechanism for identifying children and young people in difficult circumstances who need support, regardless of whether or not they will drop out. With limited resources, priority should be given to children who are most at risk and most in need of support<sup>1</sup>.

According to the Theory of Change<sup>2</sup>, **Early Warning System (EWS) development hypothesis state:**

IF awareness of school staff and parents about various risk factors behind school dropout and supportive learning is increased as part of the proposed Early Warning System (EWS)

**AND** schools strengthen school retention techniques and use of the EWS to identify, record, report and support children at risk of dropping out (especially children with Special Educational Needs and Disability and children with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties )

**AND** the interface of communication between schools, families and organisations that work with children at risk of dropping out is improved

**THEN** there will be fuller recognition of the needs of children who are dropping out or at risk of dropping out, so all children will complete their education and be better supported across the educational system through improved practices of inclusive education throughout

**PLUS** as practices from the EWS evolve and are constantly reviewed and improved, then schools will become more inclusive, which will benefit all children, including children with SEND and SEBD.

The main goal of the EWS model is to strengthen school-level supportive learning and retention practices, and regional and national mechanisms to prevent and reduce the drop out from school. In the current project, the establishment of Early Warning System is targeting two groups of children: i)

<sup>1</sup>Framework for Monitoring Children and Adolescents who are Out of School or at Risk of Dropping Out, UNICEF Series on Education Participation and Dropout Prevention – Volume 1, UNICEF 2017

<sup>2</sup>Theory of Change designed as a three-year action plan – 2019-2021.

children with special educational needs and disabilities (home schooling and included/retained in schools) and ii) children at risk of drop out due to the [social emotional] and behavioural difficulties.

## Assessment purpose, objective and scope

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of an Early Warning System model for preventing, identifying and responding to school drop out. The assessment exercise is exploring what risk factors that have been identified and what is the best practice in relation to the EWS model delivery and what are the bottlenecks that impede the implementation of the model. Since September 2018, an EWS has been piloting in five schools, one kindergarten and one mini-centre in two urban locations – big cities and in one rural location – a village school.

## Assessment methodology and approach

The current assessment followed the ethical principles of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). During two Phases of assessment exercise (November 2018 and March 2019), data were collected by means of three methods: 1) via a Qualtrics online questionnaire (available in Kazakh and Russian); 2) by holding focus group discussions with participants, and 3) by documenting the piloting process – e.g. collecting self-reported documents from all pilot organisations. In addition, documents (such as action plans of EWS teams, social passports, attendance records, individual support plans, indicators of risk factors) from pilot organisations were analysed.

## Selected findings

The pilot organisations reported certain progress achieved by the schools in supporting children at risk. Some promising practices have been observed as well as some areas where additional support and improvement are required.

**Strategic Objective (SO) 1:** Increasing awareness of the factors contributing to children becoming at risk of school dropout and awareness of school teachers/ staff and parents about an EWS model with attention paid to addressing needs of children with SEND and/or children with SEBD.

### *Increased presence and timely support by school-based EWS team*

- Most participants (76.6%) reported that an **EWS Team had been created** in their school during the 2018-2019 academic year. This proportion was larger than that reported during Phase 1 (66.7%) and it was reported that the roles of the EWS team members had been communicated (92.5%).
- **Participants reported certain progress achieved by the schools in supporting the children at risk.** Many participants reported that they have

enhanced their capacities of working with the EWS model. **An important comment** by one of the participants expressed that: “the EWS piloting helped us to become more attentive to each individual [child] case” (School-D-Location-iii-r)

- Online sessions, as well as face-to-face sessions run by the Local support team (including NEA, UNICEF office and international consultants), sessions run by the EWS teams and practitioner guide were identified by almost half of the participants in the questionnaire each as **having played an important part in developing understanding** while the EWS model was piloted. In addition, **the importance of ongoing support** was acknowledged by participants.

### ***Increased awareness about EWS indicators (factors that impact on school dropout) and its thresholds***

- The data show **widespread awareness about ‘drop out’ phenomena** and the risk factors in pilot schools. **The most commonly identified dropout risk factors were attendance and poor behavior.** It was noted: “we have been able to identify the children at risk with the help of indicators, suggested in the Practitioner’s guide: attendance, achievement, behavior...” (School-B-Location-i-u). Some differences were found across geographic locations. Among Location-ii-u participants, the main risk factor was poor behaviour (34.1%), while attendance was the most commonly intended factor in the other two Locations (33.7% in Location-i-u and 64.7% in Location-iii-r). Also, current family situation was seen as the third top priority factor in Location-iii-r (41.2%). Overall, pilot schools have identified the most relevant indicators and mapped the specific interventions to address the students’ needs.

- The evidence from both Phases revealed the importance of **keeping up-to-day records in social passports.** Although, the way how schools design templates and update information varied across pilot schools. In some schools there is a policy to update social passport every quarter, while in other twice a year. There is evidence from self-reported data from schools of a high mobility rates of children/students in urban schools during one academic year. Therefore, having regular updates (e.g. monthly) in the social passport would be a useful strategy to monitor the data for the internal usage in the school and as well as in the National Education Database (NOBD).

### ***Improved monitoring, school attendance and behaviour policy***

- All pilot schools have **an established system of monitoring and recording absenteeism.** More than half of the respondents (66.7%) who reported that an EWS team had been created commented that their school used daily attendance forms to track these children in three locations, followed by the E-Journal Kundelik. There are different types of in-school journals and

sheets including grade/months/children name/absent/total number/signed by a homeroom teacher. In all schools the children's attendance is recorded initially by homeroom teachers and the information about the absent students is collected by the deputy director. All pilot schools collect the medical certificates from the students who were absent and classify the reasons of absence.

### Number of children at risk identified in pilot organisations

- The Table 1 provides some information about children with SEND, SEBD, children in home schooling and children 'at-risk' as identified by EWS teams in schools.

**Table 1** Number of children at risk as reported by pilot schools

	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 2018		2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2018		3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter*2019		4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2019	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Number of children with SEBD in schools	29	18	6	4	16	5	16	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>		<b>10</b>		<b>21</b>		<b>22</b>	
Number of children 'at risk' identified by the EWS teams	28	19	5	3	7	10	7	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>18</b>	
Number of children with SEND studying in schools in special classes **	46	34	45	34	82	50	83	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>		<b>79</b>		<b>132</b>		<b>133</b>	
Number of home-schooled children ***	17	7	17	9	26	14	23	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>		<b>26</b>		<b>40</b>		<b>40</b>	

**Notes:** \*a new school joined the pilot project in January 2019, thus the numbers have increased. These numbers are provided by pilot schools on 23rd of May 2019. \*\* No information about number of children studying in inclusive classes is provided in Table. \*\*\*Numbers of home-schooled children in 3 schools only reported for the 1st and 2nd quarter and for 4 schools for the 3rd and 4th quarter.

- Four schools reported teaching children on home schooling in the third quarter (see Table above). Among the main reasons for children studying at home were listed the following: disability (School-A, School-E), illness, (School-B), and medical reasons/indications /disability and features of psychological development (School-C). As a rule, home schooled children are studying according to a [simplified] curriculum, specified by PMPC certificate. Children are often supported by specialists (e.g. a speech therapist) or a psychologist.

### ***Practices by teachers and school specialists of assessing students' needs and mapping interventions***

- Schools reported having **the individual plan of working with students at risk**. Such a plan includes the basic indicators, mapped by the EWS team: i) systematic control of absenteeism data; ii) systematic control of students' achievement records (includes peer support of those students who demonstrate low academic achievement and mentorship); iii) systematic measures of controlling and improving the students' behaviour and progress at school; iv) continuous work with parents.

- Participants from kindergarten reported that they develop individual plan of work with the child and his/her parents: «we work both with the child and also with the parents of the child. If the child is not able to attend the kindergarten due to health issues, we try to give him more homework, we give the handouts to parents...we have also the so-called fairy-tale therapy, sand tray therapy, they are particularly helpful to calm down the child who has emotional and behavioural difficulties.»

- The teachers in Phase 2 agreed that additional resources are needed to instruct children with SEND, namely: different format of textbooks; additional classroom (and IT) equipment; a teaching assistant; example lesson plans; assessment guidelines and training on teaching children with SEND. Out of the 41 teachers who reported working with home-schooled children, 39 provided information about the additional resources they need to work with these students were methodological guidelines and supportive learning techniques.

- Results from the questionnaire shows that the most commonly provided interventions for children with SEND during the 2018/2019 academic year were additional classes (49.4%), followed by differentiated pedagogy and individualised learning in the classroom (48.2%); guidance and counselling (41.5%); working with parents on family learning activities (34.8%); and skills training: learning to learn, self-management (34.8%). Homework clubs, on the contrary, were the less common intervention available (4.9%). It was stated that, “for each child, an individual psychological and pedagogical support program is developed and implemented by teachers together with specialists. The program is developed based on diagnostic data and includes the main directions of [correctional] and developmental work, as well as

individual curricula and programs” (self-report, School-C-Location-ii-u).

- The most common interventions provided for children with SEBD were text messages or calls to notify parents (43.1%), and the provision of extracurricular activities (41.3%); guidance and counselling (37.5%) identified by almost half of the participants each. Individual behaviour plans (31.9%) and additional classes (25.6%) were also identified. An important proportion of the participants (n = 11, 11.9%) reported not knowing which interventions were provided for children with SEBD at their school.

**Strategic Objective 2:** Reinforced a whole-school development approach to inclusive education with integrated EWS model for intervention and prevention of school dropout, especially children with SEND and/or SEBD to include identifying strategies for the inclusion of all children.

### **Availability and use of EWS team and tools across the schools**

- Psychologists and homeroom teachers are seen as the most important actors in the identification of children at risk of dropping out of school.

- The commonly identified strategy to get students at risk back on track was the implementation of attendance policies and programmes (50.3% of the valid cases). Then were listed ‘pathways planning for children at risk’, ‘policy to talk with parents after two unexcused absences’. It is worth noting that a relatively high proportion of participants (n = 13, 8.2%) reported not knowing which strategies were effective to get students back on track, and that, in general, most strategies were identified by less than 36% of the participants.

### **Teachers’ knowledge and skills in providing supportive learning / retention, and family conferencing**

- The evidence from online questionnaire shows that the participants viewed most of the various aspects of supportive learning as important (median =3). The most commonly identified supportive learning techniques used at the schools were treating the students as individuals (66.7%) and flexibility and responsiveness to the students’ individual need (56.5%); getting to know the children and their families (34.5%).

- Among the interventions used in the school to engage all students (including those with SEND and SEBD) in active learning were identified by more than half of the participants the following items: marking and feedback (53.7%), speaking to the students privately (53.0%), and providing positive reinforcements (50.6%).

- Participants were asked to indicate if they agreed with the statement that students with special educational needs and disabilities who had been included in school saw improvements in various areas. In Phase 2 participants seemed to agree more strongly with the different statements about the results of the inclusion of children with SEND in the school (highest median = 4). The following answers in Phase 2 reported: children



are healthier (n = 159, 82,4%); perform better in highly inclusive settings (n = 152, 78.8%), more likely to look forward to attending school (n = 145, 75.1%); more likely to participate in communities after graduation (n = 146, 75.6%). In other words, **results from Phase 2 seemed to suggest that the perceived importance of school inclusion of children with SEND in the different areas increased for all participants, especially among teachers.** As a group, participants in non-teaching roles seemed to have a slightly more positive perception of the effects of the inclusion of children with SEND.

- Participants from schools reported that the practice of peer support was present in their school increased slightly from 83.5% (n = 76) of the valid responses in Phase 1, to 90.3% (n = 149) during Phase 2. In general, the participants reported that peer support was “good” (n = 93, 65%) to prevent dropout. Similarly, participants (n = 102) confirmed that their school had a mentor support that was “good” in place to support children in risk of dropping out. Furthermore, participants reported increased evidence of peer support in three pilot schools.

- The most commonly identified objective of family conferencing was involving and listening to the parents (68.6%), followed by forming plans that include different perspectives (47.1%), and involving and listening to children (37.3%).

**Strategic Objective 3:** Improving the interface of communication between schools and other organisations that work with children at risk of dropping out and that support vulnerable children (particularly, children with SEND and/or children with SEBD), and their families.

### ***Communication within the school, as well as between the school, with parents and organisations***

- Daily attendance records, and social passports were identified as the most commonly used for tracking children at risk of dropping in pilot schools. Each of these tools were identified by almost 70% of the valid cases. In comparison, the NOBD and Kundelik were identified for slightly less than half of the participants.

- Home/class teachers were the most commonly identified as being responsible for collecting data about the children as well as were the mostly commonly identified staff members for updating the data about the children in the school (75.8%). Furthermore, social pedagogue was the second top priority specialist responsible for collecting/updating the data about the children in the school.

- Participants from schools reported increase in communication with the parents as calling and messaging the students’ parents to identify the reasons of absence, increased communication with the parents for the case management as well the increased number of visits to the families of the students at-risk. Furthermore, the participants assessed the cooperation between their school and the parents as effective (n = 87, 59.2%). While overall schools reported that collaboration with parents had improved

there were yet some barriers, such as the parents in cities are very busy and logistically it takes them time to get to the school for family conferencing.

### **Timely response and delivery of services**

- The pilot schools reported that they support not only the children who have been identified as “at-risk”, but also provide the psychological support for all students in their organisations.

- Most participants agreed that the school had in place procedures regarding the use of support plans to work with children with SEND (n =112, 81.2%), children with SEBD (n = 82, 67.2%), and children registered in home schooling (n =102, 75.6%). Furthermore, most participants (n = 119, 80.4% of the 148 valid responses) reported knowing who was responsible at each stage of support plans to work with individual children.

- The participants were asked to identify support available at local level after children at risk of dropping out had been identified. Consultations by specialists, and preventive work were identified by more than 50% of the participants as type of support available at the local level after children at risk of dropping out had been identified.

- Participants stated that pilot schools and kindergartens are working with a range of organisations such as methodological centres, PMPC, Police, local medical centre, and region and/or city education department; a local university and other local schools; some organisations and foundations, with Juvenile Police, Association of Parents of children with disabilities.

- The assessment exercise asked participants to indicate how likely children were to be supported before and after the instruction of the EWS in five different situations (e.g. i) learning difficulties, ii) behaviour issues; iii) home schooling; iv) family difficulties; v) issues with peers). Overall, the participants reported that the children were supported “quite well” (median =4) before the introduction of the EWS. The assessment did not vary significantly when compared by the occupation of the participants. Although the assessment of the quality/likelihood of the interventions seemed to increase after the introduction of the EWS, the differences were statistically significant only regarding learning difficulties, behaviour issues, and issues with peers. Nonetheless, the differences before and after the EWS were very small. To enhance this area in the new phase of implementation ‘a support checklist’ indicating what kinds of support may be needed.

- Majority of the participants (72.4% based on n = 98 valid cases only) reported that they agreed with the statement that “the EWS is beneficial for all children.” In addition, most participants (70.0% based on n =100 valid cases only) reported that they “agreed” with the statement “your school (or kindergarten) needs the EWS.” Majority of participants (n = 88, 90.7% of valid cases) reported that they believed that the EWS model was the best use of resources. However, due to the important proportion of missing data (n = 50, 34%), these findings should be interpreted cautiously.

- Participants (n = 147) who reported that an EWS had been created during the 2018-2019 academic year were asked to evaluate how well the initiative worked in their school. Based on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent), **most participants assess the performance of the EWS model as “above average” (59.0%)**. The results suggest that piloting of the EWS model has had **positive influence on professional thinking and ways of working**, as quote below illustrates:

*“What is so great about the EWS, it is that it helps to prevent (emphasis added) the drop-outs and issues with students. Previously in the school the work was organised in such a way that we worked with the cases when the children already had serious behaviour and attendance issues and left the school. It is always hard to change what has already occurred and now we see how important the prevention and we really do our best to identify the issues earlier.” (School-E-Location-i-u)*

- Participants reported that to improve the EWS model to make it more sustainable there should be more communication between the schools and the parents of at-risk children and “the school, the parents and the teachers should be in constant and close contact with each other”, as well as to create “more favourable conditions at school for all children”. Finally, participants agreed that the work should be organised “systematically and actively” and in case the EWS model continues to work more systematically with all categories of children”, “there will be a positive result.” The online respondents highlighted the importance of “everyday control”, “team work,” “clear distribution of the roles and responsibilities of all EWS team members” so that every team member” fulfils his/her role” for making the EWS model more sustainable.

### Costing the EWS model

The budget of the EWS model is a rough estimation of resources needed (e.g. human, financial, organisational) for the model (e.g. in one school – average) if the schools continue to use the main principles of identification and support of children at risk of dropping out after a pilot period in accordance with indicators outlined in the ToC (October 2018). The purpose of the costing model is to provide the UNICEF office in Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Republic of Kazakhstan, National Education Academy named after Y. Altynsarin and key stakeholders with a picture of the costs required to implement the EWS model for further plans of rolling it out to other schools and regions. Importantly, contextual characteristics of the schools (e.g. a small rural school or a large urban school), as well as available resources (human/ financial/organisational) have to be discussed and considered when planning the implementation of the EWS model. An average budget would vary by size of school.

The evidence from the first phase of assessment (that took place in November 2018) suggests that the implementation of the EWS model could be described as a process of ‘building upon existing infrastructure’ in an organisation. Furthermore, all pilot organisations were asked to assist in sharing their ideas

of drafting a costing of the EWS model by completing three tasks (see a mid-term report for details).

The costs associated with implementing an EWS model can be calculated using formula (1) by summing up the new personnel/human resource costs (e.g. depending on a specific school context, it could be a social pedagogue, and a few teaching assistants, see detailed information in the mid-term report), including employees' salaries before taxes (PS), the cost of purchasing [special] equipment and supportive resources including textbooks and relevant literature (CC), with organizational costs (OC) and training costs (TC) - (and multiplied by coefficient  $\Delta \leq 10\%$  of total cost to create an EWS).

$$(1) \text{ CPП} = \text{PS} + \text{CC} + \text{OC} + \text{TC} + \Delta \leq 10\%$$

The formula does not take into account the salary of the current staff, working in schools (e.g. school principal, vice principal), and administrative expenses (e.g. renting a classroom for a family conferencing) and other operating costs (such as utilities, maintenance costs, communications, landline- phone / fax, broadband), because usually all EWS team members use offices / classrooms and office equipment provided by schools (these costs are already included in the budget of Regional Education Department) – see Table below.

**Table 2** Total cost of the EWS model

Category	Budget heading / resources	Total cost (KZT)
Personnel Costs		
<b>Total</b>		<b>13 576 200</b>
Organisational Costs		
<b>Total</b>		<b>4 797 000</b>
Capital Costs		
<b>Total</b>		<b>6 200 000</b>
multiplied by coefficient $\Delta \leq 10\%$	<b>10%</b>	<b>2 457 320</b>
<b>Overall Cost for Year 1</b>		<b>27 030 520</b>

**The calculation of economic costs is based on the following assumptions:**

- The EWS team is an important organisational component which is comprised of full-time employees of the school (or a kindergarten), and the number of permanent members varies depending on a size of the school (or a kindergarten).

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- The cost of implementing the EWS model is higher in the first year as it will require some direct costs. These costs may include: i) recruitment of the new personnel; ii) professional development for teachers, administrators, SEN specialists and other staff in working with indicators, in assessing the data about children and appropriately interpreting its meaning; iii) understanding and practicing the case management process; iv) and purchasing special resources and equipment.

- Additional support with regards to resources (e.g. manuals; examples of case studies and Webinars), and interventions (e.g. extra-curricular activities; family counselling / activities) might be provided free of charge by key stakeholders (e.g. a local DoE, international organisations, social services, and NGOs). Thus, the budget for resources could also fluctuate across schools.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Rumberger (2004), a leading researcher on factors affecting student completion, noted that for schools to reduce drop out, they need to address academic and social behaviour, focus on both individual and institutional factors, and begin early in students' academic careers. It can be argued that this can be achieved through the implementation of the EWS model and targeted interventions and strategies. **On the basis of the above, the mid-term report puts forward the following set of specific recommendations:**

### Recommendation 1:

#### Importance of leadership support

- School leaders should be equipped with knowledge of the EWS and be well prepared for this to be achieved. Organisational and structural changes (e.g. an EWS team) need to be explained and communicated, specifically any changes in practices by teachers and specialists.
- The members of the EWS team need to be working together to support all interventions to reduce the burden of only a few people working with children at risk (e.g. social pedagogue or psychologist). The danger of developing superficial practice if there is not a deep commitment to early warning system work and senior leadership prioritising this. **The lack of leadership support in schools could threaten the whole implementation of the project.**
- School leaders should **promote inclusive school ethos and thinking** and commitment to the EWS principles and practices.

### Recommendation 2:

#### Improving the working procedures

There are several avenues to improve current practical working procedures in schools:

- There is no single risk factor that can be used to accurately predict who is at risk of dropping out. Thus, there should **be strengthened accuracy of dropout predictions by combination of multiple risk factors** it was shown from examples in pilot schools.
- The participating institutions had implemented several interventions to support children with SEND and children with SEBD. Importantly, **schools should adopt multifaceted approaches**. As evidence from two Phases of assessment reports shows, that no single strategy works alone to increase student engagement and retention, although some strategies are more important than others. Furthermore, the assessment seemed to suggest that, interventions for children with SEBD and SEND were slightly more common than interventions for home schooled children. **There is a need to locate the education of home-schooled children within inclusive policy**

**and practice**, with emphasis on improving the whole learning environment and the combination of teaching and learning approaches applicable to all children.

- The support of family and teachers is vital for the success of children. However, the impact that guidance and advice from people who are closer in age can have is often underestimated – in fact, peer mentoring has been shown to lead to improved attitude to school, learning, attendance and behaviour. It can also help children to build up a peer network within their school, causing more holistic benefits such as a sense of community and belonging. There should be more **peer [and teacher mentoring] schemes to help children get more interested and involved in the school life.**

- **Context sensitivity is essential.** Participants interviewed during two phases of assessment commented frequently on how important it was to adjust strategies according to the needs of the local children and parents. **Timely communication between the school and parent should be established to flag problems facing children before they become critical.** Parents might not be aware of how much a child is missing school and the effects this has on academic performance, behaviour and disengagement.

### **Recommendation 3: Focus on capacity building of teachers and specialists**

- There is a need to **increase awareness-raising of the entire school staff** about the purpose of the EWS model and school-based sessions to promote the inclusive practices. To make sure all staff understand and support the value behind the EWS practices, it is important to make it clear for the all staff by arranging a session in the beginning of academic years, and by supporting it throughout the year by regular updates; by producing posters for the staff to display on the notice board in the staff rooms. Practitioners need to recognise that to make the implementation successful it is **necessary to provide information and guidance and increase commitment and engagement of everyone.**

- Staffing is an issue in many schools. **The most often mentioned recommendation was to include more specialists with knowledge of the EWS model and inclusive education for working with children (e.g. teaching assistants and social pedagogues).** For instance, the School-D-Location-iii-r after the piloting of the model identified that EWS will be more effective if the school had a juvenile affairs inspector and family psychologist. The School-D is located in the rural area and attracts the students from neighbouring villages. The children from the district orphanage also attend this school “we have two psychologists, but the workload is very big, so having these people as a part of EWS team would be very useful,” says a participant from that school. The pilot kindergarten considers that having social pedagogue will be very helpful for children and parents.

- It is important that the **EWS team is trained and understand the purpose of the EWS model**, members' roles, monitoring of children at risk and accountability in the school. It is also important that teachers understand their role in supporting children to remain in school. **Teachers should adopt a deliberate effort in monitoring children's attendance, behaviour and performance and supportive learning techniques.** Teachers should make an effort to attend to individual children's needs in order for the EWS to be effective.

- The EWS teams also highlighted that to sustain the process of prevention, the training sessions and ongoing support **for the teachers and school administration** are very important. **The potential of distance learning (support) might be further explored to broaden the audience reach.** In the long term, should be a balanced mix of specialist input into an inclusive approach. Importantly, school staff need to be empowered to see what they can achieve.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

##### **Monitoring and assessment of the EWS interventions**

- Data collected during two Phases of assessment reveal an important part of preventing school drop out is ensuring that **rigorous [ongoing] tracking system of students and recording data about students** is established at all levels of the system. There is strong evidence that schools are working hard to collect and record all data but the constant flow of new children to schools (e.g. migrants, new students coming from the orphanage, etc.), demand schools use more efficient tools for updating the school datasets. **Effective use of data should be adopted to assess the true status of individual students to inform support interventions.** Methods need to be efficient of time and energy. Currently the data collected via class social passports, National Educational Database (NOBD), paper-based templates of children's attendance records, and via E-journal – Kundelik. The structure and categories of information gathered in social passports vary across schools as well as periodicity of updates, while the NOBD has a standard template. However, the information collected in NOBD about children with SEND [and children with SEBD] does not have any codes for a child disability, it is often copied from a medical certificate provided by the child or the child's parents. These strategies should be discussed and addressed. This is about ethics of data logging and possible data sharing within the school, with Regional Department of Education (RED) and other organisations. As evidence shows a high level of migration of children in urban locations, NOBD should be able to keep track of children/students going from one part of the country to another.

- **Monitoring is an important** element in assessing effectiveness of the EWS and supporting students at risk of dropping out. It is important to interact with all at risk students in order to get their insights and experiences of how interventions are impacting on their retention in school.



## Recommendation 5.

### A long-term vision for sustainability of the EWS model and the role of external actors

- **Maximising the potential of preschool and particularly of pre-primary is key to improving school readiness for children, to ensure their timely enrolment in Grade 1 but also to start identifying children at risk of low education and life outcomes and their families.** There are lots of initiatives that the Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Kazakhstan is/ has undertaken to support pre-school education in Kazakhstan (e.g. Biz Mektepke Baramyz -“We go to school”- for 5-year-olds). In the short term, key stakeholders (e.g. MoES and NEA) should also develop sound strategies **to raise parental awareness of the importance of preschool** and to increase the number of facilities and human resources needed to reach the full coverage of pre-primary age children. Although the evidence gathered in kindergartens is very limited, it is possible to conclude that preschool professionals could be better equipped to identify children with learning difficulties, vulnerable children and be able to identify and receive support. **Early identification and early response interventions are the most effective.**

- Changing how schools and kindergartens operate and how they support their children is rarely a problem-free process. **It is important to stress the need to create an inclusive ethos, and inclusive education teaching and learning practices for all students.** However, traditions of segregation in education are strong and moving to an inclusive education approach takes time . There is a need for changes in attitudes among some practitioners and decision-makers. Lack of familiarity with the purpose of inclusive education and the EWS model can lead to scepticism and dismissal of inclusive practices, as well as the results of piloting the EWS model. **It is important to create opportunities for dialogue between practitioners, researchers and policy-makers to discuss IE priorities as well as the importance of the EWS practices.**

- **Investing in professionals’ capacities at school and regional level is key to translate an EWS model into concrete and effective practices. It is necessary to create an infrastructure for cross-training and work experience** (e.g. an example is a support of the NAE, UNICEF office in Kazakhstan and international consultants during this piloting project). It also means providing schools with much greater support to assist children at risk through catch up programmes and on-going learning support for children in home schooling, children with behavioural difficulties, as well as children lagging behind. Lastly, **it means creating spaces for professionals to come together and discuss dropout prevention and response strategies in a meaningful and creative way, including how to maximise the participation of children in interventions.**

- One of recommendations of the Inception report (July 2018) of the current project, suggests that ‘cross-ministerial work is required to **remove inconsistency in the legislation.** For example, the term ‘special educational

needs' has been introduced but this has not yet revealed its meaning. Those children with behavioural issues (deviant children) and socially deprived children - are also included in this group (definition of SEN). In the past, the phrase 'children with limited opportunities' was used, but this new interpretation is not yet clearly defined. Furthermore, the meaning of the term 'children with behavioural difficulties' needs further discussion - e.g. children with social emotional and behavioural difficulties – SEBD .

- Two phases of assessment exercises show that the on-going support and assistance provided by UNICEF office in Kazakhstan and the local team of experts (NEA) is central to success of piloting the EWS as well as for scaling it up to other schools

### **THE WAY FORWARD:**

1. Cross-ministerial work is required to remove inconsistency in the legislation.
2. To improve inclusive education practices – i.e. inclusive ethos and inclusive education teaching and learning.
3. To improve data tracking and recording mechanisms
4. To support pre-primary education, early identification and early response interventions
5. To strengthened accuracy of dropout predictions by combination of multiple risk factors
6. To adopt an EWS model to needs of kindergartens
7. To apply multifaceted approaches in supporting all children, and especially, children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and children in home schooling
8. To support the development of knowledge and skills of professionals at school and regional level about the EWS and mechanisms of monitoring of children at risk.

## **ACKNOWLEDGING THE USE OF TERMINOLOGY WITHIN THIS PROJECT**

### ***International definitions***

The term 'special educational needs' often has a specific legal definition in each country. For the purposes of the current project, students with special educational needs (SEN) refers to students 'with barriers to learning and development' as defined by Mitchell (2014), regardless of the nature of these barriers. It should be noted that the term 'special educational needs' includes children with disabilities but is not exclusive to children with disabilities (UNICEF, 2017, pp.10-11). According to Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), children with disabilities (SEND) are 'those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation

in society on an equal basis with others’.

Children with ‘behavioural difficulties’ are referred to generally as children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) in the international literature since there are often complex and overlapping reasons behind children disengaging with school, failing to learn effectively and/or dropping out. Much debate exists as to whether the use of labels for children is helpful and whether children with SEBD form a subset of those with SEN or not.

In England, The Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs (DfEE, 1994) and The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES 2001, DfE and DoH, 2015) have both used the category of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Prior to this, the term “severe or emotional behavioural disorders” (Warnock, 1978, p.96) was used. The Codes worked from the assumption that pupils who are placed within a range of categories require additional support to ensure that they can access teaching and learning in schools and specialist settings successfully (Childerhouse, 2017).

### **Definitions adopted in Kazakhstan**

A person with special educational needs (SEN) is anyone who is experiencing permanent or temporary difficulties in obtaining education due to health. Such a person requires special comprehensive training programs and educational programs of additional education (Law «On Education», MoES 2007)

“Deviant behaviour is the systematic offenses committed by children and minors, which entail the application of administrative punishment, malicious evasion from studies, work, continuous run away from the family and educational organisations, as well as their socially dangerous acts, containing signs of crime freed from criminal responsibility” - Law “On Education” of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated July 27, 2007 N 319, Article 1. Basic Terms Used in the Law.

As it is stated in the “Monitoring Framework of Inclusive Education” (2017): ‘Organisations of the system of education and social protection of the population are taking preventive measures to support children who have difficulties in social adaptation. The number of students who are in boarding schools for children with deviant behaviour and a special regime of upbringing decreased from 237 people in 2015 to 154 in 2016. The purpose of such schools is to provide education, training and social rehabilitation of minors (age 11-18) with deviant behaviour’ (p.22).

A child with disability (SEND) – is anyone under the age of eighteen years, having health problems with persistent disorder of body functions, caused by disease, injury (injury, trauma, contusion), their consequences, defects, which leads to a limitation of life and the necessity of its social protection (Law «On social protection of disabled persons in the Republic of Kazakhstan»; also Monitoring Framework of Inclusive Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2017, p.10)

The relevance of inclusive education in public debate is illustrated by the

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popularity of the **Index for Inclusion** (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). Originally developed in the UK, the Index provides a list of indicators and questions to assist schools in engaging in a process of self-review, with a view to developing inclusive ethos and practices. The Index has been translated into more than 32 languages.

UNICEF advocates for eliminating word “deviant” in legislative norms and practice in accordance with the Riyadh Guidelines. United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines) call for: The need for and importance of progressive delinquency prevention policies and the systematic study and the elaboration of measures should be recognized. These should avoid criminalizing and penalizing a child for behaviour that does not cause serious damage to the development of the child or harm to others. Such policies and measures should involve: Awareness that, in the predominant opinion of experts, labelling a young person as «deviant», «delinquent» or «pre-delinquent» often contributes to the development of a consistent pattern of undesirable behaviour by young persons (Online: [www.un.org/documents/ga/res/45/a45r112.htm](http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/45/a45r112.htm) )

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